

## LITERATURE FOCUS UNIT THE GREAT DEPRESSION

### Featured Selection

- *Out of the Dust* by Karen Hesse
- Published by Scholastic Inc. in 1999
- Grade Level
- *Out of the Dust* takes place in Oklahoma during the thirties during the time of The Great Depression. Life in 1934 was tough, but for Billie Jo it was about to get worse. Billie Jo's family is struggling through hard times on their farm. Her father does not say much, but it is evident that he loves his family and feels a strong connection to his land, but Billie Jo's mother is more refined and has "made herself over" to fit in with her father. Billie Jo's mother plays the piano and Billie Jo is learning to do so herself. She wants to "ride the music out of the dust". During this hard time her mother is pregnant and the family is eager for the arrival of the new baby. Before the baby is born the dust storms and their aftermath drive many of the family's neighbors to California. Billie Jo's father insists that they are staying. After tragedy comes to the family Billie Jo's father becomes very distant and unreachable. When Billie Jo tries to go on without support she decides to run away. In running away, Billie Jo finds that her future is back at home.

### Related Materials

1. *Dust For Dinner* by Ann Turner
  - Harper Collins 1995
  - Jake and Maggy lived on a farm where they loved to sing and dance to the music from Mama's radio. The terrible dust storms during the Great Depression came and ruined the land that they loved so much. The family had no choice but to auction off the farm and make the long, hard journey west to California-away from the dust storms, where the land is still green. Along the way, Papa tries to find work, and Jake and Maggy try to help too. But what if Papa can't find a job? What if California isn't better after all? This story addresses all the issues many families faced during the Great Depression and the ways in which they coped with them.
  - Grade Level: 3- 6
2. *The Dust Bowl* by David Booth
  - Kids Can Press 1997
  - This story tells about a drought that seems to have gone on forever, but Grandfather remembers a time when the drought and the dust were worse than this. He tells his family about the Dust Bowl and the way many neighbors abandoned their farms during the Great Depression. His family decided to stick it out and they did. Through the drought, the cold and the grasshopper plague his family stayed put and survived. The story makes the father decide that he will stick these hard times out as well.

- Grade Level: 2- 6
3. *The Babe and I* by David A. Adler
    - Gulliver 1999
    - The boy in this story thinks that his father goes off the work each day. When he discovers that his father is actually selling apples on the street he learns how to help the family out. The boy sells newspapers near Yankee Stadium in 1932 Bronx. He yells out the exploits of Babe Ruth until one day the Babe buys a newspaper. When this happens the boy gets to watch the game.
    - Grade Level: 2- 4
  4. *Roll of Thunder, Here My Cry* by Mildred Taylor
    - Fogelman 2001
    - This is the story of a black family with strong ties to each other and their farm. These ties give them the strength to defy racism during the Depression. This story shows that having a place of their own is the life blood of the Logan family. It is the land that gives them their courage and pride. No matter how much others degrade them, the Logan's possess something no one can take away.
    - Grade Level: 5- 9
  5. *What You Know First* by Patricia MacLachlan
    - Harper Collins 1995
    - A little girl vows that she is not moving away even though her family is. She says that she will stay on the prairie and live in their attic when the new people move in or with her uncle who sings cowboy songs. The text gives the feelings of loss and fear familiar to many people who have had to move experience. The story also stays in the perspective of a child.
    - Grade Level: 3- 5
  6. *The Gardener* by Sarah Stewart
    - Farrar Straus 1997
    - This book consists of a series of letters between a young lady, Lydia, and her family. The letters are sent during the Great Depression by Lydia. Lydia was sent away from the family farm to live with her uncle in New York City. She helps her uncle at the bakery. The times are very hard for everyone, especially Lydia. She misses her family and home in the country. Lydia is determined to make the best out of her time in the city by making her uncle smile. The letters she writes home reveal some of her plan to do so, but the plan she creates will surely bring a smile to her uncle's bleak face.
    - Grade Level: 2- 8
  7. *Ida Early Comes Over the Mountain* by Robert Burch
    - Avon 1980
    - Ida has been everywhere, done everything, and done it well. One day this self professed free spirit shows up on the Sutton family's rural Georgia doorstep during the Great Depression. The Sutton family is motherless and needs Ida as much as she needs them. This story follows Ida and the Sutton family through hard times and bonds that will never be broken.

- Grade Level: 3
- 8. *Rocks In His Head* by Carol Otis Hurst
  - Greenwillow 2001
  - Everyone has a collection of something. Carol Hurst's father collected rocks. Rocks are harmless and would never amount to anything, or so everyone thought. After the family was forced to sell their house and gas station during the Great Depression all hope was lost. However, through her father's rock collection the family was able to contribute to a science museum. This story tells the trials and tribulations of someone who was out of sync with the entire world and the triumphs they had over their hard times.
  - Grade Level: PreK and up

## Goals

- Indiana Standards
  - 4.1.11 Identify important events and movements that changed life in Indiana in the twentieth century.
  - 4.4.4 Explain that prices change as a result of changes in supply and demand for specific products.

