

0. STARVING PEOPLE - Story Preface

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When hard times arrived in America, few areas in the country were spared the hardship of too little to eat and nowhere to sleep. This photo depicts a "Beggars in Hoboken," the New Jersey town where Jim Braddock worked the docks, hoping to get chosen for a day's worth of work. Image, by the Bain News Service, [online via the Library of Congress](#).

As if the economic disaster were not enough, the American Midwest was hit with unprecedented drought. Food supplies were diminished as formerly fertile fields became dust bowls. In the south, once-productive cotton fields were transformed into eroded wastelands.

People in America were starving. Oral histories, recorded by the Library of Congress, relate tales of despondent people. Some picked dandelion greens to use as food. Others had to relocate, like 76-year-old Perry Rupert and Alvin Sharpe of North Carolina.

By 1936, tenant farmers and their families had become homeless wanderers. Farmers who had worked their own land were also forced to "evacuate." People moving west had little to go on but hope for a better future.

John Steinbeck's Grapes of Wrath had its roots in real-life America. Sometimes the struggle to retain one's dignity was almost more than a human being could manage.

Private parties offered cheap or free food. People stood in "bread lines" that stretched many blocks, only to be disappointed by the time it was "their turn." Food, in increasingly short supplies, was already gone. These were desperate times.

Before he became President, Herbert Hoover was the "United States Food Administrator." Although he tried to distribute food throughout the country, as he had provided wheat to America's allies during World War I, Hoover could not do his job the way he wanted to do it. There simply wasn't enough to go around.

There also wasn't enough food for Jim Braddock and his family. Like other fathers keen to do whatever was necessary to feed his children, the once-formidable boxer (whose powerful right hand had been broken more than once) walked to the Hoboken docks.

Despite his hand injury, he hoped to be one of few men picked for a day's work loading whatever ships were in port.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/STARVING-PEOPLE-Cinderella-Man>

See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/STARVING-PEOPLE-Cinderella-Man>



A Beggar in Hoboken

Library of Congress, Bain News Service

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Drought

Image online, courtesy the U.S. National Archives. Photo /27/8/27-0726a.

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Transformed Farm Land

Image online, courtesy the U.S. National Archives. Photo 27/7/27-0666a.

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Perry Rupert

Image online, courtesy the U.S. National Archives. Photo 27/8/27-0764a.

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Alvin Sharpe

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Homeless Wanderers

Image online, courtesy the U.S. National Archives.

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Evacuation Sale

Image online, courtesy, U.S. National Archives.

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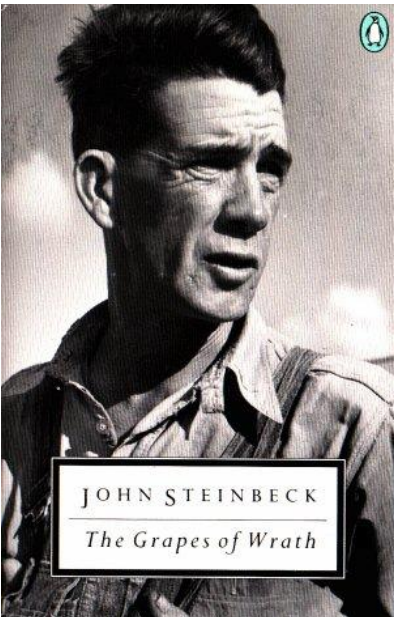


Very Little Possessions

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Grapes of Wrath

Image online, courtesy, Amazon.com

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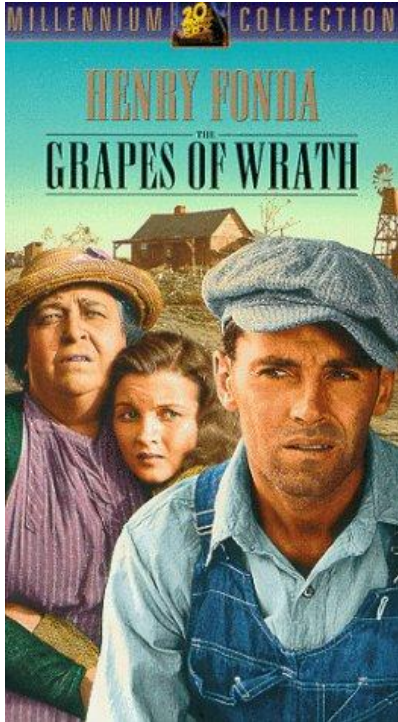
Family Traveling During the Depression

U.S. National Archive Photo.

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The Grapes of Wrath Movie Poster

Image online, courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Bread Lines

Image online, courtesy the U.S. National Archives.

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Desperate Times

Image online, courtesy the U.S. Library of Congress.

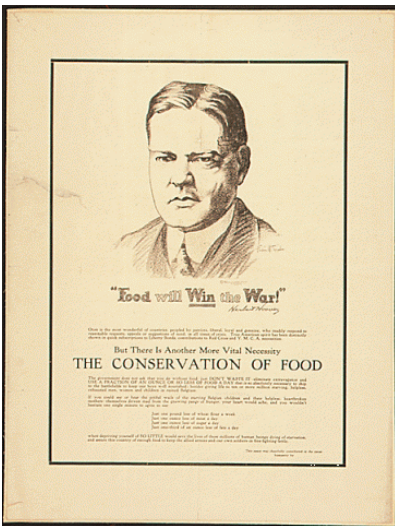
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Herbert Hoover

U.S. National Archive Photo 40/19/40-1856a.

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Hoover as Food Administrator

Image online, courtesy the U.S. National Archives.

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The Docks At Hoboken, New Jersey

Image online, courtesy ccsu.edu - the library website of Central Connecticut State University.

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