

*All Pikes Peak Reads 2008
Curriculum Guide
for
Children of the Dust Bowl:
The True Story of the School
at Weedpatch Camp*

by Jerry Stanley



(<http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin>)

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Overview

The teachers' guide employs these thinking skills: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. The questions and the activities engage students at all levels. The questions and the activities align with **Colorado's Content Standards**.

Reading and Writing Content Standard #3: Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing.

Reading and Writing Content Standard #5: Students read to locate, select, and make use of relevant information from a variety of media, reference, and technological sources.

History Content Standard #1: Students understand the chronological organization of history and know how to organize events and people into major eras to identify and explain historical relationships.

History Content Standard #2: Students know how to use the processes and resources of historical inquiry.

History Content Standard #3: Students understand that societies are diverse and have changed over time.

History Content Standard #4: Students understand how science, technology, and economic activity have developed, changed, and affected societies throughout history.

Activities:

1. Collect newspaper headlines from then and now. Mix the headlines together and then sort into two piles based on your guesses of which ones were printed in the 1930s and which ones were printed in 2008. What parallels do you see?
2. Display household items (e. g., dishes, silverware, pots) covered with sand or confetti to demonstrate how hard it would be to perform daily activities. Wrap with plastic to avoid a mess.
3. Check out pictures of the 1930s from the Pikes Peak Library District and more online. Display a classroom mural of scenes from the Dust Bowl.
4. Attend the Colorado Springs Philharmonic Concert on October 11 or the Youth Concert on October 30.
5. Attend the Living Voices presentation, "Journey from the Dust: A Story of the Great Depression" at the East Library on Oct. 10 at 9 a. m., 11 a. m., or 1 p. m.
6. Attend the film screenings at the Pikes Peak Library District
7. Attend a production of Manitou Arts Theater's *Kids in the Dust Bowl: True Colorado Perspectives*.

Themes:

1. **HUMAN SURVIVAL.** Social philosophy maintains that human survival is dependent upon the banding together of humans to find strength in group unity and action. An individual's very existence is defined by his responsibility (or lack of) for those with whom he interacts. In order for the country not only to survive but also to thrive, citizens need to band together. Leo Hunt brought the people who lived at the Weedpatch Camp together for a common cause: to build their own school. How did the people work together? While Mr. Hunt gave us a model, the work is far from done. Identify the causes today that require unity and action. Develop an action plan for your class or your school.

2. **HAVES vs. HAVE NOTS.** During the Dust Bowl, the people who had little were survivors. To these people, owning or working the land meant that they had a rewarding life. The have/have not thinking still exists today. Identify the portions of the population who are marginalized and the effect on the general population. The Okie children were identified as "have nots." How did they become contributing members of society? What can we all learn from their experiences? Access to health care is a major issue facing the community, the state, and the country. What are the answers? Further, explore the issues of affordable housing, automobile insurance, and the increasing cost of food.

3. **THE LAND AND SELF-RESPECT.** Another component of this era is the tenants' connection with the land and the resultant destruction that occurs when they are torn from it – or when they fail it. These men take their dignity and self-respect from the proximity to earth and its cycles of growth. When this relationship is severed or diminished, they lose their identities and drift. They also question their ability to care for their families. People's identities are tied to land and home ownership. How is the mortgage crisis affecting Colorado Springs and the rest of the country? The expansion of Fort Carson is causing great concern for ranchers whose land might be taken by the government. Is eminent domain ethical? Should the government have the right to take someone's land?

4. **SOCIAL COMMITMENT.** People must work for the good of all. People must practice humanism – helping those who are trapped by hard times. In recent years, the country has shifted from government assistance to non-profits providing needed assistance. Research area assistance programs and agencies, such as food drives and food banks, toy drives, back-to-school supply drives, etc. Debate whether citizens should receive a "free ride" from the government when they encounter hard times. How do tax incentive packages and mortgage bailouts and national health care fit into this discussion?

Note: Throughout this teachers' guide there are suggestions for community-service projects to promote social commitment.

Vocabulary

Place the vocabulary words from each chapter into the proper categories.

Words I Think I Know	Words I Need To Learn	Words I Need to Know Just for This Book	Words, Terms for This Period

Author's Note

The term “Okie” is used in this book as the Okies used it in the 1930s and still do today. Although used by others as a term of abuse, to the Okies themselves, it meant pride, courage, and a determination to accept hardship without showing weakness. What does “Coloradoan” mean to you? Why do you like living in Colorado? Are you proud to be from Colorado?