## Unit Plan

- Pre-Reading
  - Activity: Introduce the Great Depression. Talk about the events leading up to the Depression and some events that happened during the Depression.
  - Introduce Key Words: Dust Bowl, Depression
  - Grouping: Whole group
- Reading
  - Activity: Teacher reads a section of the book each day. Be sure to stop and examine key points and different elements of the story.
  - Accommodations: Advanced students can read the book as a literature circle. Struggling students can be in the group the teacher reads to.
  - Grouping: Whole group, small group, individual
- Responding
  - Activity 1: Students will participate in literature circles while reading the book. Each student will have a specific task each day. These tasks include connecting the story to real life, summarizing the section they have read, picking important words out of the selection, and connecting with the characters.
  - Grouping: small groups
  - Activity 2: Students will keep a response journal. Topics should relate to the literature circles the students are involved in.
  - Grouping: Individual
- Exploring
  - Activity: Students can discuss and participate in a mini stock market. This will give them a general idea as to the cause of the Great Depression. It will also al-

low them to experience and understand the way our economy works in the United States of America. (MATH)

- Grouping: whole group, small group
- Activity 2: Students will read books from the list of related materials and connect the events and characters to those in *Out of the Dust*. The similarities and differences should be put into a Venn diagram.
- Grouping: individual
- Activity 3: Students can listen to music from the time period surrounding the Great Depression. They should discuss the different instruments used and the message that the music conveys (MUSIC). This can also be used as a journal topic.
- Grouping: whole group, individual
- Activity 4: The students will learn about different types of entertainment during the Great Depression. One type of entertainment was dancing. Swing dancing became popular during the years surrounding the Great Depression. The students can then learn a few swing steps and practice/ perform them for the rest of the grade/ school (PE/ MOVEMENT- GROSS MOTOR SKILLS).
- Grouping: whole group, small group
- Applying
  - Activity: The teacher can collaborate with the students to recreate “The Dust Bowl” in the classroom. The students can use butcher paper and construction paper to create the dust effect. (ART) Before or after turning the classroom into “The Dust Bowl” the students will discuss why the Great Depression caused the Dust Bowl. They will also discuss the scientific reasons the Dust bowl existed.
  - Grouping: whole group, small group
  - Activity 2: After discussing the physical condition in specific regions of the United States during the Great Depression the students can look at maps (SOCIAL STUDIES) to determine where they think the best place to live would have been. They can then write about this in their journal.
  - Grouping: whole group, small group, individual
  - Activity 3: Students will create skits based on their studies and readings about the Great Depression. The students should write out a script and designate parts to the members of their groups.
  - Grouping: small group
  - Activity 4: Create a budget for your household that would represent the hard times faced during the Great Depression. (MATH)
  - Grouping: Individual

## TIME SCHEDULE

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Introduce the Great Depression</li> <li>● Discuss events that</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Assign literature circle groups.</li> <li>● Talk about the jobs of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Introduce mini economy and stock market.</li> <li>● Discuss the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Continue reading and discussing <i>Out of the Dust</i>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Learn dance steps.</li> <li>● Continue reading <i>Out of the Dust</i>.</li> </ul>

<p>caused the Great Depression</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce <i>Out of the Dust</i></li> <li>• Talk about characters and timeline of events in the book.</li> </ul>	<p>individuals in a literature circle.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read first section of <i>Out of the Dust</i> to the class.</li> </ul>	<p>students' roles in the stock market.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to read <i>Out of the Dust</i>.</li> <li>• Students write in their journals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk about entertainment during the Great Depression.</li> <li>• Listen to music from the time period-journal response.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Literature Circle work</li> <li>• Begin planning for classroom "Dust Bowl"</li> </ul>
<p>Day 6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan and begin work on "Dust Bowl"</li> <li>• Finish reading <i>Out of the Dust</i>.</li> <li>• Continue practicing dance steps.</li> <li>• Work with mini economy and stock market.</li> </ul>	<p>Day 7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Begin writing skits.</li> <li>• Look at maps and do journal entry.</li> <li>• Discuss events and characters in <i>Out of the Dust</i>.</li> <li>• Work on "Dust Bowl"</li> <li>• Start planning for dance and skit performances</li> </ul>	<p>Day 8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read other selections from the related materials list.</li> <li>• Venn Diagram</li> <li>• Practice skits and dance steps</li> <li>• Mini stock market review</li> </ul>	<p>Day 9</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wrap up skits and "Dust Bowl"</li> <li>• Perfect dances</li> <li>• Create budget</li> </ul>	<p>Day 10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perform skits and dances.</li> <li>• Write journal reflection about performances.</li> <li>• Wrap up mini stick market activities.</li> </ul>

## ASSIGNMENT CHECKLIST

READ *Out of the Dust* \_\_\_\_\_  
 LITERATURE CIRCLES \_\_\_\_\_  
 JOURNAL ENTRIES \_\_\_\_\_  
 MINI STOCK MARKET ECONOMY \_\_\_\_\_  
 VENN DIAGRAM \_\_\_\_\_  
 MUSIC LISTENING \_\_\_\_\_  
 DANCE \_\_\_\_\_  
 PERFORMANCE \_\_\_\_\_  
 CREATION OF "DUST BOWL" \_\_\_\_\_  
 MAP ACTIVITY \_\_\_\_\_  
 SKIT \_\_\_\_\_