LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
PATHWAYS ADVENTURES:
Using Historical Documents to Develop Early Literacy

Lynne Savago
Heather Werner
Jami Mundt
Nicole Rischer
Haley Haight
Caitlin Doeden

College of Education
University of Northern Iowa

Book Backdrop Title:
The Dust Bowl: "Leah's Pony" and the Black Blizzards

Table of Contents

◆ Introduction..............................................................................................................2
◆ Lesson Module
  - Lesson 1 - Black Blizzards: What Caused Them?.............................................3
  - Lesson 2 - The Great Depression: The Big Picture...........................................5
  - Lesson 3 - Okies: Migration in the Dirty Thirties.............................................8
  - Lesson 4 - When the Dust Settles: The Aftermath of the Dust Bowl..............10
  - Lesson 5 - Surviving the Dust Storms: A Day in the Life............................12
◆ Appendix I: Library of Congress Resources.....................................................14
◆ Appendix II: Bibliography and Webliography..................................................25
INTRODUCTION

Book Backdrop Title:
The Dust Bowl: "Leah's Pony" and the Black Blizzards

Focus Book Citation:

Focus Book Summary:
Leah is a young farm girl whose family has fallen on hard times. The days and nights are hot and dry and the corn they planted barely grew. Some days are black as night with dust blowing through the air. Leah's beautiful pony comforts her through these hard times, although his coat wasn't as shiny with the terrible dust everywhere. One day, Leah's father tells her they have to sell their belongings at an auction so they can pay their debt to the bank. They can make it without cattle and a pickup truck, but they have to sell their Farmall tractor, too. Without the tractor, there will not be any way for Leah's father to plant crops, and their family will have to pack up and leave the farm. Leah decides to try to buy the tractor at the auction, and what happens next is the light at the end of a dark, dusty tunnel for Leah's family.

Book Setting:
The story takes place on a farm in the United States during the Dust Bowl of the 1930s.

NCSS Notable Tradebook Theme: Environment, Energy and Ecology

Historical Period:
Great Depression and WWII

Grade Range:
Primary: 2nd to 3rd grade
LESSON MODULE

Five Lesson Primary Source-Based Book Backdrop Lesson Plans

Lesson 1

Title: Black Blizzards: What Caused Them?

Learning Goals:

Knowledge
• Students will understand what the term drought means.
• Students will understand how droughts affected farming conditions.

Skills
• Students will be able to compare human causes of the dust bowl and natural causes of the dust bowl.
• Students will be able to create a short narrative about what caused the Dust Bowl from a set of pictures.

Dispositions
• Students will begin to develop a deeper understanding of the Dust Bowl and the natural and human causes of it.

Links to National Standards:
http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/strands

Time, Continuity, & Change: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the past and its legacy.

People, Places, and Environments: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of people, places, and environments.

Individual Development and Identity: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of individual development and identity.

General Instructional Materials:
• Paper
• Writing Utensil
• “Leah’s Pony”
• Set of pictures from LOC

LOC Primary Source Materials:
• Appendix #1 - Image: Dust bowl farmer with tractor and young son near Cland, New Mexico. (1938)
Lesson Procedures:

Introduction

1. Talk about how pioneers moved to the west and Southwest and settled there to farm.
2. Talk about how farming was going very well for farmers when they first moved there until about the 1930s when strong winds, drought, and clouds of dust hit the area.
3. Talk about how in the 1920s after World War I we went into a recession, which led farmers to start using mechanized farming techniques as a way of increasing profits. Many were too poor to afford crops, so farmers planted wheat in place of natural drought resistant grasses.
4. Talk about how plow-based farming led to a loss of fertile topsoil which left the land vulnerable to drought and bad for crop growth. When the wind picks up and there was no rain for days, it led to huge black clouds of dust.
5. Talk about how livestock died as a result of the dust storms.
6. Revisit “Leah’s Pony” and talk about how the drought affected her family and their farming.

Development

1. Ask students what were some of the hard times in the story “Leah’s Pony.”
2. Ask students some human causes of the drought.
3. Ask students some natural causes of the drought.

Culmination

1. Hand out sets of pictures and have student create a short narrative of what caused the Dust Bowl. Have them include what caused it, what the drought might of looked like, how the farmers and their families felt during this time, etc.

Assessment Strategies Linked to Lesson Goals
Have the students shared their narratives with each other.
LESSON 2

Title: The Great Depression: The Big Picture

Learning Goals:

Knowledge
• Students will understand aspects of life for a farm family during the Depression.
• Students will comprehend the letters written to Eleanor Roosevelt during the Depression.

