## Lesson Title Dust Bowl: Lessons of the Past, Informing the Present, Shaping the Future

## Lesson Overview

The following unit was designed to enable students to understand, summarize, and analyze primary and secondary sources of historical, literary and contemporary significance. Specifically, it is an interdisciplinary unit focusing on how the experiences and lessons of the Dust Bowl in US history can be used to inform the present climate refugee crisis and shape future policy to prevent and assist citizens displaced due to changes in the environment.

## Historical Context

The “Dust Bowl” was the moniker given to the region of the US (Great Plains) beset by a combination of drought and ecologically unsound farming practices. This vast area of Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Georgia and Tennessee was ravaged by driving dust storms and drought so severe that by 1940 nearly 2.5 million souls had been forced off of the Plains. As these dusty refugees or “Okies” attempted to relocate they faced discrimination and overt hostility from fellow Americans who were also struggling to scrape by in the Great Depression. Both Author John Steinbeck, in his novel Grapes of Wrath and nonfiction pieces, and singer/ songwriters such as Woody Guthrie, via heartfelt ballads, popularized and immortalized the plight of the displaced plains dwellers by invoking images of life on the road and in the field though their respective art forms.

## Grade Level

**[**6-8]

## Number of Class Periods

**3-4 1 hour class periods**

## Standards

**National Council for the Social Studies Standards:**

2-Time, continuity and change

3- People, places and environments

7 – Production distribution and consumption

8 – Science technology and society

9 – Global connections

**Common Core Standards:**

* [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.1](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RH/9-10/1/) Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.
* [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9-10.2](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RH/9-10/2/) Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.
* [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.1](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/9-10/1/) Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.
* [CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.2](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/W/9-10/2/) Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

## Procedure (The accompanying PowerPoint is designed to not only provide a visual representation of the following step-by-step guide, but also as a means to conduct the lesson(s) in your classroom with your students and can be edited to fit many teaching/learning styles and specific classroom needs including time constraints.)

**On The Move**

**Supplies Needed:**

* Post-it Notes
* Copies of the article “Worried About Refugees? Just Wait Until We Dust Bowlify Mexico and Central America.” Or internet access and computers or like devices.
* 3-2-1 Charts

Explain to the students that they will be groups for an activity

1. Distribute the post-it notes to each group.
2. Have the students discuss with their groups why they think people might want to move from where they live to another place.
3. Stop the group discussion and instruct the students to record their responses on the post-it notes-one reason per post-it
4. Once the feverish writing breaks inform the students that their next task is to sort their reasons into two categories: those reasons that would **force** you to move and those that would help you make the **choice** to move.
5. Groups will then choose s member to post their reasons in the **forced** category on the designate **forced** area of the board and another member to do the same for the **choice** responses
6. Next each group identifies their responses and explains their reasoning-there will be many duplicate answers ergo not every group will have to go through all of their responses.
7. If a group disagrees with another group’s categorization of a reason the group in disagreement is allowed to make their case to switch categories. The class votes on whether to move the reason needing a simple majority to switch categories.
8. Pose the question “Why were you asked to sort your responses into these two categories?” to be answered in each group and reported to the class a whole.
9. Place/project the following on the board or screen: Read the following definitions, note that forced = refugee and choice=migrant then decide as a group which type of movement is more of a concern for individuals and governments in both in the US and globally. Why?

**ref-u-gee**

A person who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster. (https://www.google.com/?gws\_rd=ssl#q=refugee+definition)

**mi-grant**

A migrant is a person who makes a conscious choice to leave their country to seek a better life elsewhere. (http://www.ssi.org.au/faqs/refugee-faqs/148-what-is-the-difference-between-a-refugee-and-a-migrant)

1. Ask the groups to think of one current examples of situations in the world today that are forcing people to move and report to the class.
2. Hand out copies of or have the students link to “Worried About Refugees? Just Wait Until We Dust Bowlify Mexico and Central America” along with the Annotation Code for the Stop, Think and React chart. Each student should annotate the text and complete sentence for each category using the sentence starters provided.
3. Students should turn to a shoulder partner and share their sentences. Each student chooses one of their partner’s sentences to share with the class.
4. The partners then find another pair to “quad” with and answer the following: Can the 4 of you think of any situations in the past that could help us understand this problem and perhaps help us deal with it today?
5. Hand out the 3-2-1 chart to be completed during the video. Show the video clip that introduces the dust bowl.
6. Partner read “Mass Exodus From the Plains” and complete the 3-2-1 with partner and without using duplicating answers from the video 3-2-1 chart.
7. Step one: Students compare a four charts and circle your 3 best facts, 2 best questions and best opinion. Step two: Students share their selections with another group and repeat step one. Step three: Students select three group members to post their best of the best on the board in each category.

**Dust Bowl Lab**

Students will further explore different aspects of the Dust Bowl and the implications for those affected by the extreme environmental conditions as they rotate through the different stations in this lab.

**Supplies Needed:**

* Computers/like devices and internet access
* “Lab Report: Dust Bowl” activity sheets
* “Should I Stay or Should I Go?” writer’s prep guide
* Colored pencils for sketch and poster (optional)
* Research Guides

*In addition to the work specific to each station, A common task at every station asks students to gauge their current state of mind on whether they would move west or remain home in the dust bowl. This task is designed to not only trach which stations influenced student decision making the most and vice versa, but also to help students recall where to go to retrieve evidence that can be used as support in their decision making paragraph.*

To Students: *When you are ready… add your post-it note in the appropriate place on the station’s stay or go spectrum before moving to the next station. (See slide #7)*

Though the time suggested for each station is 20 minutes on the PowerPoint presentation, the timing of this lab will vary depending on several factors including computer/internet access, whether writing or drawing tasks re assigned as homework and if the research extension is assigned.

The Students should cycle through stations 1-4 in any order with station five Decision Time always 5th due to the fact that evidence for the required paragraph could be drawn from and of the four antecedent stations. Station 6 serves to catapult the issues of the dust bowl into the present and asks the students to transfer their fresh knowledge of the past to a current situation revolving around a like issue. Finally, the extension option offers student choice and an opportunity to delve into another (local?) environmental issue and connect past to present and perhaps suggest solutions for the future when presenting their findings.