

# **All PIKES PEAK READS 2008**

## **HIGH SCHOOL CURRICULUM**

### **FOR *THE GRAPES OF WRATH* BY John Steinbeck**

#### **Sections**

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**Note:** The teachers' guide for *The Worst Hard Times* by Timothy Egan follows the guide to *The Grapes of Wrath*. The curriculum committee suggests that both books be taught, possibly by the English and the Social Studies teachers.

**These materials written by The APPR Curriculum Committee: Sharyn Markus, project coordinator; Kay Esmiol, and Ann Seibert.**

“Humanity has been passing through a gray and desolate time of confusion . . . The ancient commission of the writer has not changed. He is charged with exposing our many grievous faults and failures, with dredging up to the light our dark and dangerous dreams for the purpose of improvement.

Furthermore, the writer is delegated to declare and to celebrate man’s proven capacity for greatness of heart and spirit – for gallantry in defeat, for courage, compassion, and love. In the endless war against weakness and despair, there are the bright rally flags of hope and emulation.” (Steinbeck, from Nobel Prize acceptance speech)

While authors like John Steinbeck write of the human condition, residents of the Pikes Peak region have the opportunity to bring about change through Vision City/Dream 2020. Steinbeck further said, “Nobel found a safety valve in the human mind and the human spirit . . . The awards are offered for increased and continuing knowledge of man and of his world – for understanding and communication, which are the functions of literature” – and of change.

“Man himself has become our greatest hazard and our only hope.” (Steinbeck)

**Join All Pikes Peak Reads as we understand and communicate the world in which we live and the hope for how the Pikes Peak region should be in 2020. Although there are areas of improvement in our lives, we, too, have the rally flags for hope and emulation.**

*“I tried to write this book the way lives are being lived not the way books are written.”* – John Steinbeck

The teachers’ guide employs these thinking skills: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. The questions and the activities were written to engage students at all levels. The questions and activities align with **Colorado’s Content Standards**.

**Reading and Writing Content Standard #3:** Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing.

**Reading and Writing Content Standard #5:** Students read to locate, select, and make use of relevant information from a variety of media, reference, and technological sources.

**Reading and Writing Content Standard #6:** Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience.

**History Content Standard #4:** Students understand how science, technology, and economic activity have developed, changed, and affected societies throughout history.

## **Introduction**

“The publication of *The Grapes of Wrath* in 1939 was *the* pivotal event in the life and the writing career of John Steinbeck. All of his other work flows up to and surges away from the writing of his “big

book,” as Steinbeck often referred to *The Grapes of Wrath*. In the words of one of Steinbeck’s most influential critics, Peter Lisca, *The Grapes of Wrath* ‘is unquestionably John Steinbeck’s finest achievement, a work of literary genius.’

“Yet, over the years there has been much debate as to whether *The Grapes of Wrath* is an important book, a great work of art, or both. The Pulitzer and Nobel prizes accorded to Steinbeck would seem to argue for both. So, too, would the novel’s continuing endurance, its secure place on high school and college reading lists, and its wide audience. . .But like most great works, the novel has a universal message that reaches far beyond place and time.

“From the beginning, Steinbeck knew that he was onto something: ‘If only I could do this book properly, it would be one of the really fine books and a truly American book,’ he wrote in his diary. Although he later doubted himself, it is clear that his first impulse was correct. The novel that emerged after a one-hundred-day marathon of writing was everything Steinbeck believed it could be and more.

“For its social significance, its effect on an entire country’s attitudes, *The Grapes of Wrath*, ranks with Harriet Beecher Stowe’s exposé of slavery, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, and Upton Sinclair’s powerful attack on the meat packing industry, *The Jungle*. For its philosophical and artistic expressions of America at a particular point in its history, it finds a place in the American literary canon of novels that includes *The Scarlet Letter*, *Moby Dick*, *The Great Gatsby*, and *Native Son*. Harold Bloom acknowledges that ‘no canonical standards worthy of human respect could exclude *The Grapes of Wrath* from a serious reader’s esteem.’ ” (Bender, *Readings on The Grapes of Wrath*, San Diego: The Greenhaven Press, 1998.)

**“It is difficult to understand how any American high school or college could forbid the teaching or use of the book while maintaining a claim to act as a proper agency for the education of the young in this democratic republic.”** (Bender, 104)

All Pikes Peak Reads selected this book to generate thoughts and discussions about the key issues that dominated the United States then and now: immigration, human survival, family ties, the economy, the food supply, poverty, and health care. APPR is partnering with Dream City/Vision 2020 in discussions of what Colorado Springs should look like in 2020. Can we have answers to these pressing issues by then?

