Disaster in the Heartland: The American Dust Bowl

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Disaster in the Heartland: The American Dust Bowl

by

Carl Richard O’Connor

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A thesis (or project) submitted to the
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Disaster in the Heartland: The American Dust Bowl

by

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To my parents, Richard & Carol O’Connor. Thank you for everything. You don’t know how much your support means to me.

~Carl
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Chapter One: Historiography

In the American Great Plains, one of the most destructive ecological disasters occurred in the 1930s. It was known as the Dust Bowl, and crippled most of the Southwestern United States, including parts of Colorado, Texas, New Mexico, Kansas, and Oklahoma. During World War I, a majority of the country’s food supply was grown in the fertile soils of the American Southwest. The increased use of lands mixed with a rapid period of hasty transformation in farming methods led to the mass depletion of nutrients from the once lush soil. The years of abundant production in the plains made it such an economic powerhouse that greed soon overpowered conservation. Even though Mother Nature was blamed for causing this ecological disaster, it was more the ignorance of the farmers that cultivated the region and then caused its demise. Their greed plagued the area with despair for the better part of the 1930s.

Before the boom of wheat and the arrival of farmers to the region, the area was abundant with a homogenous mixture of grasses. These native grasses could withstand the long periods of drought the area regularly sustained. In the late 19th Century, the passage of the Homestead Act brought settlers west. The majority of these travelers were farmers who introduced crops like corn and wheat and brought their cattle to the area. Both the crops and the cattle left the soil exposed and loose to the wind during drought periods. Ignoring the history of droughts that plagued the area, farmers and businessmen continued to strive for a profit. In the early 1930s drought once again attacked the area. They called it the Dust Bowl, and many
Americans living in the southwest lost their livelihood during this time. The Dust Bowl lasted for about a decade, coinciding with one of America’s hardest economical hardships, the Great Depression.

In 1935 federal and state governments started to research programs for soil conservation while sending aid to the crippled southwest. President Franklin D. Roosevelt approved the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act, as part of the New Deal. In addition to soil conservation, the legislation pushed for reconstruction of the Dust Bowl area.

There are numerous sources of literature that account the events during this period of American history. Using primary source documents such as letters, diaries, government reports, and newspapers, authors have strategically depicted these events.

One of the first and most influential books dealing with the American Dust Bowl was historian Donald Worster’s *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s*, published in 1979. Worster was one of the first historians to put together a piece discussing the 1920s era all the way through and ending with The Great Depression. Using valuable primary sources, Worster is able to vividly and accurately describe the scene of the American mid-west throughout the 1920s, 30s and into the mid 40s.

Along with using government databases and archives, Worster is one of the first historians to point to machinery as one of the causes of the Dust Bowl. One of Worster’s sources was the late 1930s film “The Plow That Broke the Plains,” produced by the Farm Security Administration and directed by Para Lorentz. The
purpose of this film was two-fold. The first goal was to put out-of-work Depression era artists back into the field. The second goal was to create a film that would grab Americans in the east by surprise and show them the despair of the mid-west region. The film, which was overwhelmingly popular back east, hinted at the possibility that nature was not totally at fault for these ecological conundrums. In some respects the film pointed at technology and the farmers themselves. “It was Lorentz who first focused people’s attention on technology as the instrument of destruction.” As this film spread in the east, the notion of technology as fault also spread.

Another crucial point that Worster included was that nature was seen as capital in the western regions. When settlers first arrived to the region, their main concern was for shelter, but the family rose as their primary focus. As time moved on, and the United States entered the Twentieth Century, farmers’ estates were growing exponentially. As this happened, farmers were no longer growing based on need, but on want. They produced more and were able to sell more at markets for a monetary gain. With this increase in wealth, farmers were able to purchase more tractors, combines, and trucks to substantially increase their economic base.

Worster combines his two schools of thought into one solid theme in his book. When you take the industrial advancement led by Case, Ford, and Deere and mix in the economic greed of the farmer, you are essentially left with the Dust Bowl as your result. Once the Dust Bowl hit and was in full effect, farmers did not know what to do. So, they did what they usually did: produce more. As the market became flooded
with too many agricultural products, the price drastically dropped and hurt the farmers.

One of Worster’s final thoughts in his book revolves around the timing of the Dust Bowl. As the Dust Bowl was transpiring in the American mid-west, the Great Depression was affecting the entire globe. As the world economy struggled, the looming reality of the Dust Bowl was affecting farmers where it was most crucial: their pockets. As the market was flooded with agricultural products, the price of these products dropped, and many farmers were not able to pay the balance on their farm equipment, their mortgages, or their land purchases. Along with the general hardships of the Dust Bowl, many farmers were faced with these tough economic woes.

As one of the first in-depth looks on the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression, Worster carefully lays out other possible reasons for the Dust Bowl other than Mother Nature herself. His depictive views on machinery lead the reader to look closer at economic statistics and farm implement production records. The letters and diary entries allow the readers to understand from the farmers’ point of view in the areas hardest hit by the disaster.

In the Post-World War Two era, some of the federal government’s initiatives were specifically tailored to the American West. Many of the areas able to receive this federal attention were those once ravaged by the Dust Bowl. Historian Gerald Nash describes a majority of this information in his article “The New West: War and
Economic Transformation.” During this transformation, many of the western economies were stimulated in a positive way.

While FDR’s New Deal allowed the government to initiate recovery in industry and the economy in developed parts of the country, the Second World War allowed for expansion to lesser developed areas out west. Prior to the war, the West had all the tools to become economically powerfully like the East, but did not have the financial resources. According to Nash, “the war stimulated economic growth in the West like no other single event in the history of the West.” The federal government invested over $40 billion in the expansion during the war. They wanted to use the rich natural resources of the underdeveloped West to help boom war industry production in other areas of the country. Major industries such as steel, shipbuilding, and airplane manufacturing moved out West. President Roosevelt pushed especially for the expansion of steel manufacturing in the West. All of these industries had involvement in the national defense program and the increased industrial activity increased military operations, creating stimulation of the West’s banking.

While the West was an undiversified, undeveloped society, business leaders saw the war mobilization movement as an unexplored opportunity for prosperity. This program gave businessmen and state officials “an unusual opportunity to secure long-desired manufacturing facilities.” Business expansion in the East led to the business expansion in the West. FDR feared that all of this expansion could lead to the elimination of smaller businesses unless the national government intervened.
Roosevelt wanted to decentralize businesses, and did this in part through expansion to the West. War "had a profound influence on transforming the western economy, as mobilization wrought major changes in the economic life of the region and brought long-sought-for diversification." The government’s push for this mobilization allowed for the development of the western economy.

Along with the positive impact on the New Deal, family lives were also drastically affected by the Dust Bowl. Historian Jack Temple Kirby provides some insight in his book, *Rural Worlds Lost: The American South 1920-1960*. In his book, Kirby explains how the economic transformation of the South during this time period shaped its history for the last half century.

Starting with the conditions of the South in the 1920s, Kirby goes on to explain how the Great Depression and Roosevelt’s New Deal philosophies shaped the Southern half of the United States in both a positive and negative way. He also explains how time and transformation changed both family and cultural traditions. Throughout Kirby’s entire book, the theme of modernization is carefully threaded in. In some cases he also tries to show the modernization of the South in a negative way. He explains that as the United States progressed quickly, the South in many ways moved at its own pace. Along with the transformation of the South, the Mid-Western area of the United States underwent its own transformation. Through the hard times instilled by the Dust Bowl, many Americans, mainly farmers, had to readapt and change their daily lifestyles.
Throughout the book, Kirby talks about how many farmers held onto their old traditions, while the rise of technological achievements made planting, harvesting, and processing faster and more efficient as the years moved on. This factor was one of the biggest players in the transformation and modernization of the south. As innovation and technological achievement were introduced, steam, gasoline, and kerosene powered tractors and harvesters made the work of the farmer easier and more productive. These allowed for the farmer to plant and harvest more and more land.

In many aspects, Kirby tries to fight the modernization of the south. Based on the information gathered in his research, he lays the groundwork for the forced oppression of the government against small farmers. He shows the reader examples of modernization that would cripple small farmers. He talks about a cattle merchant who would let his cattle run free, but government regulations limited the traditional way he was accustomed to farming and raising cattle. “Only then did state officials fine the merchant for failure to dip his cattle in insecticide and force him to shoot the animals before spring fattening.” Kirby uses countless examples like this to show how reform and modernization essentially were used to steal long standing traditions from the south.

Kirby elaborates on the role of women during this period and the size of the family. “Larger families remains as economically important as ever, too; for theoretically, the larger the labor force, the more production, the more earnings, and security.” To sustain larger families, the mother’s role was to raise the children and
then be an extra pair of hands in the field. In many sections of the book, Kirby uses oral histories to explain the woes many women faced during this period. One history is that of the life of a female sharecropper. In many aspects the eldest female child was sometimes forced to grow up faster than normal. Usually this would occur when their mother would die. “The daughter not only cooked, washed, and cared for younger siblings, but worked in the family tobacco field as well.” 7 Countless stories such as this plagued the south for many years. Modernization and the reduction of the use of females allowed families to shrink. With birth control and proper mid-wife procedures, the fatality rate of birthing women was drastically reduced.

Jack Kirby’s explanation of southern modernization through the early twentieth century shows his bias on the topic. Throughout his book he uses specific oral histories to explain how many federal initiatives laid down by the New Deal were used to force modernization on a section of the United States that enjoyed their simple way of life. Kirby goes on to explain how the Great Depression and Roosevelt’s New Deal philosophies shaped the Southern half of the United States and explains how time and transformation changed both family and cultural traditions. Through the New Deal, the federal government acted as an invisible hand guiding areas of the south towards a forced modernization. I believe that certain factors did feed the south this modernization, but in many ways these things steered the South in a positive direction. On the other hand, modernization stole the laid-back, personal farming methods and cultural identity the South associated with for so many years.
According to historian Douglas R. Hurt in his article "The Tractor: Iron Horse for the Farmer," he discusses the evolution of the tractor and how it made its début in the Great Plains. Hurt goes on to explain how many of the well-known (Case, Ford, and John Deere) made their first inventions economical saviors to the farmers. Hurt’s vast depth of knowledge in this area greatly influences his style of writing, and he received his PhD in Agricultural/Western history in 1975 and continues to pursue his interests in this specific area.

As more tractors, harvesters, and plows made their way into the plains, drastic new farming methods followed suit. Now with more cost-effective ways to plant, harvest, and ship goods, farmers were able to overproduce and flood the markets. When the original "sodbusters" arrived to the plains, they only brought horses and hand tools such as hoes and pick axes. Then steam, kerosene, and gasoline tractors were invented, and the scale of farming on the plains increased.

The first large-scale company introduced to the plains was Ford. Henry Ford believed that his car construction techniques could also be adapted to the production of tractors for the plains. His first model, the "Fordson" was a spitting image of this philosophy. Due to the onset of World War One, the Fordson was first introduced to war-ravaged Europe. Once it was done aiding troops, it was brought back to the American West. By this time Case, John Deere, and International Harvester were already widely producing the Farmall, marketed specifically to the farmer’s needs in the west.
One of Hurt’s major points throughout his entire article is that farmers were now able to work extended hours and save money on equipment in the long-term. Oxen, horses, and mules needed rest, water, and fuel, while the tractor needed a good wrench. Thoughts like these led to the drastic downfall of the homeostasis in the arid Dust Bowl region. As the farmers purchased more of these efficient beasts, the farmers’ work load decreased.

One of the last major points that Hurt makes in his article is that the evolution of the truck made the trip to market more valuable. Farmers could use trucks to take goods to the market and the horse and wagon become obsolete.

In historian Alan Dawley’s article “Managing the Depression: Hoover and Roosevelt,” he touches upon another one of the major factors in relation to the Dust Bowl. He talks about the Great Depression and how its effects not only crippled the country, but were intensified in the Dust Bowl region. Dawley also discusses many of the Roosevelt initiatives that were put into place during the 1930s. Many of these “ABC” programs were beneficial to some of the hardest hit areas in the plains. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and the Agricultural Administration Act (AAA) are just a few of these programs.

