

The Dust Bowl

High School United States History

Time Frame: 3-5 Class Periods

United States History VSC:

- 5.3.1.a Evaluate the hardships of the Depression on various groups in American society, including families, farmers, African Americans, and industrial workers
- 5.3.1.c Describe the responses of the Roosevelt administration to the Great Depression
- 5.3.1.d Describe the effectiveness of New Deal programs, such as Social Security Administration (SSA), Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC)

Government VSC:

- 1.A.3.c Analyze the decisions made by the government on domestic issues and their effect on society, such as entitlements, socio-economic status, individuals with disabilities, welfare reform

Reading VSC:

- 3.A.1.a Listen to critically, read, and discuss a variety of literary texts representing diverse cultures, perspectives, ethnicities, time periods, and literary eras. (Grade 10)
- 3.A.1.b Listen to critically, read, and discuss a variety of literary forms and genres. (Grade 10)

Objectives:

- Students will be able to identify the states affected by the Dust Bowl.
- Students will be able to describe the causes and effects of the Dust Bowl.
- Students will analyze the costs and benefits of decisions made by Americans affected by the Dust Bowl.
- Students will analyze the costs and benefits of the United States Government response to the Dust Bowl.

Vocabulary:

Arkie	Migrate
Drought	New Deal
Depression	Okie
Dust Bowl	Cost
Migrant	Benefit
Farm Security Administration	

Materials:

For teacher:

Dust Bowl Ballads, Woody Guthrie, ASIN B00004TY8S, October 2001 (Optional)

Teacher Resource Sheet #1, "Talking Dust Bowl Blues"
Teacher Resource Sheet #2, "The Dust Bowl"
Teacher Resource Sheet #3, "July 1963- Dust Storm in Colorado"
Teacher Resource Sheet #4, "Rosebud County, South Dakota, 1935"
Teacher Resource Sheet #5, "Boy in Dust Bowl"
Teacher Resource Sheet #6, "Farmer & Sons Walking in the Face of a Dust Storm"
Teacher Resource Sheet #7, "Dust Bowl"
Teacher Resource Sheet #8, "Dorothea Lange"
Teacher Resource Sheet #9, "Migrant Mother"

For student:

"The Dust Bowl." *Cobblestone* April 2003

Student Resource Sheet #1, "Sifting Through the Dust Reading Guide"
Student Resource Sheet #2, "Harley Holladay"
Student Resource Sheet #3, "Dust Bowl Scrapbook"
Student Resource Sheet #4, "Helpful Resources for Dust Bowl Scrapbook"
Student Resource Sheet #5, "The Dust Bowl: Choices"
Student Resource Sheet #6, "Dust Bowl DBQ"

Resources:

See Student Resource Sheet # 4

Lesson Development:

1. **Motivation:** Display Teacher Resource Sheet #1, "Talkin' Dust Bowl Blues." If possible play a recording of the song. (*Dust Bowl Ballads*, ASIN B00004TY8S, October 2001.) Ask:
 - When did the events in this song take place?
 - What occurred that forced the author to leave his home?
 - To where did the author move?Discuss student responses.
2. Tell students that this song was speaking of a series of events that occurred in the 1930's that created something called the Dust Bowl. Display Teacher Resource Sheet #2, "Dust Bowl Map." Identify the areas that were impacted by the disaster.
3. Distribute Student Resource Sheet #1, "Sifting Through the Dust" Reading Guide. Instruct students to read "Sifting Through the Dust" from the April 2003 issue of *Cobblestone*. They should complete the resource sheet as they read. Debrief student responses.
4. Distribute Student Resource Sheet #2, "Harley Holladay." Have a student read the excerpt out loud to the class. While the student is reading, display Teacher

Resource Sheets #3-7. (Note: You may wish to make a power point presentation with these pictures.) Discuss student reactions to the reading and the pictures.

