

Student Essay on The Dust Bowl

The Dust Bowl

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Essay

People's attitudes toward the environment changed mostly during the Dust Bowl. The Dust Bowl was the period between 1931 and 1939 in which the plains states were nearly unfarmable and nearly uninhabitable.

In the years prior to the Dust Bowl, the southern plains were pushed to their limits and made into "wheat country." While the rest of the Nation was engulfed in the Great Depression, the southern plains were being turned from prairie to a prosperous region. In 1930, tractors began coming to the fields and were said to be like "giant armored bugs creeping over the horizon", but by the summer of 1931 the fields were left naked and vulnerable. This is when the Dust Bowl, as one journalist called it began.

April 14, 1935 was the worst day of all, Black Sunday. The silence of morning was shattered by thousands of birds flying to get away from the avalanche of dirt to come. The inch of top soil which took over a thousand years to make was destroyed in minutes. Now living on the plains became an act of sheer will. In 1935, one third of the deaths in Ford County, Kansas were caused by Dust pneumonia, but none outside the plains knew how bad it really was. This was until the father of soil conservation; Hugh Bennett held a government meeting in Washington, D.C. While in this meeting Mr. Bennett heard about a dust storm which was to go over D.C., and help these government officials to see it. He then said to them, "This gentleman is what I was talking about." In 1937, after seeing how bad it really was, Washington urged farmers to adopt certain techniques of planting and plowing. By 1938, this blowing soil was reduced by 65%, but the drought dragged on. In the spring of 1939, after the failure of 7 wheat crops in 8 years people started to believe it was becoming an American Sahara. Six months later the decade of dirt ended. One farmer said this, "people are thinking differently about taking care of the land."

The Dust Bowl was overshadowed by the Great Depression, but never the less was a major issue in America. The Dust Bowl was a major environmental issue which changed the southern plains forever, and nearly turned the southern United States into an uninhabitable area.