

A Time of Dust Storms

Linda Ruggieri



A long time ago, wind and dust caused big problems in the United States. Giant clouds of dust harmed people, animals, and crops in the central part of the country. The area became known as the Dust Bowl.

The problem started when farmers planted more crops than they could sell. The next year, those farmers decided to leave some land empty. The farmers let their cattle graze there, and the cattle ate the grass. Soon, nothing grew on that land.

Then came a drought (DROWT). A drought is a long period without rain. Land became very dry. Grass and crops barely grew. Very little was left to hold the soil in place.

At the same time, strong winds started blowing. The winds blew layers of soil into the air. Dust covered everything.

People had to protect themselves from the dust. Children wore masks and goggles when they walked to school. They used the masks so they would not breathe in dust and get sick. People hung wet sheets over their windows to prevent dust from blowing into their homes.

Finally, the rains returned. Farmers could plant crops again. The farmers learned to plant in different places to protect the soil. They also planted grasses to keep the soil in place.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. What caused big problems a long time ago in the United States?

- A masks and goggles
- B wet sheets
- C wind and dust

2. What was one effect that dust had on people, animals, and crops in the United States?

- A Dust made it easier for people, animals, and crops to stay warm.
- B Dust helped people, animals, and crops live longer.
- C Dust harmed people, animals, and crops.

3. Read this paragraph from the article.

"Then came a drought (DROWT). A drought is a long period without rain. Land became very dry. Grass and crops barely grew. Very little was left to hold the soil in place."

What can be concluded from this paragraph about grass, crops, and soil?

- A Grass and crops help hold soil in place.
- B Grass holds soil in place better than crops do.
- C Grass and crops grow best in dry soil.

4. Read these sentences from the article.

"The next year, those farmers decided to leave some land empty. The farmers let their cattle graze there, and the cattle ate the grass. Soon, nothing grew on that land."

What would probably have happened if there had still been grass growing on that land when the strong winds started blowing?

- A More soil would have blown into the air.
- B Less soil would have blown into the air.
- C The rains would have returned sooner.

5. What is the main idea of this article?

- A There was a time when part of the United States was harmed by a lot of wind and dust.
- B Once people in the United States hung wet sheets over their windows to keep dust out of their homes.
- C A drought is a long period of time without any rain.

6. Read these sentences from the article.

"The next year, those farmers decided to leave some land empty. The farmers let their cattle graze there, and the cattle ate the grass. Soon, nothing grew on that land."

Based on these sentences, what does the word "graze" mean?

- A to run around a field
- B to drink lots of water
- C to feed on grass

7. Choose the answer that best completes the sentence.

People hung wet sheets over their windows _____ they did not want dust to get into their homes.

- A so
- B because
- C but

8. What did farmers do to keep the soil in place after the rains returned?

9. Why might the farmers have wanted to keep the soil in place?

10. Were farmers responsible for there being so much dust in the air in the Dust Bowl? Explain why or why not. Support your answer with evidence from the text.
