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 of the 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.
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.