

THE DUST BOWL

The Great Depression affected Americans in both urban and rural areas.

In cities, factories closed, businesses shut down, and many people lost their jobs. People could no longer afford to buy many things they needed. Farmers also suffered because people in cities could not afford to buy their foods.

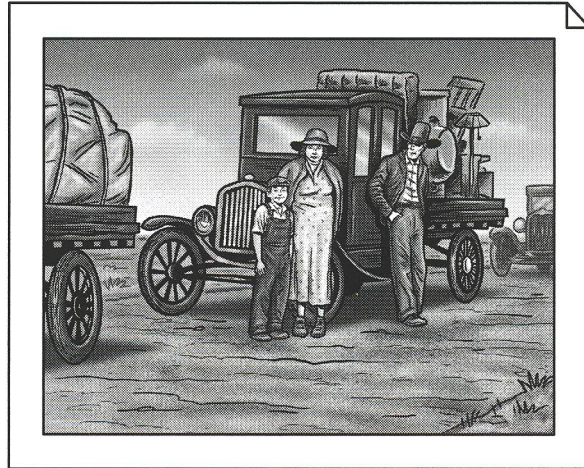
City dwellers saved in every way they could. They made their own clothes instead of buying them. Some even cut their food budgets by growing their own vegetables in small gardens. People bought cheaper foods, like bread and potatoes, instead of milk, meat, and fruit. Many of them did not get enough to eat, and some even starved to death.

While people in cities were starving, farmers had more food than they could sell. City dwellers could not afford to pay much for food that was shipped from farms. Farmers and ranchers would lose money if they kept shipping crops and livestock that no one would buy. Therefore, they let their crops rot in the fields, and they killed their herds. They had no other choice. Because they could not sell their crops, farmers did not make money. Many were unable to pay their mortgages, so their farms were taken by banks.

To make matters worse, a drought hit the Great Plains in the 1930s. An area made up of parts of Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado, and New Mexico became known as the Dust Bowl. It was called the Dust Bowl because strong winds lifted the dry soil and started dust storms. These dust storms were so bad that schools and businesses had to close. The dust was so thick that it sometimes was dark as night during the day. The drought made it impossible for crops to grow, so many people went hungry.

Many farmers decided to move. Whole families packed up their belongings and drove to California. The farmers hoped to find jobs picking fruit there. These people were called Okies because many of them were from Oklahoma. When the Okies reached California, some found jobs as migrant workers. This means they traveled from farm to farm, taking jobs picking fruit as it became ripe. The jobs were scarce and did not pay well. Many Okies could not find work at all as California farmers were suffering too.

Like the rest of the country, the Okies waited for the Great Depression to end. Americans all over the country struggled to survive. Times were tough for many years until the Depression ended in the early 1940s. The United States has not faced such a difficult economic period since that time.



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Multiple Choice

Circle the best answer, and write the letter in the box.

1. During the Great Depression, city dwellers saved money by _____.

- A. making their own clothes
- B. growing their own vegetables
- C. buying cheaper foods
- D. all of the above

2. In the 1930s, the Great Plains were hit by a/an _____.

- A. 100-year flood
- B. tornado
- C. drought
- D. earthquake

3. The Great Plains were called the _____ because strong winds lifted the dry soil and started dust storms.

- A. Dust Bowl
- B. Tumbleweed Trails
- C. Lonesome Prairies
- D. Windstorm States

