



The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of Those Who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl

By Timothy Egan

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"The Worst Hard Time is an epic story of blind hope and endurance almost beyond belief; it is also, as Tim Egan has told it, a riveting tale of bumptious charlatans, conmen, and tricksters, environmental arrogance and hubris, political chicanery, and a ruinous ignorance of nature's ways. Egan has reached across the generations and brought us the people who played out the drama in this devastated land, and uses their voices to tell the story as well as it could ever be told." — Marq de Villiers, author of Water: The Fate of Our Most Precious Resource

The dust storms that terrorized America's High Plains in the darkest years of the Depression were like nothing ever seen before or since, and the stories of the people that held on have never been fully told. Pulitzer Prize-winning New York Times journalist and author Timothy Egan follows a half-dozen families and their communities through the rise and fall of the region, going from sod homes to new framed houses to huddling in basements with the windows sealed by damp sheets in a futile effort to keep the dust out. He follows their desperate attempts to carry on through blinding black blizzards, crop failure, and the deaths of loved ones. Drawing on the voices of those who stayed and survived—those who, now in their eighties and nineties, will soon carry their memories to the grave—Egan tells a story of endurance and heroism against the backdrop of the Great Depression.

As only great history can, Egan's book captures the very voice of the times: its grit, pathos, and abiding courage. Combining the human drama of Isaac's Storm with the sweep of The American People in the Great Depression, The Worst Hard Time is a lasting and important work of American history.

Timothy Egan is a national enterprise reporter for the New York Times. He is the author of four books and the recipient of several awards, including the Pulitzer Prize. He lives in Seattle, Washington.

"As one who, as a young reporter, survived and reported on the great Dust Bowl disaster, I recommend this book as a dramatic, exciting, and accurate account of that incredible and deadly phenomenon. This is can't-put-it-down history."

—Walter Cronkite

"The Worst Hard Time is wonderful: ribbed like surf, and battering us with a national epic that ranks second only to the Revolution and the Civil War. Egan knows this and convincingly claims recognition for his subject—as we as a country finally accomplished, first with Lewis and Clark, and then for 'the greatest generation,' many of whose members of course were also survivors of the hardships of the Great Depression. This is a banner, heartfelt but informative book, full of energy, research, and compassion." —Edward Hoagland, author of *Compass Points: How I Lived*

"Here's a terrific true story—who could put it down? Egan humanizes Dust Bowl history by telling the vivid stories of the families who stayed behind. One loves the people and admires Egan's vigor and sympathy." —Annie Dillard, author of *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*

"The American West got lucky when Tim Egan focused his acute powers of observation on its past and present. Egan's remarkable combination of clear analysis and warm empathy anchors his portrait of the women and men who held on to their places—and held on to their souls—through the nearly unimaginable miseries of the Dust Bowl. This book provides the finest mental exercise for people wanting to deepen, broaden, and strengthen their thinking about the relationship of human beings to this earth." —Patricia N. Limerick, author of *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West*

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The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of Those Who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl By Timothy Egan Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #7203 in Books
- Brand: Mariner Books
- Published on: 2006-09-01
- Released on: 2006-09-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.25" h x .89" w x 5.50" l, .82 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 340 pages



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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. Egan tells an extraordinary tale in this visceral account of how America's great, grassy plains turned to dust, and how the ferocious plains winds stirred up an endless series of "black blizzards" that were like a biblical plague: "Dust clouds boiled up, ten thousand feet or more in the sky, and rolled like moving mountains" in what became known as the Dust Bowl. But the plague was man-made, as Egan shows: the plains weren't suited to farming, and plowing up the grass to plant wheat, along with a confluence of economic disaster—the Depression—and natural disaster—eight years of drought—resulted in an ecological and human catastrophe that Egan details with stunning specificity. He grounds his tale in portraits of the people who settled the plains: hardy Americans and immigrants desperate for a piece of land to call their own and lured by the lies of promoters who said the ground was arable. Egan's interviews with survivors produce tales of courage and suffering: Hazel Lucas, for instance, dared to give birth in the midst of the blight only to see her baby die of "dust pneumonia" when her lungs clogged with the airborne dirt. With characters who seem to have sprung from a novel by Sinclair Lewis or Steinbeck, and Egan's powerful writing, this account will long remain in readers' minds. (*Dec. 14*)

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From [The New Yorker](#)

On April 14, 1935, the biggest dust storm on record descended over five states, from the Dakotas to Amarillo, Texas. People standing a few feet apart could not see each other; if they touched, they risked being knocked over by the static electricity that the dust created in the air. The Dust Bowl was the product of reckless, market-driven farming that had so abused the land that, when dry weather came, the wind lifted up millions of acres of topsoil and whipped it around in "black blizzards," which blew as far east as New York. This ecological disaster rapidly disfigured whole communities. Egan's portraits of the families who stayed behind are sobering and far less familiar than those of the "exodusters" who staggered out of the High Plains. He tells of towns depopulated to this day, a mother who watched her baby die of "dust pneumonia," and farmers who gathered tumbleweed as food for their cattle and, eventually, for their children.

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

A national correspondent on environmental issues for the *New York Times*, Timothy Egan describes a central plain that is as distinct and varied as the Rocky Mountains that buttress it to the west. "Linguistic flourishes" (*San Francisco Chronicle*) and an "authoritative voice" (*Portland Oregonian*), supported by Egan's Pulitzer Prize-winning reportorial skills, make *The Worst Hard Time* an essential testament-cum-elegy to the price of human progress and the indomitable will of the American spirit. Reviewers are loath to throw around "masterpiece" lightly, but Egan's book gets a couple of nods; the uniformity of the praise seems to affirm his heady accomplishment.

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Ernestine Miller:

The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of Those Who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl can be one of your basic books that are good idea. Many of us recommend that straight away because this publication has good vocabulary which could increase your knowledge in terminology, easy to understand, bit entertaining but nonetheless delivering the information. The article author giving his/her effort to set every word into satisfaction arrangement in writing The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of Those Who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl although doesn't forget the main position, giving the reader the hottest in addition to based confirm resource info that maybe you can be certainly one of it. This great information can draw you into completely new stage of crucial considering.

Marlon Hood:

This The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of Those Who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl is great guide for you because the content which is full of information for you who else always deal with world and also have to make decision every minute. This book reveal it details accurately using great manage word or we can claim no rambling sentences in it. So if you are read it hurriedly you can have whole facts in it. Doesn't mean it only gives you straight forward sentences but tough core information with attractive delivering sentences. Having The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of Those Who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl in your hand like getting the world in your arm, info in it is not ridiculous a single. We can say that no reserve that offer you world inside ten or fifteen minute right but this publication already do that. So , this is good reading book. Hello Mr. and Mrs. hectic do you still doubt that will?

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Jack Michaud:

That book can make you to feel relax. This kind of book The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of Those Who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl was colorful and of course has pictures on there. As we know that book The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of Those Who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl has many kinds or type. Start from kids until youngsters. For example Naruto or Private eye Conan you can read and think that you are the character on there. So , not at all of book are generally make you bored, any it can make you feel happy, fun and unwind. Try to choose the best book for you and try to like reading that.

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