

# The Great Depression in America

**Instructional Plan Title:** Introduction to a Unit on the 1930's Depression in America.

**Keywords:** Depression, Dorothea Lange, Dust Bowl

**Curriculum Area:** World Geography, U.S. History

**Grade Level:** 9 - 12

**Appropriate Group Size:** This is a whole group activity. It would work with any class size.

**Time Expected to Complete Instructional Plan:** one class period.

**Instructional Objectives:**

1. To promote speculation and thought about a visual image.
2. To encourage curiosity about an historical event.

**Indiana State Proficiencies:** World Geography High School  
Students should be able to:

1. Explain how land forms and climate affects human behavior and cultural patterns, especially land use.
2. Examine the characteristics of a major environmental change and assess whether the change is the result of human action, natural causes, or both.
3. Analyze and example of changes in the physical environment that has reduced the capacity of the environment to support human activity.
4. Analyze human migration in terms of push/pull factors.

**Materials and Resources:**

1. Images from Corbis Image Database
2. A monitor and media projector

**Images:**

1. Dust Storm
2. Farmers During Drought
3. Poor Family
4. Hitchhiking Family
5. Citrus Workers Housing
6. Migrant Mother

**Preparation:** Download images and put in PowerPoint or other slide show format. Images may also be shown straight from IUPUI Community Project Web site at: [www.ulib.iupui.edu/impls](http://www.ulib.iupui.edu/impls)

**Student Instruction:**

1. Project a series of photographic images by Dorothea Lange, pausing several minutes between each in

order for students to write down their interpretation of each scene. Give no explanation at this point.

2. After all images have been shown, students are asked to share their comments about the scenes.
3. During this introductory day, the only aspects of the depression discussed are those referenced by the projected images: a) an explanation of who Dorothea Lange was and why she took the photographs, b) how poor soil management practices coupled with drought resulted in the Dust Bowl, c) how displaced farmers became migrant workers, and the conditions of the migrant camps.

The teacher will model correct verbal critique methods and symbol explanation using the keywords listed above. The teacher should discourage students from saying simple things like "I like it" or "I had fun." Ask student to express why they like it or what exact thing was fun.

**Teacher Notes:** I found that students were particularly distressed by the image of Migrant Mother with her two starving children. I found it helpful to explain that when this photograph was published in a California newspaper, immediate help was forthcoming.