

Document Based Question



Is the Grass Greener on the Other Side?

It is the 1930's. Your family is living in Oklahoma. Your family has a farm in Oklahoma, but has not been able to grow any crops in the last 3 years. You have heard that things are better in California. The rumors are that there are jobs in California and no more problems with the dust. You will have to leave your farm, your house and all of your family if you make the choice to move. Should you join the emigrants and move west for a better life?

Write an essay explaining your choice. Justify your choice with specific examples.

Should you move west for a better life? Evaluate the following documents to help you make your decision.

DBQ Background Timeline of Dust Bowl Events

- 1931: Severe Drought hits Midwestern and Southern Plains
- 1931: The number of dust storms are increasing
- 1933: May: The Emergency Farm Mortgage Act to help farmers facing foreclosure
June: The Civilian Conservation Corps opens the first soil erosion control camp. By September there are 161 soil erosion control camps set up.
- 1934: May: Great dust storms spread from the dust bowl area to across the country. Twenty-seven States are affected severely.
June: Taylor Grazing Act is passed, an effort to heal the damage done by land over use.
Dec: "The Yearbook of Agriculture" announces, "Approximately 35 million acres of formerly cultivated land have essentially been destroyed for crop production"
- 1935: April: Congress declares soil erosion "a national menace" in an act establishing the Soil Conservation Service in the Department of Agriculture. Farming techniques such as strip cropping, terracing, crop rotation, contour plowing, and cover crops are advocated. Farmers are paid to practice soil-conserving farming techniques.
Dec: At a meeting in Pueblo, Colorado, experts estimate that 850,000,000 tons of topsoil has blown off the Southern Plains during the course of the year, and that if the drought continues, the total area affected would increase from 4,350,000 acres to 5,350,000 acres by the spring of 1936.
- 1938: The extensive work re-plowing the land into furrows, planting trees in shelterbelts, and other conservation methods has resulted in a 65 percent reduction in the amount of soil blowing. However, the drought continues.
- 1939: In the fall, the rain comes, finally bringing an end to the drought.

Background information:

In the late 1920's the Plains states were gripped with a drought. Previously in the late 1800's thousands of miles of grass rich land had been plowed over to make room for fields of cotton, wheat and corn. Over-farming had depleted the soil. The area was often described as the, "Great American Desert". The dust storms began to arrive in the mid-1930's, when America was in the midst of the Great Depression. Crops withered and failed year after year. California beckoned more than any other place to the displaced, desperate refugee. California farmers were desperate and in need of labor. About 28 percent of those who migrated to California ended up in the San Joaquin Valley. Many were hoping to work in the fields and save enough to buy their own land eventually. When the refugees came to California they found competition for jobs. Eventually, this led to an over-supply of labor which drove down wages.

Should you move west for a better life? Evaluate the following documents to help you make your decision.

Source 1A: New York Times Magazine

Vocabulary:

- **Migrant:** a person who moves from place to place to get work

Document Note: This story appeared in the New York Times Magazine, a newspaper with one of the largest circulations in the U.S., as a supplement to the newspaper. This passage is part of a larger article explaining the circumstances of the Dust Bowl Migrant. The article examines the difficulties of the Dust Bowl Migrant, and the difficulties the state of California is faced with in dealing with the new migrants.



“THEY told me this was the land o’ milk an’ honey, but Ah guess the cow’s gone dry, and the tumble-bugs has got in the beehive. * * *”

That, in his own language, is the way the average Dust Bowl migrant feels toward California today. And how does California react to the migrant? As one West Coast grower puts it, “This isn’t a migration — it’s an invasion! They’re worse than a plague of locusts!”

The situation might not be so tragic if there were an end in sight somewhere. But the “covered wagons” are still rumbling across the border—there were 20,000 new arrivals during the first five months of 1939, making a total of nearly 300,000 migrants now living in California. “What shall we do with them? How can we feed them? What about housing, medical care, relief?” These are the

Source: New York Times Magazine, August 1939.

Questions:

1. How is the migrant feeling in this document?
2. How are the people of California feeling about the migrants?
3. How would you describe what is meant by the phrase, "but Ah guess the cow's gone dry, and the tumble bugs has got in the beehive."
4. Determine the basis for this article. Why do you believe it was written?
5. Evaluate why the author compares the dust bowl migrants to those in covered wagons.

