DUST, DROUGHT, AND DREAMS GONE DRY

In the 1930s, people on the Great Plains endured one of America's most destructive ecological disasters—the Dust Bowl. What caused fertile farms to turn to dust? How did people survive? What lessons can we learn from the Dust Bowl?

We can find answers to these questions in the region's history and geography. Centuries of human interaction with the environment intensified between 1850 and 1930 as farmers believed that they could overcome the area's variable weather and climate. The 1930s disaster taught them that they were wrong. However, people survived the dust and the drought by forging new community ties and by embracing new government programs. People also discovered a new respect for the power of nature. The Dust Bowl experience demonstrates the complex relationship between humans and the dynamic Great Plains environment.