While the Roaring 1920s were one of the most prosperous times in the country’s history, the nation saw a change in government policy during the 1930s. The Great Depression played a significant role in the deterioration of the economy of the United States. Almost everyone was hurt by the Depression, “as families had to make do with a third less income.” People did not have the income to spend on
products they desired like they could in the 1920s. Instead of purchasing material goods that improved a family’s standard of living, like cars, families had a difficult time just buying food.

The Great Depression came as a result of overproduction and under consumption. The “collapse of markets for food, housing, clothes, automobiles, and radios did not mean that industry could no longer produce these commodities, but that people lacked the money to buy them.” Industries kept producing products, hoping that overstimulation would fix the consumption problem while re-boosting the economy. President Herbert Hoover realized that some sort of government intervention was needed to fix the problem before it got out of hand. To Hoover, the “challenge of the Depression was to preserve the spirit of independence in an age of bureaucratic organization.” Hoover’s goal was to support the producers, think that it would in turn allow consumers to spend their income. Producer stability would boost consumer confidence in businesses. The main difference between Hoover and Roosevelt was that Hoover wanted to “avoid federal responsibility for relief,” and that did not stop Roosevelt. Hoover wanted to help boost the economy out of the Great Depression, but his conservative traditions brought limited direct government intervention. People were soon losing faith in Hoover’s ability to “respond to the mass suffering of the Depression.”

Franklin Roosevelt had a different point of view, and he greatly expanded government involvement in the economy. When FDR was elected president in 1932, he soon after began the implementation of his New Deal program. This program
brought some anti-Communist alarm because some Americans believed that too much government involvement in the economy could be dangerous. Dawley also states that FDR's New Deal program "immediately gave the banking system the kiss of life, put industry on the road to recovery, doled out jobs and relief, stabilized agriculture, and, most importantly, restored confidence in the government."\textsuperscript{14} Restoring this confidence was very significant, allowing people to accept that government involvement in the economy would help America recover. If there was little trust in the government, people would be afraid of a Communist revolt. Since the Roosevelt administration attempted to rebuild all aspects of American society, people began to trust the government and accept the idea of increased government participation for the first time in the nation's history.
Chapter Two: Disaster Hits the Heartland

“The storms were mainly the result of stripping the landscape of its natural vegetation to such an extent that there was no defense against the dry winds, no sod to hold the sandy powdery dirt.”

Introduction

In the American Great Plains, the Dust Bowl was one of the most destructive ecological disasters that occurred throughout the 1930’s. The states mainly affected included Colorado, Texas, New Mexico, Kansas, and Oklahoma. The Homestead Act of 1862 lured settlers to the Plains by offering them land at a low cost. Population surges to the west ensured that the Homestead Act would succeed. As settlers built their fortunes on the Plains, danger fast approached. The increased use of land mixed with a rapid technological transformation in farming became too much. Some of the new innovations included the addition of tractors and combines onto the Plains. These new machines led to the depletion of nutrients from the once lush soil. During World War I, a large portion of the world’s food supply was grown in the fertile soils of the American Southwest. Propaganda influenced farmers to keep producing at higher levels. The years of overabundant production in the Plains made it such an economic powerhouse that capitalism overtook conservationism. Years of
neglect left the soils unattended to and unable to support plant life. Defenseless against the winds, soil blew as far east as the nation’s capital. This event left a lasting historical scar on America’s heartland. Even though nature was at the forefront of this environmental catastrophe, it was primarily the ignorance of the farmers’ capitalistic drive that cultivated the region and plagued the area with despair for the better part of the 1930’s.

Out of the Dust Bowl, government agencies such as the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Soil Conservation Service (SCS), and the Soil Conservation District (SCD), were created to provide relief and regulation in the Plains. Before the Dust Bowl, the USDA was primarily focused on increasing farm production. After the disaster, the USDA changed its focus by offering acreage cutbacks to farmers limiting production. The SCS offered new methods of farming that would conserve nutrients in the soil. The organization also created the SCD, a grassroots organization of farmers. Conservationists believed that farmers would rally together, share ideas, and support each other better than they would listen to the dictations from Senators and Congressmen in Washington D.C. The SCD still exists today. The Dust Bowl led to the realization that government intervention is necessary for the survival of The Great Plains farmer. During the environmental crisis, most control of the Great Plains farming was given to President Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal legislation.

The native winds of the region not only destroyed the once fertile landscape but also the lives of the thousands who settled the area and called it home. Years of
flagrant land usage and poor agricultural management went widely unnoticed until the weather turned on the farmers. The Dust Bowl made Americans realize how fragile the farmland could be and how much protection it needed. By the fifties, drought returned to the region. Ecological events wreaked havoc on the Plains, as it had two decades earlier. The “filthy fifties,” had taught the farmers one thing; the precautions set up to protect them were short-term answers to long-term problems. Legislation and organizations had temporarily fixed the Dust Bowl, but they could not fix the biggest problem – the farmer.

**Off to the Great Plains**

With a flick of his pen, The Homestead Act of 1862 was signed into law by President Abraham Lincoln. This crucial piece of legislation opened up new lands in the unsettled west. Those who resettled from the east came to claim their piece of the American Dream. “[Under the act,] any person who settled on 160 acres of short grass, stayed there for five years, made ‘improvements,’ and paid a filing fee became part of the landed gentry.” The filing fee of eighteen dollars was the only money settlers were required to pay. However, the settlers ended up paying more than money in strenuous hard work and the sacrifices that came with the challenges of the area. A variety of settlers moved west to claim their “free” piece of land. Settlers included newly arrived immigrants, farmers from
the east, and newly freed slaves. The only stipulation to the Homestead Act was, “a homesteader had only to be the head of a household and at least 21 years of age to claim a 160 acre piece of land.”

After the Homestead Act was signed into law, thousands of families moved west and started their new lives. The “Sodbusters,” as they were called, moved to the west with nothing in their pockets. Their houses were constructed mainly of sod and were just sturdy enough to get by. They faced challenges and led a tough life, but the ends justified the means. From 1878-1887, the new settled lands were bountiful and farmers were able to reap plentiful harvests. As more Americans learned of the abundant harvests, the population in the Plains boomed. “In the western part of Kansas alone, the population rose from 38,000 people in 1855 to 139,000 people in 1887.” These times on the Plains were some of the most prosperous. Scientists of the day proclaimed, “rain follows the plow.” This idea would soon fade, as farmers would experience the unpredictable weather of the Plains at its worst.

Bountiful times in the Plains came to a grinding halt with the onset of the 1890 drought. Crops all over the Plains failed. The effects of the drought pressed on until 1892 when grasshoppers added to the devastation of the Plains. Any crops able to survive the weather were eaten by the grasshoppers. Over the course of a few years
drought and high winds ravaged the fragile Plains. Widespread starvation claimed many lives. "In Miner, South Dakota, 2,500 people died." This was the first sign that the Plains were unstable and hard to predict. Unfortunately, this warning sign went unnoticed to the American public. The Plains were a sleeping giant waiting to unleash a dusty fury on an unsuspecting enemy -- the farmers.

**New Farming Methods Hit The Plains**

After the first major drought, farmers experimented with different forms of cultivation to avoid another major catastrophe. "Dry Farming" was soon the new way to attack farming on the Plains. Dry farming was the work of Hardy Webster Campbell. Campbell arrived on the Plains in 1879 to take advantage of the bounty. While farming, he noticed that grass grew in the pressed-down tracts of land created by his animals, while nothing would grow in the barren regions. In 1890, he started designing a sub-surface packer. "[The design was] a series of wedge-shaped wheels revolving about an axel, the wedges designed to cut deep into the soil, packing it at the bottom of the cut while loosening the topsoil into a mulch." Along with dry farming, new drought-resistant crops like wheat were added to the Plains. Many thought that the introduction of new farming methods and crops would help farmers better cope with future droughts. As new farming methods swept the Great Plains, Congress authorized additions to the Homestead Act. "This addition to the original act allowed farmers to claim an additional 320 acres of land in nine different states." With more land available to settlers and farmers, the Plains were flooded with massive population surges in the beginning of the twentieth century. Historian Donald

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Worster put this concept into perspective: “In 1912, there were 24,000 claims; in the next year 53,000 – and they remained at over 30,000 annually until the early twenties. It was in this latest surge of settlement, from 1910 to 1930, that a dust bowl was created.” Without knowing it, The United States Congress almost single handedly laid the framework for a catastrophic event that would hit the Plains within the next 20 years.

**John Deere, Ford, Case, and Farmall Inject the Great Plains**

Farmers were not the sole cause of the escalating problems in the Dust Bowl. The rise of technological achievements made planting, harvesting, and processing faster and more efficient through the years. “No other source-man, ox, horse, mule, or steam engine has had a more profound impact on agriculture in the twentieth century than the farm tractor.” When Sodbusters arrived to the Plains they brought along small-scale tools, such as hoes, shovels, and horses. The work of the farmer was made easier as steam, gasoline, and kerosene driven tractors were introduced to the Plains. The use of large-scale harvesters increased production and efficiency, allowing the farmer to plant and harvest a larger plot of land.

Prior to gasoline and kerosene driven machinery, steam was a viable energy source for farming. The first steam tractors that emerged on the Plains were bulky pieces of equipment that weighed several tons. When Henry Ford entered the tractor market, companies such as John Deere, Case, and Farmall started to produce
tractors. Ford believed he could clone his assembly line techniques and apply it to a tractor model. After Ford constructed a variety of models, he finally was able to design one with mass appeal. “Finally, in October 1917, he produced a lightweight, low-cost, two-plow tractor called the ‘Fordson’.”

Unfortunately, all of the tractors Ford produced that year were sent to Europe to help with the war. When the war ended, the tractors were brought back to the United States and were an immediate success. “By 1919, nearly 34,000 Fordsons accounted for approximately 25 percent of the tractor production in the United States.”

Not long after, Ford withdrew the Fordson and left farm equipment production to his competitors. As technology advanced into the twentieth century, farming advanced with it. The need for livestock as farm equipment dwindled for tractors were able to do more work with less strain. Livestock needed food, water, and rest; tractors did not. As Ford proclaimed, “a farmer could repair a tractor while no one could fix a dead horse with a wrench.”

The only maintenance a tractor required was an occasional tune-up and refueling. Tractors enabled the farmers to work extended days and produce more crops without tending to the needs of their livestock. Less livestock also allowed farmers to open more land to cash crops instead of animal feed. The injection of machinery onto the Plains led to a rapid downsizing of old-fashioned ideas and livestock-run machines.

The tractor was not the only cause of the Dust Bowl. The invention of the one-way disk plow also played a significant role. Before this plow, the moldboard plow trudged through the fields and was able to dig up and slice the roots of the grass, leaving the soil intact on the surface layer. The one-way disk plow barely dug into the
surface of the field to increase water absorption. As it moved across the soil it left “a finely pulverized surface layer.” Farmers were told to use the plow after the rains fell to stir up dust. Manufacturers claimed that it would help the land absorb water, but after major droughts set in, critics blamed this method for the dust storms.

Another important machine introduced to the Plains was the combined harvester-thresher. Also known as a combine, they were seen roaming the Plains as early as 1917. The early models of the combine were towed behind tractors, like enormous beasts crawling along the Plains, engulfing everything in their paths.

On the long right arm was a reel with half a dozen wooden slats which revolved as the machine moved into the wheat. The slats gently folded in the stalks, to be cut off at any height the operator desired. A continuous belt carried the stalks into the heart of the machine, where the grain was threshed out and cleaned by air. An elevator carried the threshed kernels up to a storage bin, which rode atop the machine like a water standpipe on a factory, and the straw and chaff were thrown out the rear and scattered on the ground from whence it had come.

With the efforts of the combine, farmers no longer needed seasonal workers to harvest crops and saved employment costs to expand their harvest.

As farms and bounties grew, farmers needed a new way to transport goods to markets. Trucks replaced wagons and farmers continued to increase their production. Much of the machinery was purchased with credit. Farmers were able to purchase needed equipment immediately without worry. The easier it was to farm, the more
they would produce and sell, and in turn, have money to pay back their credit. The sodbustes were no longer living in rags. They were running large productive farms, which gobbled up more precious land with every acre. When the weather turned bad, crops failed, and banks came to collect. Many farmers lost everything.

