



Dust Bowl Chat

Dust Bowl

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Grade Level	9th – 11th Grade	Time Frame	2-3 class period(s)
Subject	Social Studies	Duration	50 minutes
Course	Oklahoma History, U.S. History, World History		

Essential Question

What factors contributed to the Dust Bowl? How effectively did the FDR administration respond to the crisis? What impact did this event have on contemporary resource management?

Summary

This Oklahoma/U.S. history lesson provides students with engaging audio, visual, and textural sources to examine the environmental conditions of the Dust Bowl alongside FDR's response in his Dust Bowl Fireside Chat. Students engage in the intellectual work of the historian as they evaluate primary source documents and examine paired texts to uncover the causes of and Federal responses to the Dust Bowl in Oklahoma.

Snapshot

Engage

Students will imagine themselves in the Great Depression and listen to an audio recording of FDR's Dust Bowl Fireside Chat.

Explore

Students will analyze primary source documents to explore Dust Bowl conditions and their effect on individuals.

Explain

Students will do a close reading of FDR's Dust Bowl Fireside Chat using the Stop and Jot strategy as an analytical reading tool.

Extend

Students will read a second informational text about New Deal responses to the Dust Bowl and will compare and contrast it with the FDR text using an H-Chart.

Evaluate

Students will write a position paper about the impact of New Deal responses to the Dust Bowl or investigate current drought conditions and create a podcast to compare today's conditions to those of the Dust Bowl.

Standards

Next Generation Science Standards (Grades 9, 10, 11, 12)

ESS3.A: Natural Resources

Attachments

- [Belezzuoli interview Excerpts.pdf](#)
- [Dust Bowl Chat Graphic Organizer.docx](#)
- [Dust Bowl Chat H-Chart.docx](#)
- [Dust Bowl Chat H-Chart.pdf](#)
- [Dust Bowl Chat Teacher Slides.pptx](#)
- [Dust Bowl Images Activity.docx](#)
- [Dust Bowl Images Activity.pdf](#)
- [Dust Bowl Perspectives.docx](#)
- [Dust Bowl Perspectives.pdf](#)
- [DustBowlChatPhotoStory.mp4](#)
- [FDR Fireside Chat Full Text.docx](#)
- [FDR Fireside Chat Full Text.pdf](#)
- [FDR Fireside Chat Modified.docx](#)
- [FDR Fireside Chat Modified.pdf](#)
- [I'd Rather Not Be on Relief.pdf](#)
- [NOAA 2013 Drought Outlook.pdf](#)
- [NOAA July 1934 Map.pdf](#)
- [Woolner Article.docx](#)
- [Woolner Article.pdf](#)

Materials

- Photostory: FDR Fireside Chat excerpt
- Handout: FDR Fireside Chat full text, September 6, 1936 (modified version also provided)
- Dust Bowl photos
- Woody Guthrie "Dust Bowl Blues" lyrics
- NOAA 1934 Dust Bowl map
- NOAA 2013 drought outlook map
- Dust Bowl poem
- Prairie root systems chart and corn root chart
- Belezzuoli oral history interview excerpt
- Handout: David Woolner, FDR and the Environment
- Handout: H-Chart for paired texts

Engage

Display slide 4 from the Dust Bowl Fireside Chat PowerPoint. Ask students to sit quietly. If possible, darken the lights in the classroom. Take the students back in time to 1936 at the height of the Great Depression and Dust Bowl during the FDR presidency. Explain that many poor Americans simply went to bed at dusk both to save energy and to stave off the pains of hunger during sleep. In an era before mass media, radio was the dominant mode of news delivery, and millions of Americans listened to the radio on Sunday evenings at 10 p.m. to hear FDR give his weekly address to the American public, the Fireside Chat. Ask students to imagine going to bed at dusk, being hungry in the dark, and listening to the president give his speech. This is what it sounded like on September 6, 1936... (Play the PhotoStory with photos and the beginning of FDR's speech.)

After listening and viewing, ask students to speculate by themselves as to why this series of speeches was known as "Fireside Chats." Ask them to discuss with a partner what they think the main idea was of this initial portion of FDR's address. Then, ask student pairs to share their answers with the whole class. This activity uses a K20 strategy called [Think-Pair-Share](#).

Possible Responses

Student responses might include: Fireside was supposed to make the speech feel more personal and less political; FDR had definite plans to help farmers and ranchers.

Explore

Display slide 5. Divide students into groups of four or five. [Jigsaw](#) the source documents (listed below) by giving each student in the group a different document. At the same time, pass out the document analysis organizer. Instruct students to examine and evaluate their specific document and prepare to share at least three pieces of information that their document reveals about the Dust Bowl with their group. Instruct students that they should record the information about their document in their organizer.

After sufficient time, typically 10 minutes, instruct students to share the information with their groups. While students present their documents to their group, others should record their information in the corresponding section of the document analysis organizer.

