

Lesson 4: Key Historic Events

Focus Questions:

What effect did key historic events such as World War II, the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl have on California’s growth as an agricultural and industrial power?

Activity # 1 Key Historic Events of the 1930s and 1940s

Preparation: Using a document camera, a transparency or large butcher paper chart, display a copy of the graphic organizer **Key Historic Events of the 1930s and 1940s (Handout #4.1)**. Duplicate a copy for each student.

Key Historic Events of the 1930s and 1940s

	Location	When? Key Dates	Key People	Why? Cause	Impact Effect
Great Depression					
The Dust Bowl					
World War II					

Read the following background information to students:

Explain that the 1930s were a time of economic depression and hard times when many people had very little money. The Great Depression began when banks that had lent too much money had to close. People lost their savings and could not afford to buy goods. Businesses failed, workers lost their jobs, and farmers lost their land.

Also, in the 1930’s, there was a terrible drought in parts of the United States, including Kansas, Oklahoma, New Mexico and Texas. The soil became so dry it turned to dust and strong winds blew away the soil. People left the Dust Bowl and moved to California because they wanted to find jobs. About 350,000 people left the Dust Bowl to find work in California.

The population of California grew by more than two and a half million during the years of World War II as new people came to find jobs. California workers produced tanks, guns, airplanes, ships, and other equipment that helped American forces fight in World War II.

Group Research

Review some of the Startling Statements presented earlier in the unit. Record any pertinent information to the proper location on the graphic organizer. Ask, “How can we find out more information about these historic events to add to the organizer?”

Textbook Walk

Assign each of the classroom groups to one of the Historic Events. Depending upon the number of students, two or more groups may share the same event.

Using a document camera, a transparency or large butcher paper chart, display a copy of the graphic organizer *Key Historic Events of the 1930s and 1940s (Handout #4.1)*. Duplicate a copy for each student.

Using the available social studies textbook, have students refer to the Table of Contents and the Index to locate their topic. If needed, demonstrate how to use appropriate strategies to “preview” or “skim” through the text when reading to locate specific information. Include illustrations, titles, topic sentences and key words as clues. The objective is to locate sections of the text related to their topic. Have each group share what they found with the rest of the class. Note specific page numbers on the graphic organizer.

Resources for Research

Bring in books with pictures depicting life during the 1930s and 1940s to help students visualize what life was like during these historic events. *Children of the Dust Bowl – The True Story of the School at Weedpatch Camp* by Jerry Stanley provides a variety of pictures. The text is too difficult for 4th graders but one teacher duplicated selected pages and had her students work in jigsaw groups to skim the materials to look for pertinent information.

A popular book to read to students is *Blue Willow* by Doris Gates. It is the story of an itinerant worker whose family moves from farm to farm. The main character, Janey Larkin, longs to set down roots in a community. The SCORE website <http://score.rims.k12.ca.us/> Grade 4 Unit 4 provides a link to a “Blue Willow” site with activities to do during or after reading *Blue Willow*.

SCORE also has a web site link to “California in the 1930’s” that contains a large photo collection of Dorothea Lang’s pictures. There is also a site for “Music from Northern California in the 1930s,” “Great Depression: Primary Source Lessons,” and several sites for World War II.

Have students ask their parents if any of their ancestors were affected by these historic events. If possible, invite a guest speaker to tell the students about life in California during World War II.

This unit offers opportunities to integrate music. For example, many of the songs of Woody Guthrie are appropriate for this unit. Highly recommended is *California Songs Volume Two* from Keith and Rusty McNeil (WEM Records, Riverside, CA (909) 780-2322.) Part Three of this compact disc contains songs and historical narrative for Immigrants and Dust Bowl Refugees and Part Four contains songs of World War II.

California at War, a documentary produced by KCET, is available for viewing online at <http://www.kcet.org/californiaatwar/index.php>. Chapters include:

1. War at Our Doorstep – After Pearl Harbor, Californians became the next target of war.
2. The War Machine – A military complex was born, placing California at the center of the war effort.