**World War I and the Consumption of Wheat**

At the same time farms were developing along the Plains, Europe erupted in war. After World War I began, Europe’s wheat supply was either destroyed, or in enemy countries. Europe turned to the United States for assistance. The United States, upon the recommendation of Herbert Hoover, newly appointed Food administrator, passed the Food and Fuel Control Act of 1917. The act called for food and fuel conservation by all citizens in the United States to support the war overseas. It also gave Hoover the power to control imports and exports of food and supplies. With Hoover’s suggestion, the government pushed for higher wheat yields in the Great Plains. Farmers in the mid-west were bombarded with propaganda to plant more wheat. Slogans such as “Plant more Wheat! Wheat will win the war!” were thrown at the farmers daily. The Secretary of Agriculture stated, “It is clear that it would be economically wise and advantageous for the farmers of the nations to put forth their best efforts…” With these incentives, farmers cultivated more land and produced more wheat than ever before. “Farmers on the Southern
Plains were not slackers. Neither were they allergic to an extra dollar. They sprang to their jobs with vigor and determination. If the boys over there [in Europe] needed wheat, they would give it to them.”

Even after the war ended, it took Europe a while to get back on track and stabilize their crops. So the Plains continued to produce wheat. “[U]nder government-set goals, [the Plains] harvested 74 million acres—yielding 952 million bushels in all...providing 330 million bushels for shipment abroad.” With the increase in need for wheat, more lands were being set aside for production. “Kansas, Colorado, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Texas had expanded their wheatlands by 13.5 million acres by 1919, mainly by plowing up 11 million acres of native grass.” Farmers did not realize that as they were taking acre upon acre from the Plains, they were burying themselves deeper and deeper. As Europe regained its agricultural power, the price of wheat started to drop. “In less than six months the price of wheat on Southern Plains farms dropped sixty-one cents a bushel.”

Even with prices falling, the farmers continued to produce more and more wheat. To the farmers, more wheat meant more...
money. They failed to comprehend that they were flooding the wheat market and
were causing prices to fall dramatically.

**Nature Takes Its Revenge**

While the government pushed the farmers, and the farmers depleted the fields,
nature took a few swings at the Great Plains as well. Weather played a significant
role in turning the Plains into an arid wasteland for the better part of a decade. Some
believe that nature dealt a cruel hand to the west, but upon examination of the climate
history, there were warning signs. The bizarre winter of 1886-1887 and the drought of
1890 offered significant proof that the climate of the Plains can be very unpredictable,
and the Dust Bowl area was located in the center of sharp climate extremes. To
understand the climate of the Plains, one must first understand its meteorological
history.

The Great Plains are accustomed to regular rain throughout the year. The 1890
drought was not normal for the region, but a similar event occurred in the 1930s. .
Anticyclones began to wreak havoc on the Great Plains’ climate. An anticyclone is a
type of high-pressure system with winds that blow opposite the Earth’s rotation. The
pressure system causes reasonably nice weather, but extreme shifts. When these
occur, they block or divert other weather patterns. They can also lead to extreme
droughts and tremendously cold winters. The droughts of the 1930s came in many
stages and did not end until the early part of 1940. *The New York Times* of 1935
stated, “To cause precipitation there must be a cooling of—rain carrying winds. But
the drought causes high temperatures, and the high temperature causes the drought.”
This is one of the most extreme climate-related disasters that can be attributed to such meteorological factors. High temperatures evaporated most of the moisture that fell as precipitation during both the spring and summer seasons. Plant roots were not able to absorb water, and the intense heat literally turned millions of lush plant life into a barren, dusty wasteland. Most of the weather records set during the Dust Bowl still stand for the Plains today.

**Stormy Depression**

The years of continued planting had severely weakened the once fertile land. The weakened soil had lost the battle and conceded to the elements. Without the strong Plains grasses, the winds kicked up soil and blew it around in violent storms. Oil pipelines originally buried two feet below the ground were slowly exposed. The storms became part of life for those living in the midwestern states. Beginning in 1932, the storms reached their peak in 1935, and began to subside in early 1940. The storms were noted as being the roughest and most violent during the spring season. In the online presentation of “Farming in the 1930’s,” Harvey Pickrel remembered purchasing a tractor and having to dig it out of the dust before he could take it home.37 Another interviewee, Walter Schmitt, recalled how tumbleweed would
collect on fence lines. Then dust would drift up behind the tumbleweeds, covering the fencerows as far as fifty feet or more.\textsuperscript{38} Often cars would become buried in the dust as they drove down the road, trapped in the clenching fist of the storms. Drivers would have to wait until winds shifted, before cars would be unburied and released. Sometimes whole roads would be buried in the dusty mess. Residents of the southwest would live day-to-day, trying to plan their chores according to where they believed the dust would settle. But because of the violent windstorms, plans would have to be adjusted by the minute. Residents had to seal their windows with tape to prevent the fine soil from entering their homes and hang wet sheets and blankets to act as a filter from the fine particles. Even though people tried many methods to escape the dust, it crept inside homes and settled on whatever was around, including clothing, furniture, and even food. The dust not only infiltrated homes, it attacked human health in general. The young and the elderly were the most harshly affected, and “dust pneumonia” was among the leading causes of fatality. \textquote{During the dirt barrage the region was stricken with an epidemic of measles, strep throat, and other bronchial diseases (that turned into pneumonia) and respiratory illnesses (generally called dust pneumonia)...In some families two or more members were killed by dust pneumonia.”\textsuperscript{39}

The worst of the storms occurred from 1935 to 1938 and were also known as “Black Blizzards.” These blizzards were comparable to winter blizzards but, instead of snow, dust was blown around. The most memorable storm, considered the strongest by many people, was on “Black Sunday.” April 14, 1935, started as a
reasonably nice day in many parts of the Plains. In stories written about the event, people were out enjoying one of the few nice days of the season. Some were attending church, visiting friends, or running errands. By mid-afternoon, the tranquil conditions began to change. The temperatures dropped drastically. Birds flying overhead changed direction in midair, as if they were fleeing from something. Then it appeared. A massive dust storm was moving in from the north, bringing an unforgiving fury. "Various measurements of the amount of dust in the air reported by observers indicated that more than 100 tons of dust per square mile fell..." The storm caught hundreds by surprise. People ran for shelter, trying to protect themselves from the tidal wave of dust that was fast approaching. The storm had started in eastern Colorado, proceeded through western Kansas, and then made a path towards Texas and Oklahoma. There was total darkness at first, as if someone had turned off the sun. For the rest of the day, there were only small traces of light. After years of uprooting the native grasses, with no additional crops in place, millions of acres succumbed to the increased winds. The soil that once helped make the area a bountiful harvest and attracted hundreds of thousands of settlers was contributing to its demise. Farmers' mistakes and their uncontrollable greed was coming back to haunt them.
American literature from the time depicted the horrid scenes that were transpiring in the Great Plains. Renowned author John Steinbeck’s novel *The Grapes of Wrath*, depicted detailed scenes of the Dust Bowl. “The very first chapter of *The Grapes of Wrath* told again of blowing dirt, darkness at midday, and crops destroyed.”

With copies of Steinbeck’s book on the market, Americans were able to read in detail about the devastation occurring in their own country.

While devastation was rampant in the Plains, the nation as a whole was suffering from one of the most destructive economic disasters of the time. In a matter of four years the GNP dropped an amazing $45 billion dollars. Low already, farm prices fell more than 60%. 3,500 banks had closed and the unemployment rate was at an all time high of 25% with 13 million people out of work. In some cities the unemployment rate rose higher than the national average.

**Outcomes**

When the Midwest was struck with the droughts of the 1930s, people started to wonder what was going on in the once rich farmland of the Great Plains. At the Conference on Land Utilization in Chicago, agricultural leaders discussed the future land needs of the Midwest. Instead of people moving to the area, they were trying to get out. The Federal Government even urged residents of the Dust Bowl to migrate. “With the movement of the sufferers to new and green pastures immediately, experts
believe that the drought victims will be able to provide for themselves before cold weather overtakes them.” 43 From the conference in Chicago, the National Resource Planning Board was born. In 1934 the Board tried to predict the American land needs for the next twenty-five years. They concluded that there were roughly 55 million acres of land that the country no longer needed, and could be turned into grasslands, parks and forests. As in the early part of the twentieth century and the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt, the term “conservationist” was brought back into the limelight showing an era of progressivism. This new agricultural state of mind stressed soil conservation through improved agricultural techniques. Many farmers did not want a government watchdog dictating how they used their lands, even if it was to ensure the longevity of their farms.

The United States Department of Agriculture became the head of conservation efforts. Before the Dust Bowl, the agency was mainly devoted to increasing farm production, and believed in using anything possible to get more out of the land. The first act in the name of conservationism was for the USDA to issue acreage cutbacks. The cutbacks sliced into the farmers’ fields, but they were subsidized for the acres lost. As the Dust Bowl became a prime issue for the USDA, affected farmers argued that they needed more than acreage cutbacks. Millions of acres were still crippled by the Dust Bowl.

In 1934, The United States Congress passed the Taylor Grazing Act. “The act declared 80 million acres of bulk land closed to further settlement.” 44 Parts of the west were finally closed to future settlement, and they were primarily used as grazing
fields for livestock herders. The goal set forth in 1934, was to buy back over 75 million acres of land. This program became known as the Land Utilization Act. By the time the project was at its end in 1947, the Federal Government had spent almost 50 million dollars for just over 11 million acres of land. From this acquired land, the Shenandoah National Park emerged, along with enlarged Indian reservations and a wildlife refuge. Another idea that came about was to plant shelterbelts, or rows of trees planted between fields to break up the wind and help prevent the soil from blowing. A row of trees around a house could cut the wind and produce a nice breeze in the summer, so it was figured that a row of trees around a field would produce a similar effect on a larger scale. “Men must be trained to plant trees properly. The difference between good planting is often the difference between success and failure. The Soil Conservation Service planted, with Civilian Conservation Corps labor, 257 million trees and shrubs, principally trees, during a 5 ½ -year period.” Ultimately, the project failed, but it gave jobs to hundreds of men during the Depression.

Another important agency that evolved out of the Dust Bowl was the Resettlement Administration. It was founded as part of President Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal. Its first administrator was Under-Secretary of Agriculture Dr. Rexford Guy Tugwell. The Resettlement Administration’s main goal
was to relocate impoverished farm families and urban poor. It focused much of its attention on improper farming and land usage, and created propaganda films to spread the message. Film director Para Lorentz created a series of films, one which specifically targeted the Midwest. The film, titled *The Plow That Broke the Plains*, placed the blame for the Dust Bowl on those who wasted the Plains' once lush bounty. In one scene, Lorentz shows giant tractors slowly moving across the majestic Plains, trailed by dark clouds of dust. Another piece of propaganda that was created during and after the Dust Bowl was a photography series of farm families. In historian Lawrence W. Levine's book *The Unpredictable Past*, he analyzes photos taken during the Dust Bowl. One of the most powerful photos is of a woman feeding her children. The photo depicts a mother, with two children and no father figure. All are un-bathed, with dirt on their faces. These photos were used to create sympathy for the settlers and bring feelings of guilt and shock to the rest of the country. The photos were used as propaganda against the American people, most notably Senators and Congressmen in Washington D.C.⁴⁶

One of the most important and yet influential agencies formed during the recovery of the Dust Bowl was the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) formed in 1933. Hugh Hammond Bennett, a University of North Carolina graduate in soil
conservation, led the SCS. At the time, he was one of the country’s most respected conservationists. In 1934, the SCS sent Civilian Conservation Corps. (CCC) workers to the Dust Bowl to repair the damaged landscape. They brought new techniques, and demonstrated innovative and sustainable ways to farm. One technique, known as “ugly farming,” meant leaving an accumulation of vegetable matter on the surface of the fields to create a protective layer over the soil. They also taught farmers to plant crops in alternating strips so the soil would become thicker, leaving dry fields to rest every other year. In 1935, after extensive work was done on the Dust Bowl area, Bennett traveled to Washington D.C. to address Congress on the SCS’s work and to rally for its permanent placement. While in the nation’s capital, he learned of a large dust storm heading east. He stalled Congress long enough for the storm to hit before he addressed them. Being startled by the storm, Congress listened to him and permanently established the SCS. In 1936, Bennett toured the Dust Bowl and reported his findings in a report to President Roosevelt. They concluded that “the basic cause of the present Great Plains situation is an attempt to impose upon the region a system of agriculture to which the Plains are not adapted to bring into semi-arid region methods which, on the whole, are suitable only for a humid region.”  

