

# Great Depression and the Dust Bowl

## How do people overcome hardships?

The United States had experienced several major economic swings before the Great Depression in the 1930s. During World War I, the U.S. government had vigorously encouraged farmers to expand crop and livestock outputs to feed the army and U.S. allies in Europe. They guaranteed high prices and appealed to the farmers' patriotism through slogans like "Food Will Win the War." Farmers borrowed to buy new machinery to replace the labor lost by sons and hired hands drafted into the military.

### As Food Demand Drops, Farm Prices Collapse

In 1920, with the war over and the demand for farm goods decreasing, the U.S. government with little warning announced that it was ending price supports. The farmers, however, continued to produce at near record levels creating surplus commodities that sent prices plummeting. Until then, land prices had been rising rapidly as farmers and non-farmers saw buying farms as a good investment. With the collapse of farm prices, the land bubble burst, often dropping the market value of the land well below what the investor owed on it. The post-war depression did not start with the Stock Market Crash of 1929. For the Midwest, it started in 1921, and farmers and the small towns that depended on the land were hit hard.

In the 1920s, only slightly less than half of the U.S. population lived on farms. When farmers were not making money, they could not buy the products that factories were making. When factories couldn't sell their products, they laid off their workers. The workers could not buy the factory output either, meaning more lay-offs, and the country fell into a downward spiral.

However, not everyone saw the pattern emerging. Many thought that because the stock market had been on a sustained upswing, it was a good place to invest money. When it became obvious that the price of stocks far outpaced their productive capacity, investors lost confidence and began selling before prices dropped further. Panic ensued, and the market dropped sharply. With factories closing and banks failing, unemployment continued to rise. Without the safety nets of today like Social Security, many families found themselves without income, losing their homes and facing poverty. The situation during the 1920s was bad; it got much worse in the 1930s.

### Farm Families and the Great Depression

Farm families were often better suited to weather hard times than town residents. Farmers could grow their own food in large gardens and raise livestock to provide meat. Chickens supplied both meat and eggs, while dairy cows produced milk and cream. Many women had sewing skills and began producing much of their family's clothing. Wherever they could, families cut down on expenses. A major problem was taxes, which had to be paid in cash. Families that could not pay taxes sometimes lost their homes and farms. The state and governments slashed costs wherever they could. Schools cut teachers' salaries. Many people remember that while they had little money, they didn't feel humiliated because everyone around them also was poor.

The federal government began to provide relief to offset the impact of the Depression. Iowan Henry Wallace, a corn scientist and farm journal editor, was named secretary of agriculture. He saw that low prices were brought about by surplus production. The federal government adopted a policy that would guarantee farmers a higher-than-market price for their crops and livestock if they would reduce their production. The Agricultural Adjustment Act began sending much needed checks to farmers who would sign up for the system, and the money was a great stimulant to the economy. It saved many a farm from foreclosure.

### Extreme Weather and the Great Depression

The environment also seemed hostile to the farmers during the 1930s. The winters of 1934 and 1936 were especially long and cold. The summer of 1936 saw one of the worst droughts ever recorded and crops dried up in the fields. Livestock died for lack of food and water.

West of Iowa, on the Great Plains, lands that could no longer sustain the grasses that held the soil in place began to lose topsoil to the strong hot winds. So much dust was picked up that soon great dark clouds, not of rain but of soil particles, began to drift eastward. Iowa was never hit as hard by the Dust Bowl as Kansas and Oklahoma, but the clouds of dust that blocked out the sun and found their way through any cracks in the house around windows or doors left a lasting impression on those who lived through them.

Times were tough through the entire decade of the 1930s. While government programs helped, it was the start of World War II and the renewed demand for manufactured goods and farm products that lifted the United States out of the worst economic period in its history. It was, however, at a heartbreaking cost in American lives.

## Supporting Questions

### What factors caused the Great Depression?

- [Crowd of People Outside the New York Stock Exchange Following the Stock Market Crash, 1929 \(Image\)](#)
- [Finance Officer W.W. Tarpley Interviews Raymond Tarver about Bank Closings, January 5, 1940 \(Document\)](#)
- [Interview of George Mehales about the Stock Market Crash of 1929, December 1938 \(Document\)](#)
- [IPTV's "The Great Depression: Stock Market Crash," 1979 \(Video\)](#)

### How did farmers interact with and adapt to the environmental changes with the Dust Bowl?

- [Proposed Migrant Camps in California for Relocated Dust Bowl Families, 1935 \(Map\)](#)
- [Dust Storm in New Mexico, April 1935 \(Image\)](#)
- [Young Man Removing Soil that Blocks the Highways near Guymon, Oklahoma, March 1936 \(Image\)](#)
- [Dust Bowl Farmer in Cimarron County, Oklahoma, April 1936 \(Image\)](#)
- [Farmer Pumping Water to his Dry Fields in Cimarron County, Oklahoma, April 1936 \(Image\)](#)
- [Dust Storm in Elkhart, Kansas, May 1937 \(Image\)](#)
- ["FDR Hears Todd Records" Newspaper Article, between 1940 and 1941 \(Document\)](#)
- [Interview with Imogene Chapin from Arvin Farm Security Administration \(FSA\) Camp in California, August 1, 1940 \(Audio\)](#)
- [Interview with Flora Robertson about Dust Storms in Oklahoma, August 5, 1940 \(Audio\)](#)
- [Interview with Mexican Migrant Jose Flores about Farm Security Administration \(FSA\) Camps, 1941](#)
- [Ethnographer Charles Todd with Mexican Men and Boys at an FSA Camp in El Rio, California, 1941](#)

