

Unit Overview: Parent Guide

Out of the Dust, Grade 6

What is the goal of this unit?

- Your child will read fiction and nonfiction texts to understand how people respond to adversity and the lessons that can be learned through hardship and failure. Your child will also learn about the social and environmental issues that farmers faced in the 1930s.

What topics and skills is your sixth grader learning in this unit?

- Agriculture in the 1930s
- Great Depression
- Adversity and hardship
- Informational writing
- Research

What tasks will your child engage in to help them consider the topics and skills of this unit?

- **Culminating Writing Task:** Your child will bring together all her learning near the end of the unit by writing an essay in response to the question: *Consider the title of the novel: Out of the Dust. How does the phrase “out of the dust” relate to a theme of the novel?*
- **Extension Task:** Your child will conduct research to answer one of two questions: (1) *What were the causes of the Dust Bowl, and what efforts have been made to prevent similar disasters?* or (2) *What was daily life like in the 1930s?* Then your child will create an electronic and interactive news article that answers one of the two questions.

Your child will read these texts, watch these videos, and listen to these audio clips:

Text Title	Author/Source	How it is used in the Unit
Out of the Dust	Karen Hesse	Main text of the unit
<i>American Experience</i>	PBS.org	Student text
“Drought!”	<i>Farming in the 1930s</i>	Student text
“Okies”	<i>Farming in the 1930s</i>	Student text

"No Title"	Woody Guthrie from The Library of Congress	Read aloud
"Letters from the Dust Bowl" (March 8, 1936)	Caroline Henderson from <i>The Atlantic</i>	Student text
"Wheat Prices"	Louisiana Department of Education	Student text
WWI US Food Administration Propaganda	U.S. Food Administration	Group text
"USDA Photographer Rescues Destitute Farm Workers"	Gwen Gilbert	Student text
"On Drought Conditions"	Franklin D. Roosevelt	Student text
"10 Things You May Not Know About the Dust Bowl"	Christopher Klein	Student text
"On Drought Conditions" (audio)	Franklin D. Roosevelt	Read aloud

Ideas for discussing adversity

- Have you had a moment where you faced something challenging? Or do you know someone who has faced an obstacle?
- How did you or that person overcome the obstacle?
- What did overcoming the obstacle teach you?
- How did overcoming the obstacle shape how you think about the world?
- What can you learn by overcoming challenges in life?
- What other books have you read that show a person overcoming an obstacle? What did you learn from that story?

Want to deepen your and your child's knowledge on the topic being studied?

Here is a suggested book list:

Title	Author
<i>The Struggle to Be Strong: True Stories By Teens About Overcoming Tough Times</i>	Al and Sybil Wolin Desetta
<i>The Lightning Queen</i>	Laura Resau

<i>Every Day After</i>	Laura Golden
<i>Stella By Starlight</i>	Sharon M. Draper

What does independent reading look like at home?

Independent reading gives your child the opportunity to read and interact with books that are on her reading level and that address topics that she chooses. Supporting independent reading at home helps build your child's confidence with reading, her reading stamina and reading achievement, and will help her do better in school.

Here are some ways you can encourage independent reading at home:

- Let your child pick out books that she finds interesting
- Prioritize reading. Protect time every day for reading (weekends and school breaks too!). Before bedtime is a great time to read.
- Read together
- Read aloud
- Discuss your child's reading. Ask questions like:
 - Tell me about what you read today.
 - What did you like about it?
 - What didn't you like about it?
 - What did you learn?
 - What questions do you have about what you read?
 - What didn't you understand about what you read?
 - What do you want to learn more about after reading?
 - How does what you've read connect to other things you've read?