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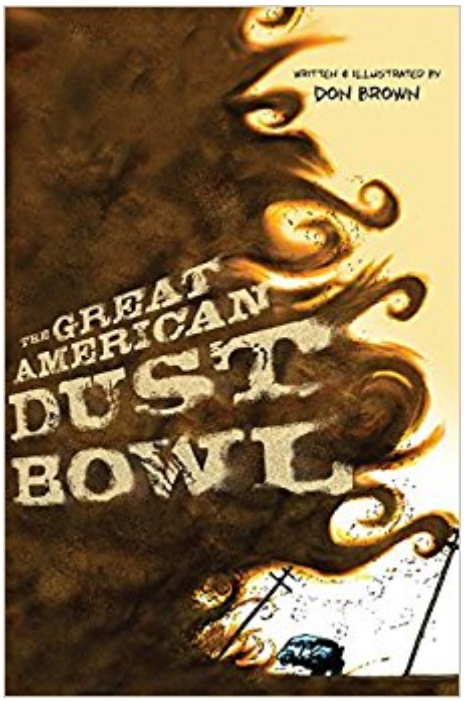
The Great American Dust Bowl



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Synopsis

A speck of dust is a tiny thing. In fact, five of them could fit into the period at the end of this sentence.On a clear, warm Sunday, April 14, 1935, a wild wind whipped up millions upon millions of these specks of dust to form a dusterÃ¢â ¬â •a savage stormÃ¢â ¬â •on America's high southern plains. The sky turned black, sand-filled winds scoured the paint off houses and cars, trains derailed, and electricity coursed through the air. Sand and dirt fell like snowÃ¢â ¬â •people got lost in the gloom and suffocated . . . and that was just the beginning.Don Brown brings the Dirty Thirties to life with kinetic, highly saturated, and lively artwork in this graphic novel of one of America's most catastrophic natural events: the Dust Bowl.

Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

Gr 5 UpÃ¢â ¬â œBrown once again dives into American history, this time telling the story of the Dust Bowl in his first graphic novel. Starting with a tale of a terrifying 200-mile-long duster in 1935, he works back to explain what caused the devastation and its decadelong effects on the economy, the land, and the people. Brown's illustrations bring these facts to life, showing the severity of the tragedy; it's one thing to read about globs of mud falling from the sky like rain, it's quite another to see them painfully pelting a herd of cattle. The drab and beige colors add to the emotional impact

and bleakness of each situation, as does Brown's sketch-heavy art style. Comic panels vary beautifully from full-page layouts of vast fields of nothing but dust and devastation to multipaneled action shots, such as an airplane falling out of a dust-filled sky, that instantly create a dramatic and tense mood. The graphic-novel format works well, but the addition of speech bubbles to deliver quotes seems awkward, since characters end up saying things like, Ã¢â ¬Å"I thought it was the last day of the worldÃ¢â ¬Â• while actively fleeing from a disaster. The quotes are needed; some just seem out of place. Ending with a dismal warning about the potential of similar future disasters, Great American Dust Bowl is a magnificent overview of this chapter in U.S. history. Pair it with Karen Hesse's Out of the Dust (Scholastic, 1997) and Matt Phelan's The Storm in the Barn (Candlewick, 2009), both of which are more entertaining, but Brown's book is more informative.Ã¢â ¬â œPeter Blenski, Greenfield Public Library, WIÃ Â (c) Copyright 2013. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

Starred Review Concise and clear in imagery, text, and layout, BrownÃ¢â ¬â„¢s (Henry and the Cannons, 2013) nonfiction examination of the Dust Bowl contextualizes its genesis in geological and cultural history, the dynamics of its climatological presentation, and the effects on both the landscape and Depression-era High Plains farmers. The pen-and-ink artwork, digitally painted in burnished and dusty brown and yellow huesÃ¢â ¬â •and the shock of blue that comes with the rain that eventually clears the airÃ¢â ¬â •is combined with swirling text, along with well-researched and minimally descriptive explanations and occasional speech balloons attributed to anonymous residents and observers. The brevity of this presentation heightens rather than diminishes its power to evoke the history, and an ample list of resources provides plenty of opportunities for further research. A closing photo of the 2011 dust storm in Arizona emphasizes that the Dust Bowl wasnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t an isolated incident. This is a complete visual package, from the whirly, mud-colored cover design through the sudden reintroduction of color only after the dust storms abate. The Dust Bowl, as experienced by its survivors, truly comes to life in this compelling look at an important moment in American history. Grades 6-10. --Francisca Goldsmith

I've had this book on pre-order forever with fingers crossed. I really wanted a book that was middle school appropriate and engaging for students. I am over the moon happy. The book is written as a graphic novel and the illustrations will grab students' attention. The facts and quotes that are in the book are a fantastic references to the sources listed in the back of the book. The quotes add to the human side of the experience, while the illustrations help understand the enormity of the disaster. I

especially liked the picture that had ocean liners in the sky and the fact that the dust would have filled 1500 modern ocean liners. Great visual for students to understand.I'll be ordering a class set of this book for our middle school. Thank you Don Brown for such a beautiful book!

It is hard to make the dust bowl interesting to today's students, but this is a beautiful and compelling book. The reader really gets an idea of the despair of the times and the dangers of living in the dust bowl. The book is graphic novel format and the reluctant readers at my school even enjoy it. Did I mention that it's also fairly short? This one is a big hit- well done!

Really shows the plight of what it was like in those days of the Great Depression and Dust Bowl era. That helped make works like John Steinbeck's Grapes of Wrath possible.

Excellent explanation of the historical background of the Dust Bowl. This book explains the political and historical causes of the drought, and it is explained succinctly and with brilliant illustrations.

This book is easily read in one setting. The depth of information is a good introduction to some very hard times. The reader is left with a curiosity to read more on the topic.

Excellent story. Enjoyable reading with child. Ar book level 5

This book was Amazing!!! I loved the pictures! I can't even believe that this happened in the United States! Awesome!!!

I found this book to be written in a way that was informative without being too wordy. The images compliment the author's words. They help tell the story just as much the words. This book is worth purchasing!

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