### How did people survive the Great Depression when they do not have enough money?

- [Letter from Martha Fast to First Lady Lou Henry Hoover, January 2, 1931 \(Document\)](#)
- [Response from First Lady Lou Henry Hoover's Secretary to Martha Fast, January 7, 1931 \(Document\)](#)
- [Dispossessed Arkansas Farmer in Bakersfield, California, 1935 \(Image\)](#)
- [Workmen at the Norris Dam in Tennessee, between 1935 and 1940 \(Image\)](#)
- [Squatters along the Highway near Bakersfield, California, November 1935 \(Image\)](#)
- [President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt in Denver, Colorado, ca. 1936](#)
- ["Migrant Mother" Florence Thompson with Her Children in Nipomo, California, February/March 1936 \(Image\)](#)
- [Oklahoma Farm Family on Highway between Blythe and Indio, California, August 1936 \(Image\)](#)
- [Rehabilitation Client Repays his Loan in Smithfield, North Carolina, October 1936 \(Image\)](#)
- [Automobile Camp North of Calipatria, California, March 1937 \(Image\)](#)
- [Swimming Pool Created by CCC \(Civilian Conservation Corps\) Dam in Huntingdon, Pennsylvania, July 1941 \(Image\)](#)

## \*Printable Image and Document Guide

## Additional Resources

**The Charles L. Todd and Robert Sonkin Collecting Expedition:** This Library of Congress collection was created by Charles L. Todd and Robert Sonkin, both ethnographers, who provide a glimpse into the everyday life and cultural expression of people living through a particularly difficult period of American history, the Great Depression and Dust Bowl era. This collection features photos, audio and documents of their work.

**Library of Congress Teacher's Guide - "The Dust Bowl":** This guide offers historical context, teaching suggestions, links to online resources and more about the Dust Bowl era in America.

**Dorothea Lange's "Migrant Mother" Photographs in the Farm Security Administration Collection:** Dorothea Lange's "Migrant Mother" photographs of Florence Thompson and her children have become an icon of the Great Depression. This resource provides additional background information about Lange's collection.

**The New Deal Primary Sources:** This webpage provides an overview of special collections held by the Library of Congress and links to other resources.

**History Channel "Great Depression" Collection:** There are over 10 videos available at history.com that focuses on different aspects of the Great Depression. Videos and additional resources include a look at such topics as the Stock Market Crash of 1929, The Roaring '20s, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal, among many others.

**The Depths of Depression:** This resource from the Library of Congress takes a look at July 8, 1932 — the day the Dow Jones Industrial Average fell to its lowest point during the Great Depression. It also provides information about the Dust Bowl and life in America after the stock market crashed.

***Rudy Rides the Rails: A Depression Era Story*** by Dandi Mackall: This children's book takes place in 1932 Akron, Ohio, where a 13-year-old Rudy wants to help his parents during the Great Depression but doesn't know where to turn. Rudy learns of other boys are heading west to seek their fortunes, and he hops a train to live the hobo life while he "rides the rails" to California.

***Leah's Pony*** by Elizabeth Friedrich: This picture book is set during the Dust Bowl and shows how Leah and her family overcome their impoverished situation through a penny auction.

***Children of the Dust Bowl: The True Story of the School at Weedpatch Camp*** by Jerry Stanley: This book, which is full of photographs from the Dust Bowl era, tells the true story that took place at the emergency farm-labor camp immortalized in John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*.

***The Lucky Star*** by Judy Young: This children's book from the "Tales of Young Americans" series is set in 1933, as millions of Americans are out of work. The story is about a young girl named Ruth who is dealing with struggles that her family encounters during the Great Depression.

## Crowds Outside of the New York Stock Exchange, 1929



Courtesy of Library of Congress, "[Crowd of people gather outside the New York Stock Exchange following the Crash of 1929]," 1929

### Description

A crowd of people standing outside of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) after the stock market crash of 1929. It was on "Black Tuesday," October 29, 1929, that investors traded around 16 million shares on the NYSE in a single day that resulted in billions of dollars being lost on the market. This led to America's spiral into what would be known as the Great Depression.

### Text-Dependent Questions

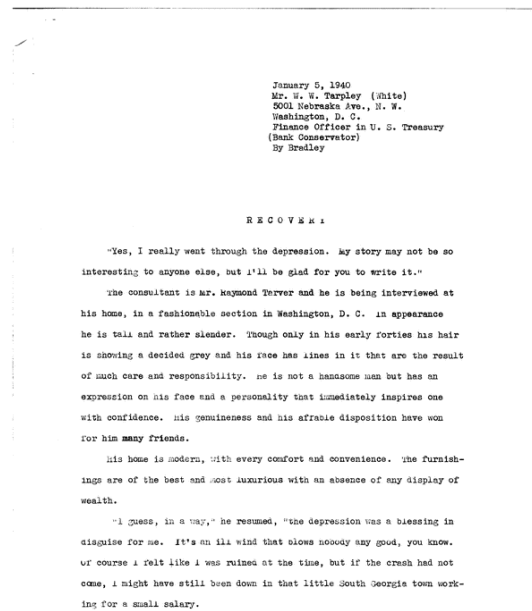
- Why would such a large crowd be gathered outside the New York Stock Exchange on "Black Tuesday"?
- Look at the expressions on the people's faces? What might they be thinking or feeling?

