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### The Dust Bowl

The Dust Bowl was a period, 1930-1936, of severe dust storms that greatly damaged the agriculture of the southwestern area of the United States. Humongous piles, death, diseases, moving, and school closings were some of the many negative outcomes caused by these severe dust storms. This period severely damaged the economy, and it took many resources to restore it. Farmers also learned many lessons throughout this horrific time. The Dust Bowl was a period, during the 1930s, in which severe dust storms damaged the southwestern United States agriculture, with many negative outcomes.

Many factors contributed to the cause of the Dust Bowl. Farmers plowed up too many acres and grazed too many animals on the land, (Grolier 57) making the soil rough and dry, to be easily blown away when the winds picked up. Farmers also switched from growing a variety of crops to just wheat. Homesteaders, who had flooded into the region at the end of the 19th century, misunderstood the area (Grolier 45), by plowing away all the grass that protected the soil. In the Summer of 1931, the rain came to a halt, sending the area into a massive drought (Lucent 31).

The Dust Bowl created many problems, but many people lived through those problems. The dust flew into the air when the winds came, creating the flying dust that would be seen during the storms. Winds could blow for up to a month straight without stopping (Lucent 32).

Dust piled up against barns and was as high up as half of a normal-sized house (Grolier 57). The dust was very dangerous to people. The dust contained high levels of silica, which poisons the body in much the same way as to lead, by weakening its resistance to disease and irritating the mucous membranes of the respiratory system (Lucent 53). Because of this, the health of many people began to suffer. Many diseases, such as sinusitis, pharyngitis, laryngitis, and bronchitis became common because of the inhalation of the dust (Grolier 53). Even with protection, there was no way to avoid inhaling the dust. Wearing a mask failed to protect people from inhaling the dust (Grolier 53). Some families followed a routine, which included sealing the windows, covering the furniture, and plates/silverware that was flipped upside down until the meal was served (Grolier 54). Families during the winter also played cards and took turns hosting ice skating and sledding parties, sponsored by churches and clubs of the area (Lucent 37). Schools closed a month early for summer because members of the board were tired of shoveling dust out of classrooms each morning, and also because the dust brought the threat of disease (Lucent 53). The storms also drove people away from their farms. Many families moved west to California to get away from the storms (Grolier 37).

In the long end, the Dust Bowl did benefit the future of U.S. agriculture and the relationship between the farmers and the federal government. Many farmers turned cropland into pastures and grassland. Others planted long shelterbelts of trees to break the winds and to hold the remaining soil (Lucent 45). The federal government purchased millions of acres of farmland and turned it into grasslands and continued to pay farmers to alternate years of crop planting. Federal funds helped pay for more dams, to help the soil retain moisture and to create electricity. Congress passed many bills to help the farmers get back on their feet. In

1933 Congress passed the Agricultural Adjustment Act, which established a direct financial relief program, which helped boost agricultural prices by reducing surpluses (Lucent 41).

During the same year, Congress also passed the Emergency Farm Mortgage to provide funds for refinancing farm mortgages (Lucent 41). In 1935, Congress passed the Resettlement Act, to help resettle destitute farmers on better land (Lucent 1941). Most Dust Bowl farmers graciously appreciated the efforts of the federal government to help them out. The strong relationship between the farmers and the federal government remained after the end of the Dust Bowl (Lucent 45). People realized during the Dust Bowl that soil ecology was fragile and that they had to take many measures and precautions to preserve it.

The Dust Bowl was a period, 1930-1936, in which the southwestern states faced severe drought. U.S. ecology was seriously damaged and took much time and resources to help restore it. The storms brought many negative outcomes, some of which included school closings, death, diseases, moving, and humongous piles of dust. Farmers learned some hard lessons, which helped shape the agriculture of the United States as we know it today.

Works Cited

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