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## Review of *Americans View Their Dust Bowl Experience* Edited by John R. Wunder, Frances W. Kaye, and Vernon Carstensen

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*Americans View Their Dust Bowl Experience*. Edited by John R. Wunder, Frances W. Kaye, and Vernon Carstensen. Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1999. Illustrations, bibliography, index. xiv + 429 pp. \$34.95.

*Americans View Their Dust Bowl Experience* is a substantial compilation of primary and secondary materials related to the agricultural crisis of the 1930s. Begun in the 1960s by the late Vernon Carstensen, it has only recently been completed by his co-editors. The book contains a number of articles from the *New York Times* and other national publications related to various aspects of the farmers' plight during the Great Depression, as well as secondary articles reprinted from *Great Plains Quarterly*, *North Dakota History*, *Annals of Iowa*, *Nebraska History*, *Agricultural History*, *South Dakota History*, and *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*. Original secondary materials include an extensive bibliography and an essay on "The Plow That Broke the Plains" by Vernon Carstensen. The editors offer the volume as an opportunity to let Americans speak for themselves about their dust bowl experience and for teachers to use to introduce students to that era.

As a compilation of materials, the book certainly gives students a place to begin their study of the Dust Bowl. It introduces many of the basic concepts necessary to study that time and place and offers a broad view of the era, including social, political, and environmental perspectives. Only the bibliography, however, carries the volume into the current generation of scholarship. Dust Bowl historiography has developed significantly in the last ten years, but very little of that scholarship has found its way into this volume. That the primary materials were gathered only from such east coast publications as the *New York Times*, *Colliers*, and the *New Republic* is also disappointing. The newspapers of the Plains carried on a rich dialogue about the crisis happening in their own back yards, but none of that material appears in the book. Much of the primary material is not so much about the problems of the

Plains, but about the farm crisis in general, and Iowa in particular. No doubt beginners in the field will find this a useful place to start; more knowledgeable readers will likely be disappointed.

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