Out of the Dust: An Introduction to the Dust Bowl

WebQuest Description: An introduction to The Dust Bowl intended to activate schema for our upcoming novel Out of the Dust.

Grade Level: 6-8

Curriculum: English / Language Arts

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Introduction

After the stock market crash of 1929, the Roaring 20's came to a screeching halt. Gone were the carefree days of dancing the Charleston and listening to jazz music at clubs all through the night. The United States was about to enter one of it's darkest decades, the 1930's. The 1930's ushered in the Great Depression, a period where our entire nation suffered under the strain of the stock market's collapse. Workers all over the nation found it difficult to find jobs that would feed, clothe, and house their families. Many people were forced into poverty because the of Great Depression, which lasted for several years. In the Midwest, farmers were struggling to produce any crops under extreme circumstances. The same fields that produced tremendous amounts of wheat and corn for many years were suddenly turned into vast, dusty wastelands. Extended periods of drought, combined with years of overfarming left over from World War I, caused the fragile farmland in the Midwest to simply turn to dust and blow away. Farms that had been grassy and bountiful lands were now covered with mounds of sandy despair. Many farmers gave up on their land and moved west to California, where they believed there would be more opportunities for success. However, once they arrived, they were faced with a shortage of jobs and a mountain of discrimination. They were called "Okies" because of their accents, and forced to live in "Hoovervilles", or shanty towns. The promise of a better life out west was only a myth. This period during the 1930's that affected both the people and land of the Midwest is called The Dust Bowl. The next novel we will read, Out of the Dust by Karen Hesse, takes place during this time period. This web quest will help you understand this era, as well as some of the "current events" mentioned in the novel.

Process

Use the following sections and links to help answer the questions on your web quest.

Evaluation

This interactive site allows you to journey west, out of the dust, and see where your decisions will take you. You'll meet some interesting people along the way, and get to see some of the same problems that migrants of the 1930's faced when heading West. When you are finished answering your Web Quest questions, you can see where your decisions will take you during the Dust Bowl.

Conclusion

The book Out of the Dust by Karen Hesse chronicles the Kelby family struggling to survive on their Oklahoma farm during the Dust Bowl. This book is unique because it follows a "free verse" poetry format, which means that the poems she writes do not rhyme at all. The main character, Billie Jo Kelby, creates a title and adds a date for each entry, much like a journal or diary. Watch this book trailer for a sneak preview of this haunting book we will begin after break.
Follow this Quizlet link to access your vocabulary for the novel Out of the Dust. I will give you a vocabulary template in class for you to fill in, or you can access the document from this page.