

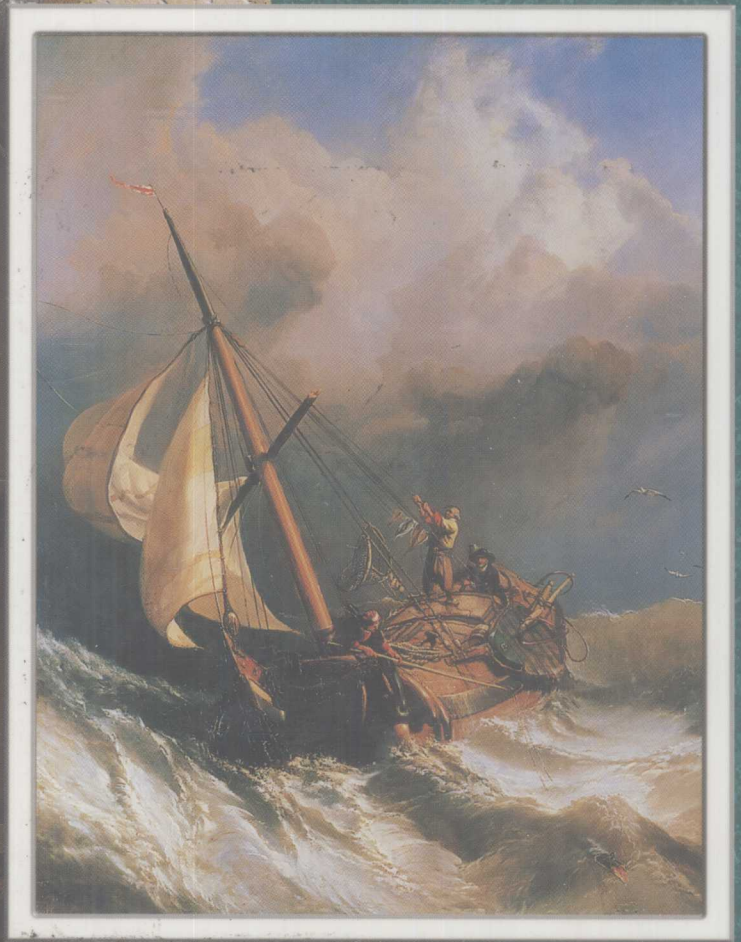
Texas Edition with World Literature Selections



G L E N C O E

LITERATURE

The Reader's Choice



Course 4

GLENCOE LITERATURE

The Reader's Choice

 Texas Edition

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Denny Wolfe

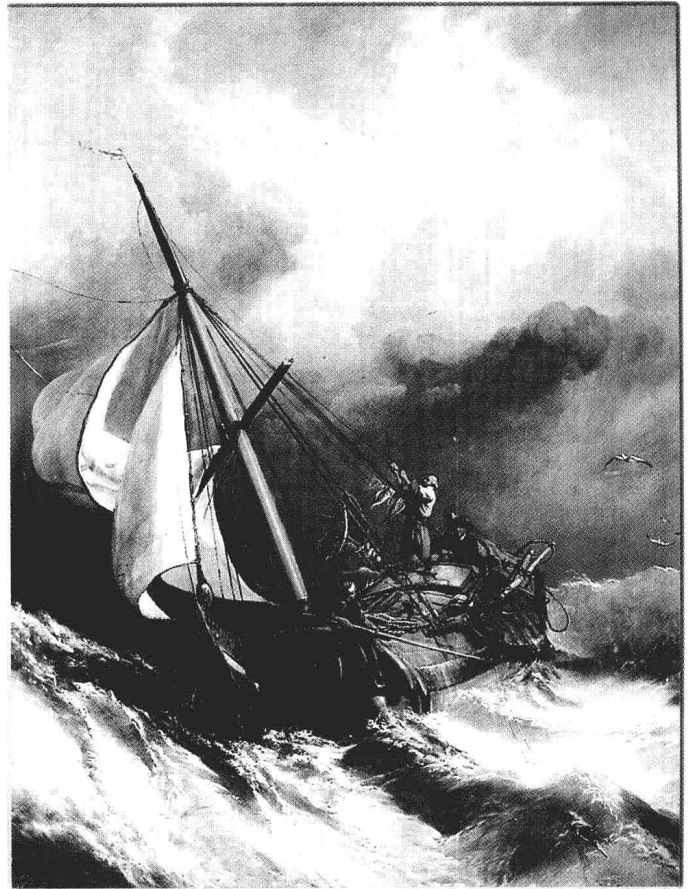
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Course 4



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Mary Ann Dudzinski is a former high school English teacher and recipient of the Ross Perot Award for Teaching Excellence. She also has served as a member of the core faculty for the National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Institute for Teachers of Secondary School English and History at the University of North Texas. After fifteen years of classroom experience in grades 9–12, she currently is a language arts consultant.