Introduction

Note: *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck is All Pikes Peak Read’s selection for high school students and for adults. Tony Napoli abridged and adapted the novel for younger students; the Pacemaker Classic is published by Globe Ferron.

1. “When they (Okies) arrived in California, the migrants discovered that few jobs were available. They also discovered that many Californians didn’t want Okies in the state.” (1) Today, many people from Mexico, known as immigrants, find that they are not wanted in the United States, including in Colorado. Find out more about this issue. What type of jobs do immigrants frequently perform? Why would some citizens object to immigrants working in Colorado? Why was the state legislature involved in this issue during the past legislative session? What was the outcome?
2. “They were called ‘dumb Okies’ by the Californians.” (1) Discuss why labeling people and name calling are wrong.
3. “When John Steinbeck visited the Okies in this camp, he saw starving children and sickness everywhere.” (1) Hunger is still an issue in the United States today. Hold a food drive. A new twist is to donate enough items for a full-meal deal. For example, donate cans of beef stew, vegetables, and fruit and packages of a drink mix. Put the items into a paper grocery bag and staple a piece of paper on the

outside of the bag listing the contents. Students can work in a group to contribute the items.

4. “Some of the Okies lived in a farm-labor camp located near the town of Arvin in the San Joaquin Valley in central California.” (1) Locate the area on a map of the United States.
5. “Some of the Okie children were dying of starvation while farmers refused to give them surplus crops to eat. Steinbeck called this ‘a crime beyond denunciation.’ ” (1) Steinbeck was saying that anyone, especially children, going hungry in America, the land of plenty, is a national shame. Another shame in this country is the amount of food that is wasted. Currently, in Colorado, restaurants, grocery stores, etc., cannot donate leftover or unsold food to food banks. Gov. Crist of Florida signed a law releasing restaurants, hotels, grocery stores, etc., from liability. Find out more about this law and then develop a campaign for the students in your school to send emails or letters to your state legislators to pass a similar law.
6. “The story you are about to read occurred when *The Grapes of Wrath* was being banned. . .” (2) A book banned refers to people deciding that some students should not read that book. Banned Book Week sponsored by the American Library Association is September 27 – October 4, 2008. Discover which children’s books have been challenged or banned. For example, the list includes *Where’s Waldo* and *The Giving Tree*. “In 1939, Kern County (California) banned *The Grapes of Wrath*.” (42)

Chapter One: Mean Clouds

Vocabulary: Panhandle, barren, sandwiched, profanity, despair, dry farmers, irrigation, reservoirs, shriveled, sizzling, unprofitable, lean, shattered, portion, northers, roiled, fierce, gales, static electricity, jolting, electrocuted, pennant, dust pneumonia

1. “Life had always been hard on the farmers who lived in Oklahoma, and in the 1930s it was especially hard on those who lived in the Panhandle, a barren stretch of rock and red soil sandwiched between Texas, Kansas, and New Mexico.” (3) See the map on page 5. Notice that southern Colorado was included. Which towns in Colorado were affected?
2. “In 1931 it stopped raining in the Panhandle. The sky became bright and hot, and it stayed that way every day.” (3) Lack of rain is still an issue today. What was the amount of rain in the Pikes Peak region for 2008? In July Denver broke the record for the most consecutive days with temperatures over 90 degrees. Access *the Denver Post’s* archives to find out how many days recorded such high temperatures.
3. “The Depression caused the price of wheat and corn to fall so low that it made growing these crops unprofitable. Most farmers had borrowed money to buy their land and had borrowed again against their land in lean years. When the prices for their crops fell, many couldn’t make payments to the banks that held title to their

- land.” (3) Many historians believe that this era started the programs of borrowing money – and banks extending credit. Many people in the United States lost their houses in foreclosures during the past several months. Why did banks or mortgage companies extend credit to people who might be unable to repay the loans? How many homes were foreclosed during 2008 compared to 2007? Do you agree or disagree with the federal government assisting?
4. “It became known as the great Dust Bowl. . .” (4) “The name ‘dust bowl’ was casually coined by Associated Press reporter Robert E. Geiger who was familiar with the Rose Bowl and Orange Bowl football championships. He used the term in one of a series of articles he wrote for the Washington (D. C.) *Evening Star* in April 1935. On April 15, he stated, ‘Three little words. . .rule life in the dust bowl of the continent – if it rains.’ ” (Yancey, 12) Research more about Geiger’s work.



