

YHBA Novel Resource #5

Submitted by Nancy Dawson
Ben Davis Ninth Grade Center

DUST TO EAT
Drought and Depression in the 1930s

By
Michael Cooper

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Michael L. Cooper was born in 1950 in Southeast Kentucky. He attended the University of Kentucky where he received his BA in English. He moved to New York where he lived for eighteen years. During that time, he earned a MA in American Studies at the City University of New York. He lives in Washington D.C.

Today Mr. Cooper enjoys tennis, working out, and cooking. He worked in restaurants when he was in graduate school.

He looks at both primary and secondary sources for his books. He says that gives him a flavor of the events and the time period. He also uses pictures by prominent photographers such as Dorothea Lange and Ansel Adams.

He has written and received awards for several books. This particular book is not only a YHBA nominee, but it also won the Golden Kite Award. The Golden Kite Award is given to children's book authors by other children's book authors.

Some of Mr. Cooper's other books are:

Surviving Jamestown

Hero of the High Seas: John Paul Jones and the American Revolution

Remembering Manzanar: Life in a Japanese American Relocation Camp

Slave Spirituals and the Jubilee Singers

Fighting for Honor: Japanese Americans and World War II

Indian School: Learning the White Man's Way

Klondike Fever: The Famous Gold Rush of 1898

Racing Sled Dogs: An Original North American Sport

Double V Campaign: African Americans and World War II

Bound for the Promised Land: The Great Black Migration

From Slave to Civil War Hero: The Life and Times of Robert Smalls

Playing America's Game: The Story of Negro League Baseball

Mr. Cooper's website is: <http://www.michaellcooper.com/newsletter.htm>

ABOUT THE BOOK

Genre: Juvenile Non-fiction

Theme: Depressions – U.S. History; Droughts - U.S. History; Dust storms – Great Plains; Migrant Workers

This brief but powerful novel brings the suffering of people in the 1920s and 1930s to light. Poignant personal anecdotes and authentic photos are painful reminders of the hardships of many migrant workers.

From the Depression to the droughts in the Midwest to the massive dust storms that traveled over 2000 miles, Mr. Cooper offers a short but intense history lesson for an often- overlooked period of our nation. He also brings in the social and economic changes to the society.

Reading Level: 6.7

Interest Level: 6th through 8th grade

Setting: time period late 1920s and the 1930s

Places: Primarily the Midwest and California

Point of view: Third person with many anecdotes from migrant workers

If you likes *Dust to Eat Drought and Depression in the 1930s*, you'll love *Out of the Dust* by Karen Hess; *Driven from the Land: The Story of the Dust Bowl* by Milton Meltzer; *Children of the Dust Bowl: The True Story of the School at Weedpatch Camp* by Jeff Stanley; *Remembering Manzanar:Life in a Japanese American Relocation Camp* by Michael L. Cooper

ANNOTATION

Dust to Eat *Drought and Depression in the 1930s*

In his brief, but powerful novel, Michael Cooper leads us through the tumultuous 1920s and 1930s. He begins with a prosperous America through the Depression and into the terrible period of dust storms and ruined crops. People, millions of them, lost jobs and farms and families and began to look for a better life. Many headed west to the green grass of California, or the Land of Opportunity.

Unfortunately, California was overrun with immigrants, and that state's economy suffered greatly. Resentment swelled against the newcomers. There were not enough jobs or places to live. Families lived, and died, in squalor.

Mr. Cooper points out that the government in the 20s and 30s was ill equipped to handle the poverty and unemployment of those days. Many social and economic programs were inaugurated to save the citizens. Many of these systems are still in effect.

This book is well documented with pictures by Dorothea Lange and Ansel Adams, songs by Woody Guthrie, and anecdotes by notables such as John Steinbeck. Interviews with migrant workers, homeless families, and surviving children make this an emotional read.

Once again, Michael L. Cooper puts us in the middle of history, and it is uncomfortable, but somehow familiar.

BOOKTALK

Dust to Eat Drought and Depression in the 1930s

Imagine that you live in Chicago in May of 1934. It is hot and humid and very windy. You think a thunderstorm is coming because you see very dark clouds in the western skies. Then you feel something hitting your face and arms and legs. It is dirt! You are standing in the beginning of the country's worst dust storm.

This storm carries 350 million tons of dirt eastward. Four million tons of dirt fell on Chicago, or four pounds of dirt on you and every citizen in the city. Let's hope you don't have asthma! The storm traveled the next day to New York and Atlanta. Prairie fell like snow on the decks of ships that were 300 hundred out in the Atlantic.