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Theme 1: Matters of Life and Death

Sometimes a moment's action can mean the difference between life or death. The selections in Theme 1 explore how a variety of characters react to situations that put them in physical or emotional peril. In the selection that follows, Texas storyteller Tom McDermott shares a legend about a caged bird and its desire for freedom.

The Caged Bird

legend by Tom McDermott—from *Best Stories from the Texas Storytelling Festival*



Tom McDermott uses musical instruments, original lyrics, humor, and folklore to enliven his stories. A native of Texas, McDermott is a past president of the Tejas Storytelling Association.

There was once a fine merchant in Persia.¹ He had a beautiful caged bird with deep blue feathers and gray-tipped wings. All day long she would sing the same song.

“I want to fly away free from my cage.
I want to find a way free from this place!”

She would sing strong and clear, for any bird flying near,

“I want to be free, free some day!”

One afternoon, the merchant approached the cage and told his bird, “Tomorrow I will be traveling to your homeland deep in the forest to buy goods that I can bring home to sell. I thought perhaps I could give your friends and family a message, if I saw them.”

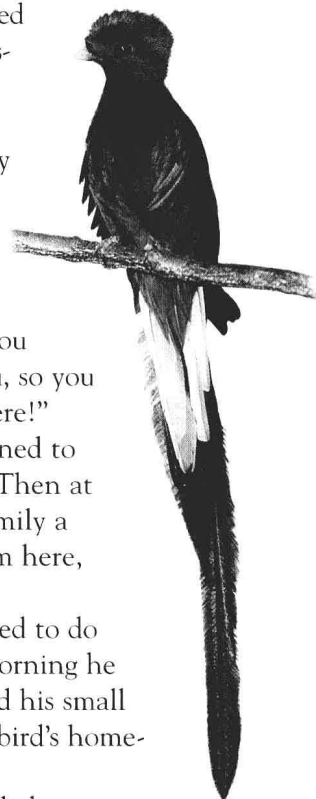
“Take a message?” she cried in disbelief. “Why take a message when you could set me free? I could go there myself. My friends would never worry about me again!”

But the merchant tapped the side of the cage and shouted, “Never! I would not think of letting you go. I caught you to keep you, so you had better learn to like it here!”

The angry merchant turned to leave, when the bird said, “Then at least give my friends and family a message. Tell them that I am here, in a cage.”

Well, the merchant agreed to do that much. And the next morning he packed up his horses, readied his small caravan, and set out for his bird's homeland deep in the forest.

Now the merchant traveled many days and bought many goods to sell. But in all his traveling he never saw any birds that looked like his own. Frustrated and tired, he decided to give up the search and return home.



1. *Persia* is the former name of a country in southwest Asia. In 1935 the name of the country was changed to Iran.



Tom McDermott performs for an elementary school class.

As he reached the edge of the forest, he suddenly heard a bird singing a strangely familiar song. High up in one of the trees he saw a bird with deep blue feathers and gray-tipped wings. So he called out the message he had been given: "You have a friend who is in a cage in my home. She wanted you to know that."

Then he turned and was about to spur his horse when he heard an odd flutter of wings. He looked back to see that the blue-feathered bird had fallen lifeless on the ground. When he nudged the lifeless body with his sandal, the bird did not move a feather, and it did not make a sound. The merchant suddenly realized the power of words and that his message had killed the bird by breaking its heart. Wondering how to break the news to his own bird, he slowly made his way home.

In his home, the caged bird could hardly wait for the merchant's return. She could only think of the good news he would be bringing, and so she sang her song again.

With her cage by the window, the bird suddenly saw the merchant returning in the distance. His horses were packed with goods she recognized from

her homeland. But as he drew near, her heart filled with sadness; for the expression on his face was not happy at all, but troubled. Soon the merchant entered the house and told her the bad news.