### Citation Information

"[Crowd of people gather outside the New York Stock Exchange following the Crash of 1929]," 1929. [Courtesy of the Library of Congress](#)



## Finance Officer W.W. Tarpley Interviews Raymond Tarver about Bank Closings, January 5, 1940



Courtesy of Library of Congress, Tarver, Raymond and Tarpley, W.W., "[Recovery]," 5 January 1940

### Description

This is an interview by W.W. Tarpley, who was a finance officer in the U.S. Treasury, of Raymond Tarver. Tarver gives his personal account of the effects of the closing of the bank he worked in during the Great Depression.

[Full Transcript of Raymond Tarver's Interview](#)

[Transcribed Excerpts from Raymond Tarver's Interview](#)

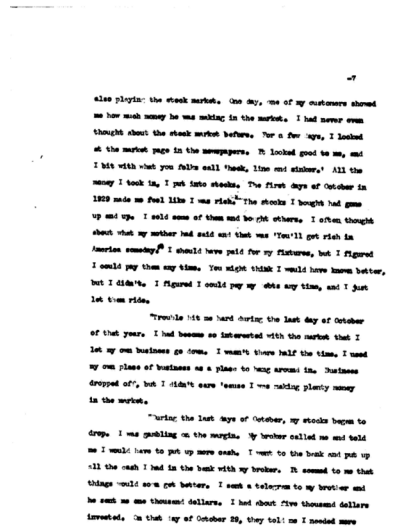
### Text-Dependent Questions

- How did closing the bank affect people like Raymond Tarver?
- How did the banks closing improve Tarver's life?

### Citation Information

Tarver, Raymond and Tarpley, W.W., "[Recovery]," 5 January 1940. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

## Interview of George Mehales about the Stock Market Crash of 1929, December 1938



Courtesy of Library of Congress, Mehales, George, "[George Mehales]," pp. 8-9, December 1938

### Description

Interview with George Mehales by R.V. Williams. Through this oral history interview, George shares stories of his life including what happened to him during the stock market crash of October 1929.

[Full Transcript of George Mehales' Interview about the Stock Market Crash of 1929](#)

[Transcribed Excerpts from George Mehales' Interview about the Stock Market Crash of 1929](#)

### Text-Dependent Questions

- Using evidence from the text, explain why George Mehales put all of his money into stocks.
- Describe what George meant when he said, "I was wiped out that day." Why would that be impactful to his life?
- Why would George think of harming himself after the stock market crash on October 29, 1929?

### Citation Information

Mehales, George, "[George Mehales]," pp. 8-9, December 1938. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

## IPTV's "The Great Depression: Stock Market Crash," 1979



Courtesy of Iowa Public Television, "The Great Depression: Stock Market Crash," Iowa Heritage Hard Times - Iowa Public Television, 1979

### Description

All parts of the nation were faced with the worst economic depression in history in 1929. Iowans suffered along with the rest of the nation. This video from Iowa Public Television explains causes and effects of the stock market crash of 1929.

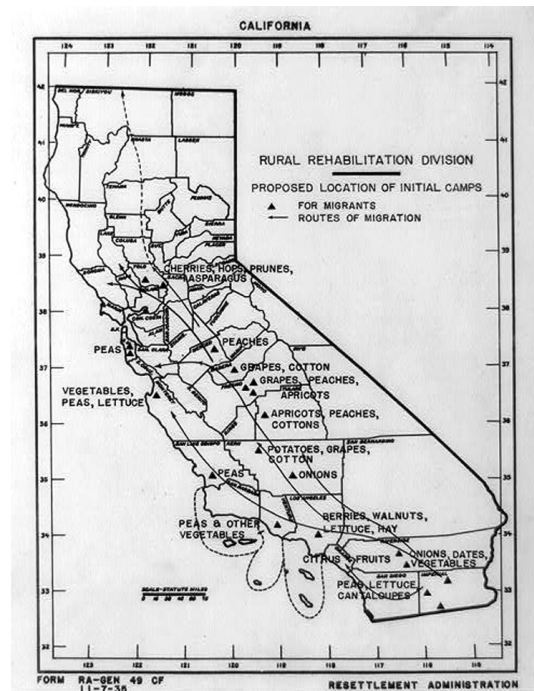
### Text-Dependent Questions

- Why would the term "Black Thursday" be used to describe the downturn of the the stock market in 1929?
- The video uses the term 'chain reaction' to describe the American economy at this time. What started the chain reaction and how did the effects impact America?
- How would an economic depression, such as the stock market crash, impact the lives of Americans, both rural and urban?

### Citation Information

"The Great Depression: Stock Market Crash," Iowa Heritage Hard Times - Iowa Public Television, 1979. [Courtesy of Iowa Public Television](#)

## Proposed Migrant Camps in California for Relocated Dust Bowl Families, 1935



Courtesy of Library of Congress, "[Map of California by the Rural Rehabilitation Division showing areas where different crops are grown, proposed location of initial camps for migrants, and routes of migration]," 1935

### Description

During the Great Depression, a series of droughts combined with non-sustainable agricultural practices led to devastating dust storms, famine, diseases and deaths related to breathing dust. This caused the largest migration in American history.

### [Transcript of Proposed Migrant Camps in California Map](#)

### Text-Dependent Questions

- What would you infer the Rural Rehabilitation Division's job was?
- Why were migrant camps placed in areas with already established food production?

