

# The Grapes of Wrath

by John Steinbeck

## Teacher's Guide

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## Synopsis

### Chapter 1

In mid-June, drought ruins the crops on Oklahoma farms. Dust invades homes. People try to figure a way out of financial disaster.

### Chapter 2

After serving four years of a seven-year prison sentence for killing a man, Tom Joad earns parole. While returning to his family's farm near Sallisaw, Oklahoma, he accepts a ride with a trucker.

### Chapter 3

A turtle crawls along the highway until a truck driver deliberately hits it and knocks it onto the shoulder.

### Chapter 4

Near the farm Tom encounters Jim Casy, a former preacher now wrestling with the concept of a universal soul. Together they approach the Joad farm, which they find deserted.

### Chapter 5

Banks are foreclosing on farms and making the farmers and their families leave the land. One victim, Joe Davis, takes the job of tractor operator and destroys the buildings left on failed homesteads.

### Chapter 6

Tom reveals that he didn't write his parents that he was coming home. A former neighbor, Muley Graves, informs Tom and Jim that the Shawnee Land and Cattle Company evicted the Joads, who have assembled at Uncle John's house eight miles away. Muley's family has gone to California, but he can't make himself leave the land. Tom determines to leave for his Uncle John's house at daybreak.

### Chapter 7

Used car dealers sell ruined vehicles to unsuspecting buyers.

### Chapter 8

Tom and Casy walk to John's place. The Joads — Ma and Pa; Noah and Al, Tom's grown brothers; Rosasharn and Connie Rivers, Tom's sister and brother-in-law; twelve-year-old Ruthie; ten-year-old Winfield; and Granma and Grampa — rejoice at Tom's arrival. The family prepares to travel 2,000 miles to California in John's cut-down Hudson fitted with a truck bed.

### Chapter 9

Handbills advertise abundant agricultural jobs, for which farmers must relinquish the familiarity of home and hurry to an ill-defined destination.

### Chapter 10

Tom tells Ma that they will be traveling for two weeks or less and reminds her that many people will be competing for jobs. Ma invites Casy to join them. The Joads sell their belongings and slaughter their last pigs. After Grampa changes his mind about going, Ma drugs him so the men can load him onto the truck.

### Chapter 11

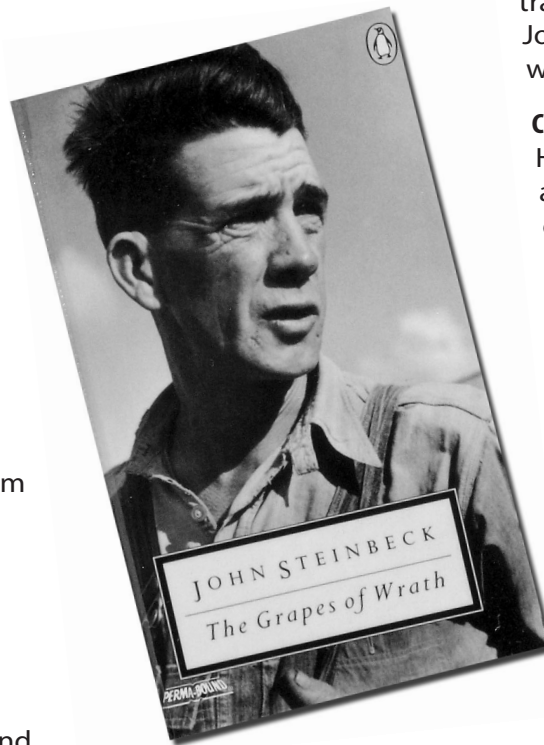
Houses begin to crumble and rats and weasels invade barns as families leave their farms.

### Chapter 12

Along Highway 66, families struggle against the odds and make do with handouts.

### Chapter 13

Traveling west out of Oklahoma, Connie and Rosasharn dream of a better life. The Joads camp next to Ivy and Sairy Wilson, who are emigrating from Galena, Kansas. Grampa dies of stroke. After



burying him in an unmarked grave, the Joads urge the Wilsons to travel with them.

## Chapter 14

People in the Western states fear the onslaught of the poor, who journey to a new life.

## Chapter 15

Al and Mae cook and serve food at a roadside café. They disdain the rich tourists and welcome truckers like Big Bill and his partner. A poor family begs to buy part of a loaf of bread.

## Chapter 16

Pushing on through the Texas Panhandle into New Mexico's desert country on Saturday, the third day, the travelers cross the Pecos River. Al and Tom study a broken con-rod. Tom proposes that the two families travel in the truck and leave the heavy items for him and Casy to convey in the Wilsons' car. Ma refuses to separate because she fears the family will disintegrate. Near Santa Rosa, Tom and Casy work at the repair. Al finds them and reports that Granma is ailing. Accounts from a man returning from California are ominous.

## Chapter 17

Migrant families journeying west become a single unit of struggling humanity.

## Chapter 18

The Joads travel into Arizona and the Painted Desert. When they reach California, Noah stays at the river. Outside Needles, the Wilsons and Joads part after Sairy Wilson becomes too ill to travel. Granma dies during the night drive across the Mojave Desert.

## Chapter 19

The land, once owned by Spanish immigrants, passes to white farmers and into the hands of prosperous orange growers. The poor congregate in Hoovervilles. Okies earn a bad reputation, causing fearful Californians to burn out their camps.

## Chapter 20

The family leaves Granma's body in Bakersfield to be buried as a pauper. They stop at a dirty, disorderly migrant camp, where they learn that work is scarce. Floyd Knowles advises them to travel 200 miles north to work in the Santa Clara Valley. Men seek workers for Tulare County. A deputy sheriff

attempts to arrest Floyd for questioning wages. The deputy carelessly shoots a woman in the hand. Casy sends Tom away from danger and takes the blame for the ensuing fight. He is hauled away in the sheriff's car. Connie deserts the family. When Uncle John takes two dollars and leaves to get drunk, Tom returns him to the family. The Joads leave for Weedpatch just before armed men burn the camp.

## Chapter 21

Gradually, social conditions force migrants into a form of serfdom.

## Chapter 22

At the camp near Bakersfield, the Joads find a vacancy. The camp has clean residences, running water, and a self-governing system. Tom finds temporary work digging ditches. Ma meets the women's committee.

## Chapter 23

Humble migrants, displaced and worn by travel, take whatever pleasure they can find on the road.

## Chapter 24

On Saturday, the women wash clothes. At a dance that night, a gate guard keeps police from investigating rumor of a riot.

## Chapter 25

An unsteady economy undermines the productivity of California's rich farmland.

## Chapter 26

A month later, the family runs out of food and money. As winter approaches, they move north toward Marysville. Arriving at a peach orchard near Pixley, police officers escort them past a yelling throng into a camp of fifty small, square shacks. Picking peaches all day earns only enough for a scanty supper, purchased at a company store. Tom slips out of camp and encounters Casy, who is leading a strike against the owners for lowering wages. Company agents kill Casy with a pick handle; Tom kills Casy's murderer and hurries back to camp. Because his nose is broken and swollen, he must hide from authorities. Contractors halve 5¢ wages. The Joads head north to Tulare, where the whole family finds work picking cotton.

**Chapter 27**

Pickers work hard to earn side meat for supper.

**Chapter 28**

While enjoying temporary prosperity, the Joads share one of twelve wheelless boxcars with the Wainwright family. Tom hides in a nearby culvert. Ruthie brags to another child that her brother killed a man. Ma warns Tom that he must flee. He goes, vowing to champion workers as Casy did. Al and Aggie Wainwright pledge to marry. Rains come and the harvest ends. Toward evening, Rosasharn suffers a chill.

**Chapter 29**

Migrants cope with the perils of nature and the apathy of Californians.

**Chapter 30**

On the second day of rain, Rosasharn goes into premature labor and delivers a stillborn baby. Pa organizes the men to build a bank against the flood, but it collapses. Water rises six inches in the boxcar. While Al stays behind with Aggie, the remaining six Joads leave to find a drier place. Arriving at a barn with dry hay, they encounter a starving man and his young son. Rosasharn suckles the starving man.

