List-Group-Label

The Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck

This strategy serves well as a pre-reading strategy for the students to understand more of the background of The Grapes of Wrath.

Step 1: Pick a word for the students to brain storm about. A good suggestion would be Dust Bowl.

Step 2: Have the students write down a word that comes to their mind when they think about the Dust Bowl. Having the students write the words on sticky notes works really well because the words can then be moved around.

Step 3: As a class, group the words into different categories. Some possible categories may be: conditions, people, time, objects, weather.

Step 4: As soon as the words are grouped the class can then come up with a name for each of the groups.

Step 5: Talk about why this activity was effective. Where did the words come from—their own previous knowledge Are they going to remember these words? Why? What helped them learn these words?

Step 6: As the students are reading the book have them continuously add to the list of words that describes the Dust Bowl.
Example

Word: Dust Bowl

Connected Words: Hot, Crops, Corn, Dry, Drought, Fields, Whirlwind, Drifts, Tractors, Oklahoma, Starvation, Moving, leaving, California, jobs, homeless, trucks, families, dusty, dirty.

Groups: Places—California, Oklahoma
Conditions—dry, starvation, dusty, dirty, homeless, hungry, children, crying, thirsty, poor, tired, smelly, separation
Objects—Whirlwind, tractors, fields, drifts, families, trucks, crops, corn
Emotions—hopelessness, fear, loneliness, frustration, inadequacy, despair