Figure 16
suitable for that terrain. The SCS’s goal was not to take land away from the farmers, but to help them manage the lands they already possessed.

The most important contribution SCS offered to the Plains was not technical. Bennett helped establish a grassroots organization of farmers, known as the Soil Conservation District (SCD). The organization would help spread new techniques and practices among farmers. Bennett believed that farmers would be more likely to listen to each other, rather than Senators and Congressmen in Washington D.C. The SCD became the only grassroots organization that has survived through today.

The Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA) was set up in 1933 under the Agricultural Adjustment Act and played a crucial role in the reconstruction of the Dust Bowl area. The AAA helped farmers who would have lost their livelihood, and “…[they were] purchasing land from farmers who most needed relief.” The agency also paid farmers not to produce certain crops to create a balance and ensure price control. By closely controlling crop production, the markets stabilized over time. Farmers had some control over their lands, but government agencies were able to steer them in a better direction.
As 1941 approached, the rains had returned to the drought-stricken Plains. Crops were starting to return, even in some of the most troubled Dust Bowl areas. The Plains were beginning to recover. It almost seemed as if it were 1917 again, except this time, new farming methods and technical achievements would allow farmers to produce more crops efficiently. By 1946, lands set aside for grasslands were once again being plowed. The farmers of the Midwest had learned nothing from their decade of pain and suffering. As crop demand was on the rise, everything they had learned about conservation went out the window. By the 1950s, drought returned, and the Plains faced destruction similar to the events from two decades earlier. The “filthy fifties,” as they were called, had taught them one thing: the precautions set up to protect them were short-term answers to long-term problems. They had temporarily fixed the Dust Bowl, but they were not able to fix the biggest problem, the farmer.

**Conclusion**

The Dust Bowl was a demonstration of how fragile the land and nature in general can be. Farmers’ greedy use of the lands and capitalistic drive forced the families on the Plains to suffer greatly. Need for wealth changed the landscape of the Plains, just as the tractors, combines, and one-way disk plows did. The winds that are native to the region not only destroyed the once fertile landscape but also the lives of the thousands that settled the area and called it home. Years of flagrant land usage and poor agricultural management went widely unnoticed until the weather was no longer in the farmers’ favor. The Dust Bowl happened and it made people stop and
realize how fragile and disastrous poor land usage can be. Even when the rains finally arrived and conditions returned to normal, farmers continued to overwork the lands. The Plains were never suited for the agricultural strain that they endured.

Technological advancements in the field of agriculture and government intervention have allowed farming in the Plains to continue in a safe and controlled manner. Sooner or later even these interventions will not be enough. Nature can easily change the face of the Plains and the area can plummet back into desperation. The future of the Great Plains is very unstable. The agricultural boom can only be sustained so long before it ultimately collapses.

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3 Nash, Gerald, 24.
4 Nash, Gerald, 35.
6 Kirby, 155.
7 Kirby, 156.
10 Ibid., 335.
11 Ibid., 344.
12 Ibid., 350.
13 Ibid., 354.
14 Ibid., 359.
16 Ibid., 82.
19 Ibid., 134.
20 Ibid., 134.
22 Hibbard, 393.
23 Worster, 88-89.
25 Ibid., 16.
26 Ibid., 16.
27 Ibid., 16.
28 Worster 91.
30 Worster, 89.
31 Johnson, 111.
32 Ibid., 89.
33 Ibid., 89.
34 Ibid., 89.
35 Ibid., 122.
37 Living History Farm, “Farming In the 1930’s,” n.d., <www.livinghistoryfarm.org/farminginthe30s/water_02.html> (28 February 2009).
38 Ibid., (28 February 2009)
41 Worster, 57.
44 Hibbard, 195.
48 Bonnifield, 123.
Chapter Three: Teaching Practices

Abstract

Political cartoons are some of the most intriguing pieces of literature that a social studies teacher has available to use. They serve as primary documents and a different method of learning. Since the mid 18th Century, cartooning has been a powerful voice in many aspects of American culture. Rather than words, a cartoonist uses pictures and symbols to make his or her point. Once students have mastered a skill to read and interpret cartoons, they can be a valuable real world tool. Social Studies as a content area, just like math or science, has specific types of literacy tailored to its own instruction. Cartooning can serve as a powerful visual tool for student comprehension in the social studies classroom.

Literature Review

Many students growing up in today’s society are centered on either televisions or computers. Due to this vast phenomenon, many students are falling by the wayside of understanding through textual representation. Many of the youth have been weaned on a television for most of their lives. Because of this, many students do not connect with lecturers given by their instructors. Within classrooms, this can cause a big disconnect between students and instructors. With the assimilation of political cartoons into the classroom, teachers are able to help student connect to social studies on a more personal level.
Much of my research for this paper included looking at a vast amount of political cartoons across many time frames. Some of the most interesting cartoons I came across were centered in the GAPE (Gilded Age-Progressive Era) time of American history. During this absolute time of political corruption and greed, Thomas Nast, a popular cartoonist during the period constructed some of the most vividly detailed cartoons that fought the inner workings of the Boss Tweed circles. Boss Tweed, a corrupt politician of the gilded age, ran one of the most corrupt political circles of his time. Nast’s cartoons were crafted in such a way that he was able to reach those who were not reachable either due to literacy or due to the political chokehold Tweed had on New York. Tweed noticed this too late in his career and was finally finished with the political reform acts handed down from Congress.

Following that timeframe, and creating a path into the Dust Bowl and Great Depression, political cartoons became the “norm” for many Americans as they read their weekly or even daily newspapers and magazines.

Many of the articles that I either came across or included in my piece conveyed the message that political cartoons need to be incorporated into the lesson plans of social studies teachers. Not only do cartoons show how life is portrayed using drawing as the vehicle, they allow us (as historians and students) to see how people viewed life at that moment in time. In reality, many political cartoons are the predecessor to the modern photograph.
With their original intent to be used as vehicles of understanding for uneducated people(s), political cartoons have survived throughout the years. Now, more so than ever, political cartoons can still be seen in the first section of almost every newspaper or magazine. Many of the issues that they tackle range from the “death tax” to even the political style of a candidate. With the 2008 election in our wake, the number of political cartoons that surfaced was expediential. It is times like the election season that political cartoons make their rise. While cartoons started originally in political origins, the necessarily are not always political in substance. Many times they end up social issues affecting a specific group of individuals.

Body

“I don’t care what they print about me, most of my constituents can’t read anyway—but them damn pictures!”

~Boss Tweed

Literacy is usually the first step to success in any content area, but what is the definition of literacy? Is literacy being able to read pages one through ten in the textbook? Is it being able to read the daily newspaper cover to cover? Or is it simply being a well rounded individual able to read a wide assortment of printed material? In the social studies content area, literacy is not only about being able to read the generic textbook for homework, or reading and interoperating a newspaper article. It is actually much more in depth. Social Studies, as a content area, just like math or science has specific types of literacy tailored to its own instruction. The textbook is
not the only source social studies teachers have at their disposal, they also have other
types of materials such as graphs, charts, primary documents, and political cartoons.
Political cartoons particularly play a vital role in the execution of an effective social
studies lesson. "The visual presentation of ideas and concepts can overcome the
students’ reluctance to read or listen to seemingly abstract lectures." Each piece that
is used in the content area is a framework that supports the details learned in lecture.
"Cartooning is an art form and a powerful visual means of dealing with historical,
political, economic, or social issues." If students are able to interpret them they are
an effective tool. Narrowed down, political cartoons are another tool that teachers can
use to effectively reinforce a lesson and teach literacy all at once.

Political cartoons, just as any other form of literacy play a vital role in our
everyday lives. In the daily
newspaper, there is at least one,
if not two cartoons "discussing"
a major issue that is transpiring
either at a local or broader level.
Without using words, sometimes
these political cartoons can have
a major impact on the way
American’s think about a certain
issue. "...the effectiveness of the
political cartoon still have a great deal of validity today, especially for a generation of students weaned on television.⁴ It's important to note that America's earliest cartoons were political in nature. The first cartoon appeared in Benjamin Franklin's newspaper, *The Pennsylvania Gazette*, on May 9, 1754. Its intention was to provoke American thought and get them to stabilize control of the colonial governments. As with general reading, political cartoons also need a pre, during, and post phase of assessment. One crucial aspect that political cartoons rely on is prior knowledge. Without prior knowledge, students will only be able to comprehend a small faction of what is being presented to them. But, as long as they are able to comprehend small parts, the whole picture should be able to fit together much more clearly.

The “pre” reading phase is the first phase and can be the most crucial especially with political cartoons. During the “pre” reading phase, students need to look at the picture holistically. They need to note dates, times, general themes that are obvious, people, and also places. Based on the cartoon above, students could pull out some basic information such as:

- A man is asking for something;
- People are standing in a long line;
- There looks to be a timeline at the top of the picture;
- A car is driving “away” from the read;
- There seems to be a side profile of someone.
Now that the student has completed this, it would be time to move onto the “during” reading phase.

When a student enters the “during” reading phase with a political cartoon, he/she must now take what they pulled from the “pre” reading phase and apply it more specifically. The most efficient way to analyze a political cartoon on a more specific basis is to divide it into four equal quadrants. By doing this, the student can specifically focus on each quadrant individually and pull out relevant information. When students do this, they should take notes in the margins next to each quadrant. This will help them later on in the “post” reading phase.

Off to the left, you will notice that the political cartoon from before has now been minimized into the first quadrant. Now, students can take a specific look at the smaller details that they now need to decode to see the “bigger” picture. In this first quadrant, we can see that there is a line of men. Based on the yellow sign and the direction they are all standing, they are waiting for free soup. Also, there is a sign noting that the building they are standing next to is up for rent. This could indicate to the students that the building was at once occupied, but due to economic conditions, the previous tenants were evicted. Above the picture of the men, a small fact is noting that “America’s falling economy takes the job of one of every four workers in the early 1930’s.” Below the picture, the small crab tells the reader that the unemployment in 1933 was roughly 15 million individuals.
Depending on the political cartoon, some quadrants may not be as active as others, and the student will realize that very quickly when they are analyzing them.

The second quadrant on the other hand shows us a little more detail than the first. Here, students can now see that a man is asking another man for a “dime”. The man who refuses to give up the dime notes that he cannot see how things will get much worse. At the bottom of the quadrant, students will also be able to notice the thought bubble that talks about the giant dust storms. Hopefully, students will now be forming some thoughts in their heads on what is transpiring in the cartoon.

For this cartoon, the third quadrant should be one of the most informative out of the four. Students should notice three main details in this quadrant. Firstly, two cars driving away from the reader with valuables and people inside. Secondly, a sign on one car stating “California or bust”. The reading on both the top and bottom of the frame should now be able to allow students to start drawing some large conclusions about the Dust Bowl. Also, the text on the bottom shows students how
they can make a connection between ELA and Social Studies. John Steinbeck’s “The Grapes of Wrath” will allow them to dig into this topic much deeper with much more connection to characters. When students are going back to make a final conclusion, this quadrant should be one of the most helpful with its high amount of detail. Many of the conclusions that the students will need to make should be derived off of this quadrant. As stated before, this is not the same with all political cartoons. In some cartoons each quadrant could be very helpful, or no such help at all.

Moving to the fourth and final quadrants, students should first notice the details of the man. Firstly, he looks like an older man, with white hair. Secondly, he looks as if he is grinning, making it seem like he knows how to fix the problems at hand. It also shows his confidence (making him a “larger than life” character). Thirdly, the name FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT is printed in bold golden letters.

Now that the students have completed both the “pre” and “during” reading phases, it is time for them to enter the final stage, “post” reading. In “post” reading with a political cartoon, students should be able to take everything that they gained in the other two phases and draw some general conclusions about the cartoon. Based on the information that the students pulled from the selected cartoon, along with a good variety of background knowledge, students should have come to these conclusions. Firstly, the time period of the cartoon is pre World War II, specifically during the Great Depression, based solely on the facts of
FDR being in the cartoon, and unemployed citizens standing in a soup line. Secondly, the cartoon is a time line showing that conditions in America seemed to get worse before they were going to be better. Thirdly, it ties Social Studies and ELA together. For example, using “The Grapes of Wrath”, students would be able to tie in much more outside information.

