

All Pikes Peak Reads 2008
Curriculum Guide
For
Dust For Dinner

By Ann Turner



U. S. National Archive

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Pre-Reading

1. Complete a KWL table with students about the Dust Bowl.

What I Know	What I Want to Know	What I Learned

Add more rows, as needed. Sample issues include:

- ✓ What is the Dust Bowl? (the worst environmental disaster in the U. S.)
- ✓ What years did the Dust Bowl occur? (early to mid 1930s)
- ✓ What region of the country was primarily affected? (See map below.)
- ✓ How much dust blew? (tons)
- ✓ How many people were affected? (300,000 to 400,000)
- ✓ What caused the Dust Bowl? (primarily poor farming practices)
- ✓ How did the people survive?
- ✓ Why did some people stay and some leave?

2. Read the story for enjoyment first. Then, go back and reread it for better understanding.

3. Share the maps of the Dust Bowl. Post a large map of the United States.



The Dust Bowl



(www.englis.uius.edu)

Chapter 1 Dust Storm

1. Who is the narrator? (Jake)
2. The story begins by telling and showing the readers the family's little house. From the clues in the picture (e. g., the windmill) and from your background knowledge of the states affected, where did the family live? (unknown – maybe southeastern Colorado)
3. What can you tell about the farm from the picture? (isolated – as no other houses around, located not too far from the road, as the mailbox is probably set along the road for the mail carrier to reach from his car, small house with a front porch, dormer window indicates an upstairs or an attic, the grass is still green in spots, there is still some grass, the trees in the back of the house have leaves, and there are fence posts)
4. Rural mail delivery began in the United States on October 1, 1891. Search for more information about rural mail delivery. Discuss whether the post office should quit delivering mail on Saturdays in order to save money.
5. One of the descriptions of the yard mentions that there is still grass. When does grass die? (lies dormant in late fall; from lack of water; and from insects, such as grasshoppers, and rabbits eating the grass) Fact: Swarms of grasshoppers descended on the farms and ate all of the crops and plants – if the rabbits hadn't eaten the foliage first.



6. From looking at the picture and from the text on pages 6 – 7, what do we learn?
 a. Mama b. Papa c. Jake (boy) d. a girl e. a dog with a collar
 f. have a radio g. chest of drawers h. wood floors i. floor lamp j. rocker
 k. 2 pictures on the wall l. family danced at night m. They planted corn.

7. What were some of the popular songs of that period? Play a CD of 1930s songs. Sing some of the songs. What songs do you like today? Fact: For entertainment, people listened to the radio, danced, played games, read books, and attended church socials.

8. Does your family dance together? What activities do you do for fun together as a family? What is your favorite activity to do together as a family?

9. How many people are in your family? Share family pictures.

10. Papa told Jake that he was growing like a weed. What does that expression mean? Have your parents or relatives ever told you that you are growing like a weed? Did you grow over the summer? If so, how much?

11. “But one year the rains stopped.” (9) Which year? (between 1932 – 1938) Fact: Drought hit the Great Plains in the 1930s. “Catastrophic dust storms struck America’s heartland between 1932 and 1938. In 1932, fourteen dust storms were reported; in 1933, 38; and 72 in 1937.” (Yancey, pp. 10-11) Drought still occurs in the United States. Discuss the high temperatures and the low rainfall in Colorado in 2008. In July, Denver broke the record for the number of consecutive days of high temperatures. How many days?

12. From the picture on page 9, what do we see? (a barn, a few more trees). Note that the grass is now brown, indicating a change in weather or lack of rain. Also note that the children and their dad are wearing the same clothes from the previous picture. During

that time, most people couldn't afford many clothes. Fact: Mothers made most of the clothes often from potato or feed sacks. Did your parents buy you new school clothes? Do you own more than one pair of jeans? What is your favorite outfit? Hold a clothing and shoe drive to benefit needy people. Sometimes agencies, such as the Marian House Soup Kitchen or the Red Cross Shelter, accept single clean socks and gloves.

13. "The wind blew dust in to the house." (10) How could dust be blown into their house? (Houses were not tightly constructed then.)

14. "One night, I said, 'We are having dust for dinner!'" (10) What do you think Jake meant? (He meant that the dust was blowing onto their food.) Fact: Mothers had a hard time keeping the house clean, particularly the kitchen. Dishes were usually stored on shelves. Before serving food, the table and the dishes had to be washed and then covered with a tablecloth so that they would stay clean by the time the food was ready. Sometimes, the dust was so bad that people ducked underneath the tablecloths to eat.