4. Many of the Okies moved from the Great Plains to _____.

- A. Arizona
- B. South Dakota
- C. California
- D. Idaho

5. The Great Depression ended in the early _____.

- A. 1920s
- B. 1930s
- C. 1900s
- D. 1940s

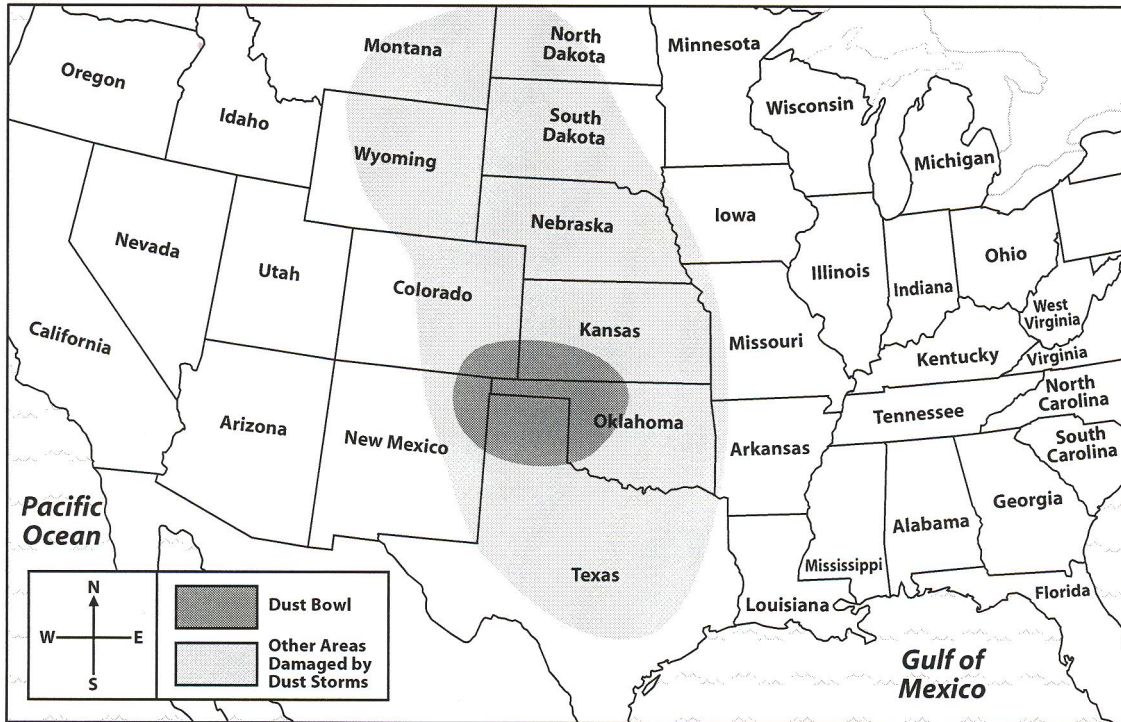
Name:

Date:

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Map – The Dust Bowl

Use the map to answer the following questions. Write the answers in complete sentences.



1. How many states were part of the Dust Bowl?

2. What are the names of two states that were not part of the Dust Bowl but were damaged by the dust storms?

3. How many total states were affected by the dust storms?

Name:

Date:

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Extension Activities

Choose one of the following activities to complete. Write the answer in complete sentences.

1. At the height of the Great Depression in 1932, nearly one-fourth of the workforce was unemployed. This means 25 out of every 100 workers did not have jobs. What is the unemployment rate today? Look on the Internet or at the library to find out.

2. If you had lived through the Great Depression, would you have rather lived in a city or on a farm? Explain your answer.

3. What was the Bonus Army? What did it do? Look on the Internet or at the library to find out.

Name:

Date:

QUIZ: THE DUST BOWL

True/False

Decide if each statement is true or false, and write "true" or "false" in the blank.

- _____ 1. In the 1930s, the Great Plains were hit by an earthquake.
- _____ 2. Farmers let their crops rot in the fields.
- _____ 3. Many farmers moved to the East Coast to become migrant workers.
- _____ 4. The Great Depression only affected people in rural areas.
- _____ 5. City dwellers saved money by buying cheaper foods.

Multiple Choice

Circle the best answer, and write the letter in the box.

6. Because of thick dust storms, _____.
- A. schools and businesses had to close
 - B. crops would not grow
 - C. it looked dark as night during the day
 - D. all of the above
7. The Dust Bowl was made up of parts of Texas, Colorado, and _____.
- A. Kansas
 - B. Oklahoma
 - C. New Mexico
 - D. all of the above

Short Answer

Answer the following question in complete sentences.

8. Why did ranchers kill their herds instead of selling them for food?