Skills
• Students will be able to write a letter of their own to Eleanor Roosevelt, from Leah’s point of view.
• Students will be able to format a letter with the three main parts: a greeting, a body, and a closing.

Dispositions
• Students will develop an empathetic understanding and compassion for the families, specifically children, during The Great Depression.
• Students will relate to the struggles of a young person during The Great Depression.

Links to National Standards:
http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/strands

Time, Continuity, & Change: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the past and its legacy.

People, Places, and Environments: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of people, places, and environments.

Individual Development and Identity: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of individual development and identity.

General Instructional Materials:
• Letters to Mrs. Roosevelt
  (https://docs.google.com/a/uni.edu/document/d/1cgaRGrVRRR0LfSCRFnP_thytwrq-BjnTSb7tw9Xnyrc/edit)
• Paper
• Writing Utensils
• Leah’s Pony book
LOC Primary Source Materials:

- Appendix #4 - Image: This is a structure in West Virginia called Arthurdale. This is a community which was created thanks to efforts by President Roosevelt and his wife, Eleanor, in order to give struggling families a place to become economically self-sufficient during the Depression.

- Appendix #5 - Image: Sculpture depicting a Great Depression breadline at the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial, Washington, D.C.

Lesson Procedures:

Introduction

1. Explain that there was once a time called The Great Depression. This time began when something called the stock market crashed, or failed, in 1929. The stock market held a lot of America’s money, so when this happened, many parts of the United States economy started to take a turn for the worst. Many adults lost their jobs, and there were not many new jobs to be found. This meant that most families went without any luxuries, and some were even unable to buy clothes or food.

2. Introduce or revisit the story *Leah’s Pony*, and explain that it took place during The Great Depression. Talk about how there were many things that Leah’s family not only wanted, but needed, in order to keep their farm and make a living.

Development

1. Ask students if they have ever written a letter asking someone for something that they wanted. This could be asking their parents, a teacher, a friend, or maybe even Santa. Have they ever written a letter for something that they needed?

2. Discuss with the students that during the Great Depression, adults and children alike would write letters to the President of the United States and his wife, asking them for help. They would ask for things like toys, which are wants, but some would even have to ask for things like money or clothing.

3. Share some of the letters to Mrs. Roosevelt with the students. ([https://docs.google.com/a/uni.edu/document/d/1cgaRGrVRRR0LfSCRFnP_thytwrg-BjnTSb7tw9Xnyrc/edit](https://docs.google.com/a/uni.edu/document/d/1cgaRGrVRRR0LfSCRFnP_thytwrg-BjnTSb7tw9Xnyrc/edit))

Culmination

1. Once the Mrs. Roosevelt letters have been shared, discuss the students’ reactions to the letters. How would they feel if they needed things like that?

2. Have each student take out a piece of paper and a writing utensil.

3. Introduce the letter-writing activity. The letter will be from Leah’s point of view from the book, *Leah’s Pony*. If you were in Leah’s position and writing a letter to the First Lady, what would you ask for?

4. Have an example of a letter template, including a greeting (Dear _____,:), a body, and a closing (Sincerely,;) up where the students can see it.
Assessment Strategies Linked to Lesson Goals
1. Ask students to share their letters, and explain how Leah’s family would benefit from the thing that they asked for.
LESSON 3

Title: Okies: Migration in the Dirty Thirties

Learning Goals:

Knowledge
• Students will be able to explain the reasons why people migrated as a result of the Dust Bowl
• Students will understand the huge significance and impact the Dust Bowl had.

Skills
• Students will be able to locate on a map where the dust bowl was located.
• Students will be able to locate where the migration mostly led to.

Dispositions
• Students will develop an empathetic understanding of and compassion for the experiences had during the Dust Bowl.

Links to National Standards:
http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/strands

Time, Continuity, & Change: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the past and its legacy.

People, Places, and Environments: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of people, places, and environments.

Individual Development and Identity: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of individual development and identity.

General Instructional Materials:
• Map
• Utensils
• Tacks

LOC Primary Source Materials:
• Appendix #9 - Image: Migrant agricultural worker's family. Seven hungry children. Mother aged thirty-two. Father is native Californian. Nipomo, California. (1936)
• Appendix #11 - Image: Family who traveled by freight train. Washington, Toppenish, Yakima Valley. (1939)
Lesson Procedures:

Introduction
1. Begin the lesson with talking to them about what they do at recess. What kinds of activities they like to play outside. Well what if you couldn’t ever have recess outside?
2. Talk about what their favorite meal is. What if they not only can’t have that favorite meal, but no food to eat at all.
3. Talk about money. Money is important to survive.
4. Talk about what they know about the Dust Bowl. Do they know how dangerous it actually was?

