

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Writing Prompts

Part 1: Boom to Bust

MISSION 5: "Up from the Dust"

A NOTE TO THE EDUCATOR:

You will need to decide how best to share these writing prompts with your students. You might share them all and ask students to choose one to respond to. You may assign one or more to the entire class. You might make one or more of the topics the basis for in-class discussions. Where there are multiple questions in a single prompt, choose the question or questions that best suits your students. Make your decisions according to the needs of your group.

You may notice that many of the topics contain some version of the phrase, "Write about a time in your life..." The intent of these prompts is twofold: first, since students remember the content of their own lives, they can more easily respond to the questions, and they are more likely to want to express themselves if they feel competent to do so; second, these questions can form a meaningful bridge between what happens in the lives of ordinary people today and the lives of people in history. For these reasons, you might decide to use some of the prompts before students encounter the history, because thinking about them sets the students up to understand and relate to it better.

Since students vary in their degree of comfort and skill in writing, you should decide when and how much students should write. We suggest that since students need to share their writing with each other to make personal and historical connections, you should encourage them to focus on content rather than mechanical skills. Pieces can be revised and edited later if you decide they should be shared formally (such as on a bulletin board or in a newsletter).

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Read through all the topics first, and then choose one of them to write about. Write the title of the piece at the top of your page. Write in complete sentences. After you are finished, proofread your work for correctness.

CRASH! During Part One, Frank and Ginny wonder whether the October 1929 stock market crash contributed their family's financial issues. Mr. Dunn said that the crash had "nothing to do with farmers." We now know the stock market crash was a very significant event that partially caused the Great Depression, an economic crisis that deeply impacted the United States and other countries for several years. What events have happened during your life that may be significant to US History students a hundred years from now? You may also consider interviewing older friends or family members about important historical events that happened during their lifetimes, and how those events impacted their lives and the country.

OUR TOWN. Ginny goes into the town of Dalhart, Texas with her father in Part One. She has the option of visiting places like her school, the movie theater, the soda foundation, and a 4-H club meeting. From what Ginny says, you can tell she's visited each of these places before, and they are all important to her. What are the most important places in your community to you? If you were showing a new friend around your town, what places would be at the top of your list to show? Why? What makes these places significant to you? You may also consider developing a brochure or poster promoting the most important places in your community.

UNEXPECTED OBSTACLES. Throughout Part One, the Dunn family farm is impacted by a number of unpredicted obstacles, including drought, hail storms, and falling wheat prices. Write about a time in your life when you encountered an unexpected obstacle when you were attempting to reach a specific goal or outcome. What was the goal? What was the obstacle? How did you overcome—or not overcome—the obstacle? What advice would you give to someone trying to reach a similar goal?

IT'S ALL POLITICS. As Ginny explores the town of Dalhart in Part One, she may encounter adults who are discussing the news of the day and their thoughts and opinions about politicians and the government. Do you pay attention to politics or news stories about the government? Why or why not? Do you have strong opinions about any political leaders or elections? How did you develop these opinions? Why are many adults so interested and opinionated about politics?

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DEALING WITH DISAPPOINTMENT. When the wheat harvest fails to make enough money for the Dunns, a promised family trip to California is cancelled. Frank and Ginny are disappointed that they will not get to visit their Aunt Ruth or see the ocean. Despite the Dunns' best attempts to make the farm profitable, it isn't working. Write about a time in your life when you or your family were hoping for something and didn't get the outcome you wanted. How did the disappointment make you feel? What made you feel better?

GINNY OR FRANK'S JOURNAL. Through either Frank or Ginny's eyes, think about your circumstances from the beginning to the end of this part of "Up from the Dust." Think about your emotions and feelings about life on the farm and with your family. Think about what might lie ahead. Think about the choices you made and the consequences of those choices. Now write a diary entry from either Frank or Ginny's point-of-view summarizing what happened to you in Part One. You may choose to illustrate one aspect of your entry.