"I am sorry," he said, "but as soon as I found one of your friends, I told them of the message you gave to me. No sooner had I said the words than your friend fell lifeless to the ground, dead from a broken heart. I wish I had better news to tell you."

The merchant turned away from the cage. When he heard an odd flutter of feathers, he turned to see his own bird had fallen lifeless from her perch to the cage floor. The merchant shook the

cage. But the bird did not move a feather, and she would sing no more. And the merchant realized, once again, the power of his words; for his message had obviously killed both birds.

He opened up the cage door, lifted out the lifeless body of the bird, and tossed it through an open window.

At that moment, the bird suddenly spread her wings and flew away. When she was high in a nearby tree and out of the merchant's reach, she shouted back to him. "You see, the news that you brought to me was not bad news. It was glad news, because the words of my friends and the actions they took have now taught me how to find my freedom."

The once-caged bird flew off to her wooded homeland, where she found her friend. And they flew off together.



RESPOND

Were you surprised by the ending of "The Caged Bird"? Why or why not?

Theme 2: Filling a Void

Have you ever felt that your life would be complete if only you had a certain relationship, possession, or job? In Theme 2, you will meet characters who try to improve their lives. In the following selection, former Texas resident Sandra Cisneros reflects on her efforts to fill a void in her life.

A Writer's Voyages

personal essay by Sandra Cisneros—*The Texas Observer*, September 25, 1987



Moving frequently between Mexico City and Chicago, the family of Sandra Cisneros (b. 1954) never settled long in one place. Memories of those times, along with her experiences as a Mexican American woman, have given Cisneros a unique literary voice.

I like to think that somehow my family, my Mexicanness, my poverty, all had something to do with shaping me into a writer. I like to think my parents were preparing me all along for my life as an artist even though they didn't know it. From my father I inherited a love of wandering. He was born in Mexico City, but as a young man he traveled into the U.S. vagabonding. He eventually was drafted and thus became a citizen. Some of the stories he has told about his first months in the U.S. with little or no English surface in my stories in *The House on Mango Street* as well as others I have in mind to write in the future. From him I inherited a sappy heart. (He still cries when he watches Mexican soaps—especially if they deal with children who have forsaken their parents.)

My mother was born like me—in Chicago but of Mexican descent. It would be her tough street-wise voice that would haunt all my stories

and poems. An amazing woman who loves to draw and read books and can sing an opera. A smart cookie.

When I was a little girl we traveled to Mexico City so much I thought my grandparents' house on La Fortuna, number 12, was home. It was the only constant in our nomadic ramblings from one Chicago flat to another. The house on Destiny Street, number 12, in the colonia¹ Tepeyac would be perhaps the only home I knew, and that nostalgia for a home would be a theme that would obsess me.

I think my mama and papa did the best they could to keep us warm and clean and never hungry. We had birthday and graduation parties and things like that, but there was another hunger that



Sandra Cisneros

1. *Colonia* is a Spanish word that means "colony" or "neighborhood."

had to be fed. There was a hunger I didn't even have a name for. Was this when I began writing?

Texas is another chapter in my life. It brought with it the Dobie-Paisano Fellowship, a six-month residency on a 265-acre ranch. But most important, Texas brought Mexico back to me.

In the days when I would sit at my favorite people-watching spot, the snakey Woolworth's counter across the street from the Alamo (the Woolworth's which has since been torn down to make way for progress), I couldn't

There was
a hunger
I didn't even
have a name for.
Was this when I
began writing?

think of anything else I'd rather be than a writer. I've traveled and lectured from Cape Cod to San Francisco, to Spain, Yugoslavia, Greece, Mexico, France, Italy, and now today to Texas. Along the way there has been straw for the taking. With a little imagination, it can be spun into gold.



RESPOND

What questions would you like to ask Cisneros?



San Antonio Festival.

Theme 3: Looking Back

Memories—good or bad—often become the lens through which we examine our lives. In the selections in Theme 3, characters' memories lead to self-knowledge and an appreciation for the simple things in life. In the following excerpts by Texas writers, mundane daily chores and the local cash crop are the subject of fond memories, even celebration.