**Timeline**

- 1889** Whites allowed to settle in Oklahoma.
- 1907** Oklahoma becomes a state.
- 1914** The Federal Reserve System is created.
- 1917** The United States enters World War I.
- 1918** World War I ends.
- 1920s** Western farmers plow up grassland, causing widespread soil erosion and contributing to the Dust Bowl.
- 1922** America enjoys post-World War I prosperity, except for agriculture, which is in decline.
- 1929** Sept. 3: Stock prices reach record highs.  
Oct. 24: Stock prices begin to drop.  
Oct. 29: Black Tuesday: The stock market crashes.
- 1930** United States raises tariffs on imported goods to all-time highs. Other nations retaliate, worsening the worldwide depression.
- 1931** Dust Bowl covers Oklahoma, Kansas, Texas and parts of New Mexico and Arizona. At least 5 million workers are unemployed. Over 700 banks have failed.

- 1932** Number of unemployed workers reaches 13 million.  
spring: Wheat and corn prices fall to record lows.
- 1933** March: Franklin D. Roosevelt becomes president. The New Deal begins.
- 1934** Most severe drought on record causes massive crop failures in Midwest.  
June 28: Moratorium declared on farm mortgage foreclosures.  
Oct. 22: Federal agents kill Pretty Boy Floyd.
- 1935** The Wagner Act encourages unions. Social Security is created.  
Crop failures continue. Many farmers and their families head west in search of work.
- 1937** Steinbeck goes west with migrants to gather material for *The Grapes of Wrath*.
- 1939** *The Grapes of Wrath* is published.
- 1940** Steinbeck wins a Pulitzer Prize for *The Grapes of Wrath*, which is made into a movie starring Henry Fonda as Tom and Jane Darwell as Ma Joad and directed by John Ford. The picture wins Academy Awards for best actress and best director.
- 1941** The United States enters World War II.

**Author Sketch**

Born in Salinas, California, February 27, 1902, John Ernst Steinbeck published his first fiction in 1929 and continued writing short stories, screenplays, essays, speeches, and novels until his death from heart disease on December 20, 1968. His peak years extended from 1932-1945. He was named for his father, John Ernst Steinbeck, Sr., a county magistrate. His mother, Olive Hamilton Steinbeck, a public school teacher, encouraged him by reading aloud. He attended school in Salinas, played sports, wrote for the school paper, and worked on neighboring ranches, the source of his humanism and concern for humble people. A reader of *Morte d'Arthur* and *Crime and Punishment*, he later drew on his literary background for extensive writings.



In 1920, Steinbeck enrolled at Stanford University to study English. He took only courses that interested him and wrote for the *Spectator*, the campus literary magazine. He failed to complete a degree in

marine biology and left in 1925 to take menial jobs, including hod carrier, construction worker, and caretaker of a mountain lodge in the Sierras. While trying to launch a career as a journalist, he lived in New York City, but eventually returned to his home state. His friendship with biologist Ed Ricketts blossomed into a partnership, which led Steinbeck to explore the Baja peninsula.

Through realistic prose, Steinbeck accused land owners, labor organizers, communists, police, and big government of exploiting workers and the dispossessed. *Tortilla Flat* (1935) produced the first serious critical attention and recognition from American readers. He interrupted literary work in 1942 to write as a correspondent for the *Herald Tribune* and as propagandist for the war department, then completed a short story, "The Pearl of the World," and *Cannery Row* (1945), both set in Monterey. For settings, characters, and themes, he drew heavily on his training as a marine biologist.

After having lived in many sections of California, Steinbeck settled with third wife Elaine in Sag Harbor, New York. During this period, he wrote political speeches for President Lyndon Johnson as well as Hollywood screenplays, including *Lifeboat* and *Viva Zapata!* After his death at his New York home, his remains were cremated and the ashes interred in the Hamilton family plot in the Garden of Memories Memorial Park in Salinas.

### Critic's Corner

An American original, Steinbeck is best remembered for novels about the poor and socially oppressed, particularly *Of Mice and Men* (1937) and his master saga of migrant workers, *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939). To prepare for writing about the lowest laboring class, he traveled and lived with migrants. Because of his success in chronicling the Depression years, readers extolled him as a major American author.

For Steinbeck's affinity for labor struggles, right-wing critics labeled him a communist agitator. Considering him a radical, the American public ignored his work during the McCarthy era, but Europeans continued to admire him. He succeeded with *Of Mice and Men* and produced a stage version, which he and George Kaufman adapted. Readers

identified with the loneliness and victimization of the wandering farmhands, who dream of an idyllic farm. The book earned him a Book-of-the-Month Club selection; he was chosen one of 1937's Ten Outstanding Young Men in America. The Broadway version of *Of Mice and Men* won him a New York Drama Critics' Circle award.

As he planned, Steinbeck aroused Americans to an awareness of the laboring class, whom critics labeled "Steinbeck's losers." *The Grapes of Wrath*, which *Time* magazine has called Steinbeck's "strongest and most durable" work, caused an enormous national furor. The novel was banned in some localities, attacked in Congress, and branded communist propaganda. It also was a best seller for two years and earned Steinbeck a National Book Award and the 1940 Pulitzer Prize. The 1940 movie version, directed by John Ford and starring Henry Fonda as Tom Joad, won two Academy Awards — for direction and for supporting actress Jane Darwell, who played Ma Joad.

Critical reactions at first focused on the controversy over the novel's accuracy. Today the novel is revered for its moving and realistic portrayal of Okies and their plight and for Steinbeck's skillful use of intercalary chapters, a pacing technique that comments on the overall effect of the Depression in America. A classroom classic and American touchstone, the novel has remained in print for nearly six decades and has been translated into many foreign languages.

After publishing *Travels with Charley: In Search of America* (1961), Steinbeck became the sixth American to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature. The honor was greeted with some derision; Steinbeck himself stated that he didn't deserve it. Critic Edmund Wilson disagreed. In his words, "There remains behind the journalism, the theatricalism and the tricks, a mind which does seem first-rate in its unpanicky scrutiny of life."

### Steinbeck's Other Published Works

*A Cup of Gold*, 1929

*The Pastures of Heaven*, 1932

*To a God Unknown*, 1933

*Tortilla Flat*, 1935

*In Dubious Battle*, 1936



*Of Mice and Men*, 1937  
*Their Blood Is Strong*, 1938  
*The Long Valley*, 1938  
*The Red Pony*, 1938  
*The Sea of Cortez* (with Edward F. Ricketts), 1941  
*Bombs Away!*, 1942  
*The Moon Is Down*, 1942  
*Lifeboat*, 1944  
*Cannery Row*, 1945  
*The Pearl*, 1947  
*The Wayward Bus*, 1947  
*A Russian Journal*, 1948  
*Burning Bright*, 1950  
*East of Eden*, 1952  
*Sweet Thursday*, 1954  
*The Short Reign of Pippin IV*, 1957  
*Once There Was a War*, 1958  
*The Winter of Our Discontent*, 1961  
*Travels with Charley: In Search of America*, 1962  
*America and Americans*, 1966  
*Acts of King Arthur and His Noble Knights*, 1976

## Related Reading

James Agee, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*  
 Isabel Allende, *House of the Spirits*  
 Harriette Arnow, *The Doll-Maker*  
 Johan Bojer, *The Emigrants*  
 Pearl S. Buck, *The Good Earth*  
 Robert Burns, "To a Mouse"  
 Willa Cather, *My Antonia*  
 Paulo Coelho, *The Alchemist*  
 Robert Frost, "The Death of the Hired Man"  
 Ernest Gaines, *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* and  
*A Lesson Before Dying*  
 Hamlin Garland, "Under the Lion's Paw"  
 Brett Harte, "The Outcasts of Poker Flat"  
 Esther Hautzig, *The Endless Steppe*  
 Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James Houston,  
*Farewell to Manzanar*  
 Zora Neale Hurston, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*  
 Emma Lazarus, "The New Colossus"  
 Patricia Maclachlan, *Sarah Plain and Tall*  
 Ruthanne Lum McCunn, *Thousand Pieces of Gold*  
 Anne Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi*  
 Ayn Rand, *Anthem*, *The Fountainhead*, and *Atlas Shrugged*  
 O. E. Rølvaag, *Giants in the Earth*  
 Richard Wright, "Almos' a Man", *Black Boy*, and *Native Son*

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 Steinbeck, John, and Robert Demott, ed. *Working Days: The Journals of "The Grapes of Wrath"*. New York: Penguin, 1990.  
 Timmerman, John H. *John Steinbeck's Fiction: The Aesthetics of the Road Taken*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986.