The country is in a depression, millions of people are unemployed, hundreds of thousands have lost their farms and their life savings, and now there will be no crops because the soil from the Great Plains is in the Atlantic Ocean.

What caused this? How did people survive? Or did they? Michael L. Cooper has written a sort but fact filled book that takes us from the mid twenties to the early forties and educates us on the government's response to this heartbreaking period of our history.

The black and white photos of Dorothea Lange and Ansel Adams blend with family pictures to give you a glimpse into suffering. Hear the people tell their own stories of their journeys in old cars, wagons, boxcars, and on foot. This book should make all of us appreciate what we have.

CHARACTERS

Dust to Eat Drought and Depression in the 1930s

Some of the people documented in this book are:

Franklin D. Roosevelt – He was elected President in 1932 and inherited a multitude of social, economic, and political problems. His campaign slogan promised the people “A New Deal”.

John Steinbeck – He is the author of *The Grapes of Wrath*, a Pulitzer Prize Award winning novel in 1939. This novel gave a vivid account of the suffering caused by the Depression and the Dust Bowl. He interviewed hundreds of immigrants for articles that were printed in the *San Francisco News*.

Woody Guthrie – Mr. Guthrie was a young musician from Oklahoma. He moved to California in 1936. He wrote many folk songs about the plight of the migrants.

Dorothea Lange – As an award-winning photographer, Dorothea Lange chronicled the hardships of the immigrants as they escaped the Dust Bowl. Her photo entitled *Migrant Mother* symbolized the futility of women trying to take care of their families.

CONFLICT AND RESOLUTION

Dust to Eat *Drought and Depression in the 1930s*

Both types of conflict are in this book. The external conflict of man versus nature is evident in the drought, heat, wind, and the dust storms. The financial depression affected a person's ability to support his/her family. Many people lost their farms and homes and had to relocate.

Emotional depression, which can be seen on the faces of those who were photographed during the 1930s, is an example of internal conflict. Fear, hunger, poverty, and loss of hope plagues millions of people.

The buildup to World War II in the late 1930s and the war in the first half of the decade of the 40s helped resolve the unemployment problems. New economic programs enacted by the government gave people relief from hunger and poverty. Conservation programs rehabilitated the land and made it possible to grow crops again. Many legislative programs provided a safeguard against the human tragedy that America suffered in the 1930s.

READ ALOUD PASSAGES

A vivid description of a massive dust storm is given.

Chapter 2, page 11

“In 1934, the nation began to realize that something was terrible wrong on the Great Plains . . . when they saw a towering wall of black clouds rushing across the prairie toward the town.”

A displaced farmer tells of his family's living conditions.

Chapter 3, page 41, 32

“Many farmers and merchants moved to Denver, Oklahoma City or other cities in the region. . . . but at least his hungry family could sneak into the stockyards and milk the cows.”

CURRICULUM CONTENT

1. Geography

8th grade assignment

- Students will create a game board that will track the movement of a family leaving their farm in Oklahoma, Kansas, or Texas in 1934. They will travel to the San Joaquin Valley in California where, they have heard, they can work in the fields. Students will trace their route along Route 66. Students must incorporate at least **six** obstacles that may have occurred along the way.
- Students may work alone or with one partner,
- Materials: *Dust to Eat Drought and Depression in the 1930s*
Chart paper
Poster board
Construction paper
Markers and/or colored pencils
Maps and atlases
Rubric

INDIANA STANDARDS

SOCIAL STUDIES

8th grade

History	8.1.30
	8.1.31
Geography	8.3.9
Economics	8.4.4
	8.4.10

7th grade

History	7.1.18
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6th grade

History	6.1.19
	6.1.20

Name(s) _____
Date _____

Create a board game that will take a family from a dust bowl state in 1934 to the San Joaquin Valley in California. You must include at least **six** obstacles they may encounter along the way. Give your family a name, decide how many children, and show the mode of transportation they have. (See pictures in *Dust to Eat Drought and Depression in the 1930s*.) You should travel along Route 66. The game should be played by 2-4 people. Use game cards, tokens, dice, etc., of your choice. Put game pieces in a small Ziploc bag. Those will be returned.

Make a set of directions for your game.

You may work alone or with one partner.

This assignment is due _____. You will have two 1 hour blocks of time in class to work on this. If you need more time, you will need to work on your own time.

Use your copy of *Dust to Eat Drought and Depression in the 1930s* for some of your research. I will provide chart paper, poster board, construction paper, markers, crayons, maps, and atlases for use in the classroom.

Turn in this paper with your project. Make sure your name is on your poster board.