5. Have students brainstorm different ways Harley's family could have responded to the recurring Dust Storms and the damage they caused. List on the board. After all of the possibilities have been listed, ask students to work with a partner to list the costs and benefits of each alternative. After they have completed this, have them identify the choice they would have made. Discuss student responses.
6. Tell students that many people like the Holladay family who were caught in the Dust Bowl decided to migrate west. This migration became the largest in American history. By 1940, over 2.5 million people had moved West, out of the Plains states. Of those more than 200,000 moved to California.
7. Divide the class into 4 cooperative groups. Explain to students that they will be examining the migration that resulted from the Dust Bowl through the eyes of the various people who experienced it.

Groups:

Group One- Victim of the Dust Bowl on his/her trip West

Group Two- Victim of the Dust Bowl once he/she reached California

Group Three- Produce Farmer in California

Group Four- Longtime California resident

Distribute Student Resource Sheet #3, "Dust Bowl Scrapbook ". Tell students that they will be researching the Dust Bowl and creating a "scrapbook " of that person's experiences during the time period. Go over the assignment and check for clarity.

8. Groups should use Student Resource Sheet #4, "Helpful Resources for Dust Bowl Scrapbook" as a starting point for their research.
9. After all students have completed their Scrapbooks, have them present their information to the class. As each group presents, students should fill out Student Resource Sheet #5, "The Dust Bowl: Choices."
10. Remind students that the Dust Bowl was only one of the tragedies that occurred in the United States during the 1930's and '40's. Remind them of the Stock Market Crash and the subsequent depression. Remind them that the United States Government, under the leadership of President Franklin Roosevelt, implemented a number of programs designed to help Americans cope with the domestic situation. Ask: What was the name of the set of policies that Roosevelt's administration implemented to remedy the Great Depression? (*The New Deal*)
11. The Farm Security Administration (FSA) was a part of the New Deal. It was created within the Department of Agriculture in 1937. Its purpose was to assist farmers who had been impacted by the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression. Before they could

help those farmers, however, the FSA had to know the extent of the problem(s) they were dealing with. It hired photographers and journalists to document the situation. One such photographer was Dorothea Lange. Display Teacher Resource Sheet #8 “Dorothea Lange.” Lange is probably best known for her picture “Migrant Mother.” Display Teacher Resource Sheet #9.

12. **Assessment:** Students should read Student Resource Sheets #6, “Dust Bowl DBQ” and respond to the prompt.

TALKING DUST BOWL BLUES
Woody Guthrie

Back in nineteen twenty seven
I had a little farm and I called it heaven
Prices up and the rain come down
I hauled my crops all into town
Got the money...bought clothes and
groceries...
Fed the kids..and raised a big family

But the rain quit and the wind got high
Black old dust storm filled the sky
I traded my farm for a Ford machine
Poured it full of this gas-i-line
And started...rocking and a-rolling
Deserts and mountains...to California

Way up yonder on a mountain road
Hot motor and a heavy load
Going purty fast, wasn't even stopping
Bouncing up and down like popcorn a-
popping
Had a breakdown..kind of a nervous
bustdown
Mechanic feller there charged me five
bucks
And said it was En-gine trouble

Way up yonder on a mountain curve
Way up yonder in a piney wood
I gave that rolling Ford a shove
Gonna coast just fars as I could
Commence a rolling..picking up speed
Come a hairpin turn..and I didn't make it

Man alive, I'm a telling you
The fiddles and guitars really flew
That Ford took off like a flying squirrel
Flew halfway around the world
Scattered wives and children
All over the side of that mountain

Got to California so dad-gum broke
So dad-gum hungry I thought I'd choke
I bummed up a spud or two
Wife fixed up some tater stew
We poured the kids full of it
Looked like a tribe of thy-mometers
arunning around

Lord, man, I swear to you
That was surely mighty thin stew
So damn thin I really mean
You could read a magazine
Right through it..look at the pictures too
Purty whiskey bottles..naked women

Always have thought, always figured
If that damn stew had been a little
thinner
Some of these here politicians
Could of seen through it