### Citation Information

"[Map of California by the Rural Rehabilitation Division showing areas where different crops are grown, proposed location of initial camps for migrants, and routes of migration]," 1935. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

## Dust Storm in New Mexico, April 1935



Courtesy of Library of Congress, Lange, Dorothea, "Dust storm. It was conditions of this sort which forced many farmers to abandon the area. Spring 1935. New Mexico," April 1935

### Description

Many factors led to the Dust Bowl. An increased demand for wheat during World War I, the development of new mechanized farm machinery along with falling wheat prices in the 1920s, led to millions of acres of native grassland being replaced by heavily disked fields of straight row crops. Four years of drought shriveled the crops and left the loose top soil to blown away in the wind.

### Text-Dependent Questions

- Using evidence from the photo, describe what you see. What were the effects of the Dust Bowl on farmers?
- Before the Dust Bowl, farmers plowed under native grasses that held down the soil to meet increased production demand. How could this have contributed to Dust Bowl conditions? What other factors might have also contributed to Dust Bowl conditions?

### Citation Information

Lange, Dorothea, "Dust storm. It was conditions of this sort which forced many farmers to abandon the area. Spring 1935. New Mexico," April 1935. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)



## Young Man Removing Soil that Blocks the Highways near Guymon, Oklahoma, March 1936



Courtesy of Library of Congress, Rothstein, Arthur, "Removing drifts of soil which block the highways near Guymon, Oklahoma," March 1936

### Description

This young man in overalls is removing drifts of soil from the highways near Guymon, Oklahoma. These piles of soil blocked roadways throughout the area during the Dust Bowl.

### Text-Dependent Questions

- What is this young man doing to adapt to the environmental changes with the Dust Bowl?
- Why is his work important?

### Citation Information

Rothstein, Arthur, "Removing drifts of soil which block the highways near Guymon, Oklahoma," March 1936.

[Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

## Dust Bowl Farmer in Cimarron County, Oklahoma, April 1936



Courtesy of Library of Congress, Rothstein, Arthur, "Dust bowl farmer raising fence to keep it from being buried under drifting sand. Cimarron County, Oklahoma," April 1936

### Description

This photograph shows a Dust Bowl farmer raising his fence to keep it from being buried under drifting sand in Cimarron County, Oklahoma.

### Text-Dependent Questions

- How is this farmer adapting to the environmental changes of the Dust Bowl?
- What would be the importance of a farmer having a fence?

### Citation Information

Rothstein, Arthur, "Dust bowl farmer raising fence to keep it from being buried under drifting sand. Cimarron County, Oklahoma," April 1936. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

## Farmer Pumping Water to his Dry Fields in Cimarron County, Oklahoma, April 1936



Courtesy of Library of Congress, Rothstein, Arthur, "A possible solution to the dust problem is irrigation. This farmer is pumping water from a well to his parched fields. Cimarron County, Oklahoma," April 1936

### Description

This photograph shows a farmer pumping water from a well to his parched fields in Cimarron County, Oklahoma. One possible solution to the dust problem during this time period in America is irrigation.

### Text-Dependent Questions

- What is this farmer doing to try to solve the drought problem?
- How would irrigation help farmers and their crops?

### Citation Information

Rothstein, Arthur, "A possible solution to the dust problem is irrigation. This farmer is pumping water from a well to his parched fields. Cimarron County, Oklahoma," April 1936. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

## Dust Storm in Elkhart, Kansas, May 1937



Courtesy of Library of Congress, "[Dust storm, Elkhart, Kan.]," May 1937

### Description

Packing winds of 60 miles per hour, the loose topsoil was scooped up and mounded into clouds of dust hundreds of feet high. People hurried home, because being caught outside could mean suffocation and death. The dust and darkness stopped all forms of transportation and the fine silt sifting through any crack or joint causing closures of hospitals, mills, schools and businesses.

### Text-Dependent Questions

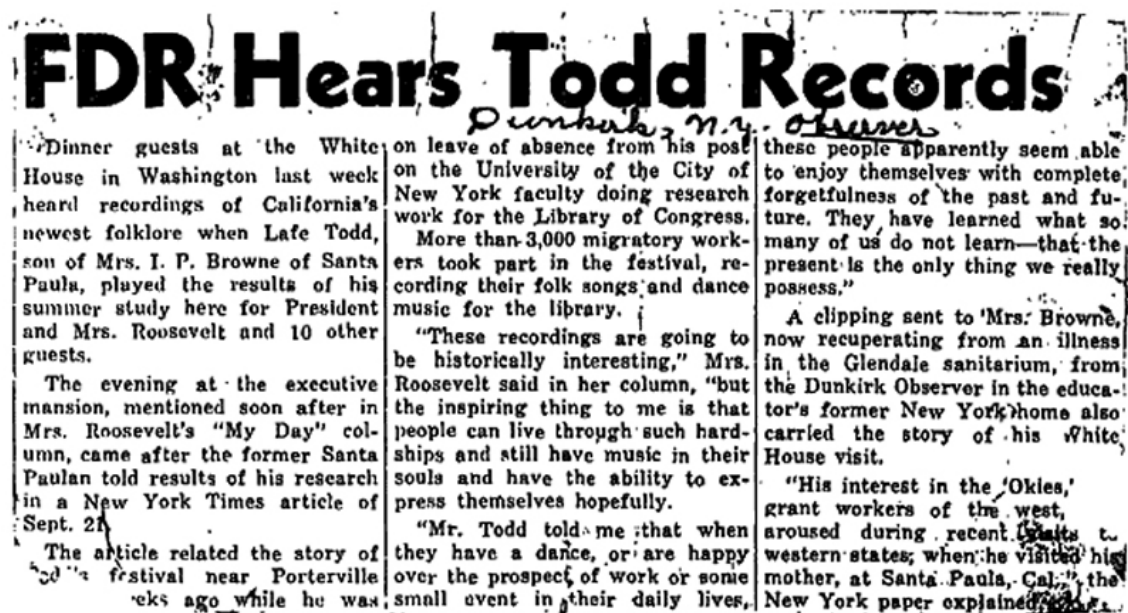
- Using evidence from the photo, describe what you see. What were the effects of the Dust Bowl on towns?
- If dust storms could cause suffocation and death, why do you think the people are outside?

