When Soil Blew Away

Read for clues about Dust Bowl conditions and where they occurred.

SS24.5.7b "Identify key characteristics of the Dust Bowl and the regions affected by it."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline details that describe Dust Bowl conditions. Circle the names of states in the hardest-hit southern Great Plains so you can tell the affected region from a place people moved to.

Life in the Dust Bowl

1. In the 1930s, a family on the southern Great Plains might wake to a brown sky. Wind could push loose soil across fields and through cracks around doors. People called this time and place the Dust Bowl. The hardest-hit areas were parts of Oklahoma, Texas, Kansas, Colorado, and New Mexico. These states did not all turn to dust, but many farms in this region suffered.

2. Years with little rain dried the ground. Before the drought, many farmers had plowed up deep-rooted prairie grasses to grow wheat. Without those grasses to hold soil in place, strong winds could lift dry topsoil into the air. Huge dust storms, sometimes called black blizzards, could darken the sky. Dust settled on crops and filled homes, making daily life difficult.

3. Some families tried to protect their farms, but failing crops left them with little food or money. Many people left the southern Great Plains in search of work. Some went west to California, which was a destination for migrants, not one of the five states listed as hardest hit. The Dust Bowl was more than a single storm. It was a period when drought, damaged farmland, and blowing dust hurt communities.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. What region was hardest hit by the Dust Bowl? Name two states with affected areas in that region.

2. What two conditions helped strong winds lift topsoil into the air?

3. What made a black blizzard more than an ordinary windy day? Give two details from the passage.

4. Was California one of the five states listed as hardest hit? Explain how its role in the passage was different.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a three-sentence diary entry from a child in one of the hardest-hit states. Name the state and region, describe two Dust Bowl conditions, and explain one choice your family makes because of those conditions.

ANSWER KEY

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GRADE 5 · SS24.5.7b

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline details that describe Dust Bowl conditions. Circle the names of states in the hardest-hit southern Great Plains so you can tell the affected region from a place people moved to. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What region was hardest hit by the Dust Bowl? Name two states with affected areas in that region.	**The southern Great Plains was hardest hit. Accept any two of Oklahoma, Texas, Kansas, Colorado, and New Mexico.**
2	What two conditions helped strong winds lift topsoil into the air?	**Little rain dried the ground, and plowing had removed prairie grasses that held soil in place.**
3	What made a black blizzard more than an ordinary windy day? Give two details from the passage.	**It was a huge dust storm that could darken the sky and send dust into homes or onto crops.**
4	Was California one of the five states listed as hardest hit? Explain how its role in the passage was different.	**No. California was a destination for people who left the southern Great Plains to look for work.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Here in Oklahoma on the southern Great Plains, dust keeps slipping through our door. The ground is dry from years with little rain, and wind blows soil across our fields. Since our crops are failing, my family has decided to look for work in California.

For the diary entry, accept any of the five named states, two accurate conditions, and a family choice that follows from them. Students need not suggest that every part of a named state was affected.