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Working for the U.S. Farm Security/Office of War Information, Dorothea Lange took many pictures of Americans enduring the difficult years of the Great Depression. In this image, from 1936, we see the "child of [a] migratory worker" at the American River camp near Sacramento. Public-domain image online via the Library of Congress. Click on the image for a full-page view.

As if economic disaster were not enough, the American Midwest was hit with unprecedented drought. Food supplies were diminished as formerly fertile fields became dust bowls. And in the south, once-productive cotton fields were transformed into eroded wastelands.

People in America were starving. Oral histories, recorded by the Library of Congress, relate tales of despondent people. Some picked dandelion greens to use as food. (You will need MP3 to hear this audio link.) Others had to relocate, like 76-year-old Perry Rupert and Alvin Sharpe of North Carolina.

By 1936, tenant farmers and their families had become homeless wanderers. Farmers that had worked their own land were also forced to "evacuate." People moving west had little to go on but hope for a better future. John Steinbeck's Grapes of Wrath had its roots in real-life America. Sometimes the struggle to retain one's dignity was almost more than a human being could manage.

Private parties offered cheap, or free, food. Pictures from the National Archives show people standing in "bread lines" which stretched for blocks. Many were disappointed by the time it was "their turn." Food, in increasingly short supplies, was already gone. These were desperate times.

Before he became President, Herbert Hoover was the "United States Food Administrator." Although he tried to distribute food throughout the country, as he had provided wheat to America's allies during World War I, Hoover could not do his job the way he wanted to do it. There simply wasn't enough to go around.

Dorothea Lange (1895-1965), working on behalf of the American Farm Security (formerly Resettlement) Administration, documented the plight of Americans, especially migratory farm workers. Many of the families she photographed had fled the Midwest.

Her pictures, many digitized by the Library of Congress and U.S. National Archives, portray how hard life had become for so many.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/STARVING-PEOPLE-King-Kong)

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See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/STARVING-PEOPLE-King-Kong)

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Great Depression - Child of Migratory Worker

Image online via the Library of Congress; Dorothea Lange, photographer. Reproduction number: LC-USF34-009911-C (b&w film nitrate neg.) LC-DIG-fsa-8b29878 (digital file from original neg.). Public Domain.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Great-Depression-Child-of-Migratory-Worker>



Drought in the Midwest

Image online, courtesy the U.S. National Archives.

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Dust Bowl - Photo

Image online, courtesy the U.S. National Archives.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Dust-Bowl-Photo>



Eroded Farm Land Becomes a Wasteland - Great Depression

Image online, courtesy the United States National Archives. Photo 27/7/27-0666a.

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Perry Rupert

Image online, courtesy the U.S. National Archives. Photo 27/8/27-0764a.

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Alvin Sharpe

Image online, courtesy the U.S. National Archives. Photo 27/8/27-0763a

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Homeless Wanderers - Great Depression Photo

Image online, courtesy the U.S. National Archives.

View this asset at:

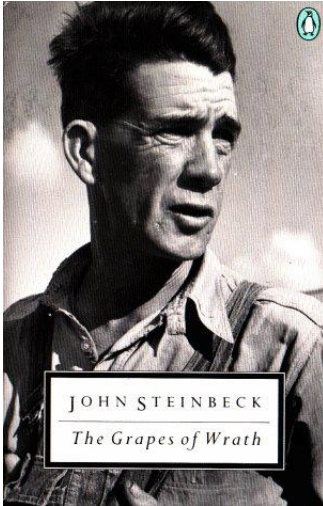
<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Homeless-Wanderers-Great-Depression-Photo>



Forced to Evacuate - Photo

Image online, courtesy the U.S. National Archives.

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The Grapes of Wrath - by John Steinbeck

Image online, Wikimedia Commons.

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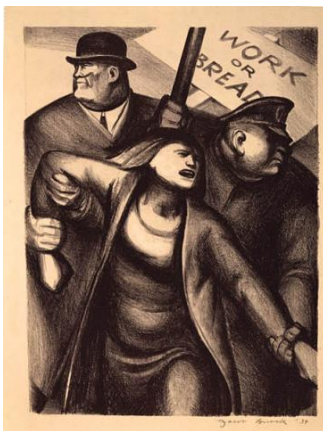


Standing in Bread Lines - Great Depression

Image online, courtesy the U.S. National Archives.

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Desperate Times - Illustration

Illustration online, courtesy Library of Congress.

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Living on Very Little - Great Depression Photo

Image online, courtesy the U.S. National Archives.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Living-on-Very-Little-Great-Depression-Photo>



President Herbert Hoover

Image online, courtesy the U.S. National Archive Photo, 40/19/40-1856a.

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