## John Ernst Steinbeck’s Brief Biography

- Born: February 27, 1902, in Salinas, California (John Ernst Steinbeck, III)
- Parents: John Ernst Steinbeck, II, (a businessman who later became Monterey County treasurer) and Olive Hamilton Steinbeck (a teacher)
- Siblings: three sisters
- Education: graduated from Salinas High School  
attended Stanford University as an English-journalism major 1920 – 1925 (but did not graduate)
- Jobs: a variety of temporary jobs, including laborer and cub reporter in New York City, resort handyman and watchman in Lake Tahoe, author

Marriages:     married Carol Henning in 1930 (divorced 1942)  
                  married Gwyn Conger in 1943 (divorced 1948)  
                  married Elaine Scott in December 1950

Children:     two sons from his second marriage (Thom born in 1944 and John VI - 1946)

Death:        December 20, 1968

## **John Steinbeck's Chronology in Connection with World Events**

- 1902   John Ernst Steinbeck, III, born on February 27 in Salinas, California
- 1905   Wright brothers' first airplane flight; Einstein published theory of relativity
- 1908   Steinbeck entered "Baby School" (what elementary school was called in Salinas)
- 1914   World War I began; Panama Canal opened
- 1915   Einstein developed general theory of relativity; Steinbeck entered Salinas High School
- 1919   Einstein published general theory of relativity; John graduated from Salinas High School
- 1920   John enrolled at Stanford University.
- 1924   John left Stanford without a degree and moved to New York City to work as a construction worker and as a reporter for the *American*.
- 1926   He moved to Lake Tahoe, California, and worked a variety of jobs, including caretaker of a summer house; he wrote seriously.
- 1929   The stock market crashed; Hoover became the President; *Cup of Gold* was published by Robert M. McBride, New York.
- 1930   Steinbeck married Carol Henning and moved to Pacific Grove. He met Edward Ricketts, marine biologist and immediate life-long friend, and began permanent association with the literary agent of McIntosh & Otis.
- 1932   Franklin Delano Roosevelt proposed the New Deal; the dust bowl in the American Midwest began; Carol and John moved to Los Angeles. *The Pastures of Heaven*, his first published work set in Monterey County: Corral De Tierra, was published by Brewer, Warren, & Putnam, New York.
- 1933   The Steinbecks moved back to Pacific Grove. *To a God Unknown* was published by Robert O. Ballou, New York); the first two parts of *The Red Pony* published in the *Northern American Review*.
- 1934   Steinbeck stayed in the family home to care for his ailing mother. Olive Hamilton Steinbeck, his mother, died in February. "The Murder" was included in *O. Henry Prize Stories*. Ben Abramson brought *The Pastures of Heaven* and *To a God Unknown* to the attention of Pascal Covici.

- 1935 Hitler assumed power in Germany. *Tortilla Flat* was published by Covici-Friede, New York, which discussed California *paisanos* with Arthurian implications. Steinbeck earned some money for his writings. Carol and John took a trip to Mexico.
- 1936 *In Dubious Battle* was published after initial rejection by a forgotten publisher's reader on the ground that the book distorted Communist ideology. Carol and John moved to a ranch in Los Gatos. John Ernst Steinbeck, II, the author's father, died in May. "The Harvest Gypsies," a series of eight articles, was published in the *San Francisco News* October 5 – 12.
- 1937 *Of Mice and Men* was published in February; the play opened in November and won the Drama Critics' Circle Award. *The Red Pony* was published in three parts. Steinbeck took his first trip to Europe and Russia. He returned early to travel from Oklahoma to California on Route 66 with migrant workers.
- 1938 *The Long Valley* was published by The Viking Press, New York, which included the fourth part of *The Red Pony*, *Their Blood Is Strong*, "The Harvest Gypsies," and an epilogue published by Simon J. Lubin Society of California, Inc. Steinbeck wrote *The Grapes of Wrath* in one hundred days between late May and late October.
- 1939 World War II began in Europe; *The Grapes of Wrath* was published.
- 1940 Steinbeck won the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award for *The Grapes of Wrath*. He and Ed Ricketts traveled to the Gulf of California (Sea of Cortez) on a marine expedition collecting specimens. The film versions of *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Of Mice and Men* released. In Mexico *The Forgotten Village* was filmed.
- 1941 Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, and the United States entered World War II. Steinbeck and Ricketts published *The Sea of Cortez*.
- 1942 Viking published *Bombs Away: The Story of a Bomber Team* (for the Army Air Corps). He published both the novel and the play *The Moon Is Down*. Film of *Tortilla Flat* released. Carol Henning divorced him and demanded half of all future profits on books he had written while married to him.
- 1943 John married Gwyndolen Conger in March and moved to New York. The film of *The Moon Is Down* was released. John worked several months in the European war zone as a correspondent for the *New York Herald Tribune*. The first edition of *The Portable Steinbeck* was published with a foreword by Pascal Covici.
- 1944 Son, Thom, was born. *Lifeboat* was filmed. Steinbeck bought a house in Monterey but was unwelcome; no one would rent him an office for writing. He was harassed when trying to get fuel and wood from a local wartime rations board; Steinbeck received an Academy Award nomination for the screenplay of Hitchcock's *Lifeboat*.
- 1945 World War II ended. Viking published *Cannery Row*, a novel of Pacific Grove, with a leading character drawn from Ed Ricketts. *The Red Pony* was republished in four parts. "The Pearl of the World" was published in December in *Women's Home Companion*.