## General Objectives

1. To account for intercalary chapters
2. To describe the physical, mental, and emotional effects of homelessness
3. To pinpoint sources of fear and despair
4. To characterize the lifestyle of an Okie
5. To analyze rumor, trickery, coercion, intimidation, and cruelty
6. To justify survivalism
7. To assess causes of name-calling and bullying
8. To isolate foreboding elements such as flood and drought
9. To account for the gradual weakening of the family unit
10. To list biblical symbols

## Specific Objectives

1. To characterize Tom, Pa, and Uncle John as migrant laborers
2. To compare Ma, Granma, Sairy Wilson, and Mrs. Wainwright as matriarchs
3. To characterize the relationship between Connie and Rosasharn
4. To comprehend the cause of mob violence against Hoovervilles
5. To account for Ruthie and Winfield's moral and behavioral decline
6. To explain how and why Granma receives a pauper's burial
7. To parallel life in a sanitary unit with subsistence in a boxcar
8. To contrast Jim and Tom as supporters of the laboring class
9. To analyze Ma's pragmatism
10. To characterize migrant humor and entertainments

## Literary Terms and Applications

For a better understanding of the novel, present the following terms to *The Grapes of Wrath*:

**Character Name:** a method of displaying or revealing character traits, attributes, or attitudes through the choice of symbolic names, which may contain a descriptive term, for example, Muley Graves, the doomed farmer, Ivy Wilson, the clinging companion, Jim Casy, whose initials, martyrdom,

and acts link him to Jesus Christ, and Rosasharn [Rose of Sharon], one of the imagistic names given to Christ. The name Joad carries the monosyllabic sound and impact of standard Anglo-Saxon terms, which derive from the simple farm folk of Great Britain. Other names carry peripheral import, as with the town of Needles in an area that intimidates migrants and the Santa Clara Valley, which suggests the Poor Clares, a medieval religious agency that ministered to the disconsolate and needy.

**Existentialism:** a loosely defined philosophy that contrasts the random nature of the universe with the inadequacy of human control or intelligence, for example, the drought and dust that result in mass exodus from lost farms to poorly defined future homes in California. In addition to human oppressors, the Joads face the heat of the Mojave Desert and a flood that drives them from the boxcar to a barn. Their inadequate preparation for travel leaves them vulnerable to thirst, hunger, overcrowded conditions, and sudden death. Among other Okies, they struggle to maintain basic cleanliness, order, and nutrition, yet find themselves steadily compromised into lower levels of subsistence. By the end of the novel, they are at the mercy of society and the environment.

**Foreshadowing:** an object, statement, action, or motif that anticipates, prefigures, or predicts a significant event, as found in ominous images of the opening chapters. Like the turtle flipped to the roadside by a truck, the Joads live in a traveling home, the cut-down Hudson. Like Muley Graves, they are emotionally unsettled by upheaval, loss, and death. Like the anonymous Cat driver who destroys abandoned homes, menace comes impersonally from unnamed vigilantes. Like the pigs they slaughter before leaving, they face overwhelming odds that cost the lives of the grandparents, Rosasharn's infant, and their friend Jim.

## The Importance of Setting

The action of the novel follows the Joad family on its exodus from Sallisaw, Oklahoma, to the Santa Clara Valley in northern California. Their singularity of purpose appears in the straightforward itinerary over Route 66, which they share with vacationers and truck drivers less troubled by the miseries of

the Depression and Dust Bowl. Steinbeck begins the novel with a thorough study of the agricultural situation among dispossessed farmers whose land has exchanged hands from traditional laborers to the soulless banking class. Devaluation of farmland equates with a discounting of human life and folk mores. Reduced to the status of migrant labor, they board their self-contained home, carved out of a Hudson fitted to a truck bed. Like the turtle that Tom picks up by the road, they travel at the mercy of weather, heat, and the lay of the land.

Stopping places echo the despair of rootlessness. They must pay a dollar to camp in a shady grove alongside fresh water. Before pressing on by night over the California desert, Ma consoles Granma and conceals the old lady's death from border agents. In the beauty of California's lush agricultural plateau, irony overcomes the action by replacing hope with despair and fear with tragedy. Moving from field to orchard, the Joads and their fellow pickers transfer the good of the land to greedy sellers and consumers. In the disparity of Depression Era economy, the pickers themselves net little for their trouble. Adults dicker with clerks at the company store for overpriced necessities; children alleviate hunger by gorging on fruit and condemn their digestive tracts to bouts of diarrhea and dehydration.

Steinbeck intensifies the vast setting in the final chapters by forcing the Joads indoors during heavy rains. In the curtained boxcar, they sit on a wheelless conveyance and watch the water rise six inches, spoiling their car battery and condemning efforts to dam the flood. Like the stillborn babe afloat in a crate, they live at nature's will until forced to seek higher ground. Like the Holy Family and the infant Christ, they shelter in dry hay in a barn and give the humblest of gifts — Rosasharn's breast milk — to a starving man.

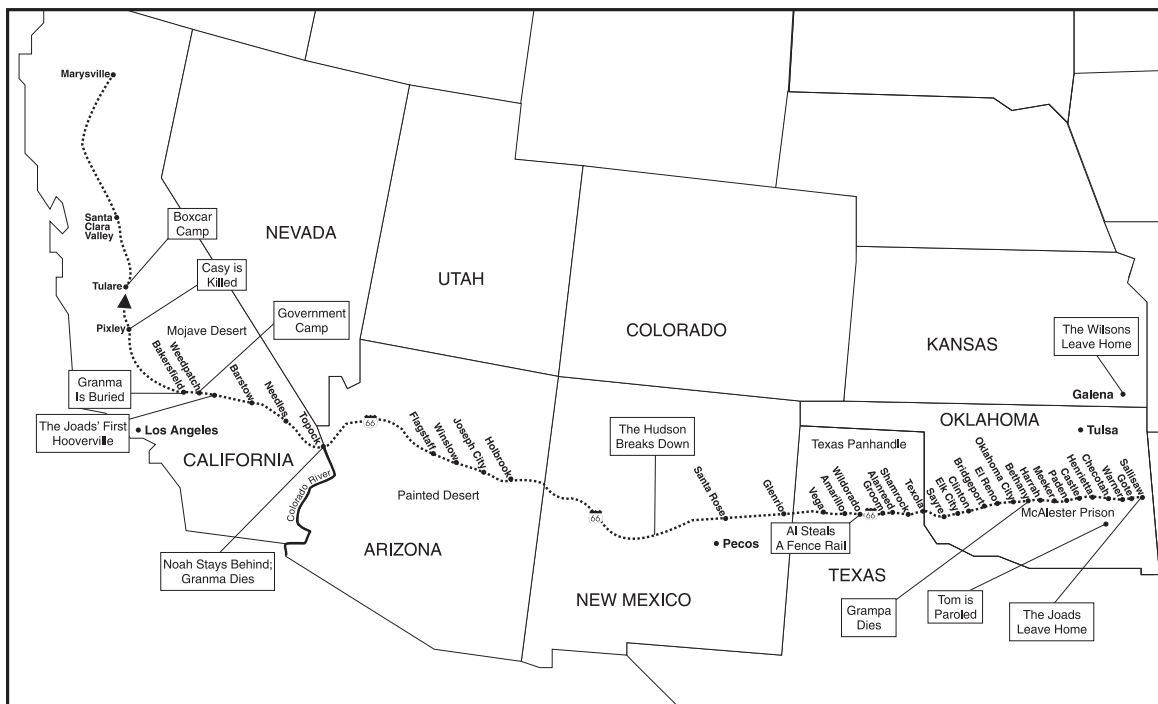
### Cross-Curricular Sources

For more information about retardation, migrant workers, agriculture, the Dust Bowl, Depression, homelessness, Nobel Prize, and John Steinbeck, consult these sources:

- Agribusiness*, Guidance Associates
- Children of the Dust Bowl: The True Story of the School at Weedpatch Camp*, Jerry Stanley
- Harvest of Shame* (video), Edward R. Murrow
- The Homeless*, Rourke Books
- Mental Retardation*, Chelsea House

Also, consult these websites:

- The Depression Era
- [http://www.lafayette-online.com/history/Depression\\_Era.html](http://www.lafayette-online.com/history/Depression_Era.html)



## Migrant Labor

[http://www.loc.gov/lexico/liv/m/Migrant\\_labor.html](http://www.loc.gov/lexico/liv/m/Migrant_labor.html)  
The Nobel Prize Internet Archive  
<http://nobelprizes.com/nobel/peace/1986a.html>  
Surviving the Dust Bowl  
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/amex/dustbowl>

## Themes and Motifs

A study of the central issues and situations in John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* should include these aspects:

### Themes

- powerlessness
- urgency
- family
- compassion
- loyalty
- dependence
- vulnerability
- need
- longing
- violence
- intimidation
- prejudice

### Motifs

- matriarchal power
- migrating from job to job
- evaluating rumor
- creation of an underclass
- dreaming of an idyllic place
- avoiding trouble

## Meaning Study

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have particular meaning in the novel. Explain each. Chapter and page numbers note the context from which the item is taken.

1. A forty-acre cropper and he ain't been dusted out and he ain't been tractored out?" (Chap. 2, p. 12)  
*(In the Dust Bowl, a disastrous drought in the American Southwest during the 1930s, farmers, who typically managed forty acres, lost their small land parcels to banks. Like hired hands, former owners continued to till the soil and paid a share of the crop as rent and advance capital for seeds, fuel, supplies, and equipment. When they gave up the land entirely, tractors*

*mowed down their homes and outbuildings, leaving more open space for giant conglomerates to farm.)*

2. "Maybe," I figgered, "maybe it's all men an' all women we love; maybe that's the Holy Sperit — the human sperit — the whole shebang. Maybe all men got one big soul ever'boday's a part of." (Chap. 4, p. 32-33)  
*(Jim Casy, a discouraged preacher, develops his own version of the transcendental concept of the oversoul. According to his populist philosophy, nobody is alone; every person is part of an all-encompassing human soul. The spirit of unified humanity is Casy's deity. He believes that the sacredness of fellow beings compels him to love all people and to help others achieve the dignity that humans deserve. His self-sacrifice and ultimate martyrdom demonstrate a profound compassion, which impresses Tom and compels him to continue the ministry to farm laborers.)*
3. "The share a tenant gets is jus' the margin a profit we can't afford to lose." (Chap. 6, p. 64)  
*(Within a free enterprise system, private business requires a profit margin to survive. No business can continue to operate if its costs reduce profits to zero. In the United States during the Depression, many farmers lost their land because they failed to repay bank loans. To increase the profit margin, the owners combined small farms into huge cooperatives.)*
4. She seemed to know, to accept, to welcome her position, the citadel of the family, the strong place that could not be taken. (Chap. 8, p. 100)  
*(Ma Joad is the Joad stronghold; her endurance is the family mainstay. In her opinion, nothing supercedes the unity of the family. She challenges anyone or anything that threatens to weaken the ties that bind member to member, but is ultimately unable to stave off death, faithlessness, prejudice, oppression, and failure.)*
5. You're not buying only junk, you're buying junked lives. And more — you'll see — you're buying bitterness. (Chap. 9, p. 118)  
*(To migrate to California, farmers sell equipment and livestock for cash to keep families afloat during the journey. The plow and horses, symbols of past lives on the soil, sink to the level of used cast-offs. Merchants exploit the migrants' desperation by offering absurdly low prices for possessions.)*



6. "What the hell! You never been called "Okie" yet. (Chap. 18, p. 280)  
*(The ringing disparagement to Oklahoma natives is the shortening of their home state to Okie. During the Depression, the term was attached to migrants in general who sought jobs in California during the worst of the Dust Bowl.)*
7. They's a time of change, an' when that comes, dyin' is a piece of all dyin', and bearin' is a piece of all bearin', an' bearin' an' dyin' is two pieces of the same thing. An' then things ain't lonely any more. An' then a hurt don't hurt so bad, 'cause it ain't a lonely hurt no more, Rosasharn. (Chap. 18, p. 286)  
*(Ma solaces Rosasharn as Granma lies dying. Ma's philosophy of the cycle of earthly life and death encompasses an eternal pattern. Everyone takes a turn at being born and dies to leave room for new life, the crucial elements of the great life cycle. By recognizing the common humanity of all people, Ma reduces the terror of passages that equalize living things.)*
8. Now farming became industry, and the owners followed Rome, although they did not know it. (Chap. 19, p. 316)  
*(Steinbeck establishes an analogy between Roman history and the evolving agricultural system in California. As in ancient Rome, the small farmer is gradually dispossessed as the land is consolidated into the hands of a few plutocrats. Big landowners exploit migrant workers in the same way that wealthy Roman patricians exploited slaves on latifundia, the Roman version of plantations. By extension, Rome's wealthy overlords grew soft and corrupt and eventually undermined the empire. Steinbeck implies that the same fate awaits the United States.)*
9. In the souls of the people the grapes of wrath are filling and growing heavy, growing heavy for the vintage. (Chap. 25, p. 477)  
*(Steinbeck evolves his title from an image in "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," which depicts an army marching against oppression. Grapes usually symbolize sweetness and plenty, but here they connote an abundance of bitterness. As migrants struggle against insurmountable odds, their anger ferments into rage. The vintage of their store suggests a ripening underclass revolt against opportunism.)*
10. "Woman can change better'n a man," Ma said soothingly. "Woman got all her life in her arms. Man got it all in his head." (Chap. 28, p. 467)  
*(Pa has difficulty adjusting to the overt leadership of Ma, who has long ruled the family as its driving, unifying element. She consoles him by explaining that women adapt well to disloca-*

*tion and suffering. Their seamless lives flow on as they submerge into caregiving under difficult circumstances. Because of their role as life-givers and nurturers, they remain close to nature's innate rhythm. While men require the dignity of work and ownership, women sustain themselves on motherhood and compassion.)*

## Comprehension Study

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers with quotations from the novel.

### Questions 1-5 (Literal Level)

1. What causes the mass migration of dispossessed smallholders to California?  
*(The failed farms of Oklahoma and surrounding states are beset by over-dependence on cotton, which leeches the soil of nutrients. Drought exacerbates the unwholesome situation, forcing smallholders into bankruptcy. At first, they manage to sharecrop and hold on to their ancestral homes. When the Dust Bowl sets in, owners evict the tenant families because the concept of a forty-acre farm is no longer profitable.)*

*Dispossessed, farmers fall back on hope of an ideal farming economy. They pore over handbills lauding the beauty and productivity of California. Led by the will to work for a new start, they sell their equipment and livestock for a pittance and use the cash to fund a trek across the American Southwest, where they expect high wages and a better life. Along the way, they encounter early migrants returning to the heartland with stories of discontent, deception, and unfair labor practices.)*

2. Describe the Joad family's vehicle and how it is set up for the trip to California.  
*(Smelling of "hot oil and oilcloth and paint," the truck — the "new hearth, the living center of the family" — is an ancient Hudson Super Six sedan which Pa and Al have modified for the journey. "Half passenger car and half truck, high-sided and clumsy," it sports a top that is "ripped in two with a cold chisel" and a truck bed fitted onto the back. Uncle John nails on new pine rails to make high sides. The tires, including the spares, are old and worn; the springs are flattened from age and use. The radiator screen is bent and scarred and hub caps are missing.)*

*For traveling, the family packs tools, boxes of clothes, and kitchen utensils — cups, fry pan, stew kettle, coffee pot — in a gunny sack and cutlery and dishes in a box on the bottom. They cushion fragile items with rolled-up blankets filling the spaces between boxes. They drape mattresses over the mass to make a*

level traveling surface. A tarpaulin spreads over it all and is secured to the side-bars with little ropes. Three people travel in the cab; the other nine ride in back on top of the load. To ease the misery of their tight quarters, the family takes turns riding up front.