<http://www.ac.wvu.edu/~stephan/Steinbeck/grapes.sonn.dustbowl.html>

The Dust Bowl



Teacher Resource Sheet #3

July 1936- Dust Storm in Colorado



<http://newdeal.feri.org/images/i39.gif>

Teacher Resource Sheet #4

Rosebud County, South Dakota, 1935



<http://newdeal.feri.org/images/s29.gif>

Teacher Resource Sheet #5

Boy in Dust Bowl



<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/pnp/fsa/8b38000/8b38200/8b38283r.jpg>

Teacher Resource Sheet #6

**Farmer & Sons Walking in the Face of a Dust Storm in 1936
Cimarron County, Oklahoma**



www.willamette.edu/.../dust_bowl_boys.jpg

Dust Bowl



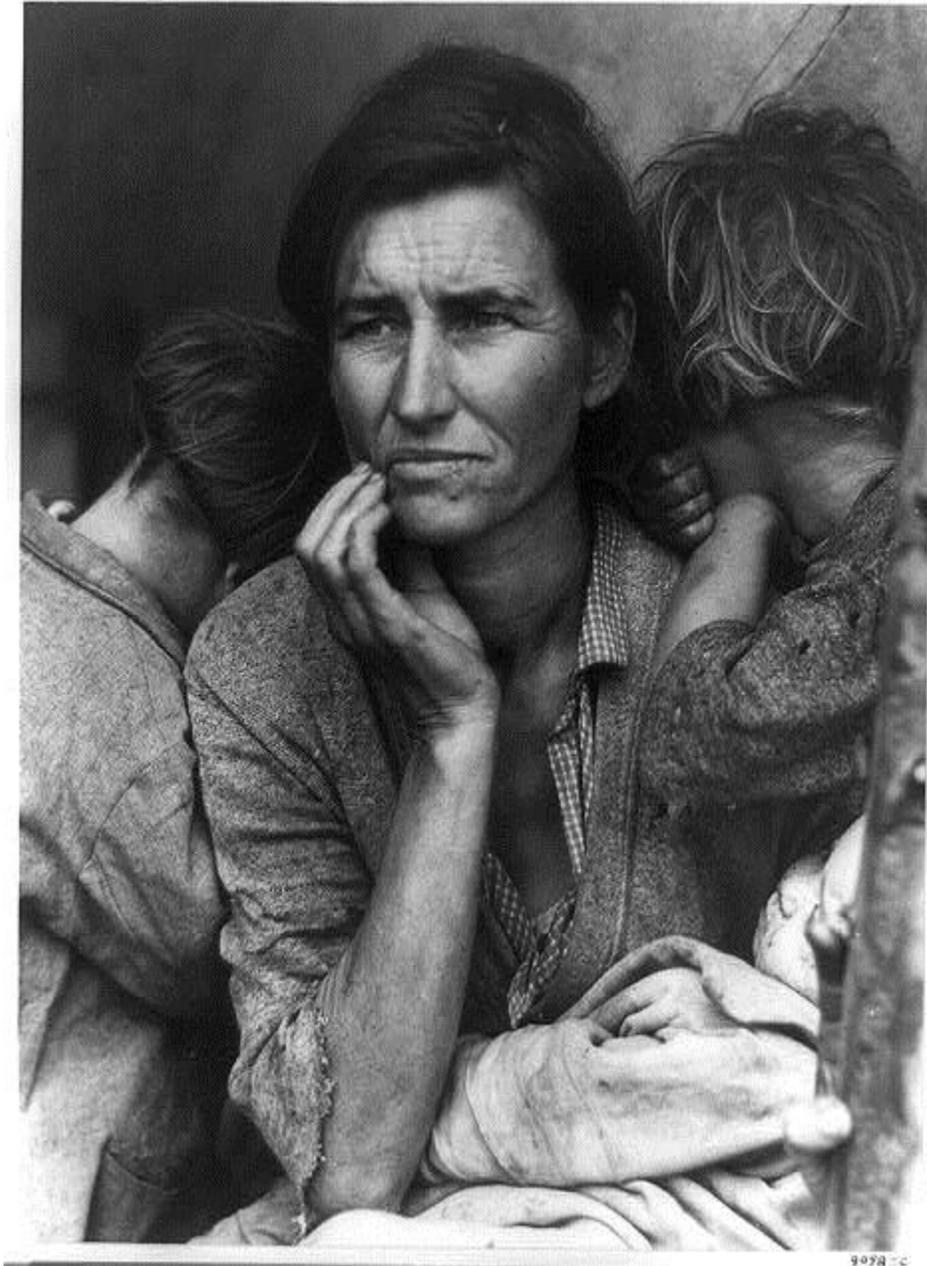
http://www.usd.edu/tiop/sild/Irene/Irene_TIOP/images/fencepostdust.jpg

