

Up From the Dust Glossary

As students play MISSION 5: “Up from the Dust,” they will encounter many of the terms below. Some of the terms, listed in this document in purple, are included as “smartwords” in the game. Additional terms are included for teacher and student reference.

4-H Club—A national organization that provides practical and hands-on learning about agriculture and home economics, especially in rural areas.

AAA—Abbreviation for the Agricultural Adjustment Act, a New Deal program for farmers, that included paying them not to grow more than a certain amount of crops in order to raise prices.

acres—Standard units for measuring areas of land. One acre is an area of land that measures 66 feet by 660 feet. One square mile is equal to 640 acres.

agronomist—A person who uses scientific knowledge to help farmers with soil management and crop production.

auspices—Care, protection and guidance provided by a senior.

aviatrix—A female pilot.

bank run—When most of a bank’s customers attempt to withdraw their money at the same time because they fear that the bank has insufficient funds.

barter—To exchange goods for other goods, rather than for money.

beaut—(slang) A beautiful work of art.

black blizzards—Severe storms of dust clouds.

Black Sunday—A massive dust storm that hit the Oklahoma and Texas panhandles on April 14, 1935.

Bonus Army—The popular name for a group of 20,000 World War I veterans who gathered in Washington, D.C., in the summer of 1932 to pressure Congress to make an early cash bonus payment for their military service.

boom—A period of great prosperity or rapid economic growth.

bootleggers—People who made and distributed alcohol illegally during the period of Prohibition, when having or selling alcohol was against the law. **Bulls**—(slang) Railroad police officers who keep rail yards secure from trespassers and prevent theft from or damage to railroad property.

bumper crop—An unusually large harvest.

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Burlington Route—A private railroad line that traveled from Texas northwest through Denver, and then east to Chicago.

bushel—A standard unit of measurement equivalent to 60 pounds of wheat.

bust—To become ruined suddenly and completely.

cannery—A factory where foods are processed and packaged into cans for distribution and sale.

Capitol Hill—A hill in Washington, D.C. on which the United States Capitol building sits, and where the United States House of Representatives and Senate meet.

catalog—A book or pamphlet containing an enumeration of things.

catwalk—A narrow platform or pathway, as on the sides of a bridge.

CCC—Abbreviation for Civilian Conservation Corps, a New Deal program that put young men to work on environmental and natural resources projects on government land.

charity—A gift or activity that benefits the larger public.

CO—Abbreviation for Commanding Officer, the highest ranking military official at a government base or camp.

collateral—An item of value promised in exchange for a loan, which the lender may keep if the loan is not repaid.

Comanches—A nomadic tribe inhabiting Mexico and the adjacent parts of the United States.

commissary—A store that sells food and supplies, especially in a military or labor camp.

communist—A person who supports the principles of communism, an economic and social system in which, in theory, all of a society's property is owned in common, rather than by individuals.

confederate—Bringing states or groups of people into an alliance.

contouring—Plowing along raised slopes in the land in order to create a natural barrier that reduces the flow of water downhill.

cotton gin—A machine that efficiently removes seeds from cotton fibers, allowing for greater productivity in processing cotton.

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demonstration—A public meeting or march protesting against something or expressing views on a political issue.

deported—When a foreigner is forced by the government to leave a country.

destitute—Extremely poor, and unable to pay for basic needs such as food, lodging, and clothing.

disc plow—A plow that uses several steel discs to cut the soil where crops will be planted. It is particularly effective at breaking up hard, dry soil.

donations—Money or goods offered as charity.

dress pattern—A model or design used as a guide for cutting and sewing a dress.

drifter—A person who moves from place to place, without a permanent home or job.

drought—A prolonged period of unusually low rainfall, resulting in a shortage of water.

dry spell—A short period of time without rain.

Dust Bowl—A period of severe dust storms that struck the Great Plains in the 1930s, due to drought and over-plowing.

economize—To save money by reducing spending and avoiding waste.

estimated—Roughly calculated.

exception—An instance or case not conforming to the general rule.

exhausted—Spent, (resources are) consumed entirely.

expenses—The money required to run a farm, business, or household.

extension agent—An agent employed by the county government to work with farmers to increase crop yields, prevent erosion, eliminate blights or pests, and the like.

fallow—Plowed farmland that has been left unplanted for a period of time in order to restore its fertility.

FERA—Abbreviation for the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, a New Deal program that provided money to state governments to distribute relief to needy people.

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flourish—(noun) A condition or period of thriving.

foreclosure—When a bank takes possession of property because the owner failed to pay back the bank loan or mortgage on time. The bank may then sell the property to a new owner.

freight—Goods or cargo, transported by train or ships

gamble—(noun) An enterprise undertaken or attempted with a risk of loss and a chance of profit or success.

gangsters—Members of an organized gang of criminals, especially those who use violence in their illegal businesses.

gear box—A set of gears, also called the transmission, that controls how the power from an engine is used.

ginning season—The time of year after cotton is harvested when it is cleared of seeds using a machine called a cotton gin (short for “engine”).

Grand Ole Opry—A weekly country-music stage concert in Tennessee, founded in 1925 as a one-hour radio “barn dance.”

grain elevator—A building for collecting, measuring, storing, and distributing grain received from farmers.

Great War—Another name for World War I, which the U.S. entered in 1917 on the side of the Allies.

gringos—A Spanish word for foreigner, or non-Hispanic person, that is often used to describe English-speaking Americans.

hobo—(slang) A homeless person who moves from place to place, often in search of work.

Homestead Act—A law passed in the 1860s that offered up to 160 acres of public land to any head of a family who paid a registration fee, lived on the land for five years, and cultivated it or built on it.