- 1946 The cold war between the United States and the USSR began. Son, John (IV) was born. Covici's revised edition of *The Portable Steinbeck*, with an Introduction by Lewis Gannett, was published.
- 1947 *The Wayward Bus* and *The Pearl* were published. John traveled through Russia with Robert Capa.
- 1948 *A Russian Journal* was published. Steinbeck was elected to the American Academy of Letters. The film version of *The Pearl* was released. Gwyndolen Conger divorced him. Friend Ed Ricketts died.
- 1949 *The Red Pony* appeared as a film.
- 1950 The Korean War began. John wrote the script for *Viva, Zapata!* Viking published *Burning Bright* as a play and a novel. He married Elaine Scott in December.
- 1951 Viking published *The Log from the Sea of Cortez* with a personal account "About Ed Ricketts." John and Elaine lived in New York City but summered in Nantucket; he wrote *East of Eden*.
- 1952 Viking published *East of Eden*, and the film *Viva Zapata!* was released. John reported for *Colliers* magazine from Europe in March until September.
- 1953 *The Short Novels of John Steinbeck* was published.
- 1954 Viking published *Sweet Thursday*, a sequel to *Cannery Row*. He spent nine months in Europe writing for *Figaro* on a weekly basis.
- 1955 He published *Pipe Dream*, a musical comedy based on *Sweet Thursday* and adapted by Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein III, for the New York stage. Steinbeck wrote editorials for the *Saturday Review*. The film of *East of Eden* starring James Dean was released. The Steinbecks purchased a summer home in Sag Harbor, Long Island.
- 1957 Viking published *The Short Reign of Pippin IV: A Fabrication*, a comic novel of political satire. Film of *The Wayward Bus* was released. Steinbeck researched Malory for *Morte d'Arthur*.
- 1958 Viking published *Once There Was a War*, a collection of dispatches from England and the Mediterranean during World War II.
- 1959 John lived in England for eleven months and later referred to this as the happiest year of his life.
- 1960 John traveled with his dog Charley on the trip that later led to *Travels with Charley*.
- 1961 John F. Kennedy was President. Viking published *The Winter of Our Discontent*. Steinbeck had his "first attack of heart failure."
- 1962 The Cuban missile crisis occurred. Viking published *Travels with Charley in Search of America*. Steinbeck received the Nobel Prize for Literature.
- 1963 President John F. Kennedy was assassinated; Lyndon Johnson became President. Steinbeck took cultural exchange trip visiting Scandinavia, Eastern Europe, and Russia.

- 1964 Steinbeck received the Presidential Medal of Freedom and mourned the passing of friend and editor Pascal Covici.
- 1965 Steinbeck spent most of the year in London, Paris, and Ireland.
- 1966 He lived in Israel and wrote articles for *Newsday*. Steinbeck wrote *America and Americans*, a ruminative response to the search for America and its essential meaning, as text for a book of photographs. He traveled through Southeast Asia for five months covering the Viet Nam War and wrote for *Newsday*. Although he condemned war in general, he supported American soldiers.
- 1967 He had a back operation and then a spinal fusion.
- 1968 Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated. Televised versions of *Travels with Charley*, *Of Mice and Men*, and *The Grapes of Wrath* air. John was diagnosed with a heart attack over Memorial Day weekend and suffered a major heart attack in July. He died December 20 in New York and his ashes were buried in the Garden of Memories in Salinas, California.
- 1969 *Journal of a Novel*, a memorial edition of Steinbeck's "log," the daily letters to his editor that accompanied and commented upon the writing of *East of Eden*, was published.
- 1974 February 27<sup>th</sup> – The Valley Guild opened the Steinbeck (family) House as a restaurant.
- 1975 *Steinbeck: A Life in Letters* edited by Elaine Steinbeck and Robert Wallsten was published.
- 1980 Annual Steinbeck Festival started in Salinas, California.
- 1989 Viking published *Working Days: The Journal of The Grapes of Wrath*, edited by Robert DeMott.
- 1990 Frank Galati adapted and directed a dramatization of *The Grapes of Wrath*; Gary Sinise starred as Tom Joad.
- 1991 Galati's dramatization of *The Grapes of Wrath* won the New York Drama Critics Circle Award.
- 1992 The film version of *Of Mice and Men* starring Gary Sinise and John Malkovich was released.
- 1995 *Zapata: A Narrative in Dramatic Form on the Life of Emiliano Zapata* was published.
- 1998 Rocinante, the truck Steinbeck drove across the United States to research *Travels with Charley* was donated to the Steinbeck Museum