(www.weru.ksu.edu/nes)

5. “Frequently, the wind blew more than fifty miles an hour, carrying away the topsoil and leaving only hard red clay, which made farming impossible.” (5) Compare the winds then to now. Farming the hard clay would be like trying to grow crops on cement. Explain how weeds seem to grow on sidewalks and driveways. Try growing a sweet potato plant. Then donate your plant to a nursing home resident.



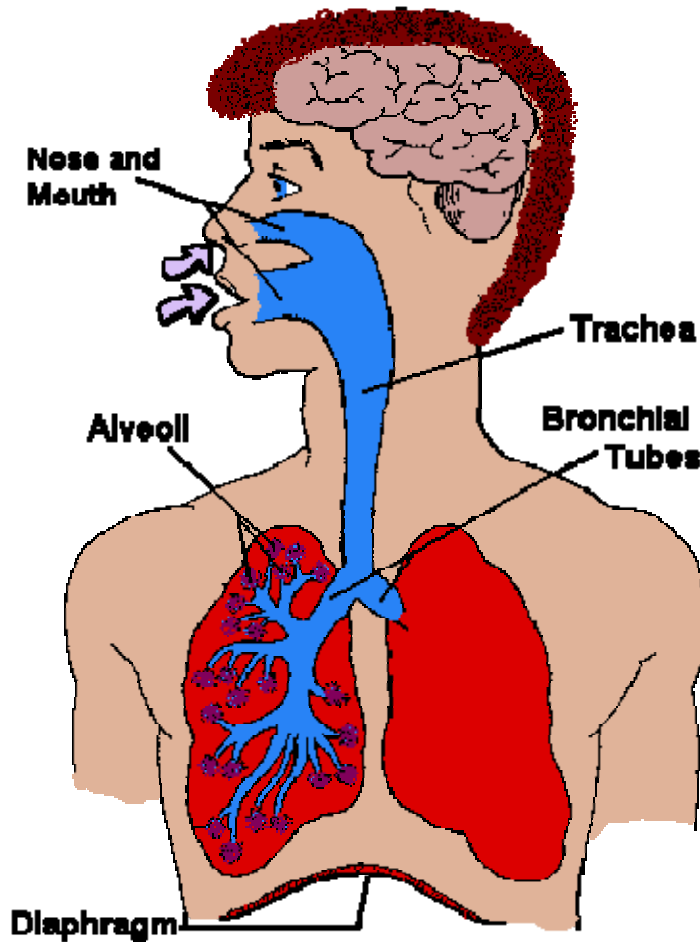
<http://dougdawg.blogspot.com>

6. “Children were assigned the task of cleaning the nostrils of cows two or three times a day.” (7) Why was this task important? (Cows often died due to their stomachs being full of dust and dirt.) In the 1930s, children then had to perform many chores. What chores are you assigned?

7. “The storms also created a charge of free-flowing static electricity in the air. If you touched anything metal – a frying pan, a pump handle, a doorknob – you could get a jolting shock.” (8) Have you ever been shocked by static electricity? What causes static electricity? What electronics today are affected by it? What do you do to protect your computer?

8. “The Dust Bowl killed people who stayed out too long without shelter . . . However, more people died from ‘dust pneumonia’ – when the dust caused severe damage to the lungs.” (8) Research respiratory diseases, such as asthma, and compare

the disease you selected with dust pneumonia.



9. “The Okies planted mulberry trees for windbreaks and plowed furrows deep in the ground to help keep the soil in place.” (10) Did the trees survive? (Recall that on page 4, the author mentioned that the area received only a few drops of rain each year for five straight years.) But, back then, people used dish, bath, or scrub water to water plants. They did a better job of conserving water than we seem to do today. Talk with your parents to devise a plan to conserve water. For example, take shorter showers, turn off the water while brushing your teeth. See the Colorado Springs Utilities Department website for suggestions.