A Texas Childhood

memoir by Bertha McKee Dobie—from *Growing Up in Texas*



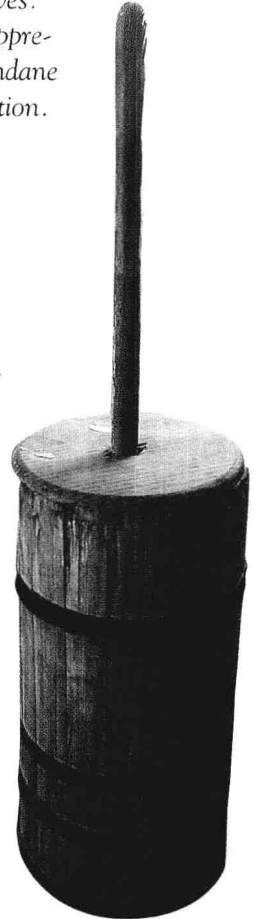
Bertha McKee Dobie's upbringing in small Gulf Coast towns instilled in her an appreciation for nature and simplicity that is evident in her writing. She is the widow of Texas author J. Frank Dobie.

People dated public events and incidents in their own lives by the years a hurricane struck, so long before, so long after. The big dates were 1875, 1886, and then 1900. The 1900 hurricane, widely known as “the Galveston storm,” was our first experience.

Two years after the storm my father bought for a few hundred dollars a large house in the east

end of town and had it moved by mule power a mile or more to the west.

At one end this porch was cut off to make a bathroom, a luxury we had not had before. The sole fixture was an oblong tub, connected by pipe and faucet with the wooden cistern just outside. When the cistern was full and rain was spilling down we could draw all the water we wanted, but we



West Texas landscape outside the town of El Dorado.



had to skimp ourselves when it was almost empty. In cold weather we had to heat water in the kitchen and carry it to the bathroom. But we were proud of the tub. It was much more comfortable than the round washtub in which, as supplement to the bowl with matching pitcher in each bedroom, we had cleansed ourselves. Besides, it was a status symbol (a term we did not know), like the piano in the parlor and the carriage in the barn. Velasco had few bathtubs.

This house, built of such stout lumber that it had resisted the great storm, is the home I chiefly recall. A picket fence kept cattle out of the yard. My mother planted flowers—roses in beds along the sides and violets up the front walk.

While my mother planted flowers, my father made a garden, a large one on a vacant block across the street. We had all we could eat and give away of tomatoes, Rocky Ford cantaloupes, and the plainer vegetables that were “so good for us.” People who have never stood in a tomato patch and eaten a tomato picked ripe from the vine and dipped mouthful by mouthful into salt held in the left palm have no idea how good a tomato can be. We would save the seeds of a particularly fine tomato and an extra sweet cantaloupe or watermelon to plant the next spring. We saved beans too and “kershaw” seeds.

In my growing-up time the only way people in a small town could have vegetables other than potatoes, onions, and withered cabbage was to raise them. To illustrate the lack of what we now take for granted in stores, I mention that my father once inquired at the family table “the name of that vegetable that is shipped in at Christmas.” It was celery.

Churning was one of my Saturday tasks and making butter one of my mother’s. The churn was

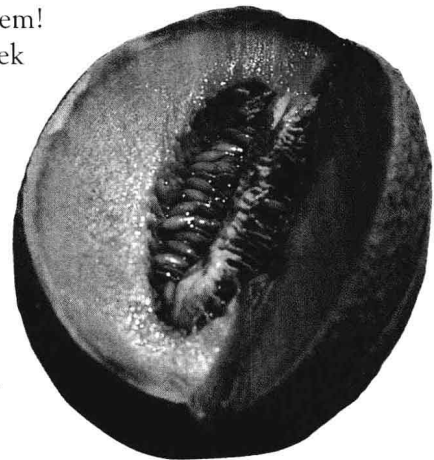


People who have never stood in a tomato patch and eaten a tomato picked ripe from the vine and dipped mouthful by mouthful into salt held in the left palm have no idea how good a tomato can be.

a tall earthen container, larger at the bottom than at the top, into which was poured the week’s accumulated cream. It had a lid with an opening through which the dasher was inserted. The children’s riddle had it this way: “Big at the bottom, little at the top, Something in the middle goes flippty-flop. What is it?” Up and down, up and down my arm would go, and with it the dasher. I could do this and read at the same time. Churning was pretty good.