15. List the animals pictured on pages 12 – 13. (horse, cow, sheep, chicken, dog) They family probably had two horses to hitch to their plow. Fact: Back then, farmers lived off the food they grew, ate the eggs from the chicken, and drank the milk from the cow. Fact: As the dust storms worsened and as the crops failed, many of the animals had little to eat. Which animal is named "Snowball"? How can you tell?

16. "A storm is coming!" (13)



Find more pictures from the Dust Bowl and create a mural for the classroom.

17. How could the family tell that a storm was coming? (a dark sky – p. 12; thunder – p. 12; wind – pictures on pages 12 -15; lightning – p. 15) How can you tell that a storm is approaching today? Why should people take cover when it is lightning?

18. Many families also covered the windows and doors with wet cloths. In the story, Mama gave everyone wet cloths to put over their faces. Explain why wet cloths would be better than dry cloths. Try an experiment with wet and dry paper towels. Which one catches the most dirt? Why?

19. On page 18, Maggy asks how they can have a storm without rain. Most descriptions of the dust storms do not mention lightning or thunder – just wind and dust. Why did the author include them? Fact: The storms were called “dusters.”

20. “Mama coughed and said, ‘The rains will come back. Next year will be better.’ ” (19) What year does Mama mean? Fact: Three-fifths of the people who lived in the Dust Bowl area stayed and hoped that the next year would be better. Fact: Substantial rain did not return until the end of the 1930s.

Chapter 2 Sold!

1. Why was the family afraid? (No rain meant no crops which meant no food and no money.)

2. “We had two more dust storms, and five cows died.” (20) What caused the cows to die? (inhaling too much dust, their stomachs filling up with dust/dirt)

3. Do you think that the parents are making the right decision to sell the farm and to move to California? Have students who believe that the family should move stand on one side of the room, and students who believe that the family should stay stand on the other side. As the students explain their reasons why they stood on one side or the other, they should try to convince students to change locations. If students are undecided, they stand in the middle of the room.

Move	Stay
better chance for a job	to stay by family, friends
better life for the family	own a house

4. Why didn't the family take their possessions? (no room to take everything) What is an auction? If all of their neighbors are suffering as well from the drought and from the dust storms, who will buy the farm? Fact: Penny sales were often held, whereby people – often outsiders – bid low on items. If you were to move and could take only five items, which items would you take?

5. Make up a tune and sing along with Maggy; “No dust in Cal-i-for-ni-ay.”

6. At the last minute, Mama tells Jake to hide the radio so that it isn't sold. Why was the radio so important to Mama? (She is losing all other personal possessions and it reminds her of happier times.)

7. Clarification from page 13: Snowball is a sheep. Do you have a pet? Have you ever had a pet? Explain how hard it would be to sell your pet or to give it away if you had to move. Sometimes people decide to give their pets away to organizations to try to find new homes. What is the purpose of the Humane Society and other animal rescue organizations? What can you do to help those organizations? (Check with the organizations to find out whether they need folded newspapers for the cages and whether they accept donated dog or cat food.)

Chapter 3 – Moving

1. Papa's explanation that they (the banks) could not take their truck because they owned it implies that they did not own other items, such as the farm equipment. Fact: Farmers often borrowed money from the banks to buy farm equipment. When the crops failed and the farmers could not pay the loans, the banks foreclosed. Some farmers lost their farms when they couldn't pay the taxes. Compare the situation to the housing crisis today. Also, the City of Colorado Springs and El Paso County administrators are discussing budget cuts since tax revenues are lower than last year, meaning that people aren't buying as much. Do you have any suggestions for the city and/or for the county administrators? What items should they keep? (police? fire protection? road maintenance? parks? sports activities?)

2. "Maggy waved good-bye, but I said, 'Who are you waving to? Everyone we know lost their farms and went west.'" (32) Answer Jake's question. (She's waving good-bye to her former life, to her memories, to her house, porch, yard, barn, etc.) Fact: Many houses were tractored out, which means that tractors tore down the houses so that the ground could be used for farming and so that the families couldn't return or drifters couldn't live there.)

