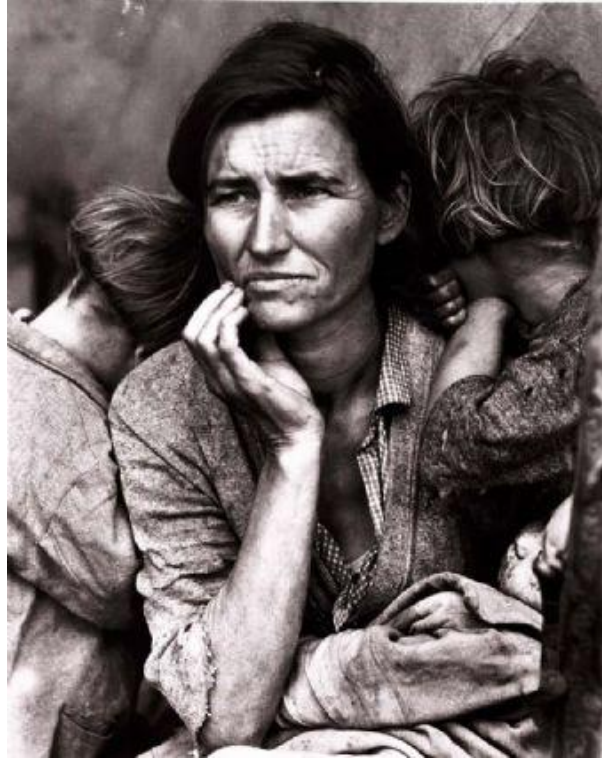


Featured Artifact: “Migrant Mother” by Dorothea Lange

Era 8: The Great Depression and World War II (1929-1945)

<http://historyexplorer.americanhistory.si.edu/resource/?key=5089&lp=artifacts>



Look at the artifact presented to you. In a few sentences, respond to the following questions:

Describe: Objectively describe the artifact. What do you think it is made of? What does it look like? Does it look old or new? Is it intact, or is it damaged in some way?

Analyze: When, where or how do you think this item was used? What kind of person may have created or used this item? What significance do you think the object held, either for the creator or the user? Do you see words or images on the artifact that connect it to others (besides the creator and user)?

Share your conclusions with a partner, then discuss the following:

Evaluate : Justify why you came to those conclusions about the artifact. What further questions do you have about the object? Of those questions, which could you solve by observing the object in person and which would you need to solve with research?

Background Information

During the Great Depression, government photographer Dorothea Lange took this picture at a migrant farmworkers' camp near Nipomo, California. Lange's brief caption recorded her impressions of the family's plight: "Destitute pea pickers ... a 32-year-old mother of seven children."

First published in a San Francisco newspaper, this poignant image became one of the most famous photographs of the Depression era, emblematic of the hardships suffered by poor migrant families. The "migrant mother," anonymous for many years, was later identified as Oklahoma native Florence Thompson.

After reading and considering the background information, compose a response to the following:

Analyze: Address the following object-specific questions:

- How might this photo have raised societal awareness about the destitution of migrant farmworkers?
- Do you think the photo had a positive or negative impact people outside of the farmworkers' camp?
- Why do you think Lange focused only on the woman and her children?
- Why does she not show her audience more the background in this photograph?

Synthesize: What does this object tell us about the era in which it was created, or the American experience as a whole? How would you describe the social, economic, or political climate of America during this time? What connections can you make between this object and other things that you have seen, read, or experienced?

Analyze: Address the following era-specific questions:

- What caused the Great Depression, and how did it affect American society?
- How did the New Deal address the Great Depression, transform American federalism, and initiate the welfare state?