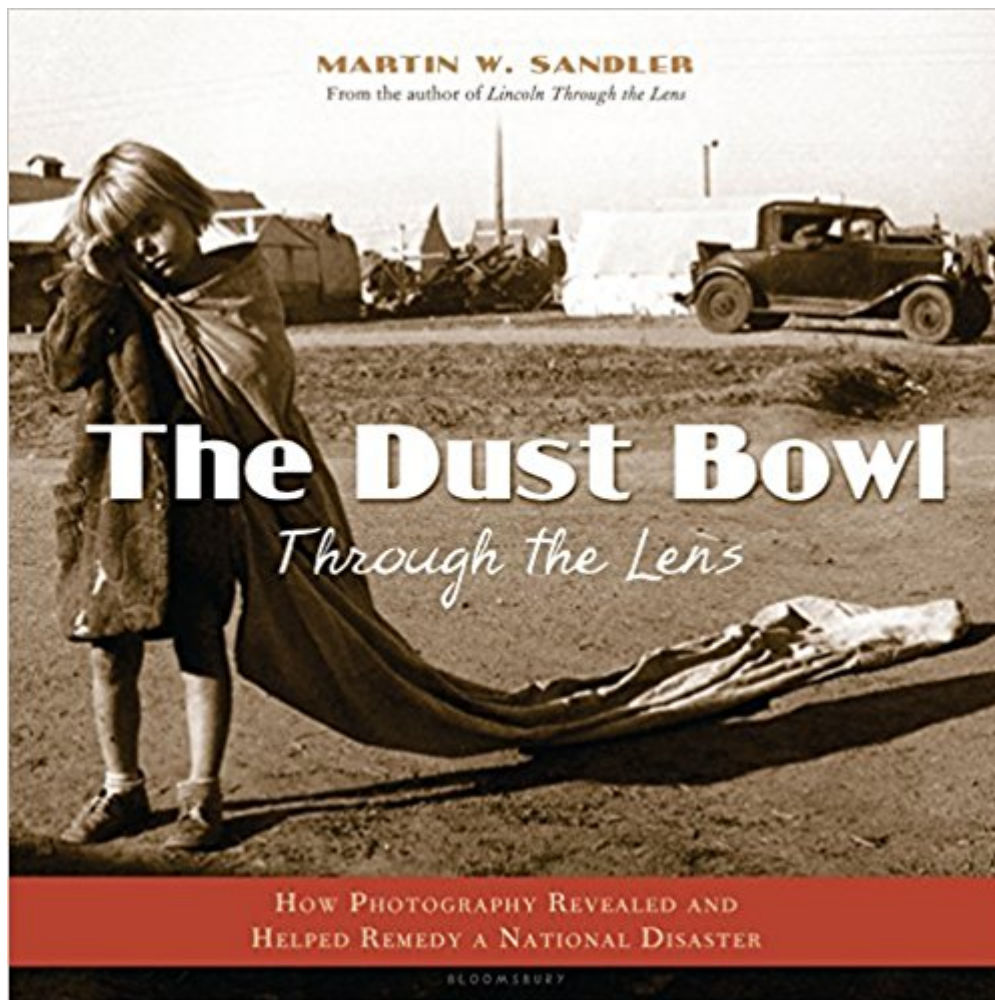




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# The Dust Bowl Through The Lens: How Photography Revealed And Helped Remedy A National Disaster



## Synopsis

The Dust Bowl was a time of hardship and environmental and economic disaster. More than 100 million acres of land had turned to dust, causing hundreds of thousands of people to seek new homes and opportunities thousands of miles away, while millions more chose to stay and battle nature to save their land. FDR's army of photographers took to the roads to document this national crisis. Their pictures spoke a thousand words, and a new form of storytelling- photojournalism- was born. With the help of iconic photographs from Dorothea Lange, Walker Evans, Arthur Rothstein, and many more, Martin Sandler tells the story of a nation as it endured its darkest days and the extraordinary courage and spirit of those who survived.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Grade 4-8 • This excellent photo-essay traces the history of the Dust Bowl from its causes to its resolution. In tandem, Sandler treats the role of the budding field of photojournalism. Forty-four spreads feature a page of clear, direct text with a large, well-reproduced image, many of which are set on color pages. Many of these, such as Dorothea Lange's "Migrant Mother" and Arthur Rothstein's "Fleeing a Dust Storm," have become iconic. The author repeatedly makes the point that it was in large part the force of these pictures that motivated the Roosevelt administration to take action in aid of both Dust Bowl farmers and migrant workers. Seldom has the connection between the arts and the general quality of life been made so clear. The text deals