(Covici, xxxvii – xli, Bender, 165 – 168, [www.steinbeckmuseum.org](http://www.steinbeckmuseum.org)., [www.steinbeck.org](http://www.steinbeck.org))

## Quotes about John Steinbeck and His Work

“We can enjoy him. His great, intuitive feeling for folklore, his magnificent use of the vernacular, his use of simple themes, and his poetic rhythms recall to me the Homeric spirit in American prose.” (Covici, Pascal. *The Portable Steinbeck*. Xi)

“Literature, when creative, is an expression of the joy of living.” (Covici, xi.)

“Very few people ever mature. It is enough if they flower and reseed. . . But sometimes . . . awareness takes place – not very often and always inexplicable . . .” (Steinbeck, John.)

“The sense that some sort of ‘awareness’ has taken place is precisely what Steinbeck’s best work – perhaps what most good writing – leaves with a reader.” (Covici, xii)

While writing, he often recorded self-doubts in his journal, *Working Days*. Even as he neared the finish, his doubts surfaced, “I am sure of one thing-it isn’t the great book I had hoped it would be. It’s just a run-of-the-mill book. And the awful thing is that it is absolutely the best I can do.” (Steinbeck)

“I wrote *The Grapes of Wrath* in one hundred days, but many years of preparation preceded it. I take a hell of a long time to get started. The actual writing is the last process.” (Steinbeck)

“The writer can only write about what he admires, and since our race admires gallantry, the writer will deal with it where he finds it. He finds it in the struggling poor now.” (Steinbeck)

“Their coming here now is going to change things almost as much as did the coming of the first American settlers . . . These people have the same vitality. . . and they know just what they want.” (Steinbeck discussing the novel)

“The fascist crowd will try to sabotage this book because it is revolutionary. They will try to give it the communist angle. However, the ‘Battle Hymn’ is American and intensely so. Further, every American child learns it and then forgets the words. So if both words and music are there the book is keyed into the American scene from the beginning.” (Steinbeck)

## Themes and Questions and Activities

1. HUMAN SURVIVAL. Social philosophy maintains that human survival is dependent upon the banding together of humans to find strength in group unity and action. An individual’s very existence is defined by his responsibility (or lack of responsibility) for those with whom he interacts. Similarly, Rose of Sharon’s gesture in the closing lines of the novel reaffirms the themes of rebirth and survival. We are all part of a larger community in which life-giving resources are shared. In order for Americans not only to survive but also to thrive, citizens need to band together. Identify the causes requiring unity and action. Participate in Dream City/Vision 2020 as the forum to share your ideas. Agree or disagree that an individual’s very existence is defined by his responsibility (or lack of responsibility) for those with whom he interacts.

2. AGRARIANISM. Without the human element invested in the continuation of the life cycle, there can be no life. This theme is indicative of Jeffersonian agrarianism which focuses on the life-giving bond between human being and the land with which they work. Steinbeck rails against the misuses of machinery and industrial power, although he praises those scientists who have labored to increase the bounty of the harvest. The number of family farms continues to decrease in the United States. Why are there fewer than there were in the 1930s? Issues of food safety and quality along with food recalls have been in the news recently. Who is responsible for food safety and quality? Who should be responsible?

Today, people are also concerned about the quality of life of the animals and the method of death the animals experience in order to provide food. Again, who is responsible? Why should people be concerned about humane treatment? about growth hormones? Research the mechanization of farming over the last century. What advances have been made? What has been lost? What is happening to the labor force? Why is the United States outsourcing so much of its labor force?