### Citation Information

"[Dust storm, Elkhart, Kan.]," May 1937. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)



## "FDR Hears Todd Records" Newspaper Article, between 1940 and 1941



Courtesy of Library of Congress, "FDR Hears Todd Records," New York Observer, between 1940 and 1941

### Description

A federal study found that the migrants were spending all they earned on gasoline and housing, with nothing left to feed themselves or their children. The Roosevelt administration answered this by setting up camps to house migrants. The large number of workers resulted in low wages, which led to a series of strikes such as the 1939 Madera Cotton Strike. In 1941, ethnographers Charles L. Todd and Robert Sonkin documented the lives of migrant workers in California, recording songs, stories, poetry and camp meetings. The *New York Observer* article reports that some of the songs recorded in California by Todd and Sonkin were presented at the White House at a dinner party. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt said, "These recordings are going to be historically interesting, but the inspiring thing to me is that people can live through such hardships and still have music in their souls and have the ability to express themselves hopefully."

### [Transcript of "FDR Hears Todd Records" Newspaper Article](#)

### Text-Dependent Questions

- Why were migrant workers, "Okies," (a native or inhabitant of Oklahoma) living in the present, rather than the past or the future?
- Why do you think more than 3,000 migratory workers wanted to record their folk songs and dance music for the Library of Congress?

### Citation Information

"FDR Hears Todd Records," *New York Observer*, between 1940 and 1941. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)



## Interview with Imogene Chapin from Arvin Farm Security Administration (FSA) Camp in California, August 1, 1940



Courtesy of Library of Congress, Chapin, Imogene, "The Job's Just Around The Corner," 1 August 1940

### Description

This interview of migrant worker Imogene Chapin, conducted by Charles L. Todd and Robert Sonkin, addressed what life was like in the Arvin Farm Security Administration (FSA) Camp. During the Great Depression, a series of droughts combined with non-sustainable agricultural practices led to devastating dust storms, famine, diseases and deaths related to breathing dust. This caused the largest migration in American history. The Dust Bowl era lasted from 1930 to the early 1940s and impacted the Midwest, Southwest and Mexico directly, but also had an impact on the states that affected populations migrated to — principally California and the Northwest. Migrants, most of whom had been farmers, went to pick crops in those states where crops would still grow. Displaced immigrants from Mexico competed with migrants from the United States for jobs.

### [Transcript of Imogene Chapin's Interview](#)

### Text-Dependent Questions

- Based on Imogene's poem, what hardships did migrant workers face?
- How did Imogene's perception of California balance against the reality of living in California?
- Compare Imogene's poem to [Flora Robertson's](#). How did both women deal with the Dust Bowl? Why do you think both women wrote multiple poems to express their feelings?

### Citation Information

Chapin, Imogene, "The Job's Just Around The Corner," 1 August 1940. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

## Interview with Flora Robertson about Dust Storms in Oklahoma, August 5, 1940



Courtesy of Library of Congress, Robertson, Flora, "Interview about dust storms in Oklahoma," 5 August 1940

### Description

This interview with Flora Robertson was conducted by ethnographers Charles L. Todd and Robert Sonkin. Robertson talks about the drought, grasshoppers and dust storms she experienced in Oklahoma. She also recites her poem about migrating from Oklahoma to California.