Source 1B: *Common Sense Journal Article, July 1939*

Document Note: This article describes the circumstances of the Dust Bowl Migrant. The article talks about the role of the Farm Security Administration in setting up the migrant camps.

Vocabulary:

- Intimate:

There are some eleven Migratory Labor Camps scattered through California, and their stories are pretty much the same. In the little town of Brawley, for example, over three hundred dust-bowl families were huddled together in a dry riverbed a few miles out of town. The intimate details of their existence may be found in a dozen Farm Security Administration reports, in the files of the Simon J. Lubin society, in Steinbeck's "Grapes of Wrath"; or they may be studied personally in the Bakersfield area where the clean-up is by no means finished. Despite the unbelievable misery in that riverbed, the good citizens of Imperial Valley did nothing. A few half-humorously suggested that the "Okies" be lined

up and shot; others sent half-hearted protests to the Health Department.

Source: Excerpt from *Common Sense Journal* article, July 1939

Questions:

- 1. How many migrant camps are in California at the time of this article?**
- 2. How does the author describe people living at these camps?**
- 3. What might be the purpose of the author in writing this article based on this excerpt? Why do you think this?**
- 4. What does the author suggest might be learned from studying the, “intimate details of their existence”?**
- 5. Evaluate what this statement might mean, “Despite the unbelievable misery in that riverbed, the good citizens of Imperial Valley did nothing.”**

Source 1C: Oral Interview, Ray Henkel, Summer 2010



Document Note: This is part of a larger interview of Ray Henkel gave in the Summer of 2010 as a child he lived during the Dust Bowl Migration and tells the story of his family moving west.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ukx9NarEucQ>

Questions

1. What does Ray say they took with them in the car? Where did they stay as they traveled west?
2. How did Ray describe the cotton camps?
3. Why does Ray describe his family's experiences picking cotton?
4. Summarize how you feel Ray sees his experiences as a Dust Bowl Migrant.
5. Evaluate, was Ray's experience a positive one for his family or was his experiences as a Dust Bowl Migrant, negative. Explain why you believe this.

Source 1D: Home of Dust Bowl Refugee, March 1937

Document Note: This photo is a photo of a migrant camp in California. There were many migrant camps set up in California to help in the large amount of migrants who came to California for jobs. Many migrants came with little money, these camps offered some relief and assistance to those migrants waiting for jobs harvesting in the fields.



Source: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Collection. Dorothea Lange, Farm Security Administration, 1937.

Questions

1. What details do you observe in the photo?
2. Determine what difficulties could a person experience when living here?
3. Evaluate the reasons people would live in a camp.
4. Contrast these conditions to the conditions a migrant may have experienced prior to moving to the migrant camps.
5. Imagine what the migrant living in these conditions might say in a letter back home. What would he/she write about? What might he/she say?

Source 1E: Table, U.S. Bureau of Census, 1910-1970

Document Note: This census table tells about the migrants who came from the Southern United States and moved to California and other states during the time period of 1910-1970. The term "Net Calif. Increase" refers to the overall increase in the state of California.

Western South Natives Living outside the Region, 1910-1970

	Living outside region	Living in California	Net Calif. Increase	Percentage of Calif. pop.
1910	661,094	103,241		4.3%
1920	1,419,046	187,471	84,230	5.5%
1930	2,027,139	430,810	243,339	7.6%
1940	2,580,940	745,934	315,124	10.8%
1950	3,887,370	1,367,720	621,786	12.9%
1960	4,966,781	1,734,271	366,551	11.0%
1970	5,309,287	1,747,632	13,361	8.8%

Sources: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Census of the United States, Population: 1910, Vol. 1, 732-33; 1920, Vol. 11, 628-29; 1930, Vol. H, 155-56; 1940, State of Birth, 17-18; 1950, State of Birth, 20-24; 1960, State of Birth, 22-23; 1970, State of Birth, 28-29.