Another “post” reading strategy that can be used would be creating a set of questions for students to answer after they have analyzed the cartoon. These questions would be pulling in outside information, while relating it to what they just have uncovered. Such questions could include:

- What is the message of the cartoon and how could it be expressed in an editorial?
- What do you think the effectiveness was on the general population?
- What do you think will happen next? In either words or drawings, create the next page of this document.

Still using the cartoon from the beginning as an example, there is another fact on how cartoons can be used in the classroom as literacy tools. Students may now understand how hard the Depression hit Americans. They may also understand how the government (especially FDR and his administration) would help elevate some of the economic hardships and raise American morale. All of the facts that students may gain from this cartoon could easily be found in any good textbook. But, literacy competency levels may hinder students from reading the textbook on a regular basis to reinforce lectures. Reading or analyzing a cartoon may be easier for students to pull on prior knowledge.
Cartoons in social studies do not only play a vital role in lecture reinforcement, but they also are used in large amounts on standardized testing. When there are students who do not understand how to interpret the cartoons in class, when they see them on exams, they can and will be treated as a foreign language by them. New York State Regents exams alone, use political cartoons in both their multiple choice and document based questions (DBQ’s).

While looking at cartoons can help students decipher the past, creating cartoons can allow students to dissect present day occurrences along with reaffirming class based instruction. While creating their own cartoons, students are able to tap their imaginations and allow third parties to see how they would interpret events as they were unveiled. When students are able to use creativity mixed with historical facts, they are then able to expand boundaries outside of the classroom.

The following is a small two day lesson compiled to teach students how to critically analyze political cartoons:

Day 1: Introduction to Political Cartoons-

On Day one, students were given a brief history of political cartooning within the United States. Before looking at any cartoons, students were shown the five areas cartoonists try to encompass when drawing. Those areas include:

- **Labeling**: Cartoonists label many things to make their bigger picture clearer.
- **Symbolism**: Cartoonists use symbols to stand for larger concepts or ideas.
Exaggeration: Cartoonists sometimes exaggerate physical characteristics to emphasize a point.

Analogy: A comparison between two unlike things.

Irony: Difference between the way things are and the way they should be.\(^5\)

Once the definitions were explained to the class, the class was asked to label a political cartoon with the five different vocabulary words listed above.\(^{(\text{Appendix H})}\)

Once this was done, the students were shown Benjamin Franklins' "Join or Die" cartoon from his newspaper, The Pennsylvania Gazette, on May 9, 1754. The message portrayed within the cartoon tells the colonists to unite against tyranny and oppression. Using this simple picture, the students are able to see how colonists' opinions were swayed in the early 18\(^{\text{th}}\) Century. In a time of illiteracy, pictures were some of the only ways of communication that newspapers could use to pull in crowds. During the early formation of the nation, only upper middle, and the land owning elite were privileged enough to read. (Note- students had basic background information on the Albany Plan of Union along with the American Revolution.) As time progressed, I showed the students more and more political cartoons starting in the mid-eighteenth century finishing up with current events that were affecting them at that moment in time.

As the day progressed, students were able to see how cartoons also progressed through times. Touching on some of the most crucial periods in American history, students were able to see how these views on certain situations were portrayed.
through a cartoonists' pen. At the end of the class, I asked students to reflect on some of the things that they saw within each cartoon. I also asked them to see if they saw a common theme throughout all of the cartoons. Many of the answers the students gave varied in depth and substance. (Please see appendix B for an abbreviated list of cartoons used)

On the second day, I allowed the students to analyze random cartoons using the pre, during, and post phases of reading described in the beginning of this research. The cartoons that were selected were done at random and represented all periods of American history. When they analyzed the cartoons into separate quadrants, I asked them to describe what was happening in each quadrant. Once they did this, they were asked to compile a list of what was happening in the picture. From their conclusions, the students finally explained the cartoon as a “whole” picture. (Appendix B includes pictures that were also used for this activity.)

On the third and final day of the lesson, students were asked to construct their own political cartoon. When creating their cartoon, they were asked to make sure they had all of the sections a political cartoon would encompass. Those sections would include those mentioned the first day (Labeling, Exaggeration, Symbolism, Irony, and Analogy.) Students were allowed to use any time period that had already been used in classroom lessons. This meant that students were able to use any information from the first day of school to the present.
Title: Analyzing a Political Cartoon

Objectives:
- Students will be able to fill make a general statement in regards to a political cartoon after summary.
- Students will be able to explain how break down a political cartoon for analysis.
- Students will be able to analyze a political cartoon on their own.
- Students will be able to create their own political cartoon based on an issue that is affecting them today.

Purpose:

Political cartoons particularly play a vital role in the execution of an effective social studies lesson. Each piece that is used in the content area is a framework that supports the details learned in lecture.

Anticipatory Set:
- Students will use prior knowledge from outside sources to understand how the Dust Bowl and Great Depression simultaneously affected the United States.
- Students will take a few minutes to themselves and write down some key points of both the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl.

Body of Lesson:

Teacher: Before we begin today I would like to collect your RAFT’s from yesterday.

*Teacher will collect RAFT’s from students*

Teacher: Good Morning Students. To start off, what are some major shows that are on TV in cartoon form?

*Teacher will take responses from students to see what they know.*

Teacher: Now, cartoons, what other types of cartoons are out there?

*Teacher will take responses from students* *Teacher will open the daily paper to show the students a political cartoon*

Teacher: Political cartoons, just as any other form of literacy play a vital role in our everyday lives. In the daily newspaper, there is at least one, if not two cartoons
“discussing” a major issue that is transpiring either at a local or broader level. Without using words, sometimes these political cartoons can have a major impact on the way American’s think about a certain issue.

*Teacher will ask students what other places they see political cartoons*

Teacher: Now, to understand a political cartoon fully, you must understand all of its parts. Today we will be examining political cartoons in small fractions to draw larger conclusions about the picture. To do this, we will be using both the Dust Bowl and Great Depression as our tools.

* The teacher will place the following overhead on the projector.*

*Teacher will also hand out copies of the cartoon to the students*

![Figure 20](image)

Teacher: The “pre” reading phase is the first phase and can be the most crucial especially with political cartoons. During the “pre” reading phase, you need to look at the picture holistically. Or look at the “big picture.” You need to note dates, times, general themes that are obvious, people, and also places. Based on the cartoon above, what information can you pull out? Please write this on the side of your handout.

*Teacher will take responses from students. Anything that they can come up with will be used* Responses the Teacher will be looking for are listed below:

- White people
- Sick man
- Doctors
- A night stand with a lot of different medicines on it
• 1 larger "bottle" and many other smaller ones
• The one man is saying something to the person in the dress

*Teacher pauses while the students complete the above stated task*

Teacher: Now, the first step is to divide the picture into four quadrants.

*Teacher divides the sheet into four quadrants on the overhead*

Teacher: When you enter the "during" reading phase with a political cartoon, you must now take what they pulled from the "pre" reading phase and apply it more specifically. The most efficient way to analyze a political cartoon on a more specific basis is to divide it into four equal quadrants. By doing this, you can specifically focus on each quadrant individually and pull out relevant information. When you do this, you should take notes in the margins next to each quadrant. This will help you later on in the "post" reading phase. Now that we have done this, let's cover up the other sections other than the lower right and examine it:

*Teacher covers up other sections with paper only revealing top left section.*
Teacher: Now, let’s write down what we think are some more specific details of this section. Remember to write the notes in the margins next to the sections:
*Teacher will take responses from students*
*Teacher will be looking for the following responses in the end.*

- An old man with a beard
- He looks “sick”
- A hat with “FDR” on it

Teacher: Good, those are some well thought out answers. Now let’s move over to the next section. Remember to move clockwise around the cartoon.

Teacher: Now, let’s write down what we think are some more specific details of this section. Remember to write the notes in the margins next to the sections:
*Teacher will take responses from students*
*Teacher will be looking for the following responses in the end.*

- The doctor is saying something to the person in the dress
- The text bubble states “of course, we may have to change remedies if we don’t get results.”
- The person in the dress seems like they are listening closely to the doctor
- There is something written on the doctors bag

Teacher: Good, those are some well thought out answers. Now let’s move onto the next section. Remember to move clockwise around the cartoon.
Teacher: Now, let's write down what we think are some more specific details of this section. Remember to write the notes in the margins next to the sections:
*Teacher will take responses from students*
*Teacher will be looking for the following responses in the end.*
- The person's dress says "Congress"
- The doctor's bag says "New Deal Remedies"
- The sick person's pajamas are stars, while his socks are stripes

Teacher: Good, those are some well thought out answers. Now let's move onto the next section. Remember to move clockwise around the cartoon.

Teacher: Now, let's write down what we think are some more specific details of this section. Remember to write the notes in the margins next to the sections:
*Teacher will take responses from students*
*Teacher will be looking for the following responses in the end.*
- The sick man's hands are folded
- We again can see stars on his pajamas

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• The biggest bottle says “NRA”
• The smaller bottles are:
  o CWA
  o AAA
  o CCC
  o WPA
  o FACA
  o FDIC
  o EHC
  o NCC

Teacher: Good, those are some well thought out answers. Now that we have moved all the way around the cartoon, it is time to make some general statements. Now that you have completed both the “pre” and “during” reading phases, it is time for you to enter the final stage, “post” reading. In “post” reading with a political cartoon, you should be able to take everything that you gained in the other two phases and draw some general conclusions about the cartoon. Based on the information that you pulled from the selected cartoon, along with a good variety of background knowledge, you should have come to what conclusions?

*Teacher will also uncover original cartoon and ask students to do the same*

*Teacher will take student guided responses*

• The “sick man” is Uncle Sam (a representation of America)
• The “Doctor” is Franklin Roosevelt
• The remedies he is applying to “America” is “The New Deal”
• The time period is likely is the mid to early 1930’s
• All of the remedies FDR is administering to America are part of his New Deal, with the National Recovery Act being the largest.
Guided Practice:
Teacher: Good, now that you have gotten the hang of this I'm going to ask you how to go about analyzing a political cartoon. With your responses we will complete this together.

*The cartoon would be as follows*

*Teacher will have students guide him through the completion of the process.*

Teacher: Excellent. Now on your own, for homework I would like you to complete the following:

1. Find a political cartoon either on the internet or in the daily paper (remember to cite your sources).
2. Complete the steps we just followed in class.
3. Answer the following questions:
   a. What is the time period?
   b. What side is being represented?
   c. What is the general theme/idea of the cartoon?
   d. Who is being represented in the cartoon/ who are the "characters?"
4. Write a 1-2 paragraph (max) essay answering the above stated questions.
5. Also, add if you liked the message or not.
6. Create a political cartoon on an issue that is affecting you today.
   Please use the rubric attached to see how it will be graded. (Please turn
Conclusion

Political cartoons are some of the most interesting pieces of literature that a social studies teacher has available. They serve as primary documents, and a different method of learning. Rather than words, a cartoonist uses pictures and symbols to make his or her point. As long as a student is able to interpret the cartoon, it is another tool in the “bag of tricks” for teachers to use along with traditional reading. Social Studies as a content area, just like math or science has specific types of literacy tailored to its own instruction. Political cartoons particularly play a vital role in the execution of an effective social studies lesson. In some instances they can serve as a primary source document, such as a letter or photograph. “Photographs can show us what happened, but it takes a good political cartoon to show us why it happened.”

Each piece that is used in the content area is a framework that supports the details learned in lecture. If students are able to interpret them they are an effective tool. Future educators need to be ready to teach their specified content as well as critical skills including reading, writing, and listening. If we want our students to understand the basics of our content areas, we need to make sure that they are able to comprehend the basics of the English language. If students are not able to do this,
learning a specific content area can become very difficult. By incorporating new tactics into our lesson plans, we will be able to meet the needs of every student’s specific learning style.
The following is a composition of lessons directly tied to both the Dust Bowl and Great Depression. The small unit is broken down as follows:

Lesson 1: Bountiful Days Turn Into Stormy Depression

Lesson 2: Brighter Days are only “One click Away”

Lesson 3: How the CCC and WPA affected our area!
Lesson Title:

Bountiful Days Turn Into Stormy Depression

NYS Curriculum Addressed:

II. The Great Depression
   D. Effects on work, family, and community
      3. The threat of possible job loss was a psychological strain on those who were employed
      7. The Dust Bowl and the Okies, human modification of the physical environment
   E. The cultural environment during the Great Depression

NYS Standards Met:

(1) History of the United States and New York: use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in the history of the United States and New York.

