



CALLING OFF SCHOOL FOR DUST

Learning Objectives: The students will...

1. Analyze causes and effects of the Dust Bowl of the 1930s.
2. Understand how geographic features influence settlement.
3. Use primary source documents to discover information.
4. Analyze the consequences of modifications in the environment.
5. Comprehend how art and music reflects the times described.

TEKS: SS 5.5A, 5.9A, 5.9B, 5.24A, 5.24B, 5.24C, 5.25A, 5.25D; LA 5.24A

Materials Needed: Copies of the Dust Bowl Disaster handout, internet access, PowerPoint presentation.

Vocabulary: drought, migration, soil conservation, erosion

Learning Strategies:

1. Introduce the lesson by recalling a time when your school was called off because of weather. Point out that in different parts of the country, the decision to call off school may be for different reasons.
2. Display the website http://www.livinghistoryfarm.org/farminginthe30s/water_04.html which details a time when school was called off because of a terrible dust storm during the 1930s, a time known as the Dust Bowl. Click on the link for Don McGinley, in which he recounts that event.
3. Click on "Dust Bowl" from this site http://www.livinghistoryfarm.org/farminginthe30s/water_02.html to see other information and interviews of life and farming during the dust storm, allowing students to hear first hand accounts of conditions during the Dust Bowl.
4. Ask students if they have ever experienced a dust storm and what it was like.
5. Ask students to think about what might cause a dust storm. Lead students to understand that lack of rainfall, as well as poor soil conservation practices can cause dust storms. But in the case of the Dust Bowl of the 1930s, the soil erosion was caused by major abuse of the land, when farmers plowed up the grasslands of the Great Plains (as much as 50 acres per day), confident of rain and unmindful of the wind.
6. Display the PowerPoint presentation. As students watch these primary source pictures, ask them to study them carefully in order to answer the questions on the Dust Storm Disaster handout. You may have students analyze each picture, or assign specific pictures. There are 10 pictures.
7. Inform students that the Dust Bowl resulted in many farmers packing up and moving west, many to California. This migration is described in the Woody Guthrie song, seen on this YouTube video (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jQYKJaWuj0Y>).
8. Ask students to analyze what their response would have been:
 - a. move away
 - b. find another job other than farming
 - c. wait until the drought is over

9. The class may create a class newspaper, using pictures from the PowerPoint slide, the interviews, and editorials written from their own perspective. Include advertisements and political cartoons.

Extension for Gifted/Talented:

Students may find out more about the Soil Conservation Act and report to the class what the government did as a result of the Dust Bowl.

Dust Bowl Disaster

As you see the pictures from the Dust Bowl years, analyze each picture by answering the following questions.

1. Describe what you see.
2. What did you notice first?
3. If there are people in this picture, what are their thoughts?
4. What are your thoughts about what is happening in this picture?
5. What do you wonder about?
6. Predict what will happen in the next few minutes after the scene pictured here.