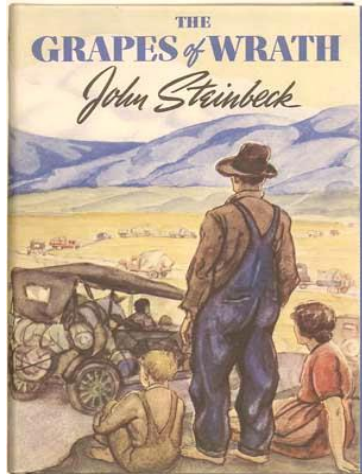


## ***The Grapes of Wrath*** **THE AMERICAN EPIC NOVEL**



### **LESSON ACTIVITY**

#### PRE-READING ACTIVITY:

*The Grapes of Wrath* can be divided into three sections:

**The drought and Dust Bowl in Oklahoma**  
(Expulsion from home)

**Oklahoma protagonists travel to California**  
(Exodus and quest for a new home)

**Protagonists become migrant farmers in California**  
(Arrival and construction of a new home)

1. Read Chapter 1 (Drought and dust storm), Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 (Turtle struggle to cross road) with the class.
2. Watch Pare Lorenz's film *The Plow That Broke the Plains*.
3. Small groups of students (2-3 students) should use at least 4 of the pictures on the Depression that follow and to construct a narrative that helps understand the historical and political context of Steinbeck's novel, and present it to the class. They should work in class for a two-hour period.

These are some of the themes students should analyse when reading the photographs:

- The Dust Bowl, human influence and ecological disasters
- The Great Depression
- Migrant camps
- The destruction of the American Dream
- The fall of American agrarianism
- Forced mobility
- The Great Depression and African Americans
- Gender and Race in the Great Depression narrative



Arthur Rothstein. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.



Arthur Rothstein, for the Farm Security Administration  
The Dust Bowl sent thousands of farmers into poverty during the 1930s



A Soup Kitchen during the Depression



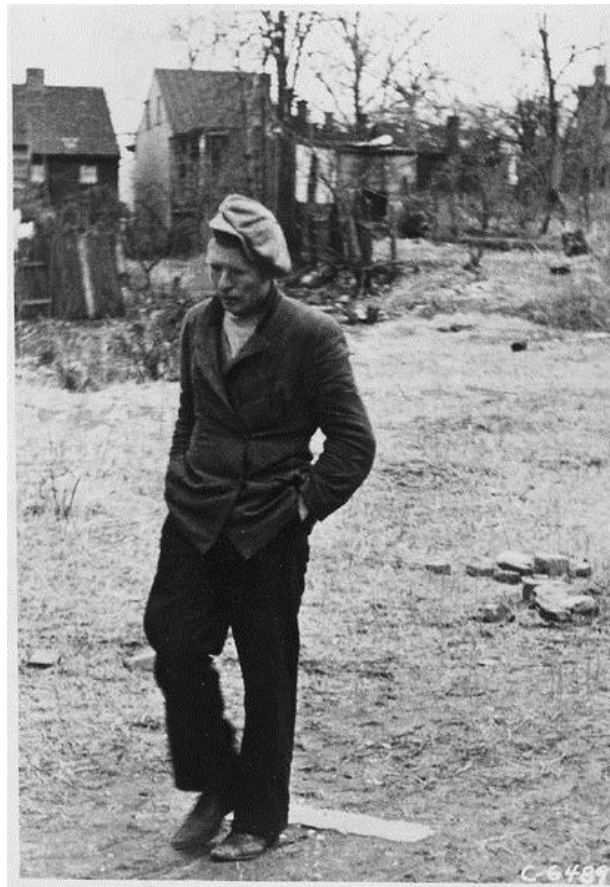
Farmer in despair over the depression in 1932.



Crowd at New York's American Union Bank during a bank run early in the Great Depression.