(3) Geography: use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of the geography of the interdependent world in which we live—local, national, and global—including the distribution of people, places, and environments over the Earth’s surface.

(4) Economics: use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of how the United States and other societies develop economic systems and associated institutions to allocate scarce resources, how major decision-making units function in the U.S. and other national economies, and how an economy solves the scarcity problem through market and nonmarket mechanisms.

NCSS Standards Met:

1. Culture: Students will be able to see how farming culture was before, during, and after the Dust Bowl. Seeing these changes, students will be able to draw larger connections to today's society and how events like this are avoidable.

2. Time, Continuity, and Change: Students will see how farmers ignored warnings and continued to harvest crops in the mid-west. They will also be able to see how careless farming practices lead to the demise of the once bountiful heartland.
8. Science, Technology, and Society: Students will be able to see how the roles of science and technology changed the shape of the American Great Plains. They will also see how farming practices evolved and made it more available to all people.

9. Global Connections: Students will be able to see how both the Great Depression and Dust Bowl made global impacts in regards to economics.

Film Information: (Bibliographic)

*Surviving the Dust Bowl.* Produced by The American Experience. 55 minutes.

Since the creation of this lesson, more film material has been produced. The following is a description from the History Channel website:

“They could be forgiven for thinking the end of the world had come. No-one had ever experienced anything like it: a rolling cloud of black dust that blocked the sun, bringing night at noon and coating everything in noxious grime.

What was it like to live through the greatest environmental disaster of the 20th century? With stunning immediacy, *BLACK BLIZZARD* transports you to the bleak period of U.S. history from 1930-1940 when, vulnerable after years of drought and poor farming techniques, America's heartland was ravaged by a weather phenomenon that became known as a "black blizzard."

HISTORY’s renowned team of scientists and special effects experts recreate, for the first time on television, the *BLACK BLIZZARDS* in amazingly realistic detail. See how they form, what they're made of, and how they affect people's health, clothing, food and environment.

Woven into the dramatic recreations and analysis are evocative first-person accounts, fascinating archival still and film images, illuminating CGI, and commentary from historians, climatologists, medical doctors, physicists and other experts.”
Materials:
1. *Surviving the Dust Bowl*, DVD
2. Film Guide (*Appendix A*)
3. Film Map & Questions (*Appendix B*)
4. Teachers Guide, provided by American Experience (*Appendix C*)

Objectives: (Students will be able to...)
1. locate the following locations on a map:
   a. Texas
   b. Colorado
   c. Oklahoma
   d. New Mexico
   e. California
   f. Illinois
   g. Washington DC.
   h. Areas hardest hit by the Dust Bowl
2. relate ideas of the 17th and 18th Centuries to their own lives
3. compare the 17th and 18th Centuries in the following ways:
   a. Religion
   b. Culture
4. produce a paragraph summarizing life before the Dust Bowl
5. produce a paragraph summarizing life during the Dust Bowl
6. produce a paragraph summarizing life after the Dust Bowl
Anticipatory Set: By watching this film, students will be able to gain an insight into many of the events transpiring during the American Dust Bowl. By understanding the events of this period, students will be able to more thoroughly understand both the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression. This film will be used on the first day of the lesson to give students an account of events leading up to, during, and following the Dust Bowl.

Questions:

I. As students watch the film, they will be able to answer the following questions: (learning level questions) Section “A” of the viewing guide (Appendix A)

II. After watching and thinking about the film, students will be able to answer the following questions: (mastery level questions) Section “B” of the viewing guide (Appendix A)

III. Closure: (what conclusions can students draw from the film) Section “C” of the viewing guide (Appendix A)
Lesson Title:
Brighter Days are only “One click Away”

Part I: Brainstorming and planning the lesson

Bibliography of Current Research:
- [http://www.wtamu.edu/library/govt/dustbowl.shtml](http://www.wtamu.edu/library/govt/dustbowl.shtml)
- [http://www.livinghistoryfarm.org/farminginthe30s/water_02.html](http://www.livinghistoryfarm.org/farminginthe30s/water_02.html)
- [http://memory.loc.gov/learn/features/timeline/depwwii/dustbowl/dustbowl.html](http://memory.loc.gov/learn/features/timeline/depwwii/dustbowl/dustbowl.html)
- [http://memory.loc.gov/learn/features/timeline/depwwii/dustbowl/camps.html](http://memory.loc.gov/learn/features/timeline/depwwii/dustbowl/camps.html)
- [http://drought.unl.edu/whatis/dustbowl.htm#lessons](http://drought.unl.edu/whatis/dustbowl.htm#lessons)

NYS Curriculum Addressed:

II. The Great Depression
   D. Effects on work, family, and community
      3. The threat of possible job loss was a psychological strain on those who were employed
      7. The Dust Bowl and the Okies, human modification of the physical environment
   E. The cultural environment during the Great Depression

NYS Standards Met:

(1) **History of the United States and New York:** use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in the history of the United States and New York.

(3) **Geography:** use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of the geography of the interdependent world in which we live—local, national, and global—including the distribution of people, places, and environments over the Earth’s surface.

(4) **Economics:** use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of how the United States and other societies develop economic systems and associated institutions to allocate scarce resources, how major decision-making units function in the U.S. and other national economies, and how an economy solves the scarcity problem through market and nonmarket mechanisms.
NCSS Standards Met:

1. Culture: Students will be able to see how farming culture was before, during, and after the Dust Bowl. Seeing these changes, students will be able to draw larger connections to today’s society and how events like this are avoidable.

2. Time, Continuity, and Change: Students will see how farmers ignored warnings and continued to harvest crops in the mid-west. They will also be able to see how careless farming practices lead to the demise of the once bountiful heartland.

8. Science, Technology, and Society: Students will be able to see how the roles of science and technology changed the shape of the American Great Plains. They will also see how farming practices evolved and made it more available to all people.

9. Global Connections: Students will be able to see how both the Great Depression and Dust Bowl made global impacts in regards to economics.

Objectives: (Students will be able to...)
1. log onto the Internet
2. identify websites and move between websites using links
3. navigate websites using the locator bars, forward/back buttons, etc.
4. locate copyright information and explain its importance
5. tell if a site is a commercial or non-commercial site using URL clues
6. comprehend why differentiating between commercial and non-commercial sites is important for judging website reliability
7. explain why copyrights are important to researchers
8. relate in their own words the meaning of the “focus question”
9. analyze information on websites for reliability and usefulness
10. synthesize information from a number of websites in order to form a hypothesis for addressing the prompt (focus question)
11. evaluate and weigh information in order to construct a coherent response to the academic prompt, either orally or in writing

Dimensions of Learning Planning Template:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classroom Climate &amp; Tasks</th>
<th>Declarative</th>
<th>Procedural</th>
<th>Activity to Extend and Refine</th>
<th>Activity to Use Knowledge Meaningfully</th>
<th>Habits of Mind</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are there any special considerations around</td>
<td>What declarative knowledge will this lesson</td>
<td>What procedural knowledge will this</td>
<td>The activity of will help students</td>
<td>Students will be using knowledge meaningfully when they</td>
<td>For this lesson my goal related to</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Example: Classroom Climate & Tasks

Because all of my students may/may not have easy access to the internet, there will be a short guided practice to familiarize themselves with basic concepts. Because they also may not be familiar with current research skills, I will guide them through the basic frameworks of such.

**Students will be able to:**
- log onto the Internet
- identify websites and move between websites using links
- navigate websites using the locator bars, forward/back buttons, etc.
- locate copyright information and explain its importance
- tell if a site is a commercial or non-commercial site using URL clues
- comprehend why differentiating between commercial and non-commercial sites is important for judging website reliability
- explain why copyrights are important to researchers
- relate in their own words the meaning of the “focus question”
- analyze information on websites for reliability and usefulness
- synthesize information from a number of websites in order to form a hypothesis for addressing the prompt (focus question)
- evaluate and weigh information in order to construct a coherent response to the academic prompt, either orally or in writing

This lesson will be made accessible for all of the students by offering...
- Ample time
- Proximity of teacher for questions
- A group guided question/answer period
- Any adaptations that will need to be made for students with disabilities in the classroom

**Declarative knowledge: Facts, concepts, and principles**

How long the Dust Bowl lasted
Key players in the Dust Bowl
Outcomes of the Dust Bowl
What areas were affected the hardest by the Dust Bowl?
Did the Dust Bowl affect areas outside of the mid-west
What was the NRA?
Who were some of the key players in the mid-west reconstruction?
Procedural Knowledge: Skills and processes

Navigating the internet
Compiling data into a graphic organizer
Reading and interpreting documents

For this lesson students will use the following thinking skills and processes to extend and refine knowledge.

Thinking skills and processes:

- Comparing
- Classifying
- Inducing
- Deducing
- Analyzing errors
- Constructing support
- Abstracting
- Analyzing perspectives

Comparing: Students will compare areas hardest hit by the Dust Bowl to those not as hard hit. They will also analyze how the Great Depression played in this factor.

Analyzing perspectives: Students will compare/contrast stories of Dust Bowl survivors

Students will be using knowledge meaningfully with the following processes.

Meaningful-use tasks:

- Decision making
- Investigation
- Experimental inquiry
- Problem solving
- Invention

Investigation: Students will be investigating events in America that made the Dust Bowl even a harder time.

Experimental inquiry: Students will compose hypothesis’ on why/how the Dust Bowl affected some areas harder than others.
Habits of Mind

Students will be able to analyze information from a variety of websites and draw conclusions from them.
Students will be able to restrain the impulse to draw conclusions before checking all of the available data.
Students will be encouraged to ask and answer their own questions about this time period.

Part II: Getting specific about the 1, 2, 3’s of the class

Input/necessary equipment:

- Computer Lab access
- Internet access
- Overhead projector
- Viewing screen linked to teachers computer, so that students can follow along both in audio and visual form
- Class set of...
  - K-W-L Worksheet (Appendix D)
  - Guided Worksheet (Appendix E)
  - 1 set of overheads for both

Procedures:

Day 1:

- When students first walk in the door, the teacher will hand out blank K-W-L charts. Students will have the first five minutes of class to complete the first two columns of the chart.
- Upon completion of the chart, the teacher will go over the chart with the students and help them fill in missing pieces.
- The teacher will begin the actual lesson with the basics of internet usage.
- The teacher will then guide the students to a website to help them further their understanding of plagiarism and internet copyrights.
- The teacher will attempt to initiate discussions throughout the lectures to make sure the students understand and also to see if they have any questions.
- After the short lecture the teacher will hand out a guided worksheet that will allow the students to travel to different sites and explore the possibilities of the internet. The students will also be doing research on the current unit.
- Throughout the entire lesson, the teacher will navigate around the room and answer student’s questions.
• Minus the time of small lecture, the majority of the period will be given to the students.

Day 2 (If needed):
• First 10-15 mins of class will be devoted to filling in the last column of the K-W-L chart handed out in the previous class. The teacher will also lead a short guided discussion with the students on what was accomplished.

Getting the Lesson started:

To start the lesson and bring the students’ mind from the hallway I will have them complete a “ticket-in” activity to test knowledge from the previous lessons. Once that is completed I will hand out a K-W-L on Internet research and have the students complete as much of the information as possible.

What teaching materials (viewing guides, film clips, documents, etc) will this lesson require in order to maximize the possibility for students being able to complete the lesson?

• K-W-L
• “Ticket-in” Activity
• Guided Dust Bowl/Depression worksheet

What directions and examples will you show your students in order to help them feel confident that they can do the lesson’s activities?

I will go through the first site with the students. Most, if not all of the activity is student driven. Many of the questions are opinion based, with no right or wrong answer.

Do I need to repeat this step for each activity?

YES!

When I give directions, what can I do to make sure my students understand what they need to in order to complete the activities?

Once I walk through the first site with the students, I will ask them to repeat the directions back to me for a check of understanding. The activities are pretty much straightforward.

1) Go to the pre-selected website
2) Answer some of the questions on the guided sheet
3) Make a conclusion about the site
I will also notify students that I will be moving about the computer lab to assist them with any questions that may arise.