Another once-a-week enterprise of my mother’s was baking lightbread, cake, and cookies. Almost invariably we would have run out of bread by Saturday noon. The dough would be rising but not yet made into loaves. Mother would cut off pieces and fry them. She called them fritters but we children called them flitters.

How we enjoyed them! Throughout the week our “piece” after school would be bread and butter with sugar sprinkled over. “Bread and butter are fit for a king,” our mother would say, and truly hers were.



RESPOND

Dobie’s recollections include those of simple, everyday tasks. Based on the tone set in her memoir, how do you think Dobie feels about these memories?

Sweet Potato Tales

article by Gene Fowler—*Texas Highways*, October 1997



The unique places, events, and history of Texas are favorite topics of writer Gene Fowler. He is a frequent contributor to Texas Highways magazine.

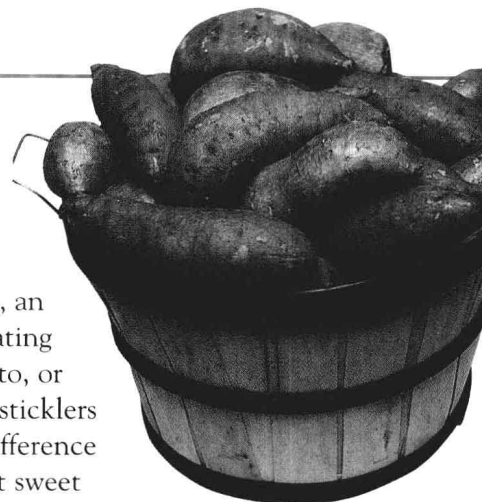
Long may the nation yam and yowl for the Texas yam,” proclaimed a telegram from Hollywood that arrived in Gilmer in October 1938. Sent by the producers of the movie *Carefree*—in which Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers hoofed a hot new dance called the Yam—the wire boasted, “Carefree Yam is now known in every section of the country and we wish as much for the Texas yam.”

The folks in Gilmer received the Tinseltown dispatch as they prepared for the fourth annual

East Texas Yamboree, an autumnal rite celebrating the area’s sweet potato, or yam, harvest. (Spud sticklers note that there’s a difference between the two, but sweet potatoes grown in the United States are commonly labeled as yams, and the terms are often used interchangeably).

Gilmer, the Upshur County seat, still yams it up on the third weekend of October each year. In Wood County, the tiny hamlet of Golden throws its own harvest party, the Golden Sweet Potato Festival, on the weekend following the Yamboree.

Both tater-toasts feature parades, cooking contests, arts and crafts shows, livestock exhibits,



Dancers twirl with yams held high in rehearsal for the 1952 Queen’s Coronation at Gilmer’s East Texas Yamboree.

pageants, carnivals, and live music. The East Texas Yamboree includes an Old-Time Fiddlers Contest, the "Tour de Yam" bicycle ride, and the "Tater Trot" 10-K footrace, as well as an elaborate presentation of Queen Yam and her court.

In Golden, toddler-citizens garner "Miss Tater Tot" and "Mr. Tater Bug" awards, and the town's elder citizen named "Sweetest Tater in Town" takes home the ribbon for wisdom and grace. An auction of prize-winning sweet potatoes raises money for charity. "Last year we helped three families whose

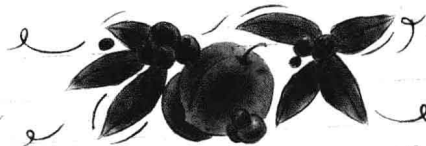
homes had been destroyed by fire," says Bonnie McAree, a co-organizer of Golden's fest. "We also give scholarships, and this year we plan to use some of the proceeds to build an air-ambulance landing pad for Golden and nearby communities."



RESPOND

Do you find the towns' reverence to the sweet potato silly, spirited, or both? Explain.