Chapter: Two Mother Road

Vocabulary: conquer, adversity, lush, migration, exodus, jalopy, straddling, lashed, sputtered, disrepair, challenge, steep, absence, summit, perilous, unreliable, severe, caravan, eventually

1. The Okies were penniless. During the 1930s, the penny had value. Today, it costs more for the federal government to make pennies than the value of the coin (one

- cent). Debate whether the federal government should discontinue making pennies. Research programs, such as Pennies for Peace, that rely heavily on donated pennies. Hold a penny drive at your school for one of the organizations. Do you pick up pennies when you see them on the street or sidewalk? Have you ever worn penny loafers? How are pennies for loafers like jibbits for Crocs today?
2. “Above all, the Dust Bowlers believed they would find work in California – if they could get there. . . The advertisements for workers led to what is called the Dust Bowl migration. It was the largest migration of people in U. S. history.” (11, 12) “To the Okies the word ‘California’ was magical . . .” (11) What is the reputation of California today? Why are so many people leaving California today? (high prices, traffic, poor air quality)
 3. “Many of these Okies ‘rode the rail’ to California, sneaking aboard empty railroad boxcars. . .Some. . .hitchhiked to California.” (13) Other authors report that some people also rode Greyhound buses. Find more pictures of people traveling to California to add to the classroom mural.



4. “For those with their own vehicles, an old car with three mattresses lashed to its roof was called ‘rich.’ A car with two mattresses was said to be ‘mediocre.’ And if someone saw a car with just one mattress, they’d say, ‘There goes a poor Okie.’” (13) Define rich, middle income, and poor today.
5. “While preparing for the trip of nearly two thousand miles, which might take them from three weeks to six months, many Okie families sang the popular Jack Bryant song ‘Sunny Cal.’ (14) Sing the song!
6. Route 66 is a famous road in the United States. Why is it famous? When this book was published in 1992, the author wrote that “old Route 66 is closed or in a state of disrepair.” (15) Is that still the condition of the route today? Which other roads in the United States are well known? (e. g., Interstate 70 for being the first interstate to link the eastern U. S. with the western U. S.)



7. “At the end of the day the families would camp by the side of the road and wash clothes, if there was a stream or ditch nearby.” (17) Many reports of this road trip mention the courtesy extended to each other. For example, when families selected a place to camp, they always asked the other people there for permission to camp. It seems that some basic courtesies are no longer practiced. What courtesies should we be practicing? What courtesy issues have cell phones generated?
8. “Always they kept up hope: hope that the truck wouldn’t overheat again, hope that the tires would last one more day, hope that there would be enough food and water for tomorrow, hope that they would eventually ‘light’ in California, and, above all, hope that they could find a job when they got there.” (20) Do Americans have hope today that things will get better? that the economy will improve?

Chapter Three: Dead Time

Vocabulary: Tehachapi Grade, Tehachapi Mountains, descended, paradise, trance, vast, ramshackle, nectarines, pamphlet, insufficient, pneumonia, inevitably, disease, sanitary, inadequate, epidemics, dysentery, tuberculosis, squalor, improvement, maintenance, auditorium, twanged

1. “When we saw the valley, we started hollerin’ and yellin’ cause we knew it was Californ’.” (22) Have you ever taken a long road trip? What was your reaction when you finally arrived at your destination?
2. “Everywhere they went it was the same – too many workers and not enough jobs. The growers in California had advertised for more workers than they actually needed, so there was a surplus of farm labor. This suited the growers, because the excess of workers drove wages down.” (23) Research and draw the flyers that encouraged Okies to move to California. Compare flyers as a means of communication for getting the message out today. Do you receive flyers stuck in your door or on the mailbox?

Unemployment was an issue then, and is an issue now. According to an article by the Associated Press, “(the) unemployment rate is at its highest in 4 years and is expected to climb. . .Employers clamped down on hiring and cut 51,000 jobs in July, the Labor Department said. The economy has shed jobs each month this year – 463,000 in all. The unemployment rate rose to 5.7 percent, up from 5.5 percent in June.” (www.ap.org) Research which industries had the biggest job losses.

3. “This (excess of available workers) suited the growers because the excess of workers drove wages down.” (23) Create a table to highlight the wages paid for the jobs:

wage	job
25 cents per hour	picking cotton
35 cents per hour	picking plums, nectarines
20 cents per hour	digging potatoes, lettuce
2 ½ cents/box	picking peaches
\$1/ton	picking peaches

Then create a table for chores you do and the amount you are paid (if you are paid) or the amount many children are paid:

wage	job
	walking the dog
	cleaning own room
	doing the dishes
	setting the table
	mowing the lawn
	raking leaves