Travel west over Route 66 is tenuous. The noisy engine, banging brakes, and creaking wheels require Al's constant monitoring. As chief driver and mechanic, he continually catalogues "weak points and suspicious things about the car." He believes that the truck is "his responsibility, this truck, its running, and its maintenance. If something went wrong it would be his fault." Along the way, he makes a ridge pole from a stolen fence rail and stretches the tarp over it like a tent.)

3. Compare the migrant camp outside Bakersfield with the government camp at Weedpatch.

(The Hooverville outside Bakersfield is a random collection of forty tents and shacks and an equal number of cars. Some dwellings are hovels: a collection of rusty corrugated iron, moldy carpet, roofing paper, gunny sacking, and tattered canvas, covered by willow limbs and unthatched grass and surrounded by a clutter of equipment, boxes, and junk. Most tents are grimy and ragged. Residents haul water from a nearby stream for cooking and sanitation. The children are barefoot and dirty, and many adults are slovenly, passive, and despairing. Deputy sheriffs periodically harass the migrants to encourage them to move on.

In the government camp the migrants return to a semblance of civility. Their tents are in straight rows with no surrounding litter. Residents sweep and sprinkle streets to keep down dust. The camp, managed by Jim Rawley, has hot and cold running water, showers, rows of wash trays in open-sided buildings, and flush toilets, an unknown luxury to rural Okies more familiar with outhouses.

The migrants themselves run the camp through five elected Central Committees, who make rules and keep order. The people of the camp, although poor, are clean and proud. They form self-governing sanitary committees and offer each resident a voice in camp management. There are dances each Saturday night. Local Law officers are not allowed to search inside without a warrant.)

4. Describe the relationship of Grampa and Granma to each other and to the land.

(Grampa and Granma Joad are a vivid, memorable couple whose bond is conflict and competition. According to the text, "They fought over everything, and loved and needed the fighting." Tom admires his grandfather's spunk and daring and comments, "When Grampa was havin' the most fun, he come closest to gettin' kil't." A spirited individual, Grampa is mischievous, cantankerous, vulgar, gluttonous, stubborn, and mean; his long-

suffering wife counters with a "shrill ferocious religiosity that was as lecherous and as savage as anything Grampa could offer."

When the tractor arrives to demolish the Joad farm, Grampa shoots out the headlights with a rifle. In like manner, Granma earns his admiration by lopping off part of his buttocks with a double-barreled shotgun after a church meeting while she was speaking in tongues. Her war cry is "Pu-raise Gawd fur vittory." Despite her piety, she admires her wicked, hell-bent, and foul-mouthed husband.

The Joad family seems to enjoy the elder generation's idiosyncracies. When it comes time to leave the homestead, Grampa refuses to go. The family forcibly removes him by drugging his coffee with Ma's soothing syrup and lifting him aboard the truck. At the end of the day, he dies of a stroke. He is buried in an unmarked grave in Oklahoma, the state he wouldn't leave. At the funeral service, Ma approves Tom's choice of an epitaph from the Psalms: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered."

Grampa's death seems to draw away Granma's life force. Without Grampa to react to and against, she rapidly sickens and dies three nights later as the family crosses the Mojave Desert. She is buried at county expense near Bakersfield, California. Like her husband, she is not destined to enter the promised land.)

5. While migrating to California, what unwritten laws serve the evolving agricultural underclass?

(A new social order emerges when farmers change into migrant laborers. As separate families develop a life-sustaining camaraderie, they become a traveling unit. "The loss of home became one loss, and the golden time in the West was one dream." Each family shares in a child's sickness and rejoices at a birth. They gather around a communal fire as one body and sing the songs that all know. In time, "the technique of building worlds became their technique."

As a method of self-preservation, migrants observe practical rules of conduct to avoid chaos in their temporary residences. As the text explains in Chapter 17, migrants have "the right of privacy in the tent; the right to keep the past black hidden in the heart; the right to talk and to listen; the right to refuse help or to accept, to offer help or to decline it; the right of a son to court and daughter to be courted; the right of the hungry to be fed; the rights of the pregnant and the sick to transcend all other rights." Additional rules protect women against seduction and abandonment and the assembled community from violence and unbridled anger. A veneer of courtesy and common concern reunites the next group of migrants they meet into the widening succession of temporary homes.)

**Questions 6-8 (Interpretive Level)**

6. Who or what exploits migrant workers?  
*(From the beginning of the Depression era, an inexplicable superstructure exploits the laboring class. In their own neighborhoods, they are forced to sell possessions and livestock at low prices and to buy old cars and trucks at inflated prices. Handbills demonstrate the opportunism of distant agricultural contractors, who gauge the despair and need of the dispossessed and lure them in larger numbers than are required. When hungry laborers demand work, contractors rapidly lower the going rate, sometimes by 50% within a single day.)*

*Floyd Knowles is the first worker to explain the nature of exploitation to Tom: "Look," the young man said. "S'pose you got a job a work, an' there's jus' one fella wants the job. You got to pay 'im what he asks. But s'pose they's a hundred men wants that job. S'pose them men got kids an' them kids is hungry. S'pose a lousy dime'll buy a box a mush for them kids. S'pose a nickel'll buy at leas' somepin for them kids. An' you got a hundred men. Jus' offer 'em a nickel — why they'll kill each other fightin' for that nickel."*

*The Hoovervilles and company stores further degrade and devalue laboring families. After a brief taste of government camps, the Joads encounter the squalor of overcrowded, unsanitary hovels where guards observe their activities and keep them inside locked gates at night. When the poor live too far from competition to keep prices low, they must accept the inflated costs of foodstuffs purchased at company stores. Because the clerk accepts only work slips as legal tender, workers are bound to a serfdom by need and coercion. Ma challenges the system by reminding the clerk in a low, controlled voice, "Doin' a dirty thing like this. Shames ya, don't it? Got to act flip, huh?"*

7. How does Jim Casy fight exploitation?  
*(Jim, the failed preacher, rejuvenates his ministry by abandoning pulpit oratory for organizing a strike against peach growers. When ripening fruit force owners to hire strike-breakers and pay higher wages to save crops from waste, the disgruntled owners move against union efforts. In the clash, a hired thug bashes Jim with a club. Tom, anguished by the ignoble death of a friend and supporter, strikes back, downing Jim's attacker with a lethal blow.)*

*Because wages fall after the strike ends, Jim's immediate mission fails. However, his spirit lives on in Tom, who continues the fight for dignity and fairness.)*

8. Explain how Tom's character expands.  
*(At the novel's beginning, Tom is leaving McAlester Prison after serving four years of a seven-year sentence for killing Herb Turnbull with a shovel. Tom insists that Herb had knifed him and that the killing was self-defense. On parole, Tom intends to pick up the threads of his life and moves on toward the farm.)*

*On meeting up with Jim Casy, Tom undergoes a re-education. He listens to his friend as they travel west, but does not convert to Jim's way of thinking until Jim activates his compassion on behalf of the underclass. After Jim gives his life to save Tom from the sheriff and to further the strike against the peach farmers, Tom accepts the concept of the great oversoul and the sanctity of human life. By risking arrest for parole violation and manslaughter, he demonstrates the potential for selflessness and martyrdom that enhances Jim's character.)*

**Questions 9 and 10 (Critical Level)**

9. Analyze the social philosophy of *The Grapes of Wrath*.  
*(Although John Steinbeck's philosophy clearly displays the influence of Karl Marx, the father of communism, his social philosophy also contains distinctly American aspects. The author's concept of a government camp uses democracy and communal living to create a workable social order. Steinbeck argues that the exploited can improve their situation only through group action. By organizing, ordinary people can weaken their bonds.)*

10. Describe the structure, style and theme of the novel.  
*(The most noteworthy structural device in *The Grapes of Wrath* is the author's use of intercalary chapters. Each makes a general statement about the widespread workers' tragedy. Descriptive in an impersonal fashion, they provide background, motivation, and history and illustrate typical incidents, such as the camaraderie of Mae, Al, and the truckers at the diner. The rhythm of alternating story and commentary elevate the novel to epic proportions as the fate of the Joads grows grim to the point of desperation.)*