3. Use a large map of the United States to trace their journey on Route 66. Start in Oklahoma and end in Bakersfield, California. Fact: Thousands of people took that route hoping for a better life.



4. “That night we set up our tent beside the others near the road.” (34) Why didn’t any of the families stay in a motel? (Dad said on page 22 that they had no money.) Fact: Most “Okies” camped on the roadsides near other families traveling west. They usually camped near a source of water, even if it was a ditch. As a courtesy, the family asked the people who were already there if was acceptable for them to camp there also. Fact: The term “Okies” came to mean all people who migrated to California looking for farm work. Why is name calling wrong? What should students do when they hear someone call someone else a derogatory name?

5. “That day they (Mama and Papa) found work.” (37) Were the children too young to work? How old do you think the children are? Fact: Many children helped in the fields so that the families could earn more money.



(www.memory.loc.gov)

6. “Other days they did not (find work), and we had only bread and water to eat.” (37) Fact: The migrant workers were not generally welcomed in California. People poured kerosene over food so that the migrants couldn’t eat it. Activity: Hold a food drive in your school for needy people. A new twist on a food drive is the full-meal deal. People provide non-perishable food items for one meal. For example, cans of chicken, box of rice, cans of cream of chicken soup for a casserole; cans of vegetables and fruit; box of jello; drink mix. Put all of the items into a paper grocery bag and list the items on a piece of paper attached to the bag.

7. Mama still had hope. “Papa will find a job.” (38) Fact: Land owners had distributed thousands of flyers so that they could lower wages since so many people were looking for work. Predict whether Papa will find a job.

8. Why didn’t Papa want to sell the radio? (p. 39) (The radio provided a diversion from their problems.) With television going to high definition in 2009, some people are saying that they will be unable to afford the conversion kits and will be unable to watch TV, that they will return to listening to their radios. What is your opinion? Can you imagine life without television? How many radios does your family have?

Chapter 4 Trouble

1. When Papa finds a real job, Jake and Maggy sang, “She’ll be coming ‘round the mountain.” (42) The song is called an American folk song. “The first printed version of the song appeared in Carl Sandburg’s *The American Songbag* in 1927, although the song is believed to have been written in the late 1800s. The song was based on an old Negro spiritual titled, ‘When the Chariot Comes,’ which is sung to the same melody. During the 19th century, it spread through Appalachia where the lyrics were changed into their current form. The song was later sung by railroad work gangs in the Midwestern United States in the 1890s. The song’s style is reminiscent of the call and response structure of many folk songs of the time, where one person would shout the first line and others repeat.” (<http://en.wikipedia.org>) Access the lyrics and the tune at www.kiddiddles.com.

2. Jake cautions Sam, the dog. “Don’t even look a these chickens.” (43) Does his warning tell us that Sam bothered the chickens on the family farm in the past? Does the warning foreshadow the trouble mentioned in the chapter’s title?
3. Whose fault was it that Sam killed a rooster? How could this incident have been avoided? (They could have kept Sam in the tent; tied up Sam) (Note the dog collar Sam is wearing on pages 7, 12, 16, 30, 47, and 49.)
4. “Oh, Sam, how could you!” (47) Answer the question. What kind of dog is Sam? (Some breeds like to chase birds.) (probably a retriever)
5. “Later Papa said sternly, ‘The farmer told me either the dog goes, or we go.’ ” (48) Predict the family’s decision.
6. Is Jake right that it is his and Sam’s fault? (49)
7. Why didn’t the family get rid of Sam so that Papa could keep his job? (He was all they had left of their old farm. Have the students locate the sentence on page 48.)

Chapter 5 A House

1. “We won’t stop until we get to San Francisco.” (50) Map the family’s route from their current location to San Francisco.
2. “Mama made us do lessons all those long, slow days.” (52) Did they bring their school books with them? From the picture, what lesson do you think they are doing? (Accept any logical answer. They probably aren’t studying arithmetic since they aren’t using paper.) Pennies for Peace is a national program whereby students collect pennies to send to Greg Mortenson to build schools in the Middle East. Greg who was a mountain climber decided to build schools there when he saw the children squatting in the dirt and using sticks for writing. Find out more at penniesforpeace.org. Collect pennies to send to Greg.
3. When Papa got a job as a watchman at a big store, he brought cookies home. Serve cookies – or bring in packages of store-bought cookies to be donated to the Soup Kitchen.
4. What does “Sweets for the sweet” mean? (55) What are your favorite sweets?
5. “We packed up our truck for the last time. Other people looked at us. They wished they had a job, too.” (56) Fact: Many people lived in camps. Read *Children of the Dust Bowl: The True Story of the School at Weedpatch Camp* by Jerry Stanley.
6. “Papa drove to a house with blue shutters.” (58) Draw your house.

