

Dust In The Wind

The exodus from the great plains, 1930 -1940.

Decades of unsustainable farming practices along with decades of neglecting to protect against wind erosion created recipe for a dusty hell. Generations of farmers ripped out the carpet of grasses which held the soil and its moisture in place.

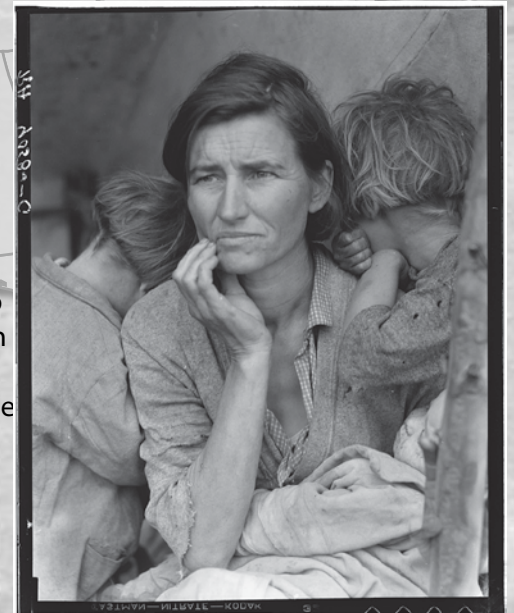
A drought, brought about by cooler than normal surface temperatures in the tropical Pacific Ocean combined with warmer temperatures in the tropical Atlantic Ocean, created conditions that shifted the large-scale weather patterns and winds.



Dust storm approaching Stratford, Texas. April 18, 1935

This in turn reduced the moisture supplied by the Gulf of Mexico which inhibited rainfall throughout the Great Plains. The winds of a weakened jet stream strayed further south than normal, blowing across the dry, haggard farm land of the great plains and the rest is history. April 14th, 1935 would come to be known as "Black Sunday" as the intensity of the storm turned day into night. The storm would move 300,000 tons of topsoil.

The dust storms ravaged a people already rattled by the great depression, further intensifying its impact. Some 300,000 to 400,000 people moved out of Oklahoma and the surrounding states, mostly heading west looking for work. Because the storms occurred over a decade, it is impossible to know who moved from where to where. As such the arrows seen here are not proportional to the number of people who left each state. Whilst the majority went to California, others landed in Arizona, Colorado and Oregon. Construction of the Hoover Dam nearly doubled the population of Clark County Nevada, home to a then sleepy town called Las Vegas, to 16,000 people.



Migrant mother, 1936. Dorothea Lange, photographer.

Author: Colin Ehler, Geography 370. Projection: Albers Equal Area Conic
Latitude Of Origin: 37.5° Central Meridian: -96° Scale: 1:20,000,000



Black Sunday April 14, 1935. Dust storm on the move in Kansas.

sources:

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