

TEACHING AMERICAN HISTORY PROJECT

Lesson Title- The Dust Bowl-Joan Galenski

GRADE- 11

LENGTH OF CLASS PERIOD- 58 minutes (at least 2-3 periods)

INQUIRY- Students will describe and interpret the dramatic climatic changes that created the Dust Bowl in the mid-1930s as well as the inner strength that helped the people living in these areas to survive.

OBJECTIVES-

Students will discuss the geographic causes and effects of the Dust Bowl.

Students will understand that humor can help people to cope with overwhelming problems.

Students will learn how literature was used as a powerful tool to describe the plight of the farmer.

MATERIALS- Primary Source Documents- Newspaper and magazine accounts as well as a series of letters that vividly describe the severity of the dust storms and the devastating effect on the land and its people:

1. From “ Brother can You Spare a Dime ?
2. May 1937 edition of “ Reader’s Digest”
3. “Newsweek” - July 18, 1936
4. “Letters to Evelyn” – “Reader’s Digest”in July 1936
5. “Dust Bowl Poem” “From Brother can You Spare a Dime”?

Song by Woody Guthrie-“So Long, It’s been Good to know Yuh

Literature – Excerpt from “The Grapes of Wrath”.

Video- “The Grapes of Wrath”

ACTIVITIES:

1. Students will be given a brief explanation of the Geography and the Black Blizzards of the Dust Bowl along with a map of its exact location.
2. Students will be asked to discuss the following questions:
 - a. In which states was the Dust Bowl?

- b. What features of land and climate in the Great Plains contributed to the black blizzards?
- c. How was human activity responsible for the black blizzards and how do you think farmers in the Great Plains should deal with the problem of their dry climate?

3. Using the Primary Source Documents, the Song, and the Literature the teacher will ask:

- a. What do the magazine articles tell you about the reasons that people abandoned their farms?
- b. Examining these three letters, what do you think was the likely outcome of their struggle?
- c. Do you think humor is important in a crisis?
- d. What does the song tell you about the reasons that people abandoned their farms and why are the churches jammed?
- e. Using the piece of literature- How would you describe the mood of the people after the dust storm? What are the men thinking?
- f. Using the video(clip) have the students make a list of ten items they noticed that would be different from today.

HOW WILL YOU ASSESS WHAT STUDENTS LEARNED DURING THIS LESSON?

Students will be given critical thinking questions in which they will use their knowledge from the information they have received and then use the skills of IDENTIFYING ASSUMPTIONS- For many people losing their homes and farms to the dust storms, California seemed to be a “promised land.” What do you think were the expectations of those who moved to California?

Making COMPARISONS- Moving westward is an American tradition. In what ways do you think the migrations of the 1930s followed this tradition? In what ways were they different?

RECOGNIZING CAUSE AND EFFECT- The Dust Bowl was a part of a long chain of natural causes and human actions. What causes and effects eventually led to the Dust Bowl?

ASKING QUESTIONS- Some people were able to stay on their farms despite the hardships and terrible conditions created by the dust storms. What questions would you have liked to ask these people?

CONNECTICUT FRAMEWORK PERFORMANCE STANDARDS-

- a. Use primary source documents to analyze multiple perspectives.
- b. Demonstrate an in-depth understanding of major events and trends in American History (The Great Depression and the Dust Bowl)

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