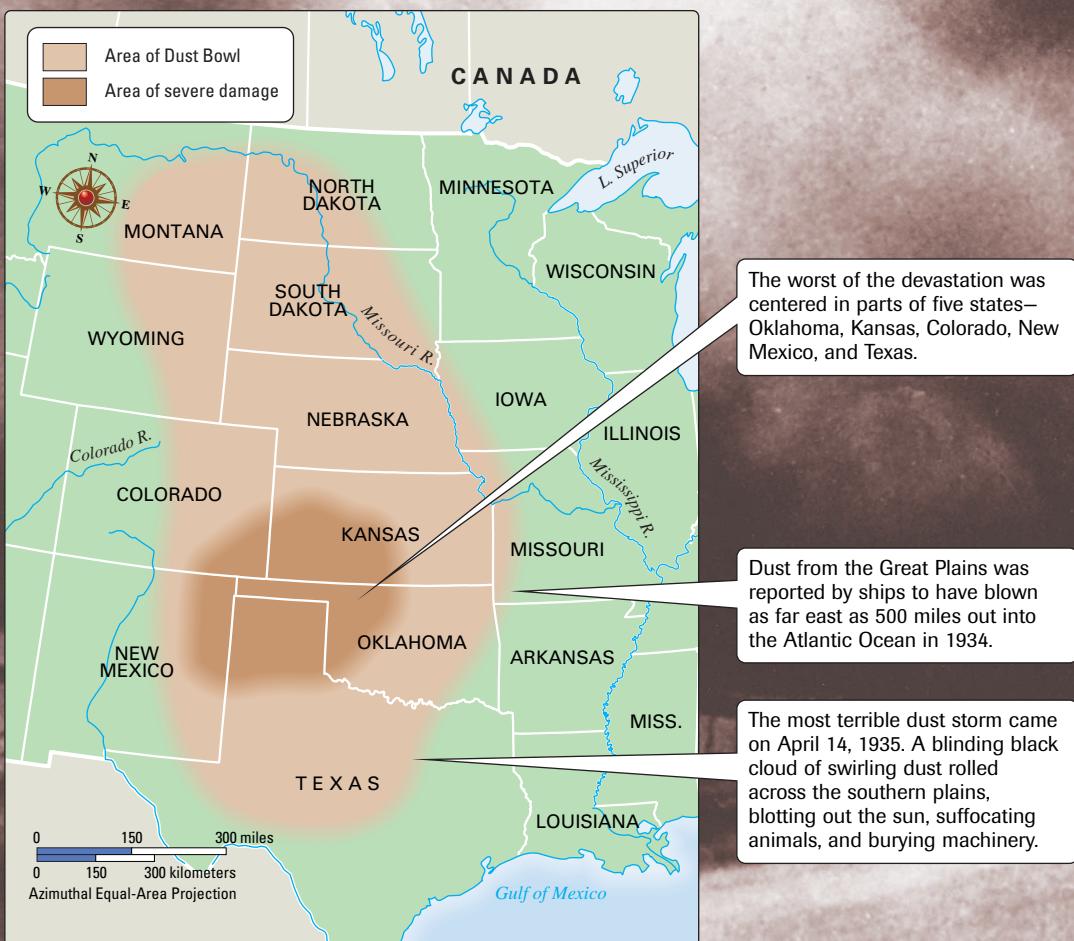


Disasters!

The Dust Bowl

Years of unrelenting drought, misuse of the land, and the miles-high dust storms that resulted (shown here) devastated the Great Plains in the 1930s. Rivers dried up, and heat scorched the earth. As livestock died and crops withered, farms were abandoned. Thousands of families—more than two million people—fled to the West, leaving behind their farms and their former lives. Most of these “Okies,” as they were called (referring to Oklahoma, the native state of many), made their way over hundreds of miles to California. There they tried to find work as migrant farm laborers and restart their lives. The drought lasted nearly a decade, and it took years for this productive agricultural region to recover.



GeoActivity

REMEMBERING THE VICTIMS

Use the Internet to find personal accounts of Dust Bowl families. Then create a **documentary proposal** about one of them.

- Begin with a brief overview of how the drought affected the family.
- Add a sketch map showing where they lived and copies of any photos available, with captions for each.
- Present your proposal to a panel of student producers.



GeoData

CAUSES

- Years of poor agricultural practices, such as overplowing and overgrazing, stripped away about 96 million acres of grasslands in the southern plains.
- Seven years of drought, or dry weather, turned the soil to dust.

EFFECTS

- Hundreds of millions of tons of soil were blown away.
- Crops withered and livestock died.
- More than 2 million plains people abandoned their farms.

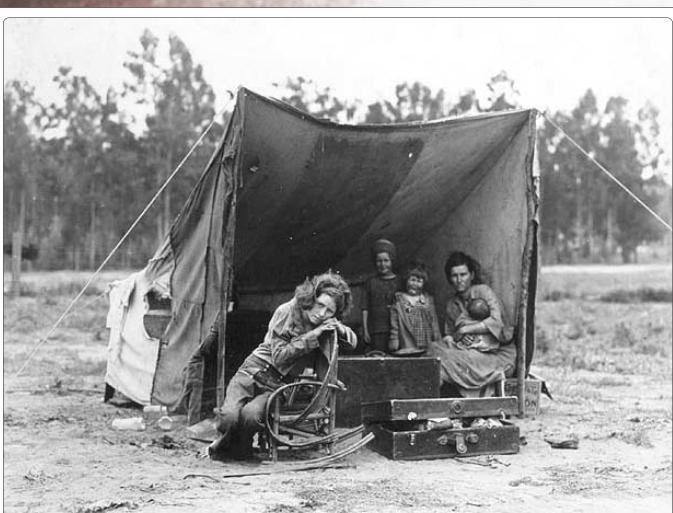
PREVENTIVE MEASURES

Experts in crop production and soil management proposed the use of scientific farming methods, including

- contour plowing, or plowing across a hill rather than up and down, to stop wind and water erosion
- terracing, or planting crops in stair-stepped rows, to prevent soil erosion
- planting trees to hold the soil in place and to slow the force of the wind



Thousands of farms like this one in Cimarron County, Oklahoma, were turned into dust-covered wastelands by the drought and dust storms of the 1930s.



Migrants from the Dust Bowl were forced to live any way they could while trying to find jobs picking vegetables or fruit. This mother and her seven children lived in a tent in a California migrant camp, eating vegetables found on the ground and birds they killed.