



LESSON PLAN

THE TEXAS DUST BOWL

Social Studies, Grades 4–8

OBJECTIVE

Students will demonstrate understanding of the impact of the Dust Bowl on the lives, livelihoods, interactions, and migrations of every day Americans and Texans through the creation of a three-part series of letters written in first-person perspective to an East Coast friend. Through creation of the letters, students will evaluate significant events in the following three periods: the beginning of the Dust Bowl droughts, the worst part of the droughts, and the resulting resolution of the droughts.

PROCESS

Prior Knowledge

Students should have a basic understanding of what the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl were.

Hook

The day before this lesson is to be completed, have students interview a relative, family friend, or neighbor who lived through the Great Depression. Instruct students to ask what it was like, if it was more difficult to obtain food, etc.

At the beginning of class, ask students to volunteer what they discovered in their interviews. Specifically inquire if students heard anything about the difficulty of obtaining food and if anyone discussed the Dust Bowl or poor growing conditions during the time.

If students do not have enough prior information, review them on what the Dust Bowl was before viewing the videos.

Lesson

Instruct students to take out a sheet of paper and divide it into an upside-down T-Chart, ensuring they leave adequate room under the T for a third section. Have them label the two sections at the top of the page, “Description of the Dust Bowl” and “Impact of the Dust Bowl.” The area under the T should be labeled, “Resolving the Dust Bowl.”

As students view the videos, instruct them to take notes over what they see in the proper area of the T-Chart.

Ask students what they think a “black blizzard” is. Take a few answers then show students the videos Black Blizzard and Black Blizzards Rage Again Over the Southwest (see Videos). Have students discuss why the dust storms are referred to as “black blizzards.”



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Show students the videos Pampa, Texas – Dust Blizzard Blots Out Sun; Buries Plants and Dalhart Dust Storm.

Show students the video \$10,000,000 Snow Blanket Covers Texas Dust Bowl; have students discuss why the video is so named.

Show students the video Civilian Conservation Corps Fights Erosion.

Have students share some of the answers they have added to their charts, instructing other students to add anything they did not already write down. As students are sharing, discuss or answer any questions that may arise.

Have students work with a partner to select the two most important factors or points in each of the three sections of the T-chart. Have students share their answers with the class and discuss.

Independent Practice

After students have viewed and discussed the videos documenting the destruction of crops in the Texas Dust Bowl, have them use their notes, textbooks, and other primary and secondary sources to create a series of three letters written from the perspective of an individual impacted by the situation.

Students can choose a child of a farmer, a farmer, a store owner, a migrant worker, etc.

Using their textbook, notes from the videos, books from the library, and Internet resources, have students research the situation at the beginning of the Dust Bowl droughts, during the worst part of the droughts, and the period of resolution at the end of the droughts.

Using the information from their research, have students take on the persona they have chosen and write three letters, one for each period researched, to a friend who lives on the East Coast and is, therefore, not experiencing the drought. (Remind students that this means they should incorporate significant background information into the first letter).

The letters should include 5-10 historical facts in each one and should explicitly address the impact of the Dust Bowl on the lives of everyday Texans focusing specifically on social, economic, and migratory changes at each of the specified three points.

There should be distinct differences between the facts contained in each letter.

OPTIONAL: Have several students volunteer to share the contents of their letter at the end of class.



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Videos



Black Blizzard

26 seconds, silent

https://texasarchive.org/2006_00109



Black Blizzards Rage Again Over the Southwest

36 seconds, silent

https://texasarchive.org/2006_00110



Pampa, Texas – Dust Blizzard Blots Out Sun; Buries Plants

36 seconds, silent

https://texasarchive.org/2006_00071



Dalhart Dust Storm

30 seconds, silent

https://texasarchive.org/2006_00041



\$10,000,000 Snow Blanket Covers Texas Dust Bowl

36 seconds, silent

https://texasarchive.org/2006_00060



Civilian Conservation Corps Fights Erosion

10:41

https://texasarchive.org/2006_00042

RESOURCES

National Museum of American History

<https://americanhistory.si.edu/home>

Sandler, Martin W. *The Dust Bowl through the Lens: How Photography Revealed and Helped Remedy a National Disaster*. New York: Walker Books for Young Readers, 2009.



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Janke, Katelan. *Survival in the Storm: The Dust Bowl Diary of Grace Edwards, Dalhart, Texas 1935*. New York: Scholastic Inc., 2002.