Dorothea Lange



<http://learn.roguecc.edu/developmental/support/dlange.jpg>

“Migrant Mother”



[http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/i?pp/lsaall:@filreq\(@field\(NUMBER+@band\(cph+3b41800\)\)+@field\(COLLID+fsa\)\):displayType=1:m856sd=cph:m856sf](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/i?pp/lsaall:@filreq(@field(NUMBER+@band(cph+3b41800))+@field(COLLID+fsa)):displayType=1:m856sd=cph:m856sf)

**Sifting Through The Dust
Reading Guide**

Questions	Answers
What is the problem?	
What are the causes?	
What are the effects?	

Harley Holladay
April 14, 1935: Black Sunday
Near Dodge City, Kansas

“It was such a nice clear Sunday. We had hung the laundry out on the line that morning, and mother had washed the upholstered chairs and set them out to dry. I walked up to our horse pond and had picked up a stone to skip across the water. While I was throwing I happened to look up and noticed this long gray line on the horizon. It looked like a thunderhead, but it was too long and flat and it was rolling toward me way too fast. I sprinted to the house to tell my parents that the dust was coming but they wouldn’t believe it until they went outside and looked for themselves. Then we started hauling in clothes as fast as we could just snatching them in armloads and running. The cloud caught me outside with a load of clothes. I couldn’t see anything at all. It was black as night. I got down on my hands and knees and tried to crawl toward the house. I finally felt the porch, and reached up and opened the screen door and crawled inside.

“For a long time it was total blackness inside, except for one thing. When I looked out the window I could see our radio antenna outlined in static electricity. There were little balls of fire all over it caused by dirt particles rubbing together. Finally the sun began to shine as a faint glow of orange light coming in through the windows. As it got lighter, I could see baskets and brush sailing past us. It felt like we were flying through space.”

“I guess we had gotten used to it, because it had been that way for a long time. Our windows were taped up and the cracks in our walls were stuffed but nothing kept the dust out. Whenever we ate a meal we had to turn our plates and cups and glasses over until the exact time the meal was served. Even then, you could write your name in dust on your glass by the time the meal was done. Every night before we went to bed we scooped a little water into our noses and blew out the dirt. We put covers over our faces and a sheet over my little sister’s crib. Some people slept with masks on.

“You didn’t want to get caught out in a storm, either. Some families strung clothesline between the house and the barn so that they could always find their way back to the house. We always made sure we had food and water with us when we left the house. When the dust started flying and I was away from the home I tried to find a fence line to follow. My father used my brother and I as guides when he was plowing with the tractor in the fields. I’d stand at one end of the field with a kerosene light and my brother would shine a light at the other end. My dad would try to drive straight between us. The dust came so fast that it would cover up the tractor’s tracks.”

Hoose, Phillip. We Were There, Too! Young People in U.S. History. New York: Melanie Kroupa Books, 2001.

Dust Bowl Scrapbook

Role:

Assignment:

Create a scrapbook of the experiences of your assigned person during the Dust Bowl. The scrapbook should be at least 8 1/2" by 11" in size and contain at least 4 pages.

Those pages should contain the following information:

- Biographical Information about your person (can be an actual person or a fictional one)
- Experiences faced by your person during the Dust Bowl time period
- A decision that your person was forced to make concerning his/her Dust Bowl experiences
- Costs and benefits of that decision

The pages should be bright and colorful and should contain pictures (either taken from the internet or hand drawn). Pictures should have captions.