3. **FAMILY TIES.** Pa's decline and Ma's assumption of the leadership role within the family illustrate the negative inversion of Steinbeck's theme of human dignity as a product of human identity with the land. With Pa unable to provide for his family, he falters. Ma takes control of the family; however, she has no intention of taking over the traditionally masculine role of the household. Her only concern is maintaining the wholeness of her family. The look of the "traditional family" has shifted since the 1930s. Compare and contrast family structure in the 1930s with family structures today. Is the so-called "decline of society" related to the changed family unit, as some people purport? What is the traditional leadership role of the head of households? of our government? What was the work ethic in the 1930s? What is the work ethic today?

## Discussion Questions and Activities

**Essential Question:** How does Steinbeck's depiction of the Dust Bowl era help readers comprehend the human toll, the environmental damage, the cause, the lessons learned, and the relevance to today?

Page numbers following quotations refer to the Steinbeck Centennial Edition published by Penguin.

### Overview Questions and Activities

1. John Steinbeck did not give subtitles to his chapters. Create titles for the chapters. "If you were asked by someone who had not read the novel, 'What is it about?' what would you write down in one sentence? Compare your sentences with those of others. If the sentences are strikingly different – as they are likely to be – how do you account for their diversity? Make a case for your sentence against those of others. Do your disagreements indicate a failure of communication on the part of the novel? What can you conclude about the novel from this experiment?" (Lisca, 863)
2. **Art:** The novel offers numerous descriptive scenes. Make a mural to hang in the classroom or hall of scenes from the era. See murals hanging in local public buildings. View the most striking photographs available at locations listed in the For Further Reading section.
3. Track the issues of verbal and physical abuse. Why was it acceptable in this era? How does the quotation, "Spare the rod and spoil the child" fit into this time?
4. Select a character and follow the character throughout the novel in order to make a character map at the end. Choose from: Tom Joad, Al Joad, Rose of Sharon Joad, Ruthie Joad, Winfield Joad, Ma Joad, Pa Joad, and Jim Casy who are featured. The adults receive most of the attention. However, there are also migrant children such as Ruthie and Winfield who are featured. What can be said of the children's reality simply as children? What is their contribution to the novel's direction? (Lisca, 867)
5. "After the publication of *The Grapes of Wrath*, Steinbeck wrote a radio interview script which never aired in which he provided both questions and answers, the major subject of which was this movement in American society as the theme of the novel." (Bender, 41.) As you read the novel, formulate questions. Then, look for the answers. Stage a radio interview with one student being Steinbeck and another student

being the interviewer as Steinbeck had originally scripted. Similarly, Steinbeck wrote the questions and the answers to an interview. Before you read the interview, write your own questions and his answers. See the appendix for this staged interview.

6. As you read the novel, list examples to prove that Tom was Ma's favorite child. Some scholars believe that Ma is a composite of Steinbeck's mother, his Aunt Molly, and his first wife. As the only boy in the family with three sisters, John was considered to be a "mama's boy" when he was young. Some scholars believe that Tom was loosely based on Steinbeck himself. Research what scholars say on the subject. How did Steinbeck's childhood affect his writing?

7. As you read the novel, keep a list of the Christian references. Then debate the purpose of the Christian references and research more about the allusions. Scholars disagree on whether Steinbeck purposely included Biblical imagery. According to scholar Leonard A. Slade, Jr., "Biblical allusion is intrinsic to *The Grapes of Wrath*. . . The (Battle) Hymn (of the Republic) itself alludes to 'the great wine press of the wrath of God in Revelation. . . . The novel has three very clear divisions parallel to the Biblical story: Chapter 1 through 10 correspond to bondage in Egypt and the plagues; chapters 11 through 18 to the Exodus and journey through the wilderness; and chapters 19 through 30 to the settlement in the Promised Land. . ." (Bender 104-105) According to Slade, the title suggests that the story exists in Christian context, indicating that we should expect to find some Christian meaning. He continues by explaining the three divisions parallel Bible stories, that Jim Casy can be identified simply and directly with Christ, and that Tom's action against the man who killed Casy mirrors Moses' action when he witnessed an Egyptian beating a Hebrew laborer. His article can be found in *Readings on The Grapes of Wrath*. On the other side of the argument, James D. Brasch wrote, "Generally speaking, this has involved somewhat contradictory assumptions that Casy is a Christ figure, and the Joads (read Judah) represent the Children of Israel returning from exile in Egypt." Read his article in *Modern Critical Interpretations of The Grapes of Wrath*. Research the arguments fully and debate the issue.