7. “Mama set up the radio on the table. A sweet, sad song came out. ‘Lord, I’m going down this road feeling bad . . .’ It is about us, I said.” (60) Listen to or read the song’s lyrics and decide whether you agree that it is about hard time, traveling, and still being together. Fact: The song was written by Woody Guthrie. See www.woodyguthrie.org. Fact: “Singer Woodrow Wilson ‘Woody’ Guthrie captured some of the melancholy humor of the dust bowl in songs that he wrote about the people and the problems of the Great Plains. . . Born in Okemah, Oklahoma, Guthrie took to the road at the age of sixteen and experienced hardship, poverty, dust storms, and drought. He identified with the victims of the Great Depression and wrote many songs that put their feelings into words. . . Whether whimsical or serious, most of Guthrie’s songs paid tribute to the toughness or working people who refused to give in to the hard times. . . Guthrie sang about not only those who stuck it out in the dust bowl, but those who left the area, either because they had to or because they believed a better life awaited them elsewhere.” (Yancey, pp. 53 – 55.) Play Woody Guthrie songs. Hold a sing-along!

Post-reading

1. What is the purpose of the story? (to introduce the Dust Bowl to young readers)
2. What is the message? (During hard times, families need to stick together.)
3. Tell your classmates about your family and a time when your family had to stick together.
4. Some people believe that another Dust Bowl can occur. What can we do to help the environment? (Discuss issues such as recycling, not littering, picking up trash, water conservation.)
5. What is corn used for today? (food, alcohol, fuel)
6. Participate in the WebQuest at www.milforded.org/schools/foran/acesare/wq/index.html.
7. Develop a community-service plan for your school, focusing on what students your age can do to help other people.

Works Cited

<http://en.wikipedia.org>

U. S. National Archive

www.englis.uius.edu

www.kiddiddles.com.

www.woodyguthrie.org

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Appendix

1. Timeline of The Dust Bowl

1931 Severe drought hits the midwestern and southern plains. As the crops die, the "black blizzards" begin. Dust from the over-plowed and over-grazed land begins to blow.

1932 The number of dust storms is increasing. Fourteen are reported this year; next year there will be 38.

1933 March: When Franklin Roosevelt takes office, the country is in desperate straits. He takes quick steps to declare a four-day bank holiday, during which time Congress came up with the Emergency Banking Act of 1933, which stabilized the banking industry and restored people's faith in the banking system by putting the federal government behind it. May: The Emergency Farm Mortgage Act allots \$200 million for refinancing mortgages to help farmers facing foreclosure. The Farm Credit Act of 1933 establishes a local bank and set up local credit associations. September: Over 6 million young pigs are slaughtered to stabilize prices With most of the meat going to waste, public outcry led to the creation, in October, of the Federal Surplus Relief Corporation. The FSRC diverted agricultural commodities to relief organizations. Apples, beans, canned beef, flour and pork products were distributed through local relief channels. Cotton goods were eventually included to clothe the needy as well. October: In California's San Joaquin Valley, where many farmers fleeing the plains have gone, seeking migrant farm work, the largest agricultural strike in America's history begins. More than 18,000 cotton workers with the Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union (CAWIU) went on strike for 24 days. During the strike, two men and one woman were killed and hundreds injured. In the settlement, the union was recognized by growers, and workers were given a 25 percent raise.