**Focus Question:**
How did the Great Depression directly affect the Dust Bowl?

**Activity One:**
- The first half of the activity will be focused on how to access the internet, internet safety, and proper internet etiquette.
- The first activity will be focused on copyright/plagiarism information. I will walk students through the steps of finding out whether or not a site is legitimate for using in research. I will also make connections outside of the internet (i.e. Movies, Music, Magazines, and Newspapers.)

The teacher will be asking guided questions for the students to respond to. I will also have them go to a pre-selected site and look over the copyright information that is laid out there.

Student will follow along with the teacher. The first activity will be done by both parties.

This activity allows students to gain a better understanding of reliable research information. It will allow them to judge the reliability of some of the pre-selected websites that I have chosen for them. Hopefully, this will lead to future understanding of what is "right" and what is "wrong" in the ever-expanding cyber world.

**Activity Two:**

Activity two is a combination of activities 2-6 on their worksheets. I have pre-chosen 5 websites for the students to explore/answer questions on. By following along with the websites that I have picked out, hopefully students will be able to both gain insight into the unit along with methods of research.

The teacher will be moving around the room answering questions and guiding students from website to website.

Students will be guided by the worksheet that was handed out to them. The overall outcome should be a gain in knowledge of how to move throughout the internet with a much more scholarly philosophy.

**Closure:**
Students will have a homework assignment in which they need to find a legitimate/scholarly website that has historical background. They will be made to supply the URL address, while also citing who publishes the site.
Lesson Title:
How the CCC and WPA affected our area!

Part I: Brainstorming and planning the lesson

Location of Lesson:
- School Classroom
- School Auditorium
- Gilbert Lake Park-CCC Museum (Directions/Information are in Appendix I)

NYS Curriculum Addressed:
II. The Great Depression
   D. Effects on work, family, and community
      3. The threat of possible job loss was a psychological strain on those
         who were employed
      7. The Dust Bowl and the Okies, human modification of the
         physical environment
   E. The cultural environment during the Great Depression

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demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and
turning points in the history of the United States and New York.

(3) Geography: use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding
of the geography of the interdependent world in which we live—local, national, and
global—including the distribution of people, places, and environments over the
Earth’s surface.

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associated institutions to allocate scarce resources, how major decision-making units
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NCSS Standards Met:
1. Culture: Students will be able to see how farming culture was before, during, and
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9. Global Connections: Students will be able to see how both the Great Depression and Dust Bowl made global impacts in regards to economics.

Sources:
http://www.stateparks.com/hamlin_beach.html
http://www.nyscccmuseum.com/
http://www.nyscccmuseum.com/ppresent.html

Objectives: Students will be able to . . .
- Explain what they learned during the trip
- Relate what they learned with what has already been explained in class
- Explain how the area would look like if these parks/buildings were never created.
- Explain how people today (2009) are still enjoying projects from the 1930's
- Produce a letter to both the School Board and NY State Department of parks.
- Assess the validity of the field trip using information gathered during the day

Activities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are there any special considerations around classroom climate of tasks associated with this lesson?</td>
<td>What declarative knowledge will this lesson teach?</td>
<td>What procedural knowledge will this lesson teach?</td>
<td>The activity of _____ will help students extend and refine knowledge by utilizing the reasoning process of ________</td>
<td>Students will be using knowledge meaningfully when they ______ using the reasoning process of ________</td>
<td>For this lesson my goal related to habits of mind is for students to use creative thinking by ______.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example:
The students will be lectured the class before the day of the field trip by both myself and an administrator on how to act in a public place. The fact of "representing our school" will be reinforced numerous times between letting the students know of the trip and all the way to the point of when we enter the museum. Students will also receive small reminders throughout the day by parents, teachers, and administrators.

**Classroom Climate & Tasks**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Declarative</th>
<th>Procedural</th>
<th>Extend &amp; Refine</th>
<th>Use Meaningfully</th>
<th>Habits of Mind</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Declarative knowledge for this lesson includes:</td>
<td>Because we will be writing to our local school board and museum officials, letter writing skills and social procedures will be reviewed and used.</td>
<td>Students will answer questions, create hypotheses, and learn about different types of research. Students will also be able to deal with many primary source documents and materials while they are exploring the museum whether it is in a group or on their own.</td>
<td>Students will gather information/clues from around the park and be made to construct logical conclusions from the evidence that they acquire. They will use the reasoning processes of investigation and decision making</td>
<td>Goals related to this lesson: Students will be reminded to keep an open mind, restrain impulsive choices, and have fun making investigative decisions. For creative thinking the investigation activity will allow students to make hypotheses and study different conclusions of the world around them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific method, types of research, well known scientists of the period in history that we are studying.</td>
<td>Strategies: Graphic organizer</td>
<td>Written steps to follow</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Part II: Getting specific about the 1, 2, 3's of the class**

**Input/necessary equipment:**

- Graphic Organizer
- Permission Slips ([Appendix N](#))
- Copies of CCC pictures ([Appendix F & G](#))
- Work for those who can not attend the trip
- Pictures of Location ([Appendix I](#))
- Behavior Contract ([Appendix J](#))
- Absent Student Work ([Appendix K](#))
- Extra Assignment(Questions to Ask at an Historical Site) -If Time is Available- ([Appendix L](#))
- Post Trip Homework Assignment ([Appendix O](#))
“10 Questions to Ask at an Historical Site” – Will be used throughout entire Unit- (Appendix P)

- Overhead projector (In Auditorium)
  - Transparencies (Appendix M)
  - Overhead Markers
  - White screen

Procedures:

Pre-Trip Tasks:
1. Organize/gain approval of trip with School Board/Administration
2. Call Department of Parks to request date and plan activities:
   a. Travel there to go through program before students do
3. Organize Busing with Transportation Dept.
4. Talk to the other grade level teachers and make sure the assigned date is suitable. Also, show them the trip materials and see if they could make a assignment out of it also. *Stress to Science Dept./English*
5. Organize “Brown-Bag” Lunches with food services.
6. Create/send-out permission slips to parents/guardians
7. Collect $5 from each student attending trip
8. Organize work for those who can not go based on a certain criteria:
   a. Behavioral problems
   b. Permission slip was not returned
   c. Other circumstances that may arise

Day 1:
1. Teacher will spend the last half the assigned periods talking about/answering questions in regards to the following day’s field trip.
2. All of the lessons for the unit will build up to this field trip.
3. This will also be the last day students can turn in permission slips. They would have had well over a week from this point to complete that assignment. Each student also owed $5. This would also be due today.

Day 2 (Day of Trip):
1. Teacher will have students meet in the Auditorium to go over general rules and expectations of the day. Students will be asked to bring either a pen or pencil along with them for activities during the day.
2. Prior to this the teacher will have had students broken up into groups. These groups will be the people they ride the bus with and also those who they will take the tour of the museum with.
3. The teacher will have the students complete a “pre” writing assignment. Of things they would like to learn at the park.
4. As soon as the teacher has been informed the buses are ready, they will then have the students calmly walk through the halls and out to the bus loop. The teacher will stress that classes are in session and that the students must remain courteous in the hallways.
5. Once the students have boarded the buses, the time to the park can be spent in whatever manner that they please, as long as it is not a distraction to the bus driver.

6. When the buses have arrived at the park the teacher will go in first and make sure that everything is all set with the park staff/local historians.

7. At this point the teacher will place control of the students in the hands of the park staff/historians. Teachers, parents, and administrators will be on hand to supervise during the activities.

8. When the guided tour is over, the teacher will have set up a closed off area with the park staff for the students to have their lunches. During this time, the students will have roughly 30mins to relax and converse with their peers.

9. After lunch, the teacher will take about 10mins to explain how the rest of the day will go.
   a. Following lunch, the students will break off into their chaperoned groups and explore the park on their own.
   b. At about 1:30pm the chaperones are asked to return with the students to the bus area.
   c. When all of the groups have arrived, the teacher will start loading the students back onto the bus. (1:45pm(ish))
   d. The time in-between loading the buses and arrival back at school will be given to the students to converse quietly with friends.
   e. Given perfect conditions, the buses should arrive back at school by the time it is ready for dismissal. If the group arrives early, the students will be ushered into the auditorium where they will receive a homework assignment due the following class. If the buses do not arrive back in time, the students will be handed the assignment as they disembark the busses.

**Teacher will be taking attendance throughout the whole day when the group is together. The Teacher will also have the chaperones keep track of the people in their groups. At the first sign of trouble chaperones will be asked to get in touch with either a park member or school staff member**

**Students will be asked to sign a “Student Behavior Contract” in correlation with the rules that have been laid for the field trip. Any in fracture of the rules will result in consequences laid down by the administration**

Day 3:

➢ First 15 minutes of class will be devoted to bringing closure to the trip and the activity. We will also go over the assigned writings.

How will you get your lesson started?

When students are settled in the auditorium, the teacher will have an open forum discussion with the students of what is expected out of them at the
museum. The teacher will also have school administrators on hand to re-enforce the concept of representing the school in public. After the formalities have been taken care of, the teacher will place a blank overhead on the projector and have students talk about things that they hope to see/discover today.

What materials (viewing guides, film clips, documents, etc) will this lesson require in order to maximize the possibility for students being able to complete the lesson?

- Map of the park (areas where the students will be limited to) (Enough for total number of students attending, along with teachers, chaperones, and administrators)
- Blank computer paper (Enough for total number of students attending, along with teachers, chaperones, and administrators)
- Whatever material the park staff/historians hand out for the students to use.
- Grade copy of Behavior Contract

What directions and examples will you show your students in order to help them feel confident that they can do the lesson's activities?

- There is no right/wrong answer for the activities that will be performed today!
- The students will be shown that the activities promote self-thinking and coming to their own conclusions based on facts.
- This will hopefully allow students to make broader connections with The Dust Bowl/Great Depression and initiatives taken to help with both.

When I give directions, what can I do to make sure my students understand what they need to in order to complete the activities?

- Students will be asked to repeat any and all directions that are announced by the teacher. Seeing that we will be in a public place and not in the classroom hearing may become difficult for some students. Thus, the teacher will repeat steps many times.

Activity One (Activity with Teacher):

During one of the breakout sessions, the teacher will go through some primary source documents with the students. Primarily being pictures (Appendix F), students will be asked to create captions for them. Once the teacher is done with the pictures, he/she will go back and hear student responses. At this point, the teacher will also give a brief history of the picture (i.e. date, location, how it was used (if it was used, etc...)

When the teacher/students are done explaining the pictures, the teacher will break the students up into smaller groups. Once in their groups, the students will be given one last picture (Appendix G, if there are pictures left over from Appendix F, they will
also be used). Once they have their picture (and materials: paper and markers) the teacher will ask each group to create a story based on what they have learned so far in the unit along with what they see in the picture. Once that is completed, the students will be asked to share their work with the class.

The teacher will be walking from group to group monitoring how each activity is progressing.

How will you bring the lesson to an end?
➢ Students will have a homework assignment in which they summarize the day’s activities.
➢ We will also take 15 minutes of the next class to discuss what we learned and bring closure to the activity/unit. The stories the students created the previous day will serve as their “capstone” projects for the unit.

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2 Mattos, 20.
4 Mattos, 20.
5 Note: This activity is adapted from: [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/learn/features/political_cartoon/cag.html](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/learn/features/political_cartoon/cag.html)
6 Mattos, 21.
Appendix A

Name: ___________________________

Date: ____________

Section: ________

Viewing Guide for Surviving the Dust Bowl

Directions: As you watch the film, please follow along and answer the questions in section A. When the film is over, move onto section B & C and answer those questions. When answering the questions in section B & C try to remember the "bigger picture." When you are done, please place this in your class bin. This will count as one (1) quiz grade. If you do not have enough time to complete this in class, please talk to me before taking it home. Remember to fill out the map on page 7 also. Enjoy the film!

Film Information: (Bibliographic)

Section A:

Introduction (19secs):

1. The Dust Bowl brought:
   a. D________________
   b. D________________
   c. D________________

2. On old maps, the mid-west was labeled as the __________________________

3. Winter Wheat, more specifically ________________ Red Wheat was one of the first products introduced to the plains.

4. ________ was the years of “bad times”

   -PAUSE VIDEO (3mins 49secs)

5. Based on the first man’s story alone, please draw a picture describing his description:
6. When people would spit out dust, it tended to look like

7. _________ was the best year to be a farmer on the southern plains.