Miller, Susan Martins. *Rosa Takes a Chance: Mexican Immigrants in the Dust Bowl Years (1935)*. *Sisters in Time*, vol. 21. Ulrichsville, Ohio: Barbour Books, 2006.

CALIFORNIA: Stanley, Jerry. *Children of the Dust Bowl: The True Story of the School at Weedpatch Camp*. New York: Crown Books for Young Readers, 1993.

OKLAHOMA: Henderson, Caroline. *Letters from the Dust Bowl*. Wichita Falls, TX: Red River Books, 2003.

Egan, Timothy. *The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of Those Who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl*. New York: Mariner Books, 2006.

TEKS

Social Studies, Grade 4

8C - Explain the geographic factors such as landforms and climate that influence patterns of settlement and the distribution of population in Texas, past and present

9A - Describe ways people have adapted to and modified their environment in Texas, past and present such as timber clearing, agricultural production, wetlands, drainage, energy production, and construction of dams

9C - Compare the positive and negative consequences of human modification of the environment in Texas, past and present, both governmental and private, such as economic development and the impact on habitats and wildlife as well as air and water quality

12C - Analyze the effects of exploration, immigration, migration, and limited resources on the economic development and growth of Texas

22B - Incorporate main and supporting ideas in verbal and written communication

22D - Create written and visual material such as journal entries, reports, graphic organizers, outlines, and biographies

Social Studies, Grade 5

8B - Explain the geographic factors that influence patterns of settlement and the distribution of population in the United States, past and present

9A - Describe how and why people have adapted to and modified their environment in the United States, past and present, such as the use of human resources to meet basic needs

9B - Analyze the positive and negative consequences of human modification of the environment in the United States, past and present



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13A - Compare how people in different parts of the United States earn a living, past and present

25B - Incorporate main and supporting ideas in verbal and written communication

25C - Express ideas orally based on research and experiences

25D - Create written and visual material such as journal entries, reports, graphic organizers, outlines, and bibliographies

Social Studies, Grade 6

1A - Trace characteristics of various contemporary societies in regions that resulted from historical events or factors such as invasion, conquests, colonization, immigration, and trade

3B - Pose and answer questions about geographic distributions and patterns for various world regions and countries shown on maps, graphs, charts, models, and databases

3C - Compare various world regions and countries using data from geographic tools, including maps, graphs, charts, databases, and models

6A - Describe and explain the effects of physical environmental processes such as erosion, ocean currents, and earthquakes on Earth's surface

7A – Describe ways in which the factors of production (natural resources, labor, capital, and entrepreneurs) influence the economies of various contemporary societies

7B - Identify and analyze ways people have modified the physical environment such as mining, irrigation, and transportation infrastructure

22A - Use social studies terminology correctly

22B - Incorporate main and supporting ideas in verbal and written communication based on research

22C - Express ideas orally based on research and experiences

22D - Create written and visual material such as journal entries, reports, graphic organizers, outlines, and bibliographies based on research

22E - Use standard grammar, spelling, sentence structure, and punctuation

Social Studies, Grade 7

7B - Define and trace the impact of “boom and bust” cycles of leading Texas industries throughout the 20th and early 21st centuries, such as farming, oil and gas production, cotton, ranching, real estate, banking and computer technology

9C - Analyze the effects of physical and human factors such as climate, weather, landforms, irrigation, transportation, and communication on major events in Texas



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10A - Identify ways in which Texans have adapted to and modified the environment and analyze the positive and negative consequences of the modifications

10B - Explain ways in which geographic factors such as the Galveston hurricane of 1900, the Dust Bowl, limited water resources, and alternative energy sources have affected the political, economic, and social development of Texas

21D - Identify points of view from the historical context surrounding an event and the frame of reference that influenced the participants

21E - Support a point of view on a social studies issue or event

22D - Create written, oral, and visual presentations of social studies information

STAAR

Social Studies, Grade 8

10C - Analyze the effects of physical and human geographic factors on major historical and contemporary events in the United States

11B - Describe the positive and negative consequences of human modification of the physical environment of the United States

29A - Differentiate between, locate, and use valid primary and secondary sources such as computer software, databases, media and news services, biographies, interviews, and artifacts to acquire information about the United States

29B - Analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing, contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions

29D - Identify points of view from the historical context surrounding an event and the frame of reference which influenced the participants

29E - Support a point of view on a social studies issue or event