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This image of Dorothea Lange, cropped from a larger picture, depicts the Resettlement Administration's photographer as she appeared, on the job in California, during February of 1936. Online via the Library of Congress.

In the early months of 1936, Florence Owens Thompson (a 32-year-old Oklahoman who had moved to California some years before) was in desperate straits. A widow, she was (at the time) the mother of six.

Jim Hill (her companion and acting father to her children) was, among other things, a "peapicker" but was unable to provide for his family since the pea crop had failed. The Thompsons had just sold their tent to buy food.

Years later, in 1960, Dorothea Lange described an encounter between the two women which led to Lange's most famous Farm Administration photographs:

I saw and approached the hungry and desperate mother, as if drawn by a magnet. I do not remember how I explained my presence or my camera to her, but I do remember she asked me no questions.

I made five exposures, working closer and closer from the same direction. I did not ask her name or her history. She told me her age, that she was thirty-two. She said that they had been living on frozen vegetables from the surrounding fields, and birds that the children killed. She had just sold the tires from her car to buy food.

There she sat in that lean-to tent with her children huddled around her, and seemed to know that my pictures might help her (they clearly did), and so she helped me. There was a sort of equality about it. (From: Popular Photography, Feb. 1960.)

From abandoned homes and tenant shelters in the plains, to hopelessness in the cities, Dorothea Lange documented "fear itself." The record (be patient with this link) she created is remarkable:

- An abandoned farm, surrounded by sand, in the Coldwater District north of Dalhart, Texas.
- In nearly-deserted Tamarack (Adams County, Idaho), a former sawmill stands empty.
- When the drought came, tenant farmers in many states left, as shown by abandoned shelters in the Mississippi Delta, Texas (near Roscoe and Childress County) and elsewhere.
- In a Kern County (California) Farm Administration camp, an Oklahoma grandmother (of 22) tries to make do.
- An antebellum plantation home (in Greene County, Georgia) had lost its former beauty.
- A family from Arkansas tried their best to make a new life in California.

One of America's bright spots, during the depression years, was the Empire State Building. Started in 1930, just months after the stock-market crash, it remained the world's tallest skyscraper until the first tower of the World Trade Center was finished in 1973.

Ultimately an "an icon for all things New York" - especially after the 1933 movie King Kong - it remains the subject of movies and stories today.

Let's take a virtual visit.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/PICTURES-BY-DOROTHEA-LANGE-King-Kong>

See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](#)

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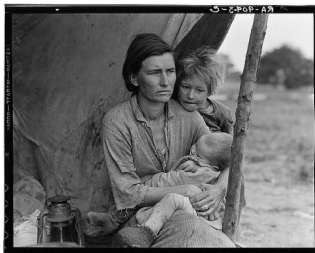
Media Stream



Dorothea Lange

Photo of Dorothea Lange while she was working as a Resettlement Administration photographer. February of 1936. Image online via the Library of Congress.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Dorothea-Lange>



Florence Owens Thompson

Photo by Dorothea Lange, from the American Memory Collection at the Library of Congress.

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Pea Pickers

Photo by Dorothea Lange, from the American Memory Collection at the Library of Congress.

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Abandoned Farm - Depression-Era America

Photo by Dorothea Lange, from the American Memory Collection at the Library of Congress.

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Abandoned Farm Surrounded by Sand - Depression-Era America

Photo by Dorothea Lange, from the American Memory Collection at the Library of Congress.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Abandoned-Farm-Surrounded-by-Sand-Depression-Era-America>



Former Saw Mill - Depression-Era America

Photo by Dorothea Lange, from the American Memory Collection at the Library of Congress.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Former-Saw-Mill-Depression-Era-America>



Abandoned Shelter During America's Great Depression

Photo by Dorothea Lange, from the American Memory Collection at the Library of Congress.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Abandoned-Shelter-During-America-s-Great-Depression>



Mississippi Delta - Abandoned Shelter

Photo by Dorothea Lange, from the American Memory Collection at the Library of Congress.

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Roscoe Texas - Abandoned Farm

Photo by Dorothea Lange, from the American Memory Collection at the Library of Congress.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Roscoe-Texas-Abandoned-Farm>



An Antebellum Plantation Home is Abandoned

Photo by Dorothea Lange, from the American Memory Collection at the Library of Congress.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/An-Antebellum-Plantation-Home-is-Abandoned>



Childress County, Texas - Abandoned Farm

Photo by Dorothea Lange, from the American Memory Collection at the Library of Congress.

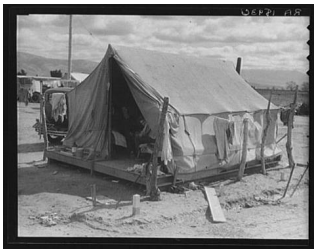
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Homeless Family from Arkansas

Photo by Dorothea Lange, from the American Memory Collection at the Library of Congress.

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Life in Desperate Times

Photo by Dorothea Lange, from the American Memory Collection at the Library of Congress.

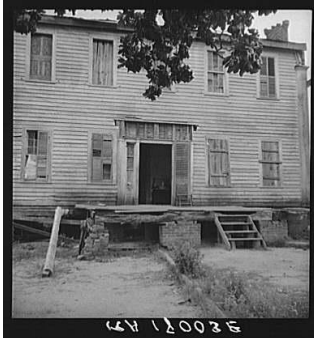
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Living in a Farm Administration Camp

Photo by Dorothea Lange, from the American Memory Collection at the Library of Congress.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Living-in-a-Farm-Administration-Camp>



Rear of the Plantation Home

Photo by Dorothea Lange, from the American Memory Collection at the Library of Congress.

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The Empire State Building

Image online, courtesy the U.S. Library of Congress.

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Trying to Make Do with Very Little

Photo by Dorothea Lange, from the American Memory Collection at the Library of Congress.

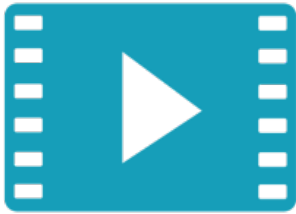
View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Trying-to-Make-Do-with-Very-Little>



View of the Empire State Buiding

Image online, courtesy the U.S. Library of Congress.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/View-of-the-Empire-State-Buiding>



King Kong - 1933 Trailer

The film was made, and released, by RKO Pictures. Copyright, RKO/Turner Entertainment/Warner Brothers, all rights reserved. Trailer online, courtesy studios and via YouTube.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/King-Kong-1933-Trailer>