

TEACHER'S GUIDE
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MISSION 5: "Up from the Dust"

Life on a Farm

Caroline Henderson lived and farmed in the Oklahoma Panhandle from 1907 until her death in 1966. She left detailed written descriptions of life in the Great Plains and published articles for Atlantic Monthly on harsh living conditions during the Great Depression. In the following letter, written in 1916 to a friend's mother, she describes farm life before the Depression hit, including the healthy livestock she and her family raised and a significant new home improvement: indoor plumbing.

We have a nice little bunch of cattle now or at least the beginning of one—24 head, all cows and heifers but four. They were getting pretty tired of dry feed but are gaining in milk since I have been watching them on the rye. Last fall we started to name the calves according to the alphabet and had Sweet-Alice and Annabel Lee. This spring we have Ben Bolt, Booker, Beauty, Buttercup and a new comer yesterday who is not yet named. Cream has kept up in price better than usual. Until just recently we have been receiving 30 cents per gallon, and eggs, astonishing to tell, are still 15 cents per dozen! Usually by this time they have been down to 10 or sometimes 8 $\frac{1}{3}$. The cream and eggs keep a little ahead of the grocery bill so that is quite a help. I wonder sometimes how really poor people in towns manage to get enough to eat these days when nearly everything is so high in price.

We have made one improvement this spring which is a great help to me—that is getting the water pumped into the house. I suppose we shouldn't have dared to do it if we had known how the season was going to be but after all, I am glad we did for it saves so much times and strength. We are fortunate in having kept over enough grain and I think enough roughage to winter the stock if we can only have a little pasture for them this summer.

Source: Caroline Henderson, "Letter to Mrs. Alden, May 18, 1916," in *Letters from the Dust Bowl*, Alvin O. Turner, ed., University of Oklahoma Press, 2001, pg. 78.