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### 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 dust piles, diseases, death, families having to move, and schools shutting down were some of the many negative outcomes caused by these severe storms. There are also some policies that could have been put into place that would have prevented the Dust Bowl from even happening. The Dust Bowl was a time during the 1930s in which severe dust storms hampered the Great Plains, caused disease outbreaks, relocation, and shutdowns, but could have been prevented if specific measures were taken beforehand.

The Dust Bowl was a period during most of the 1930s in which severe dust storms greatly damaged the agriculture of southwestern America. High winds created flying dust that could blow for up to a month straight. The dust was very dangerous to people, as it contained high levels of silica, which poisons the body similarly to lead. Diseases such as sinusitis, pharyngitis, laryngitis, and bronchitis became common because of this. Even with protection, there was no way to avoid inhaling the dust. Schools were shut down left and right, and people ended up moving out west to escape the storms. The government was very helpful in the process, granting money for the farmers and laws being made for them. President Roosevelt said

at the time "...it is our task to help them with their fight," (Roosevelt). As you can see, this was not a pleasant time.

There are many factors that caused the events 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. Homesteaders, who were flooding into the region, has misunderstood the area, by plowing away the grass that protected the soil (Grolier 45). There was also a massive drought that occurred during the summer of 1931. In June, it had rained twice. The first time it rained  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an inch, second time  $\frac{1}{2}$  of an inch (Henderson). These are just some of the many causes that made the Dust Bowl a brutal experience. Siegfried Schubert used a computer model and satellite data to study the climate and found cooler than normal tropical Pacific Ocean surface temperatures combined with warmer tropical Atlantic Ocean temperatures. He believes that these events lead to the creation of conditions in the atmosphere that lead to the severe storms of the Dust Bowl, (Dunbar). He also stated that "these changes in sea temperatures created shifts in the large-scale weather patterns and low-level winds that reduced the normal supply of moisture from the Gulf of Mexico and inhibited rainfall throughout the Great Plains," (Dunbar).

There could have been measures put in place that would have prevented the Dust Bowl from even happening in the first place. One of the measures that could have been put into place could have been distributing rainfall evenly across the fields. Remember, the summer of 1931 saw a massive drought that had devastating effects on farmers' fields and crops. This plan would indirectly tend to lessen wind erosion by promoting the growth of feed crops, restoration of humus to denuded surfaces, and some protection through standing stubbles and the natural

coverage of weeds and unavoidable wastes (Henderson). Another factor includes planting more drought-resistant strains of corn and wheat, leaving crop residue on the fields to cover the soil.

The Dust Bowl was a time during the 1930s in which severe dust storms affected many farmers in the southwestern area of the United States. Humongous dust piles, diseases, death, families having to move, and schools shutting down were some of the many negative outcomes caused by these severe storms. The Dust Bowl could have been prevented if specific measures were taken beforehand, but farmers were able to recover as they had full support from the federal government throughout the entire time.

Works Cited

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