You should include a bibliography of the sources you used in your research.



Helpful Resources for Dust Bowl Scrapbook

Websites:

Woody Guthrie

http://xroads.virginia.edu/~1930s/RADIO/c_w/guthrie.html

Dust Bowl Migration Digital Archives

<http://www.lib.csub.edu/special/dustbowl.html>

Voices from the Dust Bowl, Library of Congress

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/afctshhtml/tshome.html>

Farming in the 1930's

http://www.livinghistoryfarm.org/farminginthe30s/water_14.html

The Dust Bowl

<http://www.usd.edu/anth/epa/dust.html>

Studs Terkel: Recordings From Hard Times

<http://www.studsterkel.org/htimes.php>

Surviving the Dust Bowl, The American Experience

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/dustbowl/index.html>

Weedpatch Camp

<http://www.weedpatchcamp.com/index.htm>

Books:

Connell, Kate. Dust Bowl Days. Washington, D.C., National Geographic, 2004.

Cooper, Michael. Dust to Eat: Drought and Depression in the 1930's. New York: Clarion Books, 2004.

Hesse, Karen. Out of the Dust. New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1997.

Partridge, Elizabeth. Restless Spirit: The Life and Work of Dorothea Lange. New York: Viking, 1998.

Stanley, Jerry. Children of the Dust Bowl: The True Story of the School at Weedpatch Camp. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1992.

Steinbeck, John. The Grapes of Wrath.

"The Dust Bowl." *Cobblestone* April 2003.

Student Resource Sheet #5

The Dust Bowl: Choices

Group/person	Situation	Decision	Costs of Decision	Benefits of Decision
Victim of Dust Bowl during Trip West				
Victim of Dust Bowl once in California				
Produce Farmer in California				
Longtime California Resident				

Dust Bowl DBQ

DBQ Question:

Using information from the documents and your knowledge of United States history and government, write an essay that answers the following question:

What were the political, social, and economic costs and benefits of the Dust Bowl and the United States Government response to it?

Document #1

Chronology of the Farm Security Administration

- 1929 Onset of the Great Depression. Intensification of rural poverty that has been spreading the whole decade. Drop in agricultural prices since 1920. In response more investments in mechanization and thus more intensive farming. Results: many farmers must sell their land; sharecropping increases; over-farming leads to erosion.
- 1933 Franklin D. Roosevelt becomes President. His New Deal envisions a number of government programs for combating rural poverty. Foundation of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA). Program: crop reduction with certain price guarantees; this means profits for the well-situated farmers and losses for the sharecropper families (in the South and Southwest 75% of all farmers). Many small farmers and sharecroppers must leave their farms and look for jobs as migrant workers.
- 1935 Foundation of the Resettlement Administration (RA). The Director is Rexford G. Tugwell, Professor for Economics at Columbia University and one of the closest advisers to the President. Program: granting low-cost loans and assistance for poor farmers and sharecroppers; erection of regional model settlements for the resettlement of migrant farmers and farm workers; construction of camps of migrant farm workers; recultivation of eroded land; controls for river pollution and flood protection measures. Setting up of the Information Division as a sub-department of the RA. Task: information on and promotion of government measures which are unpopular in wider circles in the U.S. Setting up of the Historical Section as a sub department of the Information Division. Task: photographic and

sociological documentation of the work of the RA; pictorial information on rural and small-town living conditions. Employment of the photographer Dorothea Lange (with interruptions up to 1942).

1937 Incorporation of the up-to-then autonomous RA into the large United States Department of Agriculture and a name change to the Farm Security Administration (FSA). Tugwell leaves.

<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~UG97/fsa/fsabio.html>

Document #2

The Farm Security Administration

The FSA loaned money to tenant farmers (renters) at low interest rates. The loan program was the main effort of the agency and thousands of tenant farmers were able to stay on the land because of them. Many were able to earn enough ahead to actually buy their farms outright. One of the other unique aspects of the FSA program was that the agency insisted that their borrowers learn the basics of modern bookkeeping. For some, it was their first training in business skills.

