

Northwest History Consortium

Interpreting Primary Source Photographs of the Dust Bowl

Gregory J. Lucotch
6th, 7th, and 8th Grades

National Standard

Era 8: The Great Depression and World War II (1929-1945) / Standard 1B

Standard 1B : The student understands how American life changed during the 1930s

BACKGROUND

Food could seldom be eaten without getting grit in one's teeth. Clothes hung out to dry would be torn from the clothesline and pounded stiff with dirt. When the black storms blew, people covered their faces with wet cloths. Still, it was hard to breathe. Many people developed "dust pneumonia." Children and the elderly often died from respiratory problems.

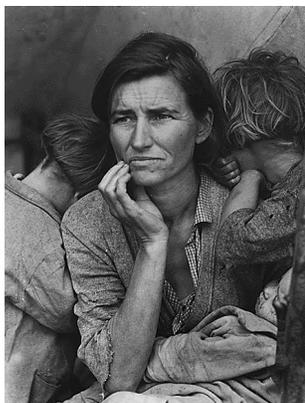
Year after year, the black blizzards came. The worst storm of all roared across the Plains on April 14, 1935. On the terrible day that came to be known as "Black Sunday," Dust Bowl residents woke to clear, blue skies. They set about doing chores and getting ready for church, thankful for a dustless day. These are some of the conditions that existed during the Dust Bowl.

Read your Dust Bowl packet before beginning this exercise.

PROBLEM

The US Farm Security Administration (FSA) investigated living conditions of families hired to work in cotton fields and farms in Arizona and California. Many of the families had fled the Dust Bowl. The lengthy drought, which devastated millions of acres of farmland in Midwestern states such as Oklahoma, left thousands homeless and without work.

You are a famous photographer sent by the US government to photograph the Dust Bowl conditions. You will need to show these photographs, and the conditions they represent, to a congressional committee. Many of these committee members are in doubt of the existence of these conditions and cannot travel.



Lange, Dorothea. "Migrant Mother." [Photograph]. Feb. or Mar. 1936. Dorothea Lange. [The Library of Congress](http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/fsa1998021539/PP/). Washington, DC. 11 April 2011 <<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/fsa1998021539/PP/>>.

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SCENARIO

You begin your journey in Washington, DC. You fill your car with gas and embark on a journey to photograph parts of the South that are most impacted by the change in climate. These dry years resulted in extreme conditions, and it is up to you to convey those images on film.

As you travel to the South, armed with your camera, you begin to photograph the deteriorating conditions that are caused by the lack of rain. You wonder if this is just a poor season or part of a much larger condition known as climate change. As you travel along, you meet thousands of people with their lifelong possessions who are fleeing the worsening conditions. Out comes your camera and you begin to record the stories seen in their faces.

The images of these faces will surely convince the congressmen of how bad the conditions are and will help them understand the Dust Bowl and its impact on the country.

TASK

As a famous photographer, it is your job to create a PowerPoint that will be presented to the congressional committee. This presentation needs to be short and concise because the time available to most congressional members is very limited. You may only use 7 slides which you think will best capture the attention of the congressional members. Each slide must contain only three bullets. In your PowerPoint include a map showing the states and cities that you visited. A copy of these photos and your notes will be turned over to the committee as official documents related to the Dust Bowl.

RESOURCES

Internet

Gavin, Philip. "Migrant Farm Families: Photos with Original Captions" by Dorothea Lange. [Photographs]. ©2000 - 2011 The History Place. The History Place. 4 July 1996 - 2011. Boston, MA. 12 April 2011 <<http://www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/lange/index.html>>.

"North America: USA Outline Map." World Atlas. ©2011 Graphic Maps (Woolwine-Moen Group). Galveston, TX. 12 April. 2011 <<http://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/namerica/usstates/us48outl.htm>>.

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ASSESSMENT

PowerPoint Assessment Rubric

Teacher Name: _____

Student Name: _____

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Content	All content throughout the presentation is accurate. There are no factual errors.	Most of the content is accurate but there is one piece of information that might be inaccurate.	The content is generally accurate, but one piece of information is clearly flawed or inaccurate.	Content is typically confusing or contains more than one factual error.
Information	Information is organized in a clear, logical way. It is easy to anticipate the type of material that might be on the next card.	Most information is organized in a clear, logical way. One card or item of information seems out of place.	Some information is logically sequenced. An occasional card or item of information seems out of place.	There is no clear plan for the organization of information.
Photographs	All graphics are attractive (size and colors) and support the theme/content of the presentation.	A few graphics are not attractive but all support the theme/content of the presentation.	All graphics are attractive but a few do not seem to support the theme/content of the presentation.	Several graphics are unattractive AND detract from the content of the presentation.
Effectiveness	Project includes all material needed to gain a comfortable understanding of the topic. It is a highly effective study guide.	Project includes most material needed to gain a comfortable understanding of the material but is lacking one or two key elements. It is an adequate study guide.	Project is missing more than two key elements. It would make an incomplete study guide.	Project is lacking several key elements and has inaccuracies that make it a poor study guide.

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REFERENCES/CITATIONS

ALTEC. "Rubistar: Create Rubrics for you Project-Based Learning Activities." 4Teachers.org. 2009. Lawrence, KS. Advanced Learning Technologies Consortia (ALTEC) at the University of Kansas. 12 April 2011 <http://rubistar.4teachers.org/index.php?screen=CustomizeTemplate&bank_rubric_id=4§ion_id=1&>. Adapted by Gregory J. Lucotch for the Northwest History Consortium with permission.

"History Standards for Grades 5-12 United States." UCLA National Center for History in the Schools. 2005. Los Angeles, CA. 12 April 2011 <<http://nchs.ucla.edu/standards/us-standards5-12.html>>.

Lange, Dorothea. "Migrant Mother." [Photograph]. Feb. or Mar. 1936. Dorothea Lange. The Library of Congress. Washington, DC. 11 April 2011 <<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/fsa1998021539/PP/>>.

Lucotch, Gregory J. "Interpreting Primary Source Photographs of the Dust Bowl." NWESD Organization. 2008 - 2011. Anacortes, WA. 12 April 2011 <http://www.nwesd.org/1510101216191755740/lib/1510101216191755740/8.1B_GreatDepression.DustBowl.GreatDepression.Lucotch.6-8/>.