### [Transcript of Flora Robertson's Interview about Oklahoma Dust Storms](#)

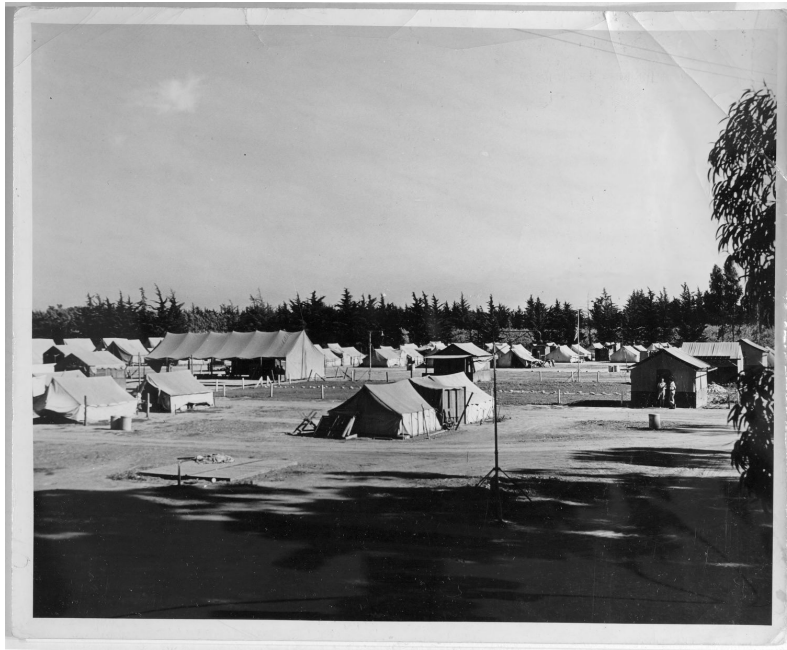
### Text-Dependent Questions

- What do you think was the hardest part of Flora Robertson's life? What evidence do you have to support your answer?
- After listening to Flora, how would you describe her outlook?
- Compare Flora's poem to [Imogene Chapin's](#). How did both women deal with the Dust Bowl? Why do you think both women wrote multiple poems to express their feelings?

### Citation Information

Robertson, Flora, "Interview about dust storms in Oklahoma," 5 August 1940. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

## Interview with Mexican Migrant Jose Flores about Farm Security Administration (FSA) Camps, 1941



Courtesy of Library of Congress, Flores, Jose, "Interview about FSA camp governance, camp work, non-FSA migrant camps, labor issues, attitude toward 'Okies'," 1941

### Description

This interview with Jose Flores, who works as a migrant laborer in El Rio, California, was conducted by Charles L. Todd and Robert Sonkin. The interview addresses issues such as Farm Security Administration (FSA) camp governance, camp work, non-FSA migrant camps, labor issues and attitude toward "Okies" — migrant agricultural workers from Oklahoma who were forced to leave during the Great Depression of the 1930s.

### [Transcript of Jose Flores' Interview about Camp Life](#)

### Text-Dependent Questions

- What were some of the labor issues at the migrant camp?
- What were the attitudes towards the "residents?"

### Citation Information

Flores, Jose, "Interview about FSA camp governance, camp work, non-FSA migrant camps, labor issues, attitude toward 'Okies'," 1941. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

## Ethnographer Charles Todd with Mexican Men and Boys at an FSA Camp in El Rio, California, 1941



Courtesy of Library of Congress, Hemmig, Robert, "Charles Todd at the recording machine surrounded by a group of Mexican boys and men," 1941

### Description

In 1941, ethnographers Charles L. Todd and Robert Sonkin documented the lives of migrant workers in California; recording songs, stories, poetry and camp meetings in interviews. Todd and Sonkin did their work with a Presto disc recording machine, recording discs, needles and batteries. At first the team used acetate-on-aluminum discs, but as the war effort got underway and aluminum became scarce, they were forced to switch to heavier, more fragile acetate-on-glass recording discs. This photograph shows Todd with his interview equipment with a group of Mexican men and boys at a Farm Security Administration (FSA) camp in El Rio, California.

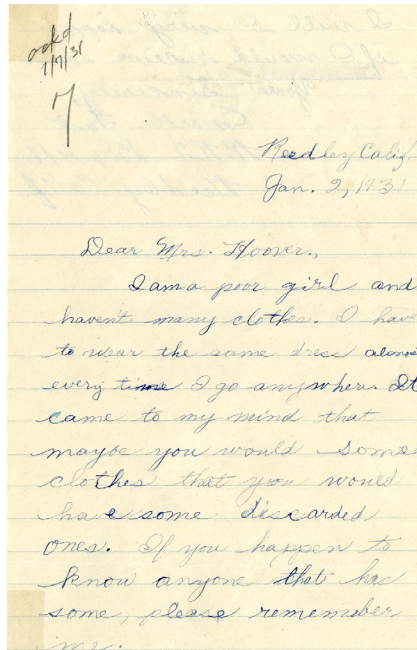
### Text-Dependent Questions

- Charles Todd, featured in this photo with the headphones around his neck, was an ethnographer. An ethnographer works closely with groups of people to record information about their lives. Why would ethnographers play an important role during the Dust Bowl?
- Compare this photo to the recordings of [Flora Robertson](#) and [Imogene Chapin](#). What source has more impact — the actual recordings or seeing an image of what happened during a recording? Explain your answer.

### Citation Information

Hemmig, Robert, "Charles Todd at the recording machine surrounded by a group of Mexican boys and men," 1941.  
[Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

## Letter from Martha Fast to First Lady Lou Henry Hoover, January 2, 1931



Courtesy of Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum, Fast, Martha, 2 January 1931

### Description

This 1931 letter is from a girl, Martha Fast, to First Lady Lou Henry Hoover. In the letter, Martha, who is writing from California, asks for clothing from the First Lady as she says she has to wear the same dress every day because of the poverty her family is facing during the Great Depression. A few days later, [Hoover's secretary writes Fast a response](#) to her request for clothes.

### [Transcript of Martha Fast's Letter to Lou Henry Hoover](#)

### Text-Dependent Questions

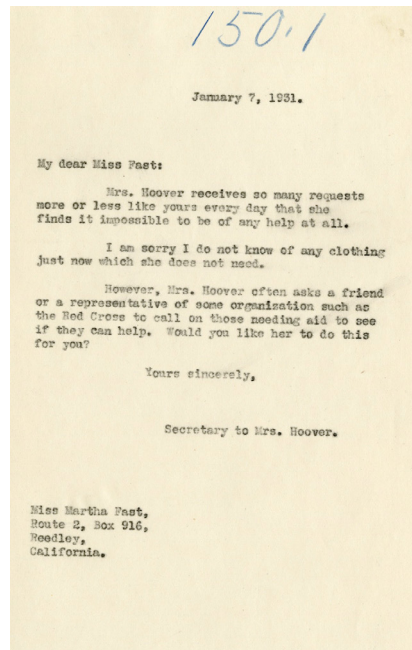
- Why would Martha Fast write Lou Henry Hoover this letter?
- What evidence proves that Fast's family live in poverty?
- Look at the [reply from Lou Henry Hoover's secretary](#). How would you feel if this was the reply to your letter?