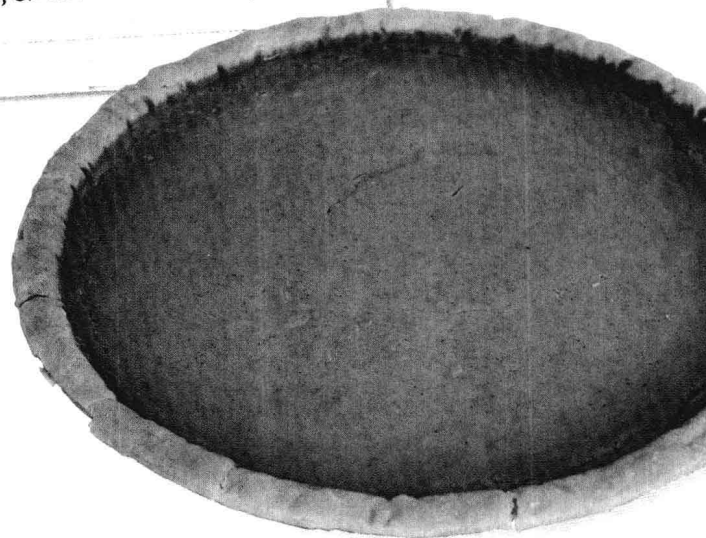
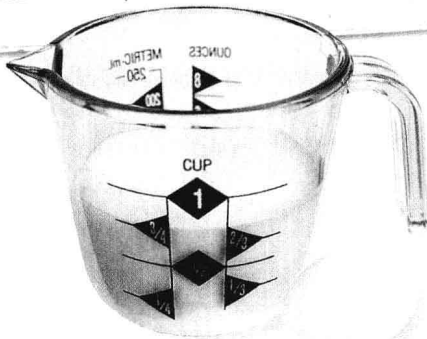
Yam Pie



2-3 large sweet potatoes, unpeeled
1/4 c. margarine or butter, melted
1 c. sugar
1/4 tsp. salt
1 tsp. cinnamon

1/2 tsp. ground allspice
2 eggs, beaten
3/4 c. milk
1 tsp. vanilla
1 unbaked 9-inch pastry shell

Scrub sweet potatoes, and cook in boiling water for 20 minutes, or until soft; drain and peel. Mash enough sweet potatoes to measure 2 cups; set aside to cool completely. Combine next 5 ingredients in a large mixing bowl, and mix well. Add mashed sweet potatoes and eggs, and beat until smooth. Gradually add milk and vanilla, beating well. Pour filling into pastry shell. Bake at 350° for 1 hour, or until set. Serve pie warm or cold.



Theme 4: In the Face of Adversity

Adversity can change us in ways we cannot see. While some struggles leave us shaken and vulnerable, others invigorate us and make us stronger. The selections in Theme 4 examine how people react to many kinds of adversity. In the following article, Anne Dingus describes a particularly Texan type of adversity: a blinding sandstorm.

The Dust Storm

article by Anne Dingus—*Texas Monthly*, August 1998



Anne Dingus grew up in Pampa, Texas, and is a senior editor for *Texas Monthly* magazine. She has written several books, including *More Texas Sayings Than You Can Shake a Stick At*.