Waiting for relief checks during Great depression. Calipatria, California



Depression: Unemployed



Breadlines: long line of people waiting to be fed: New York City



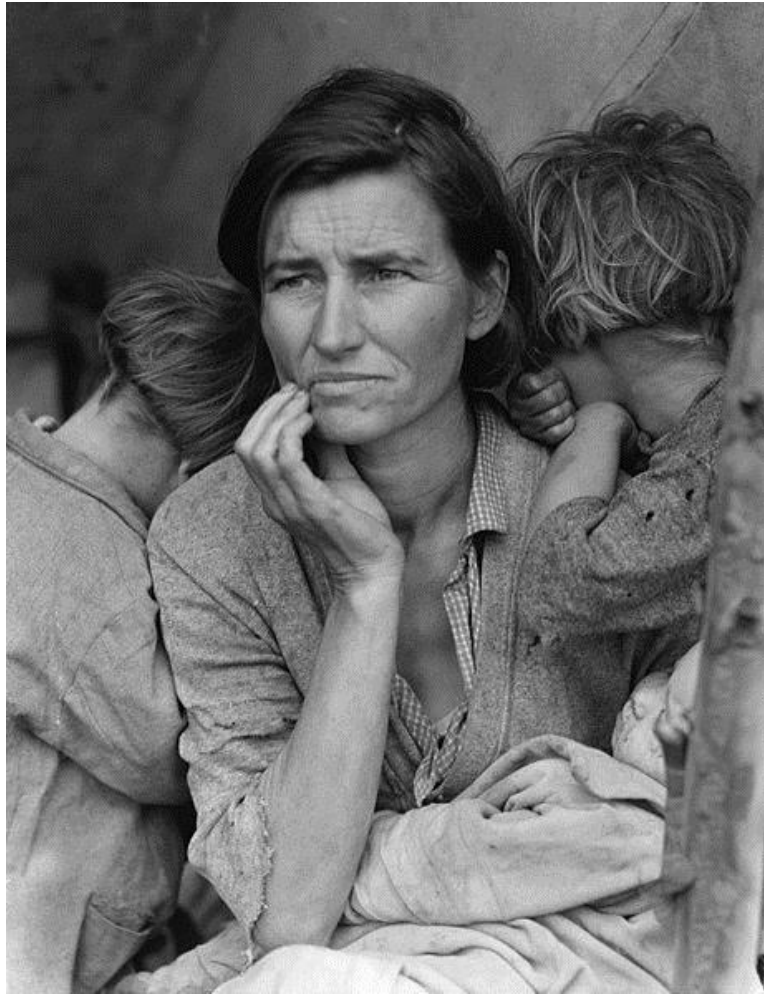
Unemployed; destitute man leaning against vacant store:photo by Dorothea Lange



Dorothea Lange of a migrant family in Kern County

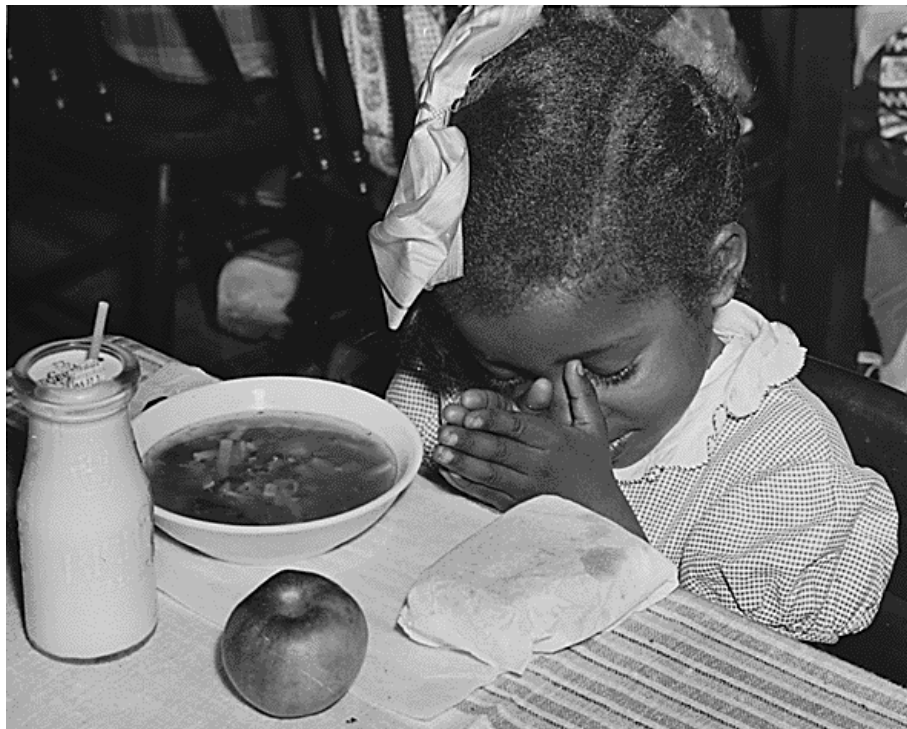


Near Buckeye, Maricopa County, Arizona.  
Migrant [African-American] cotton picker and her baby, Dorothea Lange



Migrant Mother, 1936.

A photograph by Dorothea Lange, of Florence Thompspon and several of her children



Young girl prays before eating school lunch of soup, sandwich, milk, and an apple. 1936.

Part of U.S. Works Progress Administration Surplus Commodities: School Lunch Programs during the Great Depression



**Bibliography:**

- Steinbeck, John. *The Grapes of Wrath*. Steinbeck, John. Penguin, 2006 (1939).  
Lorentz, Pare. Dir. *The Plow that Broke the Plains (1936)*.  
United States Resettlement Administration, 1992.  
Images: Library of Congress and Wikimedia Commons.