

## Dust bowl travelers

By Shoshana Danit Silverstein  
HOMESCHOOLED, GRADE 11

Out they came in silent stride,  
gravel rasping under foot,  
resolute steps side by side.  
Hats shading weary faces,  
shadows bumping on the road,  
callused hands grasping worn cases.  
They are strangers traveling by  
the twisted fences that edge their route,  
beneath the bleached and endless sky.  
Abandoned on a dusty plain,  
seeking a world that passed them by,  
mocked by 'Next Time Try The Train.'  
They go on in silent stride,  
gravel rasping under foot,  
resolute steps side by side.



Dorothea Lange took this photo, "Toward Los Angeles," in March 1937. For more historic, public photos from this era: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html>

## Almost there

By Georgia Parke  
STOWE HIGH SCHOOL, GRADE 10

i.  
Let's go somewhere, I said.  
Where? Anywhere.  
Nowhere.  
Everywhere.  
And we'll just walk for a while.  
Walk walk walk, oh, walk.  
Don't stop.  
We're almost there.  
Depends on where "there" is.  
But sure, we're almost there.

ii.  
Let's go live for a while  
Among dirt and canvas and billboards and hats  
And just forget it all.  
Let's go live for a while.

iii.  
We don't say anything, ever. So I know we both understand.

iv.  
There're footprints ahead of us.  
The same size as yours, by the looks.  
Where are they going?  
I hope mine don't erase them.  
After all, they were here first.

v.  
Maybe we'll be our own billboard someday  
And people will take a picture of us  
And try to understand where we're going.  
I hope they do,  
Because I sure don't.

vi.  
Let's just walk for a while.  
We will end up somewhere eventually.  
Yes, sure,  
We're almost there.

## Toward Los Angeles

By Kay Bushman | U-32 MIDDLE SCHOOL, GRADE 8

We walked toward the city, our bags hanging off our backs. We had no job, no pay. No pay meant no future. But the city? That meant promise.

The two of us were a statistic, just another of the seven million Joes without a paycheck, but L.A. was going to change that. We'd sleep in the streets and shine people's shoes for pay if we had to.

Harry knew a guy out there who said he could give us a job in a button factory. We'd been walking for a week. We had jumped onto the backs of hay wagons to make the trip faster but still needed a way past the police patrol set up on the border.

Then we saw that sign. We could jump a train, I suggested. Harry said the patrols probably checked the trains, but I wanted to take that risk.

We found some tracks a few miles north of the sign, and waited. When the train came, it came fast. We hopped unto an open box car.

Sitting there against the wall were four guys who looked a lot worse off than us. One guy, Sol, had the comic section of an old newspaper. We all must have read that paper a thousand times over the next two days.

Johnny had been conned out of most of his money by some small-timers back in

Chicago and was heading back to the only family he had left. Charlie was a drifter. After he told us a few of his stories, we all had to agree he had moxie. He'd been a soda jerk at a little shop a lot of cons used, so he fell in with them, but the police had got a whiff of his gang and he'd split. He'd been on the run for a while.

Woody was just an unemployed bum like Harry and me. "Times are always tough, but I still don't never seem to be able to get me a job, Guy," he told me.

Marshall was an old man. He had been in Philadelphia, hadn't had enough money to buy a ticket home, and jumped the train. All he wanted to do was get home to his girl, Celia. He never stopped talking 'bout her. "Beautiful as Aphrodite, my Celia. Cooks better than heaven." He spent his silences staring dreamily into space as the train bumped and hissed.

Me, Harry, Marshall and Woody all got off when we started seeing buildings in the distance on the second day. Harry was amazed we hadn't been caught, but I knew we wouldn't have an exciting story to tell about our trip to L.A. I still hoped something would happen before we got there, just to tell the grandkids, like.

### NEXT PROMPT

**Ghosts.** Have you ever seen a ghost? Tell us a ghost story. Make one up if you want, but make it believable. **Alternate: Favorite character.** Choose your favorite character from a book or movie and place them in a different story. **Due Friday.** To see the year's prompts and to submit best work go to: [youngwritersproject.org](http://youngwritersproject.org)

## Almost there

By Paige Brigham

MAIN STREET MIDDLE SCHOOL, GRADE 7

We keep walking, one foot at a time, and I'm not even telling myself to do so. The same sound over and over again. The poor, hard crunch of the rocks is almost silent, but still heard.

My mind is quiet, nothing to say. I have no worries except whether we could be home, if we could actually call a place home.

I think of relaxing and lying down on every patch of green grass and big bold rock. It makes me want to stop more.

The longer I walk the heavier my bag gets.

But I can't stop.

All I can do is keep walking, as if I were almost there ...

## Let's leave

By Jacob Hinton

SPAULDING HIGH SCHOOL, GRADE 10

"We need to leave."

"We killed three people. The whole city is after us."

"Yes, I know."

"Toward Los Angeles," said a guy boarding the train.

"Let's get on it and leave this city behind us." He glanced into his bag and laughed.

"We have enough money."



### Young Writers Project

Project is an independent nonprofit that engages students to write, helps them get better at it and finds audience for their best work.

YWP provides writing prompts for this newspaper series;

maintains a supportive online community, [youngwritersproject.org](http://youngwritersproject.org); trains college mentors to provide students with feedback and builds Digital Writing Classrooms for schools and afterschool programs. For more go to: [ywpschools.net](http://ywpschools.net).

YWP depends on the generosity of businesses, foundations and individuals. Special thanks to:

The Amy Tarrant Foundation