1934 May: Great dust storms spread from the Dust Bowl area. The drought is the worst ever in U.S. history, covering more than 75 percent of the country and affecting 27 states severely. June: The Frazier-Lemke Farm Bankruptcy Act is approved. This act restricted the ability of banks to dispossess farmers in times of distress. Originally, effective until 1938, the act was renewed four times until 1947, when it expired. Roosevelt signs the Taylor Grazing Act, which allows him to take up to 140 million acres of federally-owned land out of the public domain and establish grazing districts that will be carefully monitored. One of many New Deal efforts to reverse the damage done to the land by overuse, the program was able to arrest the deterioration, but couldn't undo the historical damage. December: The "Yearbook of Agriculture" for 1934 announces, "Approximately 35 million acres of formerly cultivated land have essentially been destroyed for crop production. . . . 100 million acres now in crops have lost all or most of the topsoil; 125 million acres of land now in crops are rapidly losing topsoil. . . "

1935 January 15: The federal government forms a Drought Relief Service to coordinate relief activities. The DRS bought cattle in counties that were designated emergency areas, for \$14 to \$20 a head. Those unfit for human consumption - more than 50 percent at the beginning of the program - were destroyed. The remaining cattle were given to the Federal Surplus Relief Corporation to be used in food distribution to families nationwide. Although it was difficult for farmers to give up their herds, the cattle slaughter program helped many of them avoid bankruptcy. "The government cattle buying program was a God-send to many farmers, as they could not afford to keep their cattle, and the government paid a better price than they could obtain in local markets." April 8: FDR approves the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act, which provides \$525 million for drought relief, and authorizes creation of the Works Progress Administration, which would employ 8.5 million people. April 14: Black Sunday. The worst "black blizzard" of the Dust Bowl occurs, causing extensive damage. April 27: Congress declares soil erosion "a national menace" in an act establishing the Soil Conservation Service in the Department of Agriculture (formerly the Soil Erosion Service in the U.S. Department of Interior). Under the direction of Hugh H. Bennett, the SCS developed extensive conservation programs that retained topsoil and prevented irreparable damage to the land. Farming techniques such as strip cropping, terracing, crop rotation, contour plowing, and cover crops were advocated. Farmers were paid to practice soil-conserving farming techniques. December: At a meeting in Pueblo, Colorado, experts estimate that 850,000,000 tons of topsoil has blown off the Southern Plains during the course of the year, and that if the drought continued, the total area affected would increase from 4,350,000 acres to 5,350,000 acres in the spring of 1936. C.H. Wilson of the Resettlement Administration proposes buying up 2,250,000 acres and retiring it from cultivation.

1936 February: Los Angeles Police Chief James E. Davis sends 125 policemen to patrol the borders of Arizona and Oregon to keep "undesirables" out. As a result, the American Civil Liberties Union sues the city. May: The SCS publishes a soil conservation district law, which, if passed by the states, allows farmers to set up their own districts to enforce soil conservation practices for five-year periods. One of the few grassroots organizations set up by the New Deal still in operation, the soil conservation district program recognized that new farming methods needed to be accepted and enforced by the farmers on the land rather than bureaucrats in Washington.

1937 March: Roosevelt addresses the nation in his second inaugural address, stating, "I see one-third of the nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished . . . the test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little." FDR's Shelterbelt Project begins. The project called for large-scale planting of trees across the Great Plains, stretching in a 100-mile wide zone from Canada to northern Texas, to protect the land from erosion. Native trees, such as red cedar and green ash, were planted along fence rows separating properties, and farmers were paid to plant and cultivate them. The project was estimated to cost 75 million dollars over a period of 12 years. When disputes arose over funding sources (the project was considered to be a long-term strategy, and therefore ineligible for

emergency relief funds), FDR transferred the program to the WPA, where the project had limited success.

1938 The extensive work re-plowing the land into furrows, planting trees in shelterbelts, and other conservation methods has resulted in a 65 percent reduction in the amount of soil blowing. However, the drought continued.

1939 In the fall, the rain comes, finally bringing an end to the drought. During the next few years, with the coming of World War II, the country is pulled out of the Depression and the plains once again become golden with wheat.

(www.english.uiuc.edu)

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www.memory.loc.gov

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Yancey, Diane. *Life During the Dust Bowl*. Farmington Hills, MI: Lucent Books, 2004.

For Further Reading, More Information

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/afctshhtml/tshome.html> (migrant camps in central California)

<http://humanities-interactive.org/texas/dustbowl/> (lessons and pictures about the Dust Bowl)

<http://xroads.virginia.edu/~1930s/RADIO/cw/guthrie.html> (music of the 1930s)

Raven, Margot Theis. *Angels in the Dust*. Mahwah, NJ: Bridgewater Books, 1977. (age 7 – 9)

Rutland, Robert Allen. *A Boyhood in the Dust Bowl, 1926 – 1934*. Niwot, CO: University Press of Colorado, 1995.