*Steinbeck's style alternates from minute description and lyrical commentary to a newsreel documentary, liturgical chant, isolated scenario, and repetition. By shifting back to the Joad's humble dialogue, the author restores moments of humor and passion to the trek west. For maximum naturalism, the author stresses folk idiom, jokes, aphorism, and the folksy quality that unites peasant families as they are transformed into migrants.)*

*Significant to themes are events that elucidate survival and threats to dignity. As oppression grows more overt at the California camps, the Joads struggle to maintain a decent standard of living while complying with work conditions that demean and devalue them. Steinbeck elevates Tom and his mother as they survive with style, their character affirmed and their loyalty intact. In contrast, the grandparents die; Pa Joad, Ruthie and Winfield, Al, and Noah fail to rise to the worsening situation. This reminds the reader that not all workers have the inner strength and nobility of character to surmount the terrors of a great shift in the social order.)*

## Questions 11-12 (Creative Level)

11. Explain in a short speech evidence of disruption in the family order, particularly in Ruthie's belligerence, Winfield's weakened physical condition and bad dreams, Noah's refusal to continue on the journey, and Al's decision to remain behind with Aggie.
12. Compose a statement of the value of communal order in determining manners, courtesy, and public deportment. Use as examples the importance of Saturday dances, assistance at Rosasharn's lying-in, sharing of laundry and cooking, disciplining camp children, offering tips on finding work and avoiding trouble, hanging a blanket between family units in the boxcar, and feeding of the starving man in the barn.

## Across the Curriculum

### History and Law

1. Launch an Internet web site detailing the sufferings of agricultural workers during the 1920s and 1930s. Comment on Hoovervilles, villages of shacks targeted by locals who overran homeless laborers, exiled them, and burned their belongings. Account for the influence of the Industrial Workers of the World.
2. Read about uniquely American agricultural methods, particularly sharecropping and cotton cultivation. Summarize how the system changed after the emancipation of slaves.
3. Explain the tenor of politics during the Depression. Discuss with a small group why labor organizers like Jim Casy and Tom Joad acquired a reputation as communist agitators.
4. Compose an extended definition of migrant. Use examples from the novel to characterize how the word applies to dispossessed Okies. Research the economic ramifications of an underclass composed of rootless, hopeless laboring families.

### Economics

1. Explain the financial, social, religious, and political outcomes of bullying a subgroup of the population. Contrast the plight of migrant workers with the plantation enslavement of blacks, sharecropping among poor whites, and exploitation of illegal aliens.
2. Characterize aloud the type of person who would prefer laboring on farms and in orchards to working in the military, at sea, or in a factory, retail sales, or offices.

### Cinema

1. Summarize orally Henry Fonda's role as Tom Joad and Jane Darwell's part as Ma Joad in the screen version of *The Grapes of Wrath*. Contrast their depiction of "Steinbeck's losers" with Gary Sinise and John Malkovich's leading parts in *Of Mice and Men*.
2. Discuss the theme of oppression in these films: *Native Son*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Exodus*, *Places in the Heart*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *The Ghosts of Mississippi*, *Glory*, *A Town Like Alice*, *Farewell to Manzanar*, *Hurry Sundown*, *Playing for Time*, *Mississippi Burning*, *The Pearl*, *Sarafina!*, and *The Power of One*. Discuss with a small group the causes and results of ostracizing and criminalizing the poor.

### Science and Health

1. Compose a lecture on the decline in workers' health. Make a chalkboard list of inadequacies, including work amenities, rest, medical care, food, shelter, clothing, and pay. Discuss symptoms of malnutrition, including convulsions, exhaustion, sleep disruption, listlessness, pellagra, premature births, and stillbirths.
2. Explain to a small group what survival techniques Ma employs to keep her family safe, such as refusing to disrupt the family, bargaining for the best nutrition she can afford, supporting members who have committed faults against each other, and strengthening other families like Ivy and Sairy Wilson and the Wainwrights. Discuss why and how she maintains a philosophy of living a day at a time.



3. Use a chart of human anatomy to show where and how malnutrition strikes and the ways in which it undermines general health, as with erratic emotions, low spirits, and nervousness.

### Geography

1. Create a mural or web site that contrasts these settings: a boxcar and Oklahoma farmhouse, McAlester Prison and a truckstop, company store and orchard, migrant camp and back of a migrant truck, Route 66 and culvert, Mojave Desert and Santa Clara Valley, Hooper ranch and Uncle John's farm, used car lot and repair shop, and square dance and roadside gravesite.
2. Compose a paragraph detailing the studies John Steinbeck and Ed Ricketts made of the topography and biota of California and its shoreline.
3. Keep a map of Route 66, marking events of the novel at identifiable towns and landmarks.

### Art

1. Using desk-top publishing or other artistic media, design a map of Sallisaw and Bakersfield, placards supporting fair and open hiring practices for migrant workers or listing services held by a traveling preacher, business cards for the Shawnee Land and Cattle Company or county sheriff, lists of government camp and cotton field rules, instructions on burying a pauper and acquiring a sanitary unit, Chamber of Commerce pamphlets on California's produce or the dangers of strike-breaking, a chart of parole stipulations, an advertisement for peaches or used tractor parts, layouts of a small farm or Hooverville, encyclopedia entries on birth defects or alcoholism, or news accounts of Steinbeck's Nobel Prize or the end of the Depression.

### Social Studies

1. Express in a paragraph Steinbeck's concept of humanism, which makes ethical, social, economic, and behavioral demands on the public to uplift people living on the margin.

2. List ways that political or economic upheaval threatens migrant workers and other homeless people. Explain to a group why local people suspect farm laborers and drifters of petty theft, filth, disease, communism, violence, and low work standards.
3. Make contrasting chalkboard definitions of discrimination and survival. Explain how the terms define segments of Tom or Jim's life.

### Mathematics and Computers

1. Using desktop publishing, compose an annotated time line of United States farm history. Note the influx of ex-slaves, failed sharecroppers, and illegal immigrants into the work force.
2. Graph current census figures concerning the makeup of the United States work force. Highlight a map with graphs and data indicating what parts of the nation draw the most migrant labor. Note the percentage of drifters in Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California as well as Florida, Washington, Oregon, Georgia, Alabama, the Carolinas, and New England's agricultural areas.

### Music

1. Work with a group to compose a laborer's work song in either English or Spanish. Include recognition of Cesar Chavez and other champions of oppressed migrants, especially nonwhites, the illiterate, those who speak no English, or those injured on the job or by pesticides or unsafe work practices.
2. Distribute the words and music of "The Internationale," the unofficial national anthem of the Soviet Union. Discuss concepts of work fairness that equate with Steinbeck's attitude toward an economy that embraces all laborers.

### Language and Speech

1. Compose individual posters explaining the significance of these names and slang terms: Jehovahites, tappet, stroke, harrow, hominy, two-by-four, the fatted calf, the prodigal, scripture, McAlester Prison, Cat, diesel, handbill, burning bush, 'cropper, homicide, parole, hug-dance, and grapes of wrath.

2. Create a handbill that typifies the actual economic situation in California, including living conditions and food prices. Indicate that wages can drop by half overnight and work can end within hours of employment.
3. Compose a short speech in which you describe how oppression of the poor demoralizes, marginalizes, violates civil rights, and encourages exploitation and coercion.

### Literature

1. Read aloud "The New Colossus," a poem by Emma Lazarus. Discuss its implications for migrant workers and the homeless.
2. Draw a character web representing the interconnectedness between Tom and Jim, Ma and Mrs. Wainwright, Ivy Wilson and Pa Joad, Grampa and Uncle John, Al and Noah, Rosasharn and Connie, Ruthie and Winfield, Mae and Big Bill, and the deputy sheriff and residents of Hooverville.
3. Assign parts and read aloud the biblical book of Ruth. Have a narrator express the connection between gleaners and migrant workers.