I will grade your work on this rubric.

RUBRIC:

Effort -----	_____
	20 pts.
Content -----	_____
	20 pts.
Neatness -----	_____
	10 pts.
Mechanics -----	_____
	10 pts.
Overall Effect -----	_____
	10 pts.
 TOTAL -----	 _____
	70 pts.

Name _____
Date _____

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

#2 Language Arts

Grade 8

Imagine that you are a 14 year-old boy or girl who has traveled with your family from eastern Arkansas to California in 1934. After arriving, you decide to write a letter to your best friend from school. In your letter you should explain the following:

1. why your family decided to leave
2. events during the trip (include at least 4 problems your family encountered)
3. what conditions your family encountered once you arrived

Your trip would have taken two weeks. Describe your travel conditions, weather conditions, family dynamics, and your personal feelings about the overall experience.

Before you begin to write, reread the book *Dust to Eat Drought and Depression in the 1930s*. Look carefully at the pictures. Also pay attention to the excerpts from the movie *The Grapes of Wrath* that I will be showing you in class. Feel free to use maps or atlases in the classroom

I need to have a paper from each student. Your paper will be due _____.

I will give you time in class each day for one week to work on this assignment. The length of your paper should be at least 2 written pages one 1 typed page. Be neat and legible. I understand that most letters then would have been written in pencil, but please use standard blue or black ink if you are writing your letter

Attach this paper with the rubric to your letter.

RUBRIC

Content - - - - -	_____
	25 pts.
Length - - - - -	_____
	10 pts.
Neatness - - - - -	_____
	5 pts.
Mechanics - - - - -	_____
	5 pts.
Total - - - - -	_____
	45 pts.

Materials: *Dust to Eat Drought and Depression in the 1930s*
Atlases and maps
Paper
Ink pens
Video clips from *The Grapes of Wrath*

INDIANA STANDARDS

English/Language Arts

8th grade

Writing applications 8.5.6

7th grade

Writing Processes 7.4.3

6th grade

Writing Applications 6.5.6

CITATION

Video clips from the movie *The Grapes of Wrath* will be shown in class to give the students the flavor of the times. These clips come via:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_bxy52jaqg

<http://video.google.com>

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Pre-reading:

1. In what decade did the Great Depression begin?
2. What were some causes of the Great Depression? (Brainstorm on board)

During reading:

1. What was John Steinbeck doing in 1936? Where? Why? Ch. 1, pg. 1
2. What was an “Okieville?” Why were they called that? Ch. 1, pg. 3
3. Give three reasons people rushed to California in the 1930s? Ch. 1, pgs. 1-9
4. Describe the dust storm of May 9, 1934. Ch. 2, pg. 11
5. Give three causes of the Great Dust Bowl Disaster. Ch. 2, pg. 12
6. What and when was Black Tuesday? Ch. 2, pg. 17
7. What is a foreclosure? Ch. 3, pg.28
8. Discuss the effects of the Dust Bowl on entire communities. Ch. 3, pg. 30
9. Which highway to California did most migrants take? Describe travel conditions. Ch. 4, pg. 41
10. Describe the weather conditions in the Mojave Desert. Ch. 4, pgs. 43-45
11. List at least 10 crops that were grown in Central California. Ch. 5, pg. 47
12. Describe medical conditions among the migrants. Ch. 5, pgs. 52-55
13. What caused the crisis in the San Joaquin Valley in 1938? Ch. 6, pg. 37
14. What was the goal of the California Citizens Association? Ch. 6, pg. 60
15. What historic event changed the focus of California? Ch. 7, pg. 65
16. What were the effects of eight years of the Works Progress Administration? Ch. 7, pg. 68, 69

17. What was the purpose of the Social Security Act? Ch. 7, pg. 69

Post reading:

1. Name and discuss three similarities between conditions in the United States today and conditions in the mid-1920s.
2. Name and discuss three differences between conditions in the United States today and conditions in the mid-1920s.