8. Music: While this novel emphasizes the indomitable spirit of people, the singing group *Up With People* promotes the concept that "people need people." As you read the novel, record the different ways that people need people in every day life. Then, research *Up With People* and their songs. How do they develop the theme of people needing people in their songs?

9. According to Steinbeck, "Man himself has become our greatest hazard and our only hope." (from Nobel Prize acceptance speech) As you read the novel, record how Steinbeck proves this point. Then, relate it to the world today. Keep two columns marked "then" and "now." (Refer to *The Worst Hard Time* for sections on the destruction of the land.)

10. "My whole work drive has been aimed at making people understand each other . . ." (Steinbeck, John) An agrarian society had the resources to deal with most problems. Due to circumstances, they had to be self-sufficient and resourceful. Discuss how Steinbeck achieved his aim of readers understanding the migrant workers through *The Grapes of Wrath*. Provide examples of these people having to problem solve throughout the story.

11. Create a binder of a website of local recycling projects and agencies. Distribute to your school and to the community. Research *The Gazette's* archives for many examples. Start or expand programs to help the less fortunate. Research and then publish a list of the companies that help. For example, donations at Panera's for bread for the homeless. Then, support those companies.

12. Music: Music is mentioned many times throughout the novel. Research the music of the 1930s and hold a concert. Steinbeck used folk songs to suggest themes in the novel. "The work in which Steinbeck makes his most effective use of folksong (and popular song) allusions is *The Grapes of Wrath*. The first words we hear from Jim Casy are in song. . . Throughout the novel, there are references to music, glory-shoutin', gospel music of meetings, Tom Joad's playing in a strang band in prison, the woman in the camp whose soft voice soothes the child to sleep singing." (Bender, 97) Continue to record the references to songs throughout the novel. Scholar H. R. Stoneback wrote, "I would insist that Steinbeck has aptly *selected* the

songs which carry the scene. . ." (Bender, 99) Research the background and the messages of the songs Steinbeck selected.

13. Research the automobiles of the 1930s and create a photo display. Build a model of the truck the Joad family drove to California.

14. There are many great lines and quotations throughout the novel. Record the ones you find most profound. Write an explanation by each one. Attend the Living Voices presentation on October 10. Record great lines and quotations the presenter uses. When you are finished with the novel, compare the two lists.

15. Steinbeck wondered about several profound issues: What was the individual's place in society? Why were there so many poor and hungry people in a land of plenty? Research the answers for the world today. Many of the issues in the novel parallel the United States today and are issues in the upcoming Presidential election. Identify those issues and the candidates' positions on those issues. "Pascal Covici, Jr., gives one argument for the book's contemporary relevance. Are there others? Do you feel that this relevance to our own time is coincidental or that the novel has some universal or enduring qualities which will continue to keep it relevant to contemporary life? What are these qualities and how are they achieved?" (Lisca, 865)

16. Develop a multi-genre project based on the novel to display at the Pikes Peak Library District. "When students read and write they conduct research, they frequently compose in more than one genre. The types and kinds of reading and writing intertwine and blend together. Their work becomes multigenre. In the lesson described in-depth at [www.readwritethink.org](http://www.readwritethink.org), students meld together fiction, nonfiction, and art through their research on the depression era and the novel." (Copyright permission granted.)

17. Back then, people had to "make do" and make a lot of their own products, such as cosmetics and soap. Research recipes for homemade products and then make some of them.

18. Steinbeck became active in the Democratic Party. He championed the presidential candidacies of Adlai Stevenson, who lost twice to Dwight D. Eisenhower, and he was invited to John F. Kennedy's inauguration in 1961. After Kennedy's death, Steinbeck embraced his successor, Lyndon B. Johnson, and became a regular visitor to the Johnson White House. If Steinbeck were alive today, would he still be a Democrat? Research the Great Society. Why would Steinbeck have agreed with it? Which Presidential candidate would he support? Fully explain the reasons for your answers.

19. In 1962 Steinbeck was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature. At the time, only five other Americans had won the award: Sinclair Lewis, Eugene O'Neill, Pearl S. Buck, William Faulkner, and Ernest Hemingway. Research whether any Americans have won the Nobel Prize in Literature since 1962 at <http://nobelprizes.com/nobel/literature>.

20. Aspects of setting, conflict, characterization, and theme established in Steinbeck's previous writings ended up in *The Grapes of Wrath*. Each stage shared a fixed core of opposing elements, and on one side, the tyranny of California's industrialized agricultural system; on the other side, the innate dignity and resilience of the victimized American migrants. Give examples of the two elements throughout the novel.