8. The healthy sod tended to look like ________________ when it was tilled.

9. In the propaganda film, the word in bold red letters was:

10. The movie made three comparisons on harvested items. Please complete the following:

   a. Watermelons the size of: ________________

   b. Grapes the size of: ________________

   c. Corn so tall, you needed a: ________________

11. During World War I, the government said that _________ would win the war.

12. Tractors came to the fields in ____________.
13. Complete the following:
   a. ___________________________ could till 3 acres of field a day
   b. A Tractor could till ___________________________ acres of field a day

14. The two tractor brands the man listed were:
   a. ___________________________
   b. ___________________________

15. What were "suitcase farmers"?

16. When the Dust started to fly, why did the plains resemble?

17. What were the 4 states that were affected by the Dust Bowl the worst:
   a. ___________________________
   b. ___________________________
   c. ___________________________
   d. ___________________________

18. How did the government offer relief to the farmers on the plains?
19. Why did jack rabbits ravage the plains?

20. What was the significance of April 14th 1935?

21. Take a couple of minutes to describe "Black Sunday"

22. What were some home remedies of "dust phenomena"

23. What was the "Last Man's Club"
24. What was the crow's nest made of on the outskirts of town, why?

25. What did Hugh Bennet say about the Dust Bowl? Who was he?

26. What was the title of the movie produced to help urge politicians to send more relief to the plains?

27. Where did a lot of farmers go if they left their home on the plains?
Section B (Post Viewing Guide):

Finish the statements below:

What surprised me the most was...

An idea that I took from the movie that most directly pertains to my life is...

The most troubling idea was...

The most exciting idea was...
The four (4) most important terms that I learned from the movie were...

Section C:

Using both your own notes and the guided notes, construct a paragraph briefly summarizing The American Dust Bowl. If more room is needed, use the back side of this sheet.

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
Appendix B

Please mark the following locations on the map: Texas, Colorado, Oklahoma, New Mexico, California, Illinois, and Washington DC. When you are done, draw a circle on the hardest hit areas by the Dust Bowl.
Appendix C

Surviving the Dust Bowl

TIME PERIOD:
1925-1936

THEMES

The Dust Bowl: Building techniques and environmental impact. Soil conservation, the Great Depression, the New Deal.

Listed by the premier of effects, people, thousands of people came to the

American experience.

Before Watching:

1. Have students identify the five main regions of the Dust Bowl. Then, ask:
   - How were they similar to today?
   - What were the major environmental impact.
   - What was the population growth?

2. Have students identify the effects of the Dust Bowl. Then, discuss:
   - What was the population growth?
   - What were the major environmental impact.
   - What was the population growth?

After Watching:

1. Have students write a letter to your students or parents in the Dust Bowl:
   - How did you survive?
   - What was your daily life like?

2. Have students create a poster of the Dust Bowl. Then, discuss:
   - How did you survive?
   - What was your daily life like?

3. Have students write a diary entry as one of the following points of view:
   - A farmer who is a member of the "Dust Bowl Club," a farmer who is a child with dust pneumonia,

4. Have students research the following:
   - What was the population growth?
   - What was the environmental impact?

5. Have students create a timeline of the Dust Bowl. Then, discuss:
   - What was the population growth?
   - What was the environmental impact?

6. Have students create a poster of the Dust Bowl. Then, discuss:
   - What was the population growth?
   - What was the environmental impact?

7. Have students research the following:
   - What was the population growth?
   - What was the environmental impact?

8. Have students create a timeline of the Dust Bowl. Then, discuss:
   - What was the population growth?
   - What was the environmental impact?
Appendix D

Research & The Internet:

Internet KWL

What I Know:

What I want to know:

What I learned:
Brighter Days are only “One click Away”

Focus Question: People (particularly farmers) of the early 20th Century set out West with everything they had to look for a better tomorrow. A lot of the news coming into the East (mostly propaganda) promised Farmer’s watermelon harvests the size of small cars. But, a crashing economy in the East along with Mother Nature’s revenge in the plains set their hopes elsewhere. While some farmers left the Great Plains, other stuck it out hoping for a brighter tomorrow:

- How can the internet be used to send people the wrong information?
- How do you know the information that you are getting is accurate?
- How can you check to make sure that it is?
Directions: Move from activity to activity answering the stated questions. This will be collected at the end of the period. Get as much as you can done, but don’t hurry through the activity.

Homework (Due Next Class)- Find a website of historical interest to you. Explain why the site is legitimate, and who publishes the site? Also, please provide the URL address:

.gov - ________________________

.com - ________________________

.org - ________________________

.edu - ________________________

Activity 1:

1) Locate this site on the internet-
   http://www.wtamu.edu/library/govt/dustbowl.shtml
2) Click on "Voice from the Dust Bowl"- Explore the site and write your thoughts in the area below. (Use the back in needed)
3) Is this site legitimate? Explain.
Activity 2:

1) Locate this site on the internet-
   http://www.livinghistoryfarm.org/farminginthe30s/water_02.html
2) Click on 2 of the 5 interviews and explain their stories.
3) Write down 2 new facts that you learned from the interviews
4) Would this site be useful in scholarly research?
Activity 3:

1) Locate this site on the internet:
   http://memory.loc.gov/learn//features/timeline/depwwii/dustbowl/dustbowl.html
2) Click on "Songs of the Okies", in the far right.
3) Draw a picture in the space provided to explain this song

Activity 4:

1) Locate this site on the internet:
   http://memory.loc.gov/learn//features/timeline/depwwii/dustbowl/camps.html
2) Click on “Life in the Camps” in the far right.
3) What are some of your impressions of the pictures? How do they make you feel?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Activity 5:

2) How can this be looked at as a bad example of research information?
3) What aspect makes this site unreliable?

Activity 6:

1) Locate this site on the internet- [http://drought.unl.edu/whatis/dustbowl.htm#lessons](http://drought.unl.edu/whatis/dustbowl.htm#lessons)
2) Based on your findings, what are some of the lessons The Government/Americans learned from the Dust Bowl? What did you learn from the Dust Bowl?
Extra Time Activity: (Answer each question based on your own “mini” research. Please write down whatever information you can find related to the questions. Also, write down the website for future reference)

1) Why do you think that using citations is important in website design/creation?
2) What do you think are some of the crucial/key aspects of the American Dust Bowl?
Appendix H

Exaggeration

Analogy

Irrony

Labeling

Exaggeration

Symbolism

Analogy
Appendix I

Directions & Information for Gilbert Lake/Pictures of Location:

**Driving From:**
350 New Campus Drive
Brockport, NY 14420

**Driving To:**
Gilbert Lake
300 CCC Rd.
Laurens, NY 13796

Contact Number: (607) 432-2114
Appendix J

Student Behavior Contract

I, ___________________________ understand the rules that have been laid down by both the administration of the school and by Mr. O’Connor. Any in fraction of these rules during the field trip to ____________________________ will result in disciplinary actions when we return to school and a failing grade for this assignment. I will also be pulled from any activities that are occurring at the site.

Student Signature: ____________________________

Mr. O’Connor’s Signature: ____________________________

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The following is an activity for you to complete the day of the field trip (unless we have talked). Please hand it into the main office before you leave school. Any assignments handed in after that time will receive no credit. All answers must be submitted on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Locate the site: http://www.nyscccmuseum.com/

2. Explore the site, and when you are done write a one (1) page critique of the museum and the activities it offers. Remember to site specific examples!

3. Find either another web-site that you think would be helpful to either you or your peers as review. Remember 2 things: Check the validity of the site, and keep it to the confines of the Great Depression and Dust Bowl

4. Once you have found another site, write a one page critique of it. Remember to include the address of the site at the top of your paper.
Appendix L

Name: Gilbert Lake CCC Museum

Area/Park Map:

Website: http://www.nyscccmuseum.com/index.html

"10 Questions to Ask at an Historical Site"

1) Q: When did this location become a historic site? (When was the marker or monument put up? Or the house "interpreted"?) How did that time differ from ours? From the time of the event or person commemorated?

A:

2) Q: Who sponsored it? Representing which participant group's point of view? What was their position in social structure when the event occurred? When the site went "up?"

A:

4) Q: Who is the intended audience for the site? What values were they trying to leave for us, today? What does the site ask us to go and do or think about?

A:

6) Q: Who is left out? What points of view go largely unheard? How would the story differ if a different group told it? Another political party? Race? Sex? Class? Religious group?

A:
9) Q: Is the presentation accurate? What actually happened? What historical sources tell of the event, people, or period commemorated at the site?

A:
Appendix M

What we would like to know/understand from the park today:
Appendix N

Dear Parent/Guardian,

As part of a unit on the Great Depression/Dust Bowl I have scheduled a day for the students to explore the workings of the Gilbert Lake CCC Museum. The day will include a guided tour along with some self exploration time in groups. The trip is scheduled for October 31. A brown bag lunch will be provided by the school. The cost of the trip is $5.00. You can send in either a check or money with your child. Please make checks payable to Warren G. Harding High School. If you are interested in chaperoning this exciting event, or have any questions feel free to contact me at anytime.

Thank You,

Mr. O’Connor, Social Studies Department
Warren G. Harding High School
School: 555.3695 ext 56
E-Mail: croconno@brockport.edu

I, __________________________ give my son/daughter permission to attend the field trip to __________________________ on __________________________. I also understand that he/she is responsible for any work he/she will miss in any other classes. I also know that he/she will need no extra transportation to/from school. The itinerary of the trip is in the confines of the scheduled school day.

Signature of Parent/Guardian: __________________________ Date: ____________

Please Check One:
I’ am interested in chaperoning: _____
I am not interested in chaperoning: _____

If Interested- Contact Information
Name:
Phone:
E-Mail:
Appendix O

Name:
Date:
Section:

Now that you have stepped into the shoes of a CCC worker, and explored the wonders that the Gilbert Lake Museum has to offer, I have a few activates for you to complete. Please record all of your answers on a separate sheet of paper. Also, explain all of your answers with proof from the day. THIS IS DUE NEXT CLASS! IT WILL COUNT FOR THREE (3) QUIZ GRADES! NO CREDIT WILL BE GIVEN IF YOU DO NOT HAND IT IN ON TIME!

1. Answer the following questions:
   A) What were some of the most interesting points of the day?

   B) What were some of the least interesting points of the day?

   C) If you had to choose, would you take students here again?

   D) Do you think the activities you performed today are in line with some of the thoughts going through the minds of CCC workers?

2. Write a short letter (1pg maximum) to the board of education explaining to them what you learned today.

3. Write a short letter (1pg maximum) to the Gilbert Lake staff and also tell them what you enjoyed. *We will be construction a group letter in class, be prepared to share some of your examples*
Appendix P

1. When did this location become a historic site? (When was the marker or monument put up? Or the house "interpreted"?) How did that time differ from ours? From the time of the event or person commemorated?

2. Who sponsored it? Representing which participant group's point of view? What was their position in social structure when the event occurred? When the site went "up?"

3. What were the sponsors' motives? What were their ideological needs and social purposes? What were their values?

4. Who is the intended audience for the site? What values were they trying to leave for us, today? What does the site ask us to go and do or think about?

5. Did the sponsors have government support? At what level? Who was ruling the government at the time? What ideological arguments were used to get the government to acquiesce?

7. Are there problematic (insulting, degrading) words or symbols that would not be used today, or by other groups?

8. How is the site used today? Do traditional ritual continue to connect today's public to it? Or is it ignored? Why?

9. Is the presentation accurate? What actually happened? What historical sources tell of the event, people, or period commemorated at the site?

10. How does this site fit in with others that treat the same era? Or subject? What other people lived and events happened then but are not commemorated? Why?
Bibliography


Spangler, Frank M. *Bearing Down.* n.d. Frank M. Spangler Cartoons & Clippings, PB Range I, Section 4, Shelf e, Box 1, Folder 2, Alabama Department of Archives & History, Montgomery, Alabama.

Surviving the Dust Bowl, dir. Chana Gazit (The American Experience, 1998), DVD.


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_The Plow That Broke the Plains_, dir. Pare Lorentz (United States: Resettlement Administration, 1936), Videocassette.


Many of the primary source photos for this piece were found at The Library of Congress Website: http://www.loc.gov/index.html