VOCABULARY LIST

1. **Okies pg. 6** – derogatory name given to any immigrant who settles in California
2. **foreclosure pg. 28** – the possession of a home or farm by a bank when the owner cannot make the payments
3. **“black blizzards” pg. 13** – dust storms
4. **Black Tuesday pg. 17** – October 29, 1929 date of the stock market crash
5. **migrant camps pg. 3** – makeshift camps for settlers usually near a highway
6. **migrant worker pg. 1** – people who fled to California looking for work in the crop fields
7. **Dust Bowl pg. 12** – region of the country that was hit hard by dust storms
8. **First Hundred Days pg. 32** – a series of programs and policies enacted by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to try and end the depression
9. **malnutrition pg. 4** – caused by hunger and poor nutrition, identified by a swollen belly and listlessness, usually followed by death
10. **The Great Depression pg. 15** – economic failure in the United States started by the stock market crash and followed by high unemployment, falling wages, foreclosures, and worsened by the dust storms in the Great Plains
11. **prosperity pg. 15** – a period of economic wealth for many in the country characterized by high wages, low unemployment and buying on credit
12. **Roaring Twenties pg. 17** – decade of the 1920s that was lively and prosperous
13. **sharecroppers pg. 35** – farmers who worked on a farm for a share of the profits
14. **stock market pg. 17** – an investment house that moves stock and bonds for clients often inflating a person’s sense of financial security
15. **unemployment pg. 8** – too few jobs for too many people seeking jobs; out-of-work

Name _____
Date _____

BOOK ASSIGNMENT #1
English/Language Arts

Dust to Eat Drought and Depression in the 1930s

As a review for your test, match the following vocabulary words with the correct terms.
Write your answer on the blank to the left of the term.

- | | | |
|---------|----------------------|--|
| ___ 1. | Stock Market | a. name given to dust storms |
| ___ 2. | Okie | b. time of sweeping government policies |
| ___ 3. | unemployment | c. crashed October 29, 1929 |
| ___ 4. | foreclosure | d. region that produced dust storms |
| ___ 5. | First Hundred Days | e. starvation |
| ___ 6. | malnutrition | f. name given to migrants |
| ___ 7. | “black blizzards” | g. lively decade of prosperity |
| ___ 8. | sharecroppers | h. repossession of home or farm by bank |
| ___ 9. | The Great Depression | i. financial wealth and security |
| ___ 10. | Black Tuesday | j. out-of-work, few jobs |
| ___ 11. | Roaring Twenties | k. name given to day of stock market crash |
| ___ 12. | migrant camps | l. makeshift settlements for immigrants |
| ___ 13. | Dust Bowl | m. people who traveled west for work |
| ___ 14. | prosperity | n. period of economic failures |
| ___ 15. | migrant workers | o. tenant farmers |

VOCABULARY KEY

1. c
2. f
3. j
4. h
5. b
6. e
7. a
8. o
9. n
10. k
11. g
12. l
13. d
14. i
15. m

INDIANA STANDARDS

English/Language Arts

8th grade Vocabulary development 8.1.2; 8.1.2

7th grade Vocabulary development 7.1.3

6^{tg} grade Vocabulary development 6.1.4

Name _____
Date _____

BOOK ASSIGNMENT #2
SOCIAL STUDIES

Many of the programs and policies enacted during the Great Depression were known by initials. You will need to be able to identify ten of them on your test.

1. Choose one partner
2. Use your copy of the book *Dust to Eat Drought and Depression in the 1930s* and the letters below to identify ten programs and/or policies named in this book. Write the initials on the short line and the full name after it. When you are finished, see Mrs. Dawson to check your answers. Each letter will be used.

AAAAAAAAA CCCCCC D F I N P R SSSSS W

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Example: 1. AAA - Agricultural Adjustment Act Cross out three As off the letters you have used. (Hint: Use the index)

3. After you have checked your answers with Mrs. Dawson, you and your partner should choose ONE of these programs to study. Tell Mrs. Dawson your choice.
4. Get a 4x7 index card and look up the program in your book. Make notes and be ready to “teach” the class tomorrow.
5. Tell the class why the policy was enacted, when, who it helped, the cost, and the results.

KEY

Answers can be in any order, but should include these:

1. AAA – Agricultural Adjustment Act
2. CCC – California Citizens Association
3. CCC – Civilian Conservation Corps
4. FSA – Farm Security Administration
5. IA – Indigent Act
6. ND – New Deal
7. SSA – Social Security Act
8. SCS – Soil Conservation Service
9. SRA – State Relief Administration
10. WPA – Works Progress Administration

INDIANA STANDARDS

Social Studies

8th grade Economics 8.4.4

7th grade Economics 7.4.2

6th grade Economics 6.4.5; 6.4.6; 6.4.11

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Out of the Dust by Karen Hess (New York: Scholastic Press, 1977)

The Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck (Viking Penguin Press, 1939)

The Grapes of Wrath video clips <http://www.video.google.com>

The Grapes of Wrath video clips http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p_bxy

<http://www.doe.state.in.us/standards>

http://www.childrenslit.com/f_coop.htm

http://nancykeane.com/booktalks/cooper_dust.htm

<http://www.michaellcooper.com/newsletter.htm>

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