Questions:

- 1. How many migrants came to California in the 1930's?**
- 2. Were more natives living in California or outside the region?
Which time period saw the greatest increase for those living in
and out of the region?**
- 3. What years show the greatest growth? Which years show the
least amount of growth?**
- 4. What can you infer from the data?**
- 5. Determine the reasons Southern natives may have come to
California.**

Source 1F: Photo, Dorothea Lange, August 1938

Document Note: Dorothea Lange was a photographer who was famous for her Great Depression photos of dust bowl migrants. She was employed by the Farm Security Administration to photograph the experiences of the migrants. She traveled along the route and took pictures on the route and in California. Her photos brought national attention to the plight of displaced refugees.



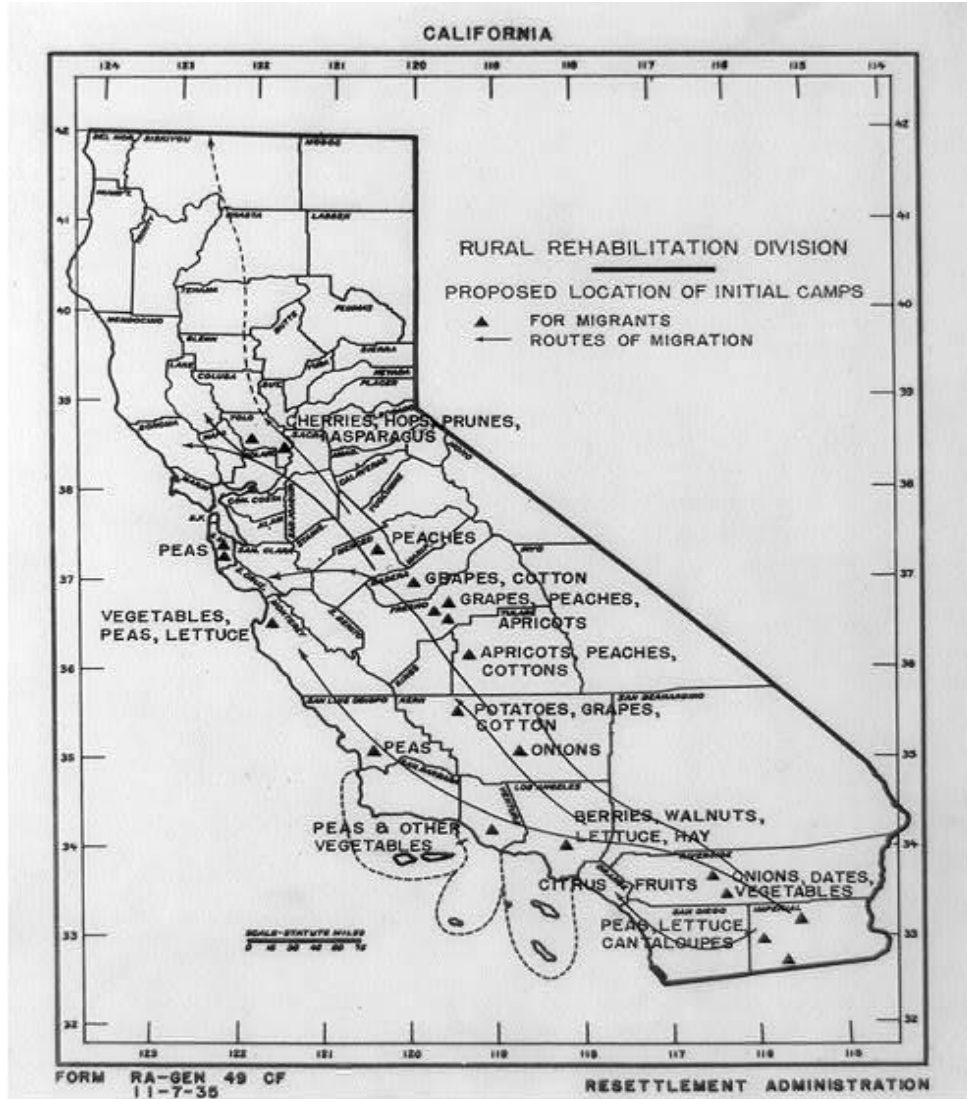
Source: Oakland Museum of California, Dorothea Lange, August 10, 1938

Questions:

1. What items might they have brought in the car?
2. Describe what you observe about the family.
3. Consider the circumstances of this photo, why might it have been taken?
4. Evaluate the difficulties that might be faced by this family in their travels.
5. Differentiate between traveling today and the way traveling may have been in 1938.

