

# Dust Bowl notes

3 tons of dust per American; dust rose 10,000 feet high

Dust storms for 5 years

Worst one: April 14, 1935 (“Black Sunday”)  
“Black Blizzards”

## Causes of the dust storms

Nature:

- Too little water (drought beginning in 1930)
- Too much wind

Humans:

- Overgrazing of cattle and sheep
  - No roots of grasses left to hold soil
- Overfarming
  - Too much plowing; loosening of topsoil
- Use of technology
  - Tractors made plowing of land so easy that lots of land was plowed
- Bad farming practices
  - Instead of fields left fallow (left alone) to rejuvenate, new land was plowed

## Dust Bowl: Location

OK, TX, KS, CO, NM, NE

## Effects:

Dust pneumonia (“brown plague”)  
Crops failed, livestock died (suffocated), birds dropped out of the sky (suffocated)  
People lost their farms (crops unsuccessful, didn’t make any money, couldn’t pay mortgage)  
Migration to California (“Okies”) looking for work, land to farm; most found neither

## Cultural response:

John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*

Dorothea Lange’s photographs