### Student Involvement Activities

1. Sketch some of the machines that farm workers used in the first half of the twentieth century, particularly a thresher, tractor, combine, baler, scythe, cultivator, disc harrow, corn picker, and manure spreader. Note how technology and chemicals have altered farming in recent years.
2. List ways that poorly educated laborers can become self-sufficient, such as through literacy classes, retraining programs, the military, and church and community outreach to the homeless.
3. Explain to a small group why Ma welcomes the Wilsons and Wainwrights to the family circle, yet must eject hungry children from her campfire as she struggles to feed her own family.

4. Join a discussion group to determine the type of home the Joads would have enjoyed if they could have achieved their ambitions. Make a schematic drawing of the ideal California residence, including orchards, vineyards, and farm and grazing land.
5. Report on the methods by which your community gives dignity and meaning to the lives of homeless and socially and economically underserved laborers. Mention efforts to improve health through improved diet, inoculation, and sanitation.
6. List the causes of mental retardation, including genetic defects, anoxia, disease, fever, harmful drugs, fetal syndromes, and brain trauma. Note any effects that can be reversed by early intervention, surgery, medicine, or other treatment. Comment on the midwife's efforts to repair the effects of Noah's brutal delivery.
7. Locate segments of dialogue that reveal the humanity, warmth, camaraderie, hospitality, and humor of migrants. Compose a paragraph explaining why slang and earthy imagery are effective methods of upgrading the image of illiterate or semi-literate people.
8. Explain in a short speech the effect of isolation, despair, and prejudice on powerless, young, female, handicapped, aged, ex-con, or homeless people like Jim, Tom, Granma, Noah, Muley Graves, the one-eyed repairman, Rosasharn, the woman shot by the deputy sheriff, Ruthie, Winfield, Uncle John, Sairy Wilson, Floyd Knowles, Jonas Wainwright, and the starving man in the final scene.
9. Explain in a theme the source and importance of Jim Casy's concept of the holiness of all life.
10. Conduct a mock hearing to determine whether Tom should be charged with a crime such as manslaughter or murder of Jim's attacker or whether Ma should be fined for concealing Granma's death on the passage over the California border or Uncle John for setting the stillborn fetus adrift in a crate. Assign fellow students roles as judge, witness, bailiff, or other participants.

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## Alternate Assessment

1. List examples of friendship, rumor, fear, insecurity, lust, loyalty, suffering, patience, and hope in the text.
2. Compile a list of actions that demonstrate growing frustration in agricultural laborers.
3. Compose a scene in which Ma parts with Al and Aggie.
4. Make a character list and explain the relationship of each to debasement. Stress the role of the deputy sheriff, contractor, company store clerk, Uncle John, Tom Joad, Connie Rivers, and Jonas Wainwright.
5. List abstract concepts in the story and link each to a concrete image, for example, impersonal technology and the Cat tractor or slaughtered pigs and defenseless Okies.

## Teacher's Notes

## Vocabulary

In the following quotations, underline a term to complete each statement.

1. "Grace fust," Granma (**ritualized, clamored, cooed, sniped**). "Grace fust."
2. The faces of the watching men lost their bemused (**grandeur, languor, perplexity, tappet**).
3. Muley's face wore the (**eminent, truculent, convulsive, inviolable**) look of a bad child's.
4. Rose of Sharon's whole body had become (**suppliant, recruited, corrugated, demure**) and serious.
5. There were only two punishments in the camp—a quick and murderous fight or (**ostracism, groveling, insulation, sidling**).
6. The wants of the Californians were (**disconsolate, nebulous, profiled, apprehensive**) and undefined.
7. (**Inquisitive, callous, decent, vibrant**) fingers snick in and out and find the bolls.
8. The rain had become (**pinioned, intermittent, hoyden, warranted**) now.
9. The truck driver's voice had the same quality of (**cultivation, graft, insinuation, quarantine**) his eyes had.
10. Tom was silent too, as though he had said too (**putrescent, intimate, beveled, bogus**) a thing and was ashamed.
11. In Ma (**imperturbability, tendrils, hankering, gristle**) could be depended upon.
12. Rose of Sharon smiled her (**complacent, decorous, ravenous, flip**) smile.
13. The proprietor made a quick decision, with a (**concession, pall, pellagra, stealth**) in it.
14. Every raid on a Hooverville cemented the (**skitters, vulnerability, infrequency, inevitability**) of the day of destruction.
15. There is a crime here that goes beyond (**denunciation, mastoid, conservancy, paring**).
16. After a while the faces of the watching men lost their (**bohemian, bemused, actionable, odious**) perplexity and became hard and angry and resistant.
17. Now the dust was evenly mixed with the air, an (**attribute, emulsion, obelisk, impetus**) of dust and air.
18. The road was cut into (**furrows, partisans, tendrils, cameos**) where dust had slid and settled back in to the wheel tracks.
19. At the willow he knew there would be shade, at least one hand bar of absolute shade thrown by the trunk since the sun had passed its (**myrmidon, retainer, zenith, bedlam**).
20. Tom said, "Well—" and then his voice took on a (**servile, haughty, nasal, baritone**) whine. "We're strangers here," he said. "We heard they's work in a place called Tulare."
21. And now a light truck approached, and as it came near, the driver saw the turtle and (**wobbled, swerved, evaded, proliferated**) to hit it.
22. His was a lean excitable face with little bright eyes as evil as a (**frantic, turgid, stoic, cloying**) child's eyes.
23. During a night the wind raced faster over the land, dug (**discordantly, metaphorically, rabidly, cunningly**) among the rootlets of the corn.
24. The air was (**fetid, impenitent, forensic, bellicose**) and close with the smell of the birth.
25. "Scared again?" Ma asked. "Why, you can't get through nine months without (**nullity, sorrow, nadir, franchise.**)"



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## Comprehension Test A

### Part I: Character Identification (30 points)

Name the character who is described in each phrase below.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Crazy, all right. Creepin' aroun' like a coyote; that's boun' to make him crazy. He'll kill somebody purty soon an' they'll run him down with dogs.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. A blue shriveled little mummy.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. I'm a ol' man, but I can still take care a myself . . . I tell ya I ain't goin', an' ya can lump it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Smiling her wise, self-satisfied smile, mouth tipped at the corners a little fatuously.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Heavy, but not fat; thick with child-bearing and work. . . Strong, freckled arms were bare to the elbow, and her hands were chubby and delicate, like those of a plump little girl.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Her eyes rolled up, her shoulders and arms flopped loosely at her side, and a string of thick ropy saliva ran from the corner of her mouth. She howled again and again, long deep animal howls.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. His grizzled, bearded face was low over his work, and a bunch of six-penny nails stuck out of his mouth.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Seeing he was being noticed, threw back his shoulders, and he came into the yard with a swaying strut like that of a rooster about to crow.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Came wiggling out like a snake, her hair down over her eyes and her dress wrinkled and twisted. . . . Her gray eyes were clear and calm from sleep, and mischief was not in them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. The nose was crushed, and a trickle of blood dripped from his chin. He lay still on his stomach until his mind came back. And then he crawled slowly over the edge of the ditch.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. A man sat on the ground, leaning against the trunk of the tree. His legs were crossed and one bare foot extended nearly as high as his head. . . . He was whistling solemnly the tune of "Yes, Sir, That's My Baby."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. He jarred as though under a heavy blow. He lay still and his breath was stopped.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. We hadda leave my brother Will . . . Him an' me had forties side by side. He's older'n me. Neither one ever drove a car.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. He was a nice fella. Come a-bullin' after my sister Rosasharn when he was a little fella.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. He done a little bad thing an' they hurt 'im, caught 'im an' hurt him so bad he was mad, an' the nex' bad thing he done was mad, an' they hurt' 'im again. An' purty soon he was mean-mad.

### Comprehension Test A (Page 2)

**Part II: True/False (20 points)**

Mark the following statements either T for true or F if any part is false. Rewrite any false statements to make them true.

\_\_\_\_\_ 1. Tom harbors bitterness against Herb Turnbull and his family.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 2. Mrs. Wainwright offers gold earrings to Aggie as an engagement present.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 3. Granma dies of exhaustion and grief before the Joads reach California.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 4. At Weedpatch, a young man fears that the old man will starve to death.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 5. Joe Davis is certain that the Joads are gathered at Uncle John's Farm.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 6. At the square dance, Winfield informs Ma that the half-breed started trouble over a girl.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 7. Jim Casy envisions a great soul that envelops all people.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 8. Pa Joad blames himself for the brutal delivery that cripples his son Noah.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 9. When old memories plague him, Uncle John wishes that he could die.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 10. The old Hudson carries the Joads from Sallisaw, Oklahoma, to Santa Clara Valley, California.