### Citation Information

Fast, Martha, 2 January 1931. Courtesy of Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum



## Response from First Lady Lou Henry Hoover's Secretary to Martha Fast, January 7, 1931



Courtesy of Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum, "Response from Herbert Hoover's Secretary to Martha Fast," 7 January 1931

### Description

This document is the response letter from First Lady Lou Henry Hoover's secretary to Martha Fast. Fast, a young girl in California, wrote a [letter to Hoover](#) a few days earlier asking for clothes.

### [Transcript of the Response from First Lady Lou Henry Hoover's Secretary to Martha Fast](#)

### Text-Dependent Questions

- Why would children write letters to First Lady Lou Henry Hoover?
- What suggestions did Hoover's secretary offer Martha Fast?
- Look at the [original letter written to Lou Henry Hoover](#). How would you feel if this was the reply to your letter?

### Citation Information

"Response from Herbert Hoover's Secretary to Martha Fast," 7 January 1931. Courtesy of Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum

## Dispossessed Arkansas Farmer in Bakersfield, California, 1935



Courtesy of Library of Congress, Lange, Dorothea, "Dispossessed Arkansas farmers. Bakersfield, California," 1935

### Description

This photograph shows a dispossessed Arkansas farmer who is working on a small shack for his family to live in. These people resettled themselves at the dump outside of Bakersfield, California.

### Text-Dependent Questions

- These farmers were dispossessed, which means they had to move from their land in Arkansas due to the circumstances of the Dust Bowl. Using knowledge from this set, why did farmers have to move from their homes?
- Look closely at this photo, what materials are the family using to construct their house? Why would this family elect to relocate to a dump?

### Citation Information

Lange, Dorothea, "Dispossessed Arkansas farmers. Bakersfield, California," 1935. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

## Workmen at the Norris Dam in Tennessee, between 1935 and 1940



Courtesy of Library of Congress, "Norris Dam, Tenn. 1935-40, Workmen in the dam powerhouse installing a generator," between 1935 and 1940

### Description

This photograph shows workmen in the Norris Dam powerhouse as they are installing a generator. The Tennessee Valley Authority Act of 1933 was created during the Great Depression to hire people to build dams and power plants.

### Text-Dependent Questions

- What are the workers doing?
- The Tennessee Valley Authority Act of 1933 was created to hire people to build dams and power plants. How did this help people survive the Great Depression?

### Citation Information

"Norris Dam, Tenn. 1935-40, Workmen in the dam powerhouse installing a generator," between 1935 and 1940.  
[Courtesy of the Library of Congress](#)

## Squatters along the Highway near Bakersfield, California, November 1935



Courtesy of Library of Congress, Lange, Dorothea, "Squatters along highway near Bakersfield, California. Penniless refugees from dust bowl..." November 1935

### Description

This Dorothea Lange photograph shows squatters along a highway near Bakersfield, California. They are penniless refugees from Dust Bowl. The photograph's description reads that 22 are in this family and they are without water and looking for work in cotton.

### Text-Dependent Questions

- What does encampment without shelter mean?
- Why might someone who is without a home be called a squatter?

### Citation Information

Lange, Dorothea, "Squatters along highway near Bakersfield, California. Penniless refugees from dust bowl. Twenty-two in family, thirty-nine evictions, now encamped near Bakersfield without shelter, without water and looking for work in the cotton," November 1935. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

## President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt in Denver, Colorado, ca. 1936



Courtesy of Library of Congress, Rhoads, Harry M., "Franklin Delano and Eleanor Roosevelt," ca. 1936

### Description

In July of 1932, in the midst of the greatest economic crisis in U.S. history, Franklin D. Roosevelt accepted the Democratic Party's presidential nomination, promising "a new deal for the American people." That promise became a series of relief, recovery and reform programs designed to provide assistance to the unemployed and poor, revive the economy and change the financial system to prevent another depression. This photo is of Roosevelt and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt as they pose on a train near Denver, Colorado, about a year into his first term.

### Text-Dependent Questions

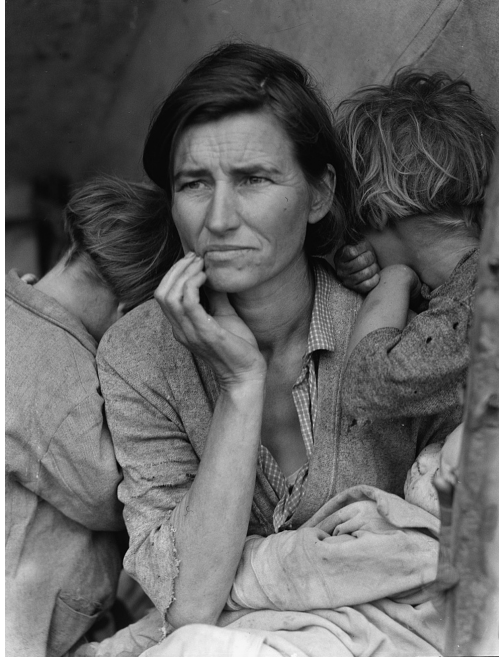
- President Franklin Delano Roosevelt developed a program called the New Deal which promised relief, recovery, and reform programs to provide assistance to the unemployed and poor as well as the revive the economy. How would the New Deal programs help people survive the Great Depression and effects of Dust Bowl?
- This photo was taken about a year into President Roosevelt's first term in office. Why would President Roosevelt travel around the United States while promoting the New Deal?