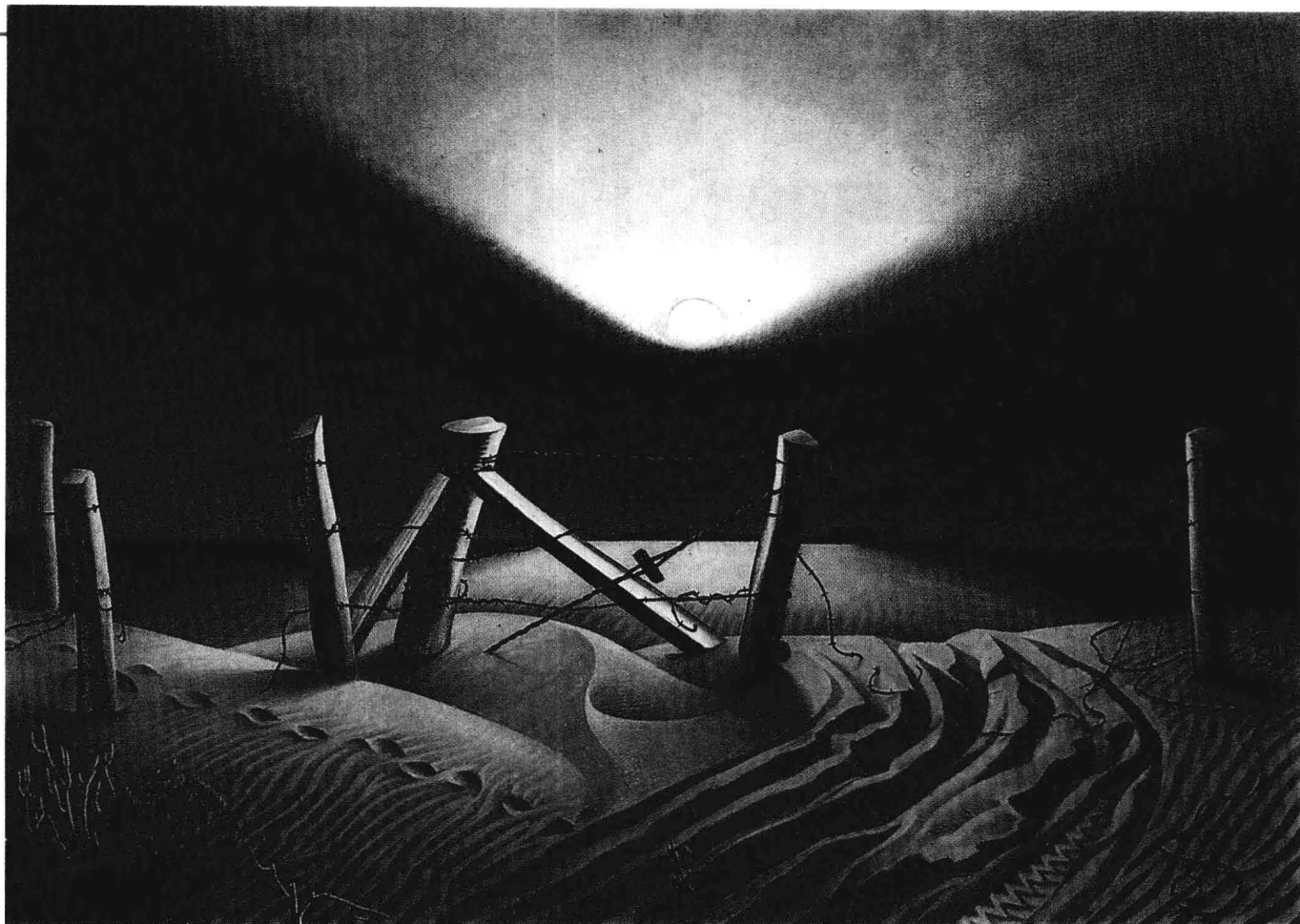
Any Texan can tell you a sandstorm story. Native writers appreciated its drama. Tom Lea set the opening chapter of *The Wonderful Country* in one, and in Larry McMurtry's *Lonesome Dove*, green cowhand Newt suffered baptism by sand on his second day up the trail. The gutless heroine of Dorothy

Scarborough's 1925 novel, *The Wind*, hated the sand: "Her eyes smarted with it . . . and her throat choked with it. . . . When she lay down at night her pillow was scratchy with its covering of sand, she could feel the grains crawling inside her clothing like vermin."

Wind is, of course, the moving force behind a sandstorm. When north winds howl into Texas, they displace rising hot air and snatch up any loose soil in their path. The stronger and faster the winds, the more sand they push before them. An equally strong factor is drought. The drier the land, the looser the topsoil and the more easily the upper layer is swept away.



Farmer and Son Walking in Face of a Dust Storm, 1936. Arthur Rothstein. Courtesy Library of Congress.



Dust Bowl, 1933. Alexandre Hogue. Oil on canvas, 24 x 33 in. National Museum of American Art, Washington, DC. Gift of International Business Machines Corporation. 1969.123.

Although most Texans use the terms “dust storm” and “sandstorm” interchangeably, the legendary sandstorms of the past are as rare today as they are ferocious. Decades ago prairie grass protected most of the soil on the plains, but pockets of sand blew about freely. Eventually, however, years of sustained plowing exposed millions of acres of dirt and made dust storms more common. Because dirt is finer-grained than sand, a storm flings it higher and faster. Thus sandstorms hang low on the horizon; dust storms boil up like thunderheads. A final difference is color. Sandstorms are yellow, dust storms brown.

In 1934 a six-year dry spell and poor land management produced the Dust Bowl, withering farms across the Panhandle and Great Plains. By 1936 the Amarillo weather bureau had counted 192 dusters locally. (No wonder the Amarillo High School team is called the Sandstorm—the Sandies for short.) Dust storms and poverty drove people out of their homes to seek new beginnings elsewhere.

**RESPOND**

What experiences or memories of Texas severe weather does this article conjure up for you?