Source Documents:

- Dust Bowl images
- "Dust Bowl Blues" lyrics by Woody Guthrie (An online version of the song can be found here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jQYKJaWuj0Y>)
- NOAA 1934 Dust Bowl map
- "I'd Rather Not Be on Relief" lyrics by Lester Hunter Shafter
- Belezzuoli oral history interview
- Textbook photos, charts/graphics, or text excerpts (optional)

Facilitate a class discussion related to the information in these documents. Ask a few students to share what they gleaned from each document. Discuss with students how this collection of documents adds to their understanding of the Dust Bowl and to the FDR speech excerpt they listened to at the beginning of the lesson.

Teacher's Note

Student responses might include: Native prairie grasses helped to keep dirt on the ground; farmers struggled to make ends meet; dust clouds were massive and probably very scary; a lot of farmers went on 'relief' (government assistance); starvation was a real threat.

Explain

Display slide 6. Let students know that the actual Dust Bowl Fireside Chat was a longer speech and that they will be analyzing the majority of the speech with a partner and comparing it to another piece of nonfiction text about the Dust Bowl.

Pass out the modified text of the FDR speech and direct students to read the passage silently. Tell students that as they read each major paragraph, they should stop and jot down the main ideas of that paragraph in the margin. This activity is a K20 Strategy called [Stop and Jot](#). After a sufficient time, around 20 minutes, ask students to share what they found with their partner and to decide upon the main ideas for the entire text. After partner discussions, facilitate a class discussion about the reading, asking a few student groups to share out main ideas with the class.

Teacher's Note

Student responses might include: FDR talks a lot about families and how many will need relief, irrigation projects and conservation, and how the Dust Bowl will have a ripple effect in cities around the United States; he ends the speech talking about reemployment and Labor Day and how it's important to respect the American worker (farmers and industry workers). He compares July 4th to Labor Day

Extend

Display slide 7. Hand out copies of the article "FDR and the Environment" by David Woolner. Ask students to read this article while using the [Stop and Jot](#) strategy again. If you prefer to try another reading strategy, there are several listed on the K20 Center's [Strategies page](#) to choose from. After finishing the Woolner text, ask students to share with their partner what they found and then come up with the main ideas for the entire text. If time allows, ask a few student partners to share out with the class.

Teacher's Note

As an alternative to the Woolner article, students could read a selection from their textbook regarding New Deal responses.

Display slide 8. After reading and discussing both texts, have students use the H-Chart worksheet to guide their analysis. On the left side of the H-chart, have students write main ideas and thoughts regarding the Fireside Chat text. On the right side of the chart, have students write main ideas and thoughts regarding the Woolner text. In the middle of the H-chart, ask students to write the 'Third Text,' which explains their ideas and thoughts about how these two texts compare and ways in which they work as a pair to shine light on the essential questions (How effectively did the FDR administration respond to the crisis? What impact did this event have on contemporary resource management?). This activity is based on the [Paired Texts/H-Chart](#) K20 strategy.

Teacher's Note

Paired Texts/H-Chart is an instructional strategy that works from the assumption that meaning is developed when multiple texts are 'paired' and compared. The focus is on helping students create a "third text," or a new understanding developed by comparing and interpreting the other texts. Students can convey the third text visually, orally, or textually. This lesson uses two texts, FDR's Fireside Chat on the Dust Bowl and an article by historian David Woolner, to help students create a 'third text' about the Dust Bowl and the Federal response.

Ask student pairs to discuss the third texts that they have created with the class. Ask students to explain how the two texts together deepen their knowledge of the Dust Bowl.

Teacher's Note

Student responses will vary greatly, as the third text is affected significantly by student discussions and interpretations. Some potential responses might include: FDR's efforts in the 1930s were the first attempt by the federal government to create a sustainable environmental policy; environmental disasters are still happening and the federal government still responds to them.

Evaluate

There are several ways to assess this lesson.

Option 1: The H-Chart could be used as a student assessment.

Option 2: Ask students to write a position paper using the following prompt: “New Deal responses to the Dust Bowl effectively ended the economic and environmental crisis.” Students should cite visual and textual evidence to support their position. Consider allowing students to visit the [Oklahoma State Impact site](#) to research information related to the current drought in the Great Plains. Follow up by asking students to write a brief essay or position paper about the similarities and differences between the two droughts.

Option 3: Ask students to adapt the Fireside Chat into the 21st Century format of a podcast on the topic of the current drought happening in the Great Plains and how it compares to the Dust Bowl.

Teacher's Note - Extending The Lesson

Woody Guthrie wrote a series of songs about this period collectively known as the ‘Dust Bowl Ballads,’ and these could be an interesting extension for students to pursue. More information can be found [here](#). In addition, Oklahoma State University has an excellent interview database of women who survived the Dust Bowl, which you can find [here](#).

Resources

- K20 Center. (n.d.). Jigsaw. Strategies. Retrieved from <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/d9908066f654727934df7bf4f507c1b8>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Paired Texts/H-Chart. Strategies. Retrieved from <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/d9908066f654727934df7bf4f5060ba6>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Stop and jot. Strategies. Retrieved from <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/d9908066f654727934df7bf4f5077921>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Think-pair-share. Strategies. Retrieved from <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/d9908066f654727934df7bf4f5064b49>