21. "*The Grapes of Wrath* permanently changed the literary landscape of American fiction and altered the public's awareness about the socio-economic nightmare caused by the Dust Bowl, the Depression, and the corporate farm industry. The book also changed Steinbeck permanently." (Bender, 39) What was America's public awareness of these issues prior to the publication of the novel? How did the novel change the public's perception? What are Americans' perceptions today about key issues?

22. (During the time of the exodusters) "California communities have used the old, old methods of dealing with such problems. The first method is to disbelieve it and vigorously to deny that there is a problem. The second is to deny local responsibility since the people are not permanent residents. And the third and silliest of all is to run the trouble over the county borders into another county." (Bender, 46) Does the old, old method apply to America's dealing with immigrants today? Is this how Colorado deals with immigrants today?

23. Analyze the nutritional value of the Joads' daily diet by listing a typical day's menu (when they had money for food) and finding the grams of protein, carbohydrates, and fat for each food. Also categorize

each food by group: fruit, vegetable, grain, meat, dairy. Place the items on the food pyramid. What is nutritionally unsound with the Joads' diet? (Dennis, 35)

24. Steinbeck uses drink as a metaphor. "The beverages consumed by the characters roughly correspond to their interaction with others, and Steinbeck uses these drinks metaphorically to suggest the novel's thematic movement from isolation to community. Toward the end of the novel, and particularly in the final scene, A. Carl Bredahl, Jr., concludes Steinbeck uses milk as a symbol of the novel's movement from selfishness to selflessness." (Bender, 92) As you read the novel, record the references to liquids. "Four liquids are predominant: liquor, water, milk, and coffee." (Bender, 93) What conclusions do you draw? Compare your conclusions with Bredahl's. See the Works Cited page for the book title.

25. According to the American Library Association, *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck has been banned in different cities since its publication in 1939:

"Burned by the East St. Louis, III. Public Library (1939) and barred from the Buffalo, N.Y. Public Library (1939) on the grounds that "vulgar words" were used. Banned in Kansas City, Missouri (1939); Kern County California, the scene of Steinbeck's novel, (1939); Ireland (1953); Kanawha, Iowa High School classes (1980); and Morris, Manitoba (1982). On Feb. 21, 1973, eleven Turkish book publishers went on trial before an Istanbul martial law tribunal on charges of publishing, possessing and selling books in violation of an order of the Istanbul martial law command. They faced possible sentences of between one month's and six months' imprisonment "for spreading propaganda unfavorable to the state" and the confiscation of their books. Eight booksellers were also on trial with the publishers on the same charge involving the *Grapes of Wrath*. Challenged in Vernon Verona Sherill, New York School District (1980); challenged as required reading for Richford, Vermont. (1981) High School English students due to the book's language and portrayal of a former minister who recounts how he took advantage of a young woman. Removed from two Anniston, Alabama high school libraries (1982), but later reinstated on a restrictive basis. Challenged at the Cummings High School in Burlington, North Carolina (1986) as an optional reading assignment because the "book is full of filth. My son is being raised in a Christian home and this book takes the Lord's name in vain and has all kinds of profanity in it." Although the parent spoke to the press, a formal complaint with the school demanding the book's removal was not filed. Challenged at the Moore County school system in Carthage, North Carolina (1986) because the book contains the phrase "God damn:" Challenged in the Greenville, South Carolina schools (1991) because the book uses the name of God and Jesus in a "vain and profane manner along with inappropriate sexual references." Challenged in the Union City Tennessee High School classes (1993). Source: 2000 BBW Resource Guide." Research whether the book is still challenged or banned and the reasons. Recall Bender's opinion: "It is difficult to understand how any American high school or college could forbid the teaching or use of the book while maintaining a claim to act as a proper agency for the education of the young in this democratic republic." (104) What is your opinion on the issues?

## Teaching the novel in depth

### Background on writing the novel

"Between 1936 and 1938 Steinbeck's engagement with his material evolved through at least four major stages of writing: 1) A seven-part series of investigative reports, 'The Harvest Gypsies,' which appeared October 5-12, 1936, in the *San Francisco News*. 2) An unfinished novel, "The Oklahomans," which apparently did not survive. 3) A 'vicious' 70,000-word anti-vigilante satire, 'L'Affaire Lettuceberg' which he finished between February and May of 1938 and then destroyed. 4) *The Grapes of Wrath* which was written in one hundred days between late May and late October 1938. . . Except for a few afterthoughts and insertions, *The*

*Grapes of Wrath* was written with remarkably pre-ordained motion and directed passion. Steinbeck apparently did not work from a formal outline; rather he sketched out the novel in his head in aggregate first, followed by a brief planning session each day. . .From the outset Steinbeck possessed an intuitive sense of rightness concerning the direction his book and his characters would take. *The Grapes of Wrath* embodies the form of his attention. In the entire handwritten manuscript of 165 12" X 18" ledger pages, the number of deletions and emendations are so few and infrequent as to be nearly nonexistent. . .The truth is that in writing the novel Steinbeck was creating with the full potency of his imaginative powers. . .Averaging 2000 words a day (some days as few as 800, some days, when the juices were flowing, as many as 2200), Steinbeck began the novel unhurriedly to keep its 'tempo' under control, hoping at the same time to keep alive the large rhythmic structure of the novel.

