

# DIRECTIONS FOR TEACHERS

## LISTENING SECTION

### COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION IN ENGLISH

Tuesday, June 18, 2002—9:15 a.m. to 12:15 p.m., only

**BE SURE THAT THE LISTENING SECTION IS ADMINISTERED TO EVERY STUDENT.**

- 1 Before the start of the examination period, say:

**Do not open the examination booklet until you are instructed to do so.**

- 2 Distribute one examination booklet and one essay booklet to each student.

- 3 After each student has received an examination booklet and an essay booklet, say:

**Tear off the answer sheet, which is the last page of the examination booklet, and fill in its heading. Now circle “Session One” and fill in the heading on each page of your essay booklet.**

- 4 After the students have filled in all headings on their answer sheets and essay booklets, say:

Look at page 2 of your examination booklet and follow along while I read the **Overview** and **The Situation**.

**Overview:**

For this part of the test, you will listen to a speech about the Dust Bowl, answer some multiple-choice questions, and write a response based on the situation described below. You will hear the speech twice. You may take notes on the next page anytime you wish during the readings.

**The Situation:**

For a school library exhibit recognizing National Environmental Awareness Month, your science class is writing essays about historical events that changed people’s attitudes toward the environment. You have decided to write your essay on the Dust Bowl that occurred in the Plains States from 1931 to 1939. In your essay, you will describe the Dust Bowl and explain how that event changed people’s attitudes about the environment. In preparation for writing your essay, listen to an excerpt from a television documentary on the Dust Bowl. Then use relevant information from the documentary to write your essay.

Now I will read the passage aloud to you for the first time.

- 5 Now read the passage aloud with appropriate expression, but without added comment.

## Listening Passage

In 1931 there was no better place to be a farmer than the Southern Plains. The rest of the nation was in the grip of the Great Depression, but in wheat country they were reaping a record-breaking crop. Plains farmers had turned untamed prairie into one of the most prosperous regions in the country. Confident of rain, unmindful of wind, they plowed mile after mile of virgin sod. Millions of acres of grassland would feel the plow for the first time. Appearing like giant armored bugs creeping along the horizon, tractors came to the fields in the 1920s.

Whirlwinds had always danced across the fields on hot, dry days. No one took much notice that these swirls of dust were growing thicker, taller, and faster than usual. Then in the summer of 1931, the rains stopped. Wheat withered in the fields, leaving the land naked and vulnerable to the menacing winds.

As dust enveloped the atmosphere, breathing became difficult. The Red Cross issued an urgent call for dust masks, especially for children. Residents grabbed any bits of cloth to cover their faces. Where grain once grew high as a man's shoulder, dazed farmers walked out over their beaten, blown-out fields. It had taken a thousand years to build an inch of topsoil on the Southern Plains. It took only minutes for one good blow to sweep it all away. One hundred million acres of the Southern Plains were turning into a wasteland. A journalist traveling through the region called it the Dust Bowl.

The drought persisted, made worse by some of the hottest summers on record. Windmills provided drinking water from deep wells, but the fields were bone dry. For farmers it was going on three years of planting with little to show for it. The hard times were beginning to take their toll. Outside the Southern Plains, few grasped the full measure of the disaster. In Washington, the Dust Bowl was seen as just another trouble spot in the nationwide crisis of the Depression. The Government began offering relief, and most people had no choice but to suffer the humiliation of relief checks and food hand-outs. Piece by piece, farmers were losing everything they cherished.

April 14, 1935 was the worst day of them all, the day no Dust Bowler would forget — the day they would call “Black Sunday.” As the dark clouds approached, there was an ominous silence. Minutes later, the stillness was shattered by thousands of birds fleeing before the avalanche of dirt. Terrified residents tried to drive through blinding dust. One Kansas farmer, disoriented, drove his car off the road. Searchers found him the next day, suffocated. Living on the Plains was becoming an act of sheer will.

The dust was beginning to make living things sick. Animals were found dead in the fields, their stomachs coated with two inches of dirt. An epidemic raged throughout the Plains. They called it dust pneumonia. In 1935, one-third of the deaths in Ford County, Kansas, resulted from pneumonia. Children were especially vulnerable.

By the end of 1935, with no substantial rainfall in four years, Dust Bowlers watched as their neighbors and friends picked up and headed west in search of farm jobs in California. As people abandoned the Southern Plains, tight-knit rural communities began to unravel. Banks and businesses failed. Schools shut their doors. Churches were boarded up.

As the drought wore on, there were some who claimed that Plains farmers themselves held the key to their own survival. The father of soil conservation, Hugh Bennett, was the leader of a new breed of agricultural experts. He argued that conservation techniques could restore farming to the Southern Plains.

Bennett took his case to lawmakers on Capitol Hill. As he was about to testify, he learned that a great dust storm was heading towards the East Coast. He managed to keep the committee in session until the dark gloom settled on Washington. “This, gentlemen,” he announced, “is what I have been talking about.” For the first time Easterners smelled, breathed, and tasted the dust blowing off the Southern Plains.

Previously, the Federal Government had regarded the soil as a limitless, indestructible resource. In a major shift, Washington now put its full weight and authority behind soil conservation. Panicked by the flood of penniless refugees heading to the West Coast, a Government report warned, “for its own sake, the nation cannot allow farmers to fail.” In 1937, Washington began an aggressive campaign to encourage Dust Bowlers to adopt planting and plowing methods that conserved the soil. Once again farmers ran their tractors from dawn to dark, this time to prevent barren fields from blowing. In 1938, the massive conservation crusade had reduced the amount of blowing soil by 65 percent. But the drought dragged on. The proud settlers of the Plains were becoming dependent on Government work projects for survival.

In the spring of 1939, after the failure of seven wheat crops in eight years, more farmers abandoned their farms and fled, convinced that the Dust Bowl was creating an American Sahara. Six months later, the skies finally opened and nearly a decade of dirt and dust came to an end. With the return of the rain, dry fields soon overflowed with golden wheat.

The harsh years of the Dust Bowl had forced farmers to accept the limits of the land. But with fortunes to be made once more on the Southern Plains, that wisdom would soon be tested. One farmer was hopeful about the future. “People are thinking differently about taking care of the land,” he said. “Don’t fool yourself,” another replied. “You can’t convince me we’ve learned our lesson. It’s just not in our blood to play a safe game.”

6 After reading the passage aloud once, say:

You may take a few minutes to look over **The Situation** and your notes.  
(Pause) Now I will read the passage aloud a second time.

7 Read the passage a second time.

8 After the second reading, say:

Now turn to page 4 of your examination booklet, read the directions, and answer the multiple-choice questions. Be sure to follow all the directions given in your examination booklet and your essay booklet. You may now begin.