One of the unintended consequences of the AAA was that landowners used new government payments to buy tractors. Farmers who had been renting a small parcel of land and farming it with horses were displaced by the landowner who now only needed one farmer and a tractor instead of several with horses.

The FSA also built model cooperative farmsteads for farmers who had been forced to receive relief (now known as "welfare"). The cooperative homestead program was one of the more ambitious and controversial programs of the Farm Security Administration. The agency's head was Rexford Tugwell, a visionary economist and planner. He was also one of Roosevelt's original "brain trusters" advising the president on economic and policy questions. He believed in the emerging cooperative movement as a way of promoting neighborliness and civic engagement.

As one of its four main programs, the FSA built series of cooperative homesteads. In the east, these projects took city people on relief and resettled them into planned communities, like Greenbelt, Maryland, or into cooperative subsistence farms. This was an early back-to-the-land movement.

The agency also built camps in California for Okies and other migrant workers.

http://www.livinghistoryfarm.org/farminginthe30s/water_13.html

Document #3

Starving Pea Pickers

Dorothea Lange's Experience as a FSA Photographer

Dorothea Lange tightened her grip on the steering wheel and peered through the rain beating against the windshield. It was the end of a cold, miserable winter. She had been traveling alone for a month photographing migrant farmworkers in California. Now her camera bags were packed and she was heading home. On the seat beside her was a box full of exposed film, ready to be mailed back to Washington, D.C. Her time was up, and she was worked out, tired to the bone.

It was early March 1936. The Great Depression and terrible dust storms in the Midwest had torn tens of thousands of farmers from their land. They had packed up a few belongings and come to California, driving battered old cars or pickup trucks, riding the rails, or tramping along the road, thumbing rides. Some came alone, but many brought their families. They were looking for work, any kind of work, to keep from starving. What they knew was farming, so they headed for the rich agricultural fields of the West.

Once they made it to California they moved from county to county following the ripening crops, earning as little as four dollars a week picking peaches, plums potatoes, and corn. Home for the migrants were old tents or cardboard boxes and flat pieces of tin thrown together into a shelter. People washed themselves in the same ponds and irrigation ditches they drew their drinking water from. They went to the bathroom in wooden outhouses or they hid behind bushes.

The government had hired Dorothea to take pictures of the migrants' living and working conditions. They worked sixteen-hour days, and so did she. She began at sunup and photographed until the evening light faded from the fields. By the end of each day, she was worn out from the long hours and the misery she had seen. But the next morning she woke up early and began all over again.

But now Dorothea's trip was nearly over. As the miles passed, she stared out at the wet and gleaming highway stretching ahead of her. The rhythmic sound of the windshield wipers filled her with relief. Sixty-five miles an hour would get her back to her family in seven hours. Finally she could take her mind off her work and think of home.

A homemade sign flashed by- PEA PICKERS' CAMP. She didn't want to stop, and she didn't. But as she drove, she started to argue with herself.

“Dorothea, how about that camp back there?”

“To turn back certainly is not necessary. Haven't you plenty of photographs on this subject? Isn't this just one more of the same?”

Twenty miles later, almost without realizing what she was doing, she made a U-turn and headed back to the camp. “I was following instinct, not reason. I drove into that wet and soggy camp and parked my car like a homing pigeon.”

A string of dirty tents sprawled across a desolate field, pitched on the bare, wet ground with no wooden floors to keep out the dampness. Piles of rubbish were heaped behind the tents. Old ramshackle cars were parked in the mud. Just a stone’s throw away was the prosperous, cozy town of Nipomo. The small town ignored the migrants’ camp that had sprung up next to them, uninvited and unwanted.

A woman and her four children sat listlessly in a lean-to shelter on the edge of the camp. Dorothea went straight to them with her camera. The woman didn’t ask any questions, but she told Dorothea that freezing rain and sleet had ruined the pea crop. For the past several weeks they had been living on frozen vegetables from the fields. In the camp at Shafter, California, the older children had learned to throw rocks at sparrows, killing them and knocking them out of the low, branching trees. When the sparrows were cooked up in a stew, the younger children didn’t realize what they were eating. But at the Nipomo camp, with only tall eucalyptus trees nearby, even these morsels of bird meat were unattainable.

