

TEACHER'S GUIDE

Writing Prompts

Part Four: A New Deal for Some

MISSION 5: "Up from the Dust"

A NOTE TO THE EDUCATOR:

You will need to decide how best to share these writing prompts with your students. You might share them all and ask students to choose one to respond to. You may assign one or more to the entire class. You might make one or more of the topics the basis for in-class discussions. Where there are multiple questions in a single prompt, choose the question or questions that best suits your students. Make your decisions according to the needs of your group.

You may notice that many of the topics contain some version of the phrase, "Write about a time in your life..." The intent of these prompts is twofold: first, since students remember the content of their own lives, they can more easily respond to the questions, and they are more likely to want to express themselves if they feel competent to do so; second, these questions can form a meaningful bridge between what happens in the lives of ordinary people today and the lives of people in history. For these reasons, you might decide to use some of the prompts before students encounter the history, because thinking about them sets the students up to understand and relate to it better.

Since students vary in their degree of comfort and skill in writing, you should decide when and how much students should write. We suggest that since students need to share their writing with each other to make personal and historical connections, you should encourage them to focus on content rather than mechanical skills. Pieces can be revised and edited later if you decide they should be shared formally (such as on a bulletin board or in a newsletter).

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Read through all the topics first, and then choose one of them to write about. Write the title of the piece at the top of your page. Write in complete sentences. After you are finished, proofread your work for correctness.

A COMMUNIST, A SOCIALIST, AND A FASCIST. At the beginning of Part 4, Ginny describes how some Americans viewed President Franklin Delano Roosevelt during the early days of the New Deal. Some Americans called him names, and believed he was taking the country in the wrong direction. Have you ever heard adults discussing their dissatisfaction with current or past presidents? Why do Americans sometimes feel such strong emotions related to the presidency? Consider interviewing an older friend or family member about favorite and least favorite presidents during their lifetime. What made someone decide whether or not the president is right for the country?

THE DEVIL MAKES WORK FOR IDLE HANDS. Mrs. Dunn tells Ginny that she is worried about Ginny's brothers, because she doesn't think they have enough to do and keep them occupied. She tells Ginny an old saying: "the devil makes work for idle hands." What does this mean? Do you agree with the saying? Why or why not? What are you most likely to do when you are bored or otherwise unoccupied?

SIXTEEN GOING ON SEVENTEEN. Mrs. Dunn tells Ginny that Frank is "seventeen and old enough to make up his own mind." Is seventeen old enough to make up your own mind about everything in your life? Why or why not? When is a person "grown up" enough to make all of their own decisions? What things are you prevented from doing because of your age? Do you feel you should be able to do any of these things regardless of your age?

LETTERS TO ELEANOR. After her store is saved, Mrs. Huff announces she is going to write a letter to the First Lady, Eleanor Roosevelt. During the Great Depression, thousands of Americans wrote letters to both the President and the First Lady, sharing their troubles, thanking them for their work, or complaining about New Deal programs. Have you ever written to a politician or other celebrity? If so, who? Why do some people write to famous individuals? If you could write a letter to any person, past or present, alive or dead, and get a response from him or her, who would it be?

BEST ATTRIBUTES. After Ginny gets all of the neighbors signed up for different New Deal programs, Mrs. Dunn compliments her on her careful reading and attention to detail. What are

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your best attributes and talents? Think about a time when you were complimented or praised for a particular trait. What did you do, and who praised you?

SEPARATE AND UNEQUAL? After Roberto enlists in the Civilian Conservation Corps, he shares that because he is Mexican, he must sleep in a separate bunkhouse and the other workers sometimes call him names. Roberto is being discriminated against. What groups in the United States today face discrimination? What forms does the discrimination take? Have you witnessed—or experienced—discrimination in your own life?

GINNY OR FRANK'S JOURNAL. Through either Frank or Ginny's eyes, think about your circumstances from the beginning to the end of this part of "Up from the Dust." Think about your feelings about life in Dalhart, and how the changes that have come with President Roosevelt's election are impacting your family. Think about what might lie ahead. Think about the choices you made and the potential consequences of those choices. Now write a diary entry from either Frank's or Ginny's point-of-view summarizing what happened to you in Part 4. You may choose to illustrate one aspect of your entry.