Hoover Tourist—A person who traveled from place to place, due to economic hardship, during the Depression; the term was a way to criticize President Hoover for not doing enough to help people.

Hooverville—Makeshift homes created by the homeless during the 1930s and named after President Herbert Hoover.

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Hugh Bennett—A soil expert who raised awareness of soil erosion and persuaded Congress to create the Soil Conservation Service.

impertinent—Boldly disrespectful.

Indians—Members of the indigenous people of America.

infirmity—A building or room within a larger institution that serves as a hospital.

inquisitive—Curious and tending to ask questions.

irrigating—Supplying farmland with water brought in from somewhere else.

Jim Thorpe—An extraordinarily talented American athlete, Thorpe could run the 100-yard dash in 10 seconds.

Kiowas—American Indian people of the Southern Plains of the US, living mainly in Oklahoma.

La Revolución—How Mexicans referred to the Mexican Revolution, a major armed struggle between 1910 and 1920 that radically transformed Mexican politics and society.

Lindy Hop—A partner dance created by African-Americans in New York City that achieved widespread popularity in the 1930s.

lister plow—A plow featuring two large steel blades in the shape of a wedge, designed to pick up the earth from below and move it to both sides of a central furrow.

lodging—A place to sleep or stay.

lynched—Killed by a mob in a racially motivated attack. Lynch mobs often hung their victims, but also sometimes burned or tore apart the victim's body.

migrant workers—People who move from place to place to get work, usually farm workers who plant and harvest crops.

mortgage—A contract between a bank and a property owner in which the bank lends the owner money and temporarily owns the land until the owner pays back the loan, also refers to the monthly payment the property owner makes to the lender.

motto—A short phrase expressing a guiding principle or belief of a person, group, or institution.

National Youth Administration (NYA)—A New Deal program that provided work and educational opportunities to young people, aged 16 to 25.

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nationalize—To transfer a privately-owned segment of industry or commerce to government ownership or control.

No Man's Land—An area that is unowned, uninhabited, or undesirable.

Okies—A term used to describe Oklahoma farmers who migrated to California to escape the Dust Bowl; in fact, migrants came from several states in the South and Midwest.

on the dole—Receiving a regular distribution of money or food from the government.

outhouse—A small building (such as a shed) that is separated from a main building.

Pancho Villa—A well-known general leading the army fighting against the Mexican government during the Mexican Revolution.

panhandle—A strip of land projecting like the handle of a pan.

Pikes Peak—A famous mountain in Colorado. The summit is higher than any point in the United States east of its longitude.

plow-up—To pull up with a plow.

prospects—Chances of finding a spouse or a job.

railroad bull—(slang) Railroad police officer who keeps rail yards secure from trespassers and prevents theft from or damage to railroad property.

rebs—Confederate soldiers

Red Cross—A humanitarian organization that provides emergency assistance, disaster relief, and education inside the United States.

relief—Assistance, especially in the form of food, clothing, or money, given to those in special need or difficulty.

Resettlement Administration (RA)—A New Deal agency that helped struggling urban and rural families move into communities planned by the federal government.

reveille—A bugle call used to wake up military personnel, usually at sunrise.

ribbon contender—A potential award-winner.

riding the rails—Riding on freight trains, illegally and without paying.

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rodeo—A competitive sport related to cattle herding.

Roebuck—A type of deer

Rolleiflex—A high-quality camera, made in Germany, used in the 1930s and 1940s by professional photographers.

Scottsboro boys—Nine young black men who were falsely accused of assaulting two white women while riding the rails near Scottsboro, Alabama, in 1931.

smut—Sooty matter, a disease-causing fungus that spoils crops.

soda jerk—A person, typically a young man, who prepares drinks at a soda fountain (a counter with a faucet that can dispense carbonated water).

sod—Grass and the part of the soil beneath it held together by the roots.

sodbusters—Farm workers who plow the land.

soil conservation—The protection of soil from erosion and loss of fertility, usually through methods to reduce damage from wind or water.

stock market crash—A sudden dramatic decline of stock prices in a stock market, resulting in a significant loss of paper wealth.

stoop labor—Hard agricultural labor required to plant, cultivate, and harvest crops that grow low to the ground.

Sundown town—A town that keeps out African Americans (or Mexican Americans or Chinese Americans) by posting signs warning them to leave by sundown, and by other methods such as police intimidation.

superlative—Of the highest order, quality, or degree.

tenant farmers—People who farm land owned by another person and pay rent in the form of cash or a portion of the crop produced.

The Klan—Refers to the Ku Klux Klan, an organization dedicated to maintaining white supremacy that was founded by former Confederate military officers during Reconstruction.

tree line—In a mountainous area, the highest elevation on which trees are capable of growing.

tumbleweed—A plant that grows in dry areas; in late summer it breaks off from its roots and is blown across the landscape by the wind.

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union—An organized association of workers formed to protect their rights and interests.

vagrancy—Having no permanent place to live; homelessness.

varmint—A troublesome, mischievous person.

vetoed—In the United States government, when the president has rejected a proposed law.

weather the storm—To survive a difficult situation.

work relief—When the government provides support to the unemployed by hiring them to perform jobs that benefit the community, such as building roads.

Yanks—(slang) used to refer to an individual from the Northern United States.

yards—Short for rail yards, an area containing a series of railroad tracks for parking, connecting, or loading and unloading railroad cars.

yearling—An animal that is one year old.

yield—The quantity of crop produced per unit of land under cultivation - for example, 12 bushels per acre of land.