Source 1F: Map of California by Rural Rehabilitation Division, 1935?

Document Note:



Source: Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs, Rural Rehabilitation Division, 1935?

Questions:

1. What types of crops are grown in California?
2. What preparations were being made for the migrants?
3. Compare and contrast the crops grown in California to the crops grown in the area where the migrants came from. What might have been grown where they had lived? How are they different? How are they similar?
4. What opportunities might exist in California that may not have existed where the migrants came from?
5. What is the most important information you can learn from this map?

Source 1G: Oral History: Mildred Lenora Morris Ward

Document Note: This is part of an interview given by a woman who grew up in Oklahoma during the Dust Bowl Migration. She was a teacher during this time period until they moved to California. In California, she didn't teach to begin with, she looked for work in the fields alongside her husband.

I was married. I married a boy that lived just next door to the school. He tried to farm. We borrowed money to buy a team and seed and a plow and a cultivator. One year the drought killed everything. We made \$100--just enough money to pay the rent. And the next year the flood did the same thing exactly, and that's what decided us to come to California. Of course I could have stayed there and continued to teach, but my husband didn't want that. Being a young man he wanted to work. We were reading articles in papers about how many hundreds of workers were wanted out here in this crop and how many hundreds of workers were wanted in another crop some place--all over California. We just knew that there was work in California because of what we'd been told and what we'd read in the papers. So we decided to come to California.

I didn't come with my husband the first year. He came out alone and worked one year because I had a contract to teach school, but I came out and spent the summer here then I went back and taught school. Then the following year we came out to stay. We came to Dinuba because I had a brother who had come here a year or two before. We drove an old Chevrolet with our belongings in a little two-wheel trailer pulled behind the car. We even brought our dog along. We had a highchair tied on top of the trailer, and we had a flat every day I think. We stayed in motels on the way--motels that had a kitchen where we could cook our supper and our breakfast. My brother and another young man came along with us. They came along with us. They came to get work too.

Source : California State College, Bakersfield, Dust Bowl Special Collections, 1981

Questions

1. How does their farm do the first year?

2. What difficulties did Mildred and her husband face that finally made them decide to move to California?

3. Describe what lured Mildred and her husband to California?

4. In your opinion, what might have been the most important reason she decided to move to California?

5. Predict what circumstances she may face when they arrive in California.

Should you move west for a better life?

Block out the Paragraphs: (4 Paragraph Essay)

Introduction Paragraph

Attention grabber:

Thesis statement:



Supporting Paragraph: Key Idea

- Support Key idea with examples, facts, evidence, etc.

-
-
-
-
-



Supporting paragraph: Key Idea

- Support Key idea with examples, facts, evidence, etc.

-
-
-
-
-

Conclusion Paragraph:

Restate thesis using new words/synonyms

Call for Action/Change/Inform (pick one)

-
-
-
-
-

	Exceeds	Meets	Approaches	Below	Inadequate Progress
Thesis	Your thesis statement is very strong and supports the question being asked.	Your thesis statement is strong and mostly supports the question being asked.	You have a thesis statement, it is weak and may not fully support the question being asked.	You have a very weak thesis statement. It does not support the question being asked.	You do not have a thesis.
Content X3	Identifies several reasons why you should move west. You have fully supported your facts with evidence.	Identifies some reasons why you should move west. Most of your facts have been supported.	Identifies a few of the reasons why you should move west. Some of your facts may have been supported.	Identifies on a few if any of the reasons you should move west. Your facts were not supported with evidence.	No reasons have been identified.
Organization/ Grammar	Essay is organized and includes a thesis, and conclusion. Essay is well edited. It is apparent you followed all steps in the planning guide. Your essay look polished.	Essay is mostly organized. A thesis is included and a conclusion may be included. There are some grammar errors.	Essay is unorganized. A thesis and conclusion are not included. The guide may not have been used. There are many grammar errors.	Essay is very unorganized. It is hard to make sense of. There is no thesis, or conclusion. There are many errors and they interfere with the essay.	Essay is very unorganized and poorly written. The guide was not used to write the essay. There are many grammar errors. Little effort was given to writing the essay.