Black Sunday and the Dust Bowl



Read the passage. Then answer the questions in full sentences.

Name _____ Date _____

The 1930s were years of terrible hardship on the Great Plains. People there faced the Great Depression and, at the same time, years of drought, a long period with too little rain. Dust storms struck the dry land again and again. People called them dirt storms, sand storms, black blizzards and "dusters." The worst came on Sunday, April 14, 1935, a day known in history as Black Sunday. That day, a mountain of blackness swept across the High Plains and turned a warm, sunny afternoon darker than the darkest night.

The wall of dust first blasted into the eastern Oklahoma panhandle around 4 p.m. Winds in the panhandle reached upwards of 60 mph, and for a short time people could not see their own hand in front of their face. A reporter named Robert E. Geiger was caught by the storm near Boise City, Oklahoma. The next day, his article began, "Residents of the southwestern dust bowl marked up another black duster today…" It was one of the first uses of the name the Dust Bowl.

The blowing dust was blamed not only on dry weather but also on poor soil conservation, the ways farmers protected their soil. In March 1935, Hugh Hammond Bennett, an advisor to President Roosevelt, testified before Congress about the need for better methods. Dust from the Great Plains blew all the way to the East Coast, blotting out the sun even in the nation's capital. Congress passed the Soil Conservation Act before the end of that year.

1. **What was Black Sunday?**

2. **What does "blotting out" mean in the last paragraph? What in the sentence shows it?**

3. **How did Black Sunday lead to the name "the Dust Bowl"?**

4. **Were the dust storms of the 1930s caused only by nature? Support your answer with details from the passage.**

Answer key

Black Sunday and the Dust Bowl

1. What was Black Sunday?
   April 14, 1935, when a mountain of blowing dust swept across the High Plains and turned a sunny afternoon darker than night. It was the worst of the 1930s dust storms.

2. What does "blotting out" mean in the last paragraph? What in the sentence shows it?
   It means hiding or covering up. The sentence says so much dust blew to the East Coast that it blotted out the sun.

3. How did Black Sunday lead to the name "the Dust Bowl"?
   A reporter caught in the storm wrote an article the next day about the "southwestern dust bowl." It was one of the first uses of the name.

4. Were the dust storms of the 1930s caused only by nature? Support your answer with details from the passage.
   Sample answer: No. Drought, a natural event, dried out the land, but the dust was also blamed on poor soil conservation, the ways farmers protected their soil. That is why Bennett testified about better methods and Congress passed the Soil Conservation Act.