### Citation Information

Rhoads, Harry M., "Franklin Delano and Eleanor Roosevelt," ca. 1936. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)



## “Migrant Mother” Florence Thompson with Her Children in Nipomo, California, February/March 1936



Courtesy of Library of Congress, Lange, Dorothea, “Migrant agricultural worker’s family. Seven hungry children. Mother aged thirty-two. Father is native Californian. Nipomo, California,” February/March 1936

### Description

This photograph by Dorothea Lange is part of a well-known collection taken of Florence Thompson with several of her children during the Dust Bowl. The photo collection, known as the “Migrant Mother” series, shows Thompson with her children in a tent shelter in Nipomo, California. Lange was concluding a month’s trip photographing migratory farm labor around the state for what was then the Resettlement Administration.

### Text-Dependent Questions

- The mother in this photo is 32 years old and has seven children. Describe what you think this mother is thinking and feeling.
- Using evidence from this photo, how do you think the Dust Bowl is affecting the children?

### Citation Information

Lange, Dorothea, “Migrant agricultural worker’s family. Seven hungry children. Mother aged thirty-two. Father is native Californian. Nipomo, California,” February/March 1936. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

## Oklahoma Farm Family on Highway between Blythe and Indio, California, August 1936



Courtesy of Library of Congress, Lange, Dorothea, "Example of self-resettlement in California. Oklahoma farm family on highway between Blythe and Indio," August 1936

### Description

This photograph is an example of self-resettlement in California. This Oklahoma farm family is waiting along a highway between Blythe and Indio. Forced by the drought of 1936 to abandon their farm, they set out with their children to drive to California. They picked cotton in Arizona for a day or two at a time to give them enough money for food and gas to continue. On this day, they were within a day's travel of their destination, Bakersfield, California. Their car had broken down en route and was abandoned.

### Text-Dependent Questions

- This family was driving their car to California from Oklahoma, but it broke down before they reached their final destination. What do you observe about the family in this image?
- Compare this photo to [Migrant Mother](#). What is similar between both photos? What is different?

### Citation Information

Lange, Dorothea, "Example of self-resettlement in California. Oklahoma farm family on highway between Blythe and Indio," August 1936. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

## Rehabilitation Client Repays his Loan in Smithfield, North Carolina, October 1936



Courtesy of Library of Congress, Rothstein, Arthur, "Rehabilitation client repays loan. Smithfield, North Carolina," October 1936

### Description

The Farm Security Administration (FSA) was created in 1935 as an effort to overcome poverty in rural areas. Under the Department of Agriculture, the FSA helped with rural rehabilitation, farm loans and subsistence homestead programs. This photograph shows a man who is a rehabilitation client and is in the process of repaying his loan with a young boy at his side.

### Text-Dependent Questions

- Look closely at the poster featured in the photo. It says, "Years of Dust. Resettlement Administration. Rescue Victims. Restores Land to Proper Use." Why would the Farm Security Administration have these goals?
- The Farm Security Administration made loans, that had to be repaid, to rural farmers who were rehabilitating the land after the Dust Bowl. Using evidence from the photo, what do you think the man is doing at the Farm Security Administration office?

### Citation Information

Rothstein, Arthur, "Rehabilitation client repays loan. Smithfield, North Carolina," October 1936. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)

## Automobile Camp North of Calipatria, California, March 1937



Courtesy of Library of Congress, Lange, Dorothea, "Auto camp north of Calipatria, California. Approximately eighty families from the Dust Bowl are camped here. They pay fifty cents a week. The only available work now is agricultural labor," March 1937

### Description

This photograph shows an automobile makeshift camp north of Calipatria, California. Approximately 80 families from the Dust Bowl were camped here. They paid 50 cents a week, and the only available work to them was agricultural labor.

### Text-Dependent Questions

- What do you observe in the camp?
- How would a camp like this help people survive the Great Depression and Dust Bowl?

### Citation Information

Lange, Dorothea, "Auto camp north of Calipatria, California. Approximately eighty families from the Dust Bowl are camped here. They pay fifty cents a week. The only available work now is agricultural labor," March 1937. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)



## Swimming Pool Created by Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Dam in Huntingdon, Pennsylvania, July 1941



Courtesy of Library of Congress, Roskam, Edwin, "Swimming pool created by CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) dam, Huntingdon, Pennsylvania," July 1941

### Description

The Reforestation Relief Act, gave jobs to 250,000 young men in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). This swimming pool in the photograph was created by a CCC dam in Huntingdon, Pennsylvania.

### Text-Dependent Questions

- As part of the New Deal, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) was created to give young men jobs. The CCC built a dam that created a swimming pool. Who benefits from building the swimming pool?
- Why would it be important to create paying jobs for young men during the Great Depression?

### Citation Information

Roskam, Edwin, "Swimming pool created by CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) dam, Huntingdon, Pennsylvania," July 1941. [Courtesy of Library of Congress](#)