

This past fall I met with my history teacher to discuss turning points in history. We reviewed a lot of possibilities but I was intrigued when she mentioned the Bonus Army. I did some investigation and quickly knew I had found my topic.

I began my research by ordering books and reading magazine, newspaper, and Internet articles. My favorite source is Bonus Expeditionary Forces written by Henry O. Meisel because it was written in 1932 by a marcher and I used some of his quotes on my exhibit. I also enjoyed the Herbert Hoover Museum archives, which had dozens of valuable primary source documents. The Time Magazine archives were useful because I could read about public reaction as it was unfolding. My other two best sources were secondary sources. The first is The Bonus Army: An American Epic by Paul Dickson and Thomas Allen; it was helpful because it gave an in-depth review of my whole topic and helped me organize my ideas regarding how the Bonus Army was a turning point in history. The other book is The President and the Protest: Hoover, Conspiracy and the Bonus Riot by Donald Lisio. It gives Hoover's perspective on the Bonus March, which was helpful because it gives balance to my project. I also enjoyed the NPR Radio Diaries about the Bonus Army with its real recordings of the radio announcements made when the marchers were driven out of Washington. And of course, the Library of Congress Photo Files were an essential source for my research and project creation.

I decided to do an exhibit because I enjoy the challenge of making a topic visually interesting and there were some great photographs of the event. I made my exhibit look like one of the Hooverville shacks on Anacostia Flats, looking out onto the other burning shacks with the capitol dome in the background. I used this photograph because of its symbolism and emotional impact. Instead of using chronological order, I organized my

exhibit according to this year's theme with separate sections giving the different perspectives of the main people involved in the Bonus Army, an examination of the march's driving ideas, a description of the eviction event, and an analysis of the Bonus Army's impact.

My topic is a historical turning point in multiple ways. Most importantly, it changed the way we treat our nation's veterans as well as creating a new social contract between our country and its returning forces. When the G.I. Bill passed in 1944 as a direct result of the Bonus marchers, it gave a generation of young veterans a chance to go to college and buy their own homes. As a result, it created a turning point in our nation's social structure by developing a middle class. The Bonus March was also the first time a large group of protesters marched on the capitol demanding something specific. Whenever anyone goes to Washington today to protest for change, they are following in the footsteps of the Bonus Army.