4. “The average field hand worked sixteen hours a day, seven days a week, and earned four dollars a week.” (24) What are average wages today for migrant workers? What is the minimum wage? When did the minimum wage increase go into effect? What is the Fair Labor Standards Act? (The FLSA establishes minimum wage, overtime pay, recordkeeping, and your employment standards affecting employees in the private sector and in the government sector. The federal minimum wage was \$5.85 per hour effective July 24, 2007; \$6.55 per hour effective July 24, 2008; and \$7.25 per hour effective July 24, 2009. Many states also have minimum wage laws. In cases where an employee is subject to both state and federal minimum wage laws, the employee is entitled to the higher minimum wage.) (www.dol.gov/esa.whd.flssa/)

5. John Steinbeck, the author of *The Grapes of Wrath*, described the situation in his pamphlet, “Their Blood Is Strong.” Compare the downward spiral with the plight of families today.

Then: No work = no gas = no food = insufficient rain = sickness. (25)

Now: No work =

6. “. . .the Okies lived in. . .tents and shacks made out of cardboard and tin. Others lived on ditch banks, under bridges, and in fields of weed and rock.” (25) The living situation was less than desirable. Compare those living conditions with the places where many homeless people live today. Due to skyrocketing housing costs and many houses being foreclosed, tent cities popped up in Los Angeles during spring 2008. Show the children pictures of those sites and have them guess when the tent cities were in L. A. They’ll be surprised that it was 2008! View the BBC news report at <http://blogspot.com>.



7. “California was one of the richest agricultural states in the nation; yet, Okie children were starving. The farms produced more than could be picked or sold, but if the Okies tried to help themselves to the surplus crop left on the ground, the growers might pour oil on the food. . . John Steinbeck saw this happen several times and called it the saddest , bitterest thing of all.’ ” (25, 26) Other reports from this time describe kerosene being poured on the excess fruit and animals being buried so that the hungry people couldn’t access the meat. Hunger in America exists today. Hold a food drive for local food banks. Many schools participate in the local Harvest of Love, the Souper Bowl drive the week before the Super Bowl by collecting cans of soup, and the U. S. Post Office’s Stamp Out Hunger program in May.

8. “Donald Ray ate a frostbitten orange that was part of the family’s wages for working in an orange grove. Donald got sick, and Lillian took him to Tulare County Hospital for treatment. But the hospital said it didn’t take ‘Okies,’ and it refused to admit him. Donald died.” (28) Research Memorial Hospital’s and Penrose-St. Francis Hospital’s policies for treating indigent patients. Who pays their bills?

9. “In 1936, the Farm Security Administration, an agency of the Department of Agriculture, started to build twelve camps in the San Joaquin Valley. . . They were built to provide the Okies with emergency shelter and better living conditions. One of these compounds was named Arvin Federal Camp, located at the base of Tehachapi Grade about fifteen miles south of Bakersfield near the towns of Arvin and Weedpatch. . . the Okies called this place Weedpatch Camp.” (29) While the government camps provided better facilities than non-government squatters’ camps, they were still a far cry from having one’s own home. Today, many people live in government housing. Research more about government housing. Where in Colorado Springs does government housing exist? Also, the government provided trailers to many people who were displaced due to Hurricane Katrina. However, numerous problems existed. Research the issues and report to the class.

10. Summarize life in a government-run camp. (pp. 30-33) Then, compare their living situation with yours.

11. “. . . there was a makeshift auditorium constructed of scrap lumber that was used as a dance hall on Saturday nights. Here families would gather to sing and ‘pick,’ playing an odd assortment of instruments that clattered and twanged – spoon, washboard, saw, and of course banjo, harmonica, fiddle, and guitar.” (31) Form a “kitchen” band.

12. “Every cloud has a silver lining.” (31) What does that expression mean? Do you agree with it? How can you apply that philosophy to your own life?

Chapter Four: “Okie, Go Home!”

Vocabulary: ridicule, rejection, shame, scum, horde, hostile, epidemics, sanitation, twang, drawl, cannery, brawl, “maggie,” lice, humiliated, jeered

1. “When they left Weedpatch Camp to find work, the Okies faced ridicule, rejection, and shame. . . When an Okie family went to downtown Bakersfield, they saw signs on store windows reading, ‘OKIES – GO SHOPPING SOMEWHERE ELSE’ and ‘NO OKIES ALLOWED.’ ” (34) These hostile environments remind many people of the segregation that Blacks faced. Compare the two situations.

