

Photograph of an abandoned farm in the Dust Bowl

Introduction

When a severe drought in the early 1930s left the crops of the Great Plains stunted, the relentless winds of the plains picked up the soil and brewed up horrific, roiling storms that gave this time its name: the Dust Bowl. Thousands of farmers saw their livelihoods literally blown away.

By 1938 when this farm was photographed by Dorothea Lange, its owners had abandoned it and it became covered by the blowing sands.

Questions for Discussion

Read the document introduction, view the photograph, and then use your knowledge of American history to answer the questions that follow.

1. Why were conditions like those seen in the photograph considered both a natural and a man-made disaster?
2. What choices were left for farmers who faced these conditions?

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Image



Dorothea Lange, Abandoned farm in the Dust Bowl, Coldwater District, near Dalhart Texas June 1938.
(Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division)