

# TEACHER'S GUIDE

## Writing Prompts

### Part 5: California or Dust!

#### MISSION 5: "Up from the Dust"

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#### **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.

**DEAR GINNY, DEAR FRANK.** Part 5 features letters exchanged between Ginny and Frank, recounting their adventures after leaving the farm. At one point, Frank remarks that it took a week for Ginny's letter to reach him. Currently, few people write letters. Emails and text messages have made communication easier, faster, and more convenient. What are the advantages and disadvantages of letter writing versus electronic communication? Why do you prefer one over another? When was the last time you wrote a letter, and to whom did you send it?

**CALIFORNIA OR KANSAS?** In Part 5, Frank learns that his CCC camp will be closing down, and he will either be sent to California to do forestry work, or Kansas to do soil conservation work. If you were to choose between visiting California and Kansas, which would you pick? What ideas or preconceptions do you have about each place? How is each state represented in popular culture (like movies and TV shows)? If you were to pick a state to live in (other than the one where you currently live), which would you pick? Why?

**BOOSTING MORALE.** When Frank and Tony are working to shingle the cabin roof, Frank tries to motivate his team to get them to work faster. Think about a time in your life when you were on a team working towards a common goal. How did the team get motivated? Who or what encouraged you? What is the best way to get a team to work together and succeed?

**THE LINDY HOP?!** Frank and Tony attend a dance, where young people are dancing the Lindy Hop, a type of partnered swing dance that was very popular during the late 1930s and early 1940s. While there are some people today who know how to do the Lindy Hop, most people don't dance it any more. Swing dancing was a fad. "Fads" are when a group or culture develops a widely shared enthusiasm for something. Fads are usually short-lived. Think about the fads that have come and gone during your life, such as dances, musicians, toys or games, fashions, and hairstyles. Which fads were the biggest? Which did you enjoy the most? The least? Why do people get so excited about fads?

**LEAVING HOME.** By the middle of Part 5, both Frank and Ginny have left Texas and are living away from their parents. When do you imagine you will leave home and/or family

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behind? Think about your life in 10 years. Where do you hope to be living? What do you hope to be doing? How will you live differently when you are on your own?

**BRUSH WITH FAME.** Ginny ends up on the road with Dorothea Lange, a photographer working for the Department of Agriculture who later became a widely known and influential photojournalist. Some of Dorothea Lange's photographs have become the most iconic and important images of the twentieth century. While Ginny is traveling with Lange, she is not yet the well-known figure she later became. Have you ever had the opportunity to meet a famous person? What were the circumstances? If not, what famous person would you choose to meet, if you could pick any one in the world?

**WHAT YOU SEE AND WHAT YOU DON'T.** When Ginny is traveling with Dorothea Lange, she is challenged to create captions for some of the photographs Lange takes. Lange explains that captions are a "written explanation of a photograph," they capture both "what you see and what you don't," and they "focus on facts." Take some photographs (or select a series of photographs you already have) and create captions for them, using the guidelines Dorothea Lange provided in "Up from the Dust."

**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 how life has changed for both Frank and Ginny. 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's or Ginny's point-of-view, summarizing what happened to you in Part 5. You may choose to illustrate one aspect of your entry.