

TEACHER'S GUIDE

About The Mission

MISSION 5: "Up from the Dust"

The mission provides young people with an experiential understanding of the enormous hardships facing Americans during the late 1920s and early 1930s, as they struggled against the joint catastrophes of the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression. The game is divided into five parts, with a prologue offering background information and an epilogue extending the story of the main characters. A new feature in Mission 5 is a tool for gathering and organizing historical evidence to support explanatory and argumentative writing aligned to the mission's learning goals.

Students playing the game assume the roles of Frank and Ginny Dunn, twins growing up on a wheat farm in the Texas Panhandle. The game begins in summer 1929, as the Dunn family is preparing to plant their wheat crop. During the 1929-1930 growing season, the stock market crashes and wheat prices begin a precipitous fall. Later, a drought adds to their problems. Over the next few years, the Dunns witness how the Great Depression affects not only their neighbors in Texas, but people all across the United States. They also experience how people came together, both through charity and government programs, to get through this challenging period in American history.



When students are reading a traditional text, such as the chapter of a book or a magazine article, they are all presented with the same information at the same time. However, as students play "Up from the Dust," their experiences may differ slightly based on the choices they make and their behavior as both Ginny and Frank. As students make their way through the mission, they receive badges signifying the characteristics, values, and skills of their particular versions of Frank and Ginny.

The Prologue ("The Great Plow-Up") introduces Frank and Ginny, and provides an overview of the



Dunn family's history. It describes the settlement of the southern plains, and details the growth and mechanization of wheat farming on the Panhandle. Frank and Ginny provide a guided tour of the farm. As players explore the farmyard, Frank describes the Dunns' daily life, chores, and duties that contribute to the farm's success. Mr. Dunn and Frank then lead players through a mini-game illustrating the phases of planning, planting, growing, harvesting, and marketing. The

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Dunns experience the "boom and bust" cycle of farming, and the impact of the 1929 Wall Street crash. The farming mini-game ends with the crushing fall of wheat prices in the summer of 1930. Pa does his best to hide his disappointment. He tells Frank "next year will be better."

Part 1, "Boom to Bust," advances one year, to the summer of 1931. The Dunns have plowed more of their land and planted more wheat in an attempt to make a profit in the face of falling prices. Record rainfall provides the family with a bumper crop, but wheat prices continue to decline. On the Fourth of July, Ginny and Frank sit on the front porch of the farmhouse and discuss their parents' announcement that a planned family trip to California has been postponed indefinitely. The player takes the Dunns through another cycle of



planning, planting, and harvesting which ends in June 1932. The harvest is much smaller and prices are still terribly low. The Dunns will have to take another loss for the year. Pa and Ginny go to the grain elevator on the edge of the town of Dalhart, and see that there is still lots of grain remaining in the elevator from the 1931 crop. Neighboring farmers are considering withholding their crops from the market altogether in an effort to reduce supply and boost prices for next year. Ginny strolls around town, and talks with town residents who express various outlooks on the Depression.

Part 2, "Neighbors in Need," begins two weeks later. Frank and Ginny's parents are headed to town to run errands and give both siblings chores to do while they are gone. Ginny must drop off clothing donations and go to the general store to barter for supplies. Frank is responsible for fixing the chicken coop and shoveling out the animal pens. Ginny's friend Thelma Mitchell picks up Ginny and they



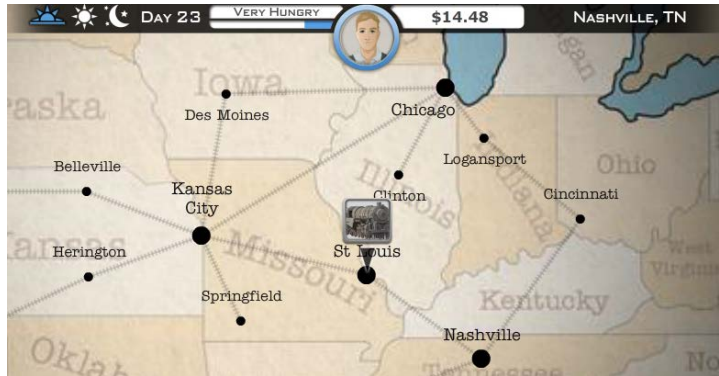
drive to the church. Thelma seems troubled; her family, like many others, is having trouble making ends meet. At the general store, Ginny discovers that the eggs and butter she brought to trade have lost value, since few people are buying. She must decide if she will use credit to purchase some of the supplies her mother wants. Back on the farm, Frank is reading an adventure book when a man appears asking for work. Frank has heard about "drifters," but he learns that Charlie is a veteran of the Great War that is looking for food before he joins the Bonus Army protest in Washington D.C. Charlie's plan to "ride the rails" starts Frank dreaming about going on his own adventure.

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Part 3, "Riding the Rails," begins one month later. Because of the ongoing drought, the Dunn family's cows are struggling to find enough grass to eat. With the poor harvest, the family can't afford to buy feed. Pa decides the best thing to do is to ensure the cattle don't suffer any more, so Frank must say goodbye to his prize cow. Later, while talking to Ginny, Frank decides it is time for him to see the country. He packs and goes off to ride the rails. As he travels from city to city, Frank meets many people who have been affected by the economic situation. He meets people living in makeshift housing at the edges of towns and the camps of other travelers like himself. There are opportunities to find work and to receive help from concerned citizens, but he must also avoid getting caught catching rides on train cars, watch out for dangerous situations, and maintain his health. Ultimately, Frank returns to his family in Texas, but not before he learns more about how the Great Depression is affecting people all across the country.



Part 4, "A New Deal for Some" takes place a year later, in July 1933. At this point, the Depression has been going on for nearly four years. On top of that, the drought, which has lasted for over two years, has compounded the problems of farmers like the Dunns.



There are signs of change, however. Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected president and quickly began creating "New Deal" programs offering relief and assistance to Americans. Ginny helps her family sign up for the Agriculture Adjustment Act, which pays farmers to limit the amount of crops they plant. Later, she goes to the Relief Office in Dalhart to learn more about the different programs available. Ginny gathers information and tries to find the right programs for Frank and her neighbors to enroll in.

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As Part 5, "California or Dust!" begins, it is two years later, in July 1935. Both Ginny and Frank have left the Dunn family farm. Frank writes from the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC), where he is working to build cabins. The camp is being split into two groups, and Frank and his friend Tony consider which new site, California or Kansas, would be a better opportunity. Meanwhile, Ginny has started her journey west with the Mitchells, who have decided to move to California to find work. Ginny is



going to live with her Aunt Ruth in Los Angeles and plans on joining the National Youth Administration (NYA). After the Mitchells' truck breaks down along the way, Jenny meets the photographer Dorothea Lange, and travels with her to document the lives of migrant farmers in California. While assisting Ms. Lange, Ginny learns more about how the workers live and work, and why some people are helping the workers organize. Ginny decides if she wants to continue to practice photography or if she still wants to join the NYA.

The epilogue follows the Dunn family for the next eleven years. Frank continues to work until World War II breaks out and he enlists in the military. Ginny's experiences in the game inform the type of work she finds and how she is able to contribute to the war effort. As was the case for so many Americans, the Great Depression and World War II change the lives the Dunns and their neighbors forever.

During the Mission, students play through several "days" of Frank and Ginny's lives over the course of six years. Each student playing "Up from the Dust" will have a unique gameplay experience based on individual choices, skill, and understanding of the period.