2. “Californians were hostile to Okies because they compete with residents for jobs and because taxpayers were forced to pay for problems that arose as a result of the Okie migration to California.” (34) The hostile attitude still exists in some places today due to illegal immigrants. Debate the issues.
3. “These patrols, intended to stop the flood of migrants into California, became known as the ‘Bum Blockade.’ ” (34) Today, the federal government implemented a plan to stop the flood of illegal immigrants from Mexico into the United States. Research the pros and the cons of building a fence between the two countries. Discuss the issues, including whether the plan is successful.
4. “To some of the people who lived in Weedpatch Camp, ‘Okie,’ was a ‘fightin’ word.’ They were proud of who they were, proud to have endured such hardships, proud enough to fight back.” (37) America is a melting pot of many cultures. What is your family’s ancestry? Why are you proud to be an American?
5. “But the feeling of rejection was greatest among Okie children. Because they had been poor for so long and had been traveling for months to get to California, the Okie children had not been able to attend school, and many couldn’t read or write. When they went to school each day, most of the teachers ignored the migrants, believing that Okie kids were too stupid to learn the alphabet, too dumb to master math, and too ‘retarded’ to learn much of anything.” (38, 39) It wasn’t just the teachers who were prejudiced against the Okie children. Other children also made fun of them. Today, many children report being miserable at school due to name calling, unpopularity, and bullying. What does your school do to ensure that all children are welcome? Write a plan for your school to support activities such as National Mix-It Up Day.
6. “They were tough and they believed they could be as good as anyone else if they were just given a chance.” (39) We each have the personal responsibility to treat others respectfully. Write a pledge to treat others well. For ideas, see the Birmingham Pledge at birminghampledge.org or the pledge at paperclipcampaign.com.

Chapter Five: Mr. Hart

Vocabulary: makeshift, tuberculosis, sanitarium, PTA, superintendent, fever pitch, Bum Brigades, irate, shifters, communist, jeopardy, masonry

1. When Leo Hart was elected superintendent of Kern County, “he knew that they ate with their fingers and went to the bathroom outdoors and needed, as Leo put it, training in ‘manners, morals, and etiquette.’ ” (41) Many people believe that youngsters, in general, need such training. What is your opinion? Research schools that are offering classes in manners and etiquette. Would you take such a class? Write a curriculum for the class.
2. “Leo said, ‘I could never understand why these kids should be treated differently. I could never understand why they shouldn’t be given the same opportunity as others. Someone had to do something for them because no one cared about them.’ ” (44) Leo Hart was a pioneer in equal education in California. Today, some children are targeted due to having shabby clothes or to missing basic school supplies. Some schools have addressed these issues by requiring students to wear uniforms. What is your opinion of public schools requiring uniforms? Design uniforms for your school. Additionally, agencies

such as The Assistance League implemented programs like Operation School Bell. Organize a school supplies drive at your school.

3. “In 1940 Leo decided that if no one wanted the Okie kids in the public schools, then maybe the Okie children should have their own school. It would be a different school, he thought. . .It would teach practical skills.” (44) This idea was revolutionary regarding providing vocational education. Today, many people are rethinking the way public high schools provide a broad-based education. Governor Ritter established a commission to review changes, including vocational education. Discuss the plan.

Chapter Six: Weedpatch School

Vocabulary: hostile, condemned, doctorate, animal husbandry, masons, scrounger, stumped, crudely, shunned, lathe, pluck, bolls, hulls, skeptical

1. Superintendent Hart received permission from the president of the school board to build an “emergency” school for the Okie children. “At the same time, Leo made friends with Dewey Russell, the manager of Weedpatch Camp and a close friend of John Steinbeck. . .Leo leased a ten-acre site of land from the federal government. . .next to the camp where Leo played with the children. . .And so Weedpatch School started with no grass, no sidewalks, no playground equipment, no toilets, no water, no books, no teachers.” (45) Compare their school with your school.

2. “During the spring and summer of 1940, Leo and Edna stumped Kern County for donations of supplies and materials. . .” (47) Most public schools in Colorado Springs seem to have adequate supplies and to be in decent shape. However, that situation is not true for public schools in rural Colorado. House Speaker Andrew Romanoff visited rural Colorado schools. He said, “I happen to think the quality of your education shouldn’t depend on your ZIP code.” (andrewromanoff.blogspot.com) His remarks refer to the state funding formula that relies largely on property taxes. Research the condition of rural schools in Colorado and what the state legislature proposes. Can urban schools provide assistance to rural schools?

