

UNIT 6 Hard Times
Depression and World War II 1929–1945

A STEINBOURNE
FROEBEL
BILINGUAL SCHOOL
Home of the Space Generation



Let Us Now Praise Famous Men

WITH
JIM SOTO

SPEAK YOUR MIND

It has been said the “ a picture says more than a thousand words?”

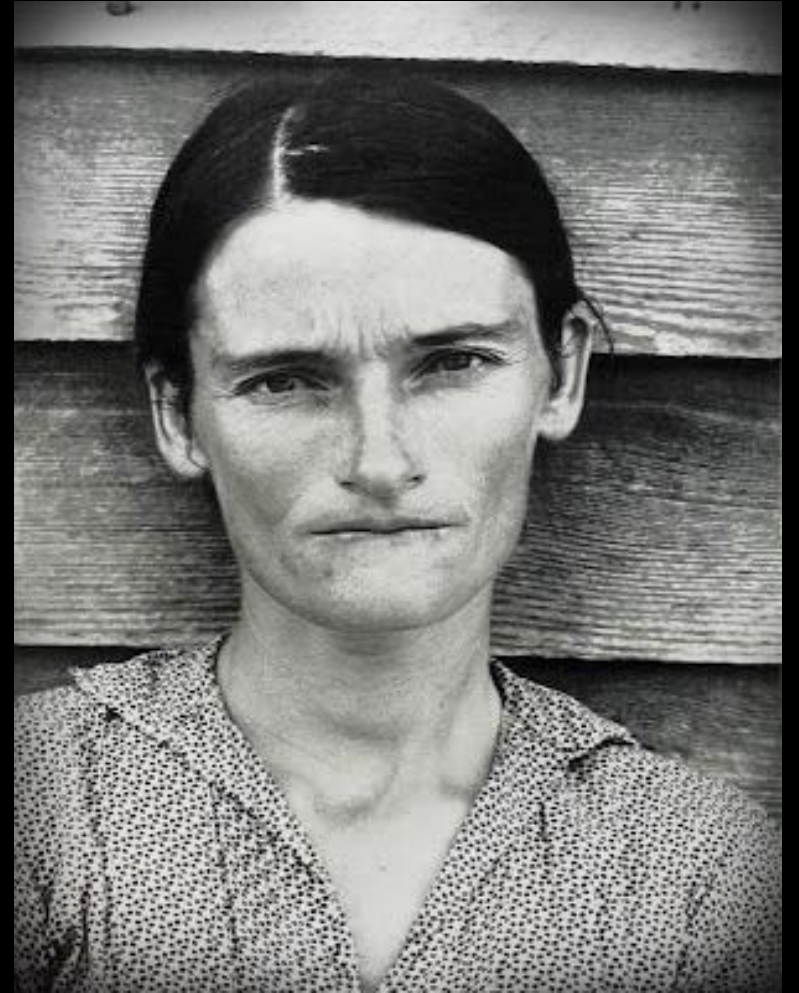
Do you agree? Why?

Has viewing a photograph ever helped you better understand the people or events of another time and place? Explain.

Take a minute to consider and answer the question.

A PICTURE SAYS MORE...

During the Depression, photographers, journalists, and fiction writers used their talents to convey the devastating effects of poverty and joblessness on people's lives. In 1936, Fortune magazine hired writer James Agee and photographer Walker Evans to produce a series of articles on the condition of white sharecroppers in the South. Agee and Evans spent about six weeks in Alabama, mostly with three families. Evans took photographs, and Agee took notes.





After their work was rejected by Fortune, it eventually was published in 1941 in the book **Let Us Now Praise Famous Men**. Avoiding the tradition of using photographs to illustrate text, the two men chose to display 50 of Evans's photographs at the beginning of the book. Agee and Evans's work is one of the earliest examples of **literary nonfiction**, a new genre in which literary techniques mix with factual, journalistic reporting to describe real events.

The title *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* is from a biblical passage, Ecclesiasticus 44:1–15. The passage describes the legacies left not only by famous people but also common individuals, those who “have no memorial.”





The book documents the miserable lives of sharecropper families in the southern United States during the Great Depression. The authors sought to capture the humanity of their subjects and to raise awareness about the poverty and struggle faced by these families. The book is often seen as an important work of social and political commentary and is still widely read and respected today.

LITERARY ELEMENTS

Description

Refers to a picture in words. Descriptive writing uses sensory details: words and phrases that describe how things look, sound, smell, taste, or feel.

Mood

Also known as atmosphere, is the emotion created in the reader by part or all of a literary work.



According to author John Hersey, Agee “strove through the sounds and meaning of words to . . . achieve photography” that equaled Evans’s images. As you read, try to envision the building Agee describes. Identify the senses he concentrates on in describing the scene. Also identify the mood that Agee and Evans create with their words and photographs. What is your emotional response toward the people and place they describe?



ASSESSMENT

After reading pages 465-471 in your book, complete the activities:

1. REFER TO TEXT &
2. REASON WITH TEXT
3. & ANALYZE LITERATURE
 - **Description and Mood** - In describing the Gudger house, which of the five senses does Agee evoke the most? Provide examples to support your choice.
 - What mood does Agee create in this excerpt? Cite the descriptive language and sensory details that led you to your conclusion.



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