Development
1. What do the students think they had to do during the Dust Bowl to survive?
2. Migration
   - Define Migration
   - Student involvement- ask questions. Why they thought they would migrate
   - Looking for jobs and food
   - Stress the importance of food, water, clothes, shelter

Culmination
1. Where do you think they would migrate to?
2. Why do they think they migrated there?
3. What were they looking for when they migrated?
4. Did they successfully find what they were looking for?

Assessment Strategies Linked to Lesson Goals
1. Have a map ready. The students will locate where the Dust Bowl was located.
2. Have them mark where they migrated to.
3. Go over main ideas
4. Questions, concerns
LESSON 4

Title: When the Dust Settles: The Aftermath of the Dust Bowl

Learning Goals:

Knowledge
• Students will understand the effects the dust bowl had.
• Students will differentiate between how farmers work their land now in comparison to the Dust Bowl era.
• Students will understand the term “no till”.
• Students will begin to understand the importance of preserving our land.

Skills
• Students will participate in matching photos to a short description to show the relationship between the way farmers farmed during the dust bowl and how we farm now.
• Students will begin exploring primary sources such as photographs from the Library of Congress.

Dispositions
• Students will begin to develop an ability to think critically about the past and understand the historical perspective.
• Students will develop understanding for the hard times people lived through, which continued after the Dust Bowl.

Links to National Standards:
http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/strands

Time, Continuity, & Change: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the past and its legacy.

People, Places, and Environments: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of people, places, and environments.

Individual Development and Identity: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of individual development and identity.

General Instructional Materials:
• Photographs
• Papers with ways we have changed farming practices (To match with photographs)
• Paper and pencil
• Leah's Pony book
LOC Primary Source Materials:

- Appendix #2 - Image: Furrowing against the wind to check the drift of sand. Dust Bowl, north of Dalhart, Texas.

Lesson Procedures:

Introduction
1. Catch students interest by asking review questions from lesson #1
   - Ask questions such as, “What was one of the main causes of the Dust Bowl?”
   - “What were the other reasons?”
   - “How do you think people who lived in the Midwest during this time felt about all the dust, drought, and disease?”

Development
1. Ask the students what are some things we do differently when we farm now than we did during the Dust Bowl. Be sure to include not tilling, irrigation (watering) systems, and crop rotation.
2. The students will be given images and descriptions of ways we farm now and how farmers used to farm. They will be asked to match them based on the material we covered earlier.

Culmination
1. Point out that the author of Leah's Pony mentions the rough times they went through and what Leah had to do to survive the depression and Dust Bowl.
2. “The year the corn grew no taller than a man’s thumb, Leah’s house became very quiet.”
3. Connection-- if Leah’s family had used the strategies we use today, predict how that might have changed their situation. Ask students to write down two different predictions on their piece of paper.

Assessment Strategies Linked to Lesson Goals
1. Ask students to share their predictions on the question “If Leah’s family had used the farming style we use now how could that have changed their situation.”
LESSON 5

Title: Surviving the Dust Storms: A Day in the Life

Learning Goals:

Knowledge
• Students will understand how the Dust Bowl affected the population
• Students will begin to understand how different time periods had different effects on the nation

Skills
• Students will create a story about the day in the life of people in pictures.
• Students will analyze photos taken from the Library of Congress
• Students will present their stories to the class

Dispositions
• Students will consider the feelings of people from the past
• Students will develop an understanding of the differences from the Dust Bowl to now

Links to National Standards:
http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/strands

Time, Continuity, & Change: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the past and its legacy.

People, Places, and Environments: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of people, places, and environments.

Individual Development and Identity: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of individual development and identity.

General Instructional Materials:
• Paper/Pencil
• Photos
• Whiteboard
• Word Bank

LOC Primary Source Materials:

• Appendix #6 - Image: Destitute pea pickers in California. Mother of seven children. Age thirty-two. Nipomo, California.
Lesson Procedures:

Introduction
1. Begin by reviewing what the Dust Bowl was
2. Lead discussion with students on the board
3. Come up with word bank for stories
4. Display the LOC picture

Development
1. Ask students how they would feel living the time period of the dust bowl
2. Allow students to share their feelings
3. Have students review the parts of a story
4. Go over directions of the story

Culmination
1. Invite students to share their stories and get into character of the photo
2. Give students the opportunity to learn more about the photos and relate a discussion back to *Leah's Pony*