equally with those who fled the decimated Bread Basket for California and those who waited out the devastation and dust. Throughout, the use of primary sources is superb, with quotations from affected citizens, the photojournalists themselves, political and entertainment figures, and writers, giving a multifaceted picture of a seminal time in United States history. This book gives a more general picture of the time than Jerry Stanley's *Children of the Dust Bowl* (Crown, 1993) and is focused more specifically than Russell Freedman's *Children of the Great Depression* (Clarion, 2005). It provides a lesson in strength and perseverance that is certainly applicable today.

—Ann Welton, Helen B. Stafford Elementary, Tacoma, WA END

Sandler, whose previous books include *America through the Lens* (2005) and *Lincoln through the Lens* (2008), has found, in *America's Dust Bowl*, a natural subject for the series' photo-essay format. Well researched and dramatically illustrated, the book explains how settlement, farming methods, and weather together devastated the southern plains and, by extension, the people who lived there, how they reacted, how the government responded, how the Dust Bowl finally ended, and who created the photographic record of the period. Each double-page spread uses a heading and a period quote to open a new topic, discusses it in a few paragraphs of text, and illustrates it with a large photo and a small one. Detailed captions comment on the photos. Telling the story with intelligence and sensitivity, Sandler honors the people who lived through the disaster and the great photographers of the 1930s, who documented the dramatic story for the people of their own time and created a record that transcends that time. Grades 5-9. --Carolyn Phelan

The Dust Bowl was the other disaster that happened during the Great Depression. It led to the migration of thousands of families from the Southern Plains to California. The book is more focused on how the photography captured the heartbreaking images of families and dust bowl survivors as well as the destruction of dust along the way. If you are interested in the Dust Bowl, this book is aimed at children readers but I found some of the writing to be a little difficult even for myself. I still admire the photographs especially the migrant mother whose face captured the world about the Dust Bowl Crisis. This book offers a fine format, beautiful photographs, and a brief explanation as to why it happened in the first place especially with focus on causes of the Dust Bowl and its disastrous effects. Even the Okies and others who fled the Dust Bowl with their families and belongings for a new life in California, they didn't receive such a welcome reception there.

This book contains a series of short, interesting articles with accompanying photographs regarding various aspects of Dust Bowl history. Each topic covers exactly two facing pages in the book, with the text on the left side and a main photo on the right. There are other photos "sprinkled" on the two pages, as appropriate. I love this format because it is simple and easy to digest the information. No matter where you open the book, there is something interesting to read and look at. A good coffee table or gift book!

This book is over designed to the detriment of the subject, ostensibly the photography. There is a wealth of wonderful photographs from the period, but one wouldn't know it from this collection and their manner of presentation. Apparently the author thought the images were not compelling, not powerful on their own as he has tinted each one and surrounded them in saturated color. There is as much text as photographs. Each two page spread is an art deco extravaganza and another excuse to rummage pantone's favorite complimentary color schemes. The results prettify but jar for sure. It cheapens the legacy of the artists who captured the Dust Bowl. But the real travesty is that it misses the spirit of the time, the people, the very events themselves. How is that possible?

A beautiful book that offers detailed information about the causes and conditions of the dust bowl. The many photos bring about a factual yet emotive truth about the era. A great gift for someone who grew up in that area during the depression or has a personal interest in the history of this difficult time for the midwest. Ordered for my mom, now 82, she has since mailed it on to her sister, who enjoyed it immensely. Her sister said it gave her a whole different perspective of the times and a much more generous forgiveness toward her parents, who she now realized were doing the best they could in a time that proved too difficult for words to explain.

I had hoped it would provide more insight. however, the photographs that are included are nice, but the book lacks real insight.

The book includes an interesting collection of period photos. I found the collection to be broad, and really provoked some conversation around the coffee table.

I liked it very much, some different photos of that time and place.

I am going to use this book with 7th and 8th grade middle-school students. It is cross-curricular, and

all of its components are moving.

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