

What was the dust bowl?



- 1 The dust bowl was a period of drought and severe dust storms in North America that occurred from 1930 to 1936. It primarily centred on areas in Texas and Oklahoma, but also affected the neighbouring states of Colorado, Kansas and New Mexico.
- 2 It had huge impacts on the ecology of the region, agriculture and worsened the economy, intensifying the effects of the Great Depression: the long and deep economic downturn that began in 1929. Massive clouds of dirt were blown across the country as a result of prolonged droughts and the application of agricultural practices not suitable for arid and semi-arid regions. The lack of rain caused most crops to fail. This left the fine topsoil of ploughed land, which now lacked the anchoring, moisture-trapping roots of native plants, to be carried across the continent by the wind.
- 3 Thousands of people were left homeless and many migrated away to less impacted areas over the course of the decade. Restoration of grasslands and the implementation of windbreaks eventually stopped the wind erosion, helping the area to recover by the early 1940s.

nhm.ac.uk