3. The War Against Ourselves – Fear and panic gave rise to segregation in California.
4. The War and the Homeland – Factories and labor influx created a social experiment that changed the face of California forever.

Activity # 2 Cause and Effect

Explain to students that during World War II, California provided many workers and resources to support the war effort. They set up military bases and built planes, battleships and cargo ships, and weapons. Shipyards in California produced one in every four ships built during the war. Farm and oil production also increased. More than two and a half million people came to California during World War II. What effect do you think this had on California?

As the students conduct their research, ask a variety of cause and effect questions.

- How did the Great Depression affect California and the rest of the nation?
- How did the Dust Bowl affect California?
- How did the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression affect the population of California?
- How did World War II affect California?
- How did these events help California become an agricultural and industrial power?

(Note: It is difficult for students to initially determine how the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression helped California become an agricultural and industrial power. This is not evident until later when the abundance of workers in California helped provide a source of labor during the shortages of World War II that students are able to predict how World War II helped California become an industrial power.)

Activity # 3 Write Information Reports - Key Historic Events of the 1930s and 1940s

Materials needed: For each student, a copy of <i>Write an Information Report and Make an Information Presentation (Handout # 4.2)</i>

It is recommended the teacher **model** how to write the information report.

Prompt: Write an information report describing the effect _____ had on California. (Fill in the blank with “the Great Depression,” “the Dust Bowl,” or “World War II.” Guidelines include:

The information report should include the following details:

- The area/location of California affected
- Key events when the events occurred
- Key people
- Why the changes occurred (cause)
- Impact of the change (effect)

Write an information report:

- Frame a central question about an issue or situation.
- Include facts and details for focus.

- Draw from more than one source of information (e.g., speakers, books, newspapers, other media sources).

Follow stages of the writing process and revise selected drafts to improve coherence and progression by adding, deleting, combining and rearranging text. Following the writing of the information reports, have groups of students make information presentations.

Make information presentation:

- Frame a key question.
- Present effective introductions and conclusions that guide and inform the listeners' understanding of key ideas.
- Include facts and details that help listeners to focus.
- Incorporate more than one source of information (e.g., speakers, books, newspapers, television or radio reports).
- Use appropriate volume, pitch, phrasing, pace and gestures expressively to communicate meaning.

Assessment:

The assessment of this unit is integrated with the instruction and occurs throughout the lesson. The focus questions provide a framework for the evaluation of the unit.

- Locate information in reference texts by using organizational features such as prefaces, appendices, table of contents and index
- Distinguish between cause and effect
- Using a variety of resources, conduct research and complete a graphic organizer on ***Key Historic Events of the 1930s and 1940s (Handout #4.1)***.
- Write an information report describing the effect _____ had on California. (Fill in the blank with “the Great Depression,” “the Dust Bowl,” or “World War II.” Make an information presentation based on the report (Handout # 4.2)

Key Historic Events of the 1930s and 1940s

How did historic events of the 1930s and 1940s help California become an agricultural and industrial power?

	Locations	When? Key Dates	Key People	Why? Cause	Impact Effect
Great Depression					
The Dust Bowl					
World War II					

Write an Information Report and Make an Information Presentation

Prompt: Write an information report describing how _____ helped California become an agricultural and industrial power. (Fill in the blank with a topic such as “The Great Depression,” “The Dust Bowl” or “World War II) Guidelines include:

The information report should include the following details:

- The area/location of California affected
- Key events when the events occurred
- Key people
- Why the changes occurred (cause)
- Impact of the change (effect)

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Follow the stages of the writing process and revise selected drafts to improve coherence and progression by adding, deleting, combining and rearranging text. Following the writing of the information reports, make an information presentation.

Make an information presentation:

- Frame a key question.
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- Use appropriate volume, pitch, phrasing, pace and gestures expressively to communicate meaning.

(Note: The *California English/Language Arts Standards* state that Grade 4 students should write an information report and make an information presentation. The above prompt and guidelines are based on the standards.)