Chapter Seven: Something to Watch

Vocabulary: whatnot, hygiene, instilling, partiality, ridicule, renovated, self-sufficient, rouge, cod-liver oil

1. “Brick by brick, board by board, the children of the Dust Bowl, eight teachers, and Leo Hart built Weedpatch School. . .As the weeks stretched into months, the school rose from the field. Within two months the two condemned buildings had been renovated and made into four general-purpose classrooms. . .” (47-52) Many discarded items were renovated to be used in the new school. Although there aren’t many small schools that need to be built in the area today, there are other places where students can help. Develop a community-service plan for your school. Contact agencies such as Silver Key, Habitat for Humanity, etc.

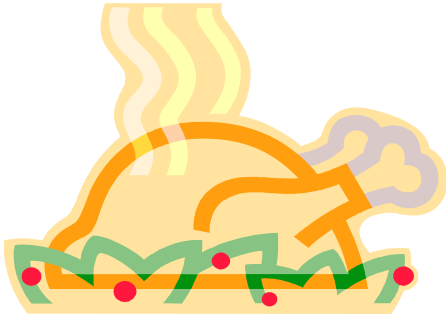
2. “There was more. By October the field was alive with the sound of a dozen hoes and clattering farm machinery striking hard earth. The Okie children plowed part of the school field and planted vegetables and other crops. . .potatoes, alfalfa, tomatoes, carrots, celery, corn, and watermelon.” (53) During this past spring, Colorado College students planted crops near the college. However, a neighbor complained. Read more about this story in the *Gazette’s* archives. Since the city’s Park and Rec Department could no longer afford to maintain the flower beds around town, private groups adopted the flower beds. Explore the idea of adopting a flower bed but using the land to grow crops to donate to the local food banks. Could you have a vegetable garden on your school grounds? in your backyard?
3. “Rose Gilger taught them science, typing. . .and sewing, so their families didn’t have to wear oversize clothes or rags.” (56) Most school districts today have removed home economics classes from the curriculum. Explore why home ec is no longer offered. If you feel that home ed should be reinstated, develop an argument to present to the school board.
4. “Chemistry teacher Barbara Sabovitch even taught the girls how to make face cream, rouge, and lipstick – in a chemistry lab!” (56) Research recipes for making these products, as well as other personal care products such as hand cream and shampoo. Make the products!
5. “Determination and a lot of hard work combined to change the fate of the Okie children from Weedpatch Camp. . .the children came to believe that anything was possible – and none of them doubted this after Leo picked up a shovel one day and started to dig at the east end of the field between the school and the camp. . .Leo said he was digging a swimming pool.” (58, 59) Plan a project to help people, encourage others to get involved, and then write an entry for the *Colorado Springs Gazette* Hub section.
6. “If the migrant children did not ‘goof off,’ Leo said, ‘if they kept up on their academics,’ he would let them dig in their spare time. ‘Dig in the hole,’ the children called it. . . ‘The hole’ became the first public swimming pool in Kern County.” (59) What did the children learn from Superintendent Hart? Do you have a favorite teacher? Why is that person special to you? What did you learn from that teacher?

Chapter Eight: Our School

Vocabulary: suspension, sporadic, quantum, intruders, pervading affection, nylons

1. “For some students at Weedpatch School, education had an immediate practical effect. For example, Joyce Foster. . .was appointed the task of writing a letter to relatives in Clinton conveying the sad news (that her father had died.) She was the only member of her family who could write. Joyce also wrote an essay about her father and read it aloud to the Okie families gathered in the auditorium at Weedpatch Camp. . .Her essay was called ‘An Okie Man.’ ” (62, 63) Write an essay as a tribute to one of your parents. Read it aloud to the class.
2. “Patsy Lamb told the story of the first Thanksgiving at the school. . .when we sat down and tried to eat the turkey, most of us couldn’t. We never had turkey before. We didn’t like the taste. We pushed the food around on our plates. Later we got some beans from the camp and we ate beans for our Thanksgiving dinner.” (64, 65) What is your most

unusual Thanksgiving dinner? Today, many families in the Pikes Peak region cannot afford a traditional Thanksgiving dinner. In addition to supporting the Harvest of Love food drive at your school, work with your school's counselors and/or administrators to raise funds to buy Thanksgiving dinners for needy families who children attend your school. Ideas to raise the funds include hosting roller skating parties at Skate City and sponsoring a hat day, etc., whereby students pay one dollar for the privilege of wearing hats or house slippers, etc., to school for the day. The Thanksgiving dinner packages can be purchased from local grocery stores, and the staff can deliver the dinners to retain the families' confidentiality.