\_\_\_\_\_

## Comprehension Test B (Page 2)

### Part III: Quotation Identification (20 points)

Identify each quotation below with the name of the speaker.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Ma — Ruthie tol’.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Gonna be all right — all right. Jus’ grip ya hans’. Now then, take your lip into your teeth. Tha’s good — tha’s good.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. If I pay you a half a dollar I ain’t a vagrant, huh?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Don’ even know if you was a boy or a girl. Ain’t gonna find out. Go on down now, an’ lay in the street. Maybe they’ll know then.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. If we was all to get our shovels an’ throw up a bank, I bet we could keep her out. On’y have to go from there down to there.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. I says, “Tommy’ll come a-bustin’ outa that jail like a bull through a corral fence.” An’ you done it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. I been in the hills, thinkin’, almost you might say like Jesus went into the wilderness to think His way out of a mess of troubles.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Las’ week when that used-car was busted into. Seems like I seen this fella hangin’ aroun’. Yep! I’d swear it’s the same fella.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. If I’d of knowed it would be like this I wouldn’ of came. I’d a studied nights ’bout tractors back home an’ got me a three-dollar job.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. We’ll sure thank you, ma’am, if you’ll keep shame from us. It ain’t Aggie’s fault. She’s growed up.

### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Explain Connie and Rosasharn’s discontent.
2. Discuss how the dog’s death foreshadows a hard journey on Route 66.
3. Contrast Mrs. Wainwright and Ma Joad as parents of daughters.
4. Describe the lifestyle of a migrant laborer.

## Comprehension Test B

### Part I: Short Answer (20 points)

Supply a word or phrase in answer to the following questions.

1. Describe the life cycle that parallels the Joads' exodus to California.  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Whose arrival makes the Joad family complete once more? Does it stay complete long?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. For whose killing did Tom go to prison? Has Tom adjusted to this?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What technology impresses the Joads at the sanitary unit? Why do they find this impressive?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Who displays serious signs of malnutrition? Why?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Who keeps two of the Joads' three farm dogs? What happened to the third?  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. Who is buried in a pauper's grave? How is this significant?  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Which family member is left unburied? Why?  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. Where does a clerk overcharge for hamburger? How is this a sign of the migrants' situation?  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Who fights a need for alcohol? How does this affect the family unit?  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Part II: Completion (20 points)

Complete each of the following statements with a word or phrase.

1. They was this here \_\_\_\_\_ leanin' against the schoolhouse, so I grabbed it an' smacked 'im over the head.
2. An he's gonna study at home, maybe \_\_\_\_\_, so he can git to be a expert an' maybe later have his own store.
3. We ain't gonna have no goddamn \_\_\_\_\_ in this town.
4. Ask anybody where the \_\_\_\_\_ is. You'll find plenty of work there.
5. Rosasharn ... you stop pickin' at yourself ... I bet it's that \_\_\_\_\_ give you all them notions. He was jes' too big for his overalls.
6. I bet that fella been in a gov'ment \_\_\_\_\_. ... They'll be wantin' clean sheets, first thing we know.
7. "They stoled my \_\_\_\_\_!" she cried. "That big son-of-a-bitch of a girl, she belted me."
8. I bet it's dry in that \_\_\_\_\_. Let's go there till the rain stops.
9. Fellow was telling me the \_\_\_\_\_ gets orders from the East. The orders were, "Make the land show profit or we'll close you up."
10. That night \_\_\_\_\_ stole a fence rail and made a ridge pole on the truck, braced at both ends.



## Comprehension Test B (Page 2)

### Part III: Identification (30 points)

Place an X by any statement that is true of Ma Joad.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. insists that Rosasharn walk until she gives birth
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. frequently grieves over a relative who died of appendicitis
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. believes in living a day at a time
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. pays a dollar for a con-rod
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. shames the company store clerk
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. refuses to blame Ruthie for revealing Tom's hiding place
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. takes the family's equipment into town to sell
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. rinses a quilt to remove the smell of death
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. gives Grampa soothing syrup
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. recognizes that Grampa died of stroke
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. fears prison made Tom mean
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. pierces Rosasharn's ears with needle and thread
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. asks hungry children to leave
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. speaks scripture over Granma's grave
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. forces Pa to accept the rule of women

### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Discuss the theme of powerlessness among agricultural laborers.
2. Explain Tom's reasons for taking on Jim's mission among workers.
3. Explain the social status of each of these positions: picker, contractor, deputy sheriff, used-car salesman, café waitress, trucker, border patrol, sharecropper, ex-con, and preacher.
4. Account for Steinbeck's choice of title image.

# Answer Key

## VOCABULARY

- |                      |                   |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| 1. clamored          | 14. inevitability |
| 2. perplexity        | 15. denunciation  |
| 3. truculent         | 16. bemused       |
| 4. demure            | 17. emulsion      |
| 5. ostracism         | 18. furrows       |
| 6. nebulous          | 19. zenith        |
| 7. inquisitive       | 20. servile       |
| 8. intermittent      | 21. swerved       |
| 9. insinuation       | 22. frantic       |
| 10. intimate         | 23. cunningly     |
| 11. imperturbability | 24. fetid         |
| 12. complacent       | 25. sorrow        |
| 13. concession       |                   |

## COMPREHENSION TEST A

### Part I: Character Identification (30 points)

- |                     |                     |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Muley Graves     | 9. Ruthie Joad      |
| 2. Rivers' infant   | 10. Tom Joad        |
| 3. Grampa Joad      | 11. Jim Casy        |
| 4. Rosasharn Rivers | 12. Grampa Joad     |
| 5. Ma Joad          | 13. Ivy Wilson      |
| 6. Mrs. Sandry      | 14. Herb Turnbull   |
| 7. Pa Joad          | 15. Purty Boy Floyd |
| 8. Al Joad          |                     |

### Part II: True/False (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. F  |
| 2. F | 7. T  |
| 3. T | 8. T  |
| 4. F | 9. T  |
| 5. F | 10. T |

### Part III: Quotation Identification (20 points)

- |                    |                      |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Winfield Joad   | 6. Grampa Joad       |
| 2. Ma Joad         | 7. Jim Casy          |
| 3. Tom Joad        | 8. deputy sheriff    |
| 4. Uncle John Joad | 9. Connie Rivers     |
| 5. Pa Joad         | 10. Jonas Wainwright |

### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

## COMPREHENSION TEST B

### Part I: Short Answer (20 points)

- |                          |                       |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Rosasharn's pregnancy | 6. Muley Graves       |
| 2. Tom Joad              | 7. Granma Joad        |
| 3. Herb Turnbull         | 8. the Rivers' infant |
| 4. flush toilets         | 9. company store      |
| 5. Winfield Joad         | 10. Uncle John Joad   |

### Part II: Completion (20 points)

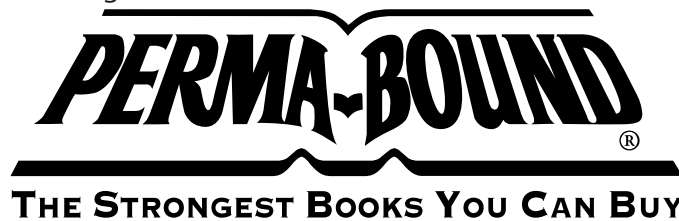
- |                 |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. shovel       | 6. camp         |
| 2. radio        | 7. Cracker Jack |
| 3. Okies        | 8. barn         |
| 4. Hooper ranch | 9. bank         |
| 5. Connie       | 10. Al          |

### Part III: Identification (20 points)

- |      |      |       |
|------|------|-------|
| 1.   | 6. X | 11. X |
| 2.   | 7.   | 12. X |
| 3. X | 8.   | 13. X |
| 4.   | 9. X | 14.   |
| 5. X | 10.  | 15.   |

### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.



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