Dorothea took only a few pictures, moving closer and closer to the desperate and hungry family. Then she packed up her camera without approaching any of the other pea pickers. It wasn’t necessary. She knew that she had just recorded the essence of her month-long assignment. She climbed back into her car and headed for home.

Waking early the next morning, Dorothea pushed aside her deep weariness and hurried into the darkroom. Haunted by what she had seen at the pea picker’ camp, she knew she needed to act immediately. Being with her family would have to wait. Making prints of the migrant mother and her children were more important.

With the photographs barely dry, she rushed to the city editor of the *San Francisco News* and told him that rain had ruined the pea crop, stranding several thousand pea pickers. Tires, clothes, and even bedding had been sold just to buy a little food. The paper ran the story on March 10, using her photos. The article was picked up and carried in newspapers across the country.

The response to the newspaper article was instantaneous and powerful. Seeing the desperate, helpless mother unable to feed her children shocked Americans nationwide. They were appalled that the very people who provided food for American families were themselves starving. The federal government acted immediately, shipping twenty thousand pounds of food to the California fields.

Dorothea felt a flood of relief and satisfaction that she had helped the starving pea pickers. But she had no way of knowing then that the Migrant Mother would become her most famous image, reproduced thousand of times all over the world. To many, it came to symbolize the despair and uncertainty of the Great Depression.

Partridge, Elizabeth. Restless Spirit: The Life and Work of Dorothea Lange. New York: Viking, 1998.

Document #4



By Ben Shahn, Resettlement Administration, 1937, Photolithograph
Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, National Archives and Records Administration
(MO 90-10)
http://www.archives.gov/exhibit_hall/new_deal_for_the_arts/images/work_pays_america/years_of_dust.html

Document #5

The Federal Government Role in Regard to Camps

As the migrants came into California in the middle thirties, they congregated in "squatter camps" along the side of roads, on the banks of canals or close to a town where they could obtain water and supplies. These were not healthy living conditions. The mortality rate among small children and infants was high and many were suffering from malnutrition and rickets. Tuberculosis was prevalent among young and old alike. Many parents did not know where to turn for help.

The Farm Security Administration was already starting to construct camps for migrant workers because, with a few exceptions, the camps managed by the farmers were not too much better than the "squatter camps."

The winter of 1937 and 1938 was especially severe in California. Rivers and creeks overflowed their banks washing out squatter camps and flooding farm camps. Families were forced to flee, often abandoning what few possessions they had. Hundreds were left without food or water. Private groups and government agencies rushed to their aid. The F.S.A. intensified their efforts to get the camps built, and launched an emergency program along with medical care.

One of the important discoveries the F.S.A. made was that when the migrant family was "taken off wheels" their annual income increased 20% due to the fact that most of their income went for gas while they traveled from place to place looking for work. After this discovery, the F.S.A. provided cheap, clean, generally well managed camps. They had tent platforms, metal buildings and sanitary facilities.

The Weedpatch Camp was one of these camps. Beside the qualities just mentioned, they had bath and laundry facilities, a good recreational program, and schooling available for the children. They also governed and policed themselves. This was made possible due to the efforts of the camp manager, Tom Collins to whom John Steinbeck dedicated his book *The Grapes of Wrath*. Mr. Collins was sympathetic to the plight of the migrants. He did not see them as uneducated dirt farmers. To him they were "colorful relics of the nations rural past." He treated these migrants with care and dignity.

In 1939, Tom Collins supervised the set up of one complete mobile camp. The State Department of Public health followed the lead of the F.S.A. and put four mobile health units in the field.

These camps were the federal government's answer to the problem created by the Dust Bowl migration. They were clean, safe, havens to a multitude of migrants. They also gave the children of these migrants a chance to grow up in a better world than the one they had left. These children of the Dust Bowl camps are the teachers, community leaders and business owners of our communities today.

http://www.weedpatchcamp.com/fed_gov.htm