Assessment Strategies Linked to Lesson Goals
1. Have students create a story about the day in the life of people living in the Dust Bowl era. Display photos for the students to look at and get a better understanding of the era.
2. Have students display their stories to the class and also have the chance to read their stories to the class
APPENDIX I:
Library of Congress Resources

1. Image
Dust bowl farmer with tractor and young son near Cland, New Mexico. (1938). http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/fsa.8b32438/
2. Image
Furrowing against the wind to check the drift of sand. Dust Bowl, north of Dalhart, Texas.
http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/fsa.8b32393/
3. Image
Farmer and sons walking in the face of a dust storm. Cimarron County, Oklahoma. (1936)
http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/ppmsc.00241/
4. Image
This is a structure in West Virginia called Arthurdale. This is a community created thanks to efforts by President Roosevelt and his wife, Eleanor, in order to give struggling families a place to become economically self-sufficient during the Depression.
http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/highsm.16281/
5. Image
Sculpture depicting a Great Depression breadline at the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial, Washington, D.C.
http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/highsm.15096/
6. Image
Destitute pea pickers in California. Mother of seven children. Age thirty-two. Nipomo, California
http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/fsa.8b29516/
7. Image
Prowers County, Colorado. Dust storm. (1935)
http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/fsa.8e03000/
8. Image
Dust storm. Baca County, Colorado. (1936)
http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/fsa.8b26998/
9. Image
Migrant agricultural worker's family. Seven hungry children. Mother aged thirty-two. Father is native Californian. Nipomo, California. (1936)
http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/cph.3b06165/
10. Image
Stock watering hole almost completely covered by shifting topsoil. Cimarron County, Oklahoma. (1936)
http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/cph.3c29097/
11. Image
Family who traveled by freight train. Washington, Toppenish, Yakima Valley. (1939)
http://www.loc.gov/pictures/resource/fsa.8b34311/
APPENDIX II: 
Bibliography and Webliography

Bibliography of Related Children's Literature:


Webliography of Supporting Online Resources for Students:

The Dust Bowl - American History Games & Activities for Kids
A kid-friendly website that provides information about the Dust Bowl and videos and activities to help students have fun while learning about the Dust Bowl.
http://www.wartgames.com/themes/american/dustbowl.html

Dust Bowl
A website with information about the Dust Bowl and how children's lives were affected by the Dust Bowl in the 1930s. This website also has activities about the Dust Bowl for students.
http://library.thinkquest.org/TQ0312210/childrenslife.html

Drought for Kids
A website that explains what drought is, how we can prepare for it, who studies droughts, and how drought affects our lives.
http://drought.unl.edu/DroughtforKids.aspx
Webliography of Supporting Online Resources for Teachers:

Dust Bowl Resources for Teachers
This website provides lesson plans and other resources for teachers to use in the classroom when teaching about the Dust Bowl.
http://texaspbs.org/dust-bowl-for-teachers/

PBS - American Experience: Surviving the Dust Bowl
The story of the farmers of Texas, Oklahoma, and Kansas who lived through ten years of drought, dust storms, and death.
http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/dustbowl/

PBS - The Dust Bowl
Clips of the documentary by Ken Burns about the Dust Bowl. The videos include interviews with survivors of the Dust Bowl as well as descriptions of the events of the Dust Bowl, how it was caused, and the aftermath of it.
http://video.pbs.org/video/2299842345

The Dust Bowl - Primary Source Set
Resources for teachers to use to teach about the migrations that happened as a result of the Dust Bowl. Includes a teacher guide to migrations as well as photographs from the Dust Bowl and songs written about the Dust Bowl.
http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/primarysourcesets/dust-bowl-migration/

How Teachers Can Make the Most of "The Dust Bowl"
A website with tips on how to make the most out of Ken Burns's PBS documentary "The Dust Bowl", as well as lesson plans and educational resources to be used along with the documentary or on their own as part of a unit on the Dust Bowl.
http://edsitement.neh.gov/how-teachers-can-make-most-dust-bowl

The Dust Bowl WebQuest
A WebQuest for teachers to use with their students when teaching a unit on the Dust Bowl. Includes questions for the teacher to ask students and an activity where students write entries in a diary as if they are living during the Dust Bowl.
http://teacherweb.com/WQ/ElementarySchool/TheDustBowl/apt2.aspx

The Land Blew Away: Activities and Lessons About the Dust Bowl
A PDF file with a plethora of information about the Dust Bowl as well as lesson plans and ideas and resources. Also included are quiz questions and worksheet activities as well as links to web activities about the Dust Bowl.