3. "Other students have vivid memories of the outings at the school. . .Leo and the teachers took the children on one-day vacations, which Leo called 'outings.' " (65) Today, those out-of-school adventures are called "field trips." Due to budget constraints and the high price of gas, many schools have had to reduce or to eliminate field trips. How can schools afford to offer field trips? Share memories of field trips with your classmates.

4. The children at the Weedpatch School showed pride in their school by fighting back when challenged. "Perhaps as many as fifty children were playing baseball at the school or swimming in the pool when three cars driven by teenage boys began to circle the playground. The teenage boys got out of the cars and squared off in front of Eddie and a line of other sixteen-year-old boys from the camp. When the intruders hurled rocks into the swimming pool, the Okie boys charged forward and the Fight was on. . .That was what the Okie children meant when they said, "It was *our* school.' " (67) Does school pride still exist today? Define school pride for your school. How do you show school pride? How do students in your school stick up for each other?

5. "Surely every day was special to the four hundred or so students who attended Weedpatch School. For it was there that they learned a most important lesson: they were as good as anybody else." (70) How do students today learn that important lesson?

Chapter Nine: Sunset School

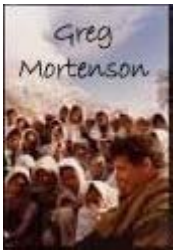
Vocabulary: commending, absorbed, merged, ragamuffins, tattered

1. "Gradually the community around Weedpatch Camp began to hear stories about the Okie school . . .They heard that the school's cafeteria served a hot breakfast for one cent and a hot lunch for two cents or offered these meals free if pupils had no money." (71) Research the history of school lunch programs. What programs are offered at your

school? With more people becoming more nutrition conscious, they are decrying junk food and sodas being offered to students. How has your school incorporated offerings that are more nutritious? Plan the menus. Remember to thank the people who work in your school cafeteria!

2. “Arvin Federal *Emergency* School – the school that Okie children built from scratch – ended in 1944. The district attorney for Kern County wrote to the state attorney general in Sacramento and asked for a legal opinion about the status of the school. The legal ruling stated that an emergency could not last more than five years, and therefore Leo could no longer run his school. Accordingly, within a matter of months, the school was absorbed by Vineland School District. . . Today it is known as Sunset School.” (72) What is the history of your school? The Arvin/Weedpatch School offered a special curriculum. Today charter schools have become popular. How are charter schools different from regular public or private schools? Debate the issue of charter schools.

3. Leo Hart said, “You know, history is always full of choices. It’s possible to achieve anything. Look at these kids, and look at what they’ve become.” (76) Many people who read this inspiring story wish that they could build schools today for needy children. They can! Read about Greg Mortenson, a mountain climber, who promised children in the Middle East that he would build schools for them. He made this promise after he witnessed the children squatting in the dirt to attend “school” and using sticks to write. Visit the websites to learn more about how you can help build schools: www.gregmortenson.com and [pennies for peace.org](http://penniesforpeace.org).



www.penniesforpeace.org

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Appendix

SUNNY CAL

Jack Bryant
Firebaugh, 1940

You've all heard the story
Of old Sunny Cal
The place where it never rains
They say it don't know how.

They say, "Come on, you Okies,
Work is easy found
Bring along your cotton pack
You can pick the whole year round.

Get your money ever' night
Spread your blanket on the ground
It' s always bright and warm
You can sleep right on the ground."

But listen to me Okies
I came out here one day
Spent all my money getting here
Now I can't get away.

For Further Information

www.ravenradiotheater.com (The script of Leo Hart's story sells for \$28.00.)
www.weedpatchcamp.com (Complete information about all aspects of the school.)
www.weedpatchcamp.com/Festival/festival.com (Information about the annual Dust Bowl Festival.)

Teachers' Noted: The original intention was to provide a teachers' guide for *Survival in the Storm: The Dust Bowl Diary of Grace Edwards, Dalhart, Texas 1935* (Dear America series.) However, when we learned that the book is out of print, we opted not to provide a guide for this fiction book. We do recommend it as a choice for a fiction book to use along with *Children of the Dust Bowl*. Another recommendation is *Out of the Dust* by

Karen Hesse; a teachers' guide is available on line at ppld.org or by calling PPLD at 531-6333, extension 1212.