Although Steinbeck did not believe writing was a team sport, the fact is the novel profited from the involvement of other people, primarily (Weedpatch government camp manager) Tom Collins, who kept Steinbeck supplied with much of the basic field information he needed to make his novel accurate and detailed. Carol Steinbeck, who typed the novel and who served her husband in most other ways, keeping distractions to a minimum while he wrote. . . Finally, sometime around noon on Wednesday, October 26, Steinbeck, 'so dizzy' he could 'hardly see the page' completed the last 775 words of the novel. At the bottom of the concluding manuscript page, Steinbeck, whose writing was normally minuscule, scrawled in letters an inch-and-a-half high, 'END#.' " (Bender, 32, 35-38 )

## The Title

Steinbeck's first wife, Carol, came up with the title: *The Grapes of Wrath*. Steinbeck believed that this title would give the novel the precise focus that he wanted: it suggested a new, social revolution while undercutting accusations that his book was anti-American. At Steinbeck's insistence his publisher printed the complete lyrics of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," from which the title is taken, on the novel's endsheets. Jackson J. Benson wrote in *The True Adventures of John Steinbeck* published in 1984, "At the beginning of September (1938) Carol had come up with a brilliant idea for the title of the new book. The title "The Grapes of Wrath" gave the book a dynamic focus, and the words of the hymn it referred to could be applied in numerous ways to the novel's contents. John was delighted, and he wrote to both publishers Covici and Otis to ask them how they liked it. A week later he wrote to Otis:

About the title – Pat wired that he liked it. And I am glad because I too like it better all the time. I think it is Carol's best title so far. I like it because it is a march and this book is a kind of march – because it is in our own revolutionary tradition and because in reference to this book, it has a large meaning. I like it because people know the Battle Hymn who don't know the Star Spangled Banner.

He particularly liked the title because it gave an American stamp to his material. (Bender, 40)

## Format

Steinbeck inserted chapters of general information or commentary between the story of the Joad family. The intercalary chapters serve a distinct purpose in commenting on and expanding the events of the

narrative. Sixteen intercalary chapters (100 pages or one-sixth of the text) do serve a purpose. Although the members of the Joad family do not appear in any of these chapters, many of the incidents foreshadow similar situations experienced by the Joads. Some of the chapters provide an overview of the social conditions affecting the main characters as well as other “exodusters,” while others provide historical information and commentary.

### **Social message**

Steinbeck wanted readers to understand the suffering of the wandering families (referred to by some authors as “exodusters”). Their oppression by larger, more powerful forces was a social crisis of widespread magnitude. By having only one family to represent all exodusters, Steinbeck achieved his “ultimate artistic goal: to weave together specific social facts and lyrical elements to create a personal story that expresses universal truths about the human condition.” (Vlcek, 10) “Steinbeck’s social philosophy maintains that human survival is dependent upon the bonding together of humans to find strength in group unity and action.” (Vlcek, 11)

### **Mood**

In Chapter 1, Steinbeck sets the mood for the rest of the book. The environmental issues are just as oppressive to the readers as they are for the characters. Look for examples where the characters are experiencing the change in the environment and the threats to the family staying together.

### **Motifs**

When the novel begins, the Joad family relies on a traditional family structure in which men make the decisions, and the women obediently do as they are told . . . As the Joads journey west, however, the family dynamic changes drastically. Discouraged and defeated by his mounting failures, Pa withdraws from his role as leader and spends his days tangled in thought. In his stead, Ma assumes the responsibility of making decisions for the family. . . By the end of the novel, the family structure has undergone a major transition, in which the woman figure, traditionally powerless, has taken control, while the male figure, traditionally in the leadership role, has retreated. This change parallels a similar upheaval in the world. Thus, the workers at the Weedpatch camp govern themselves according to their own rules and share tasks in accordance with notions of fairness and equality rather than power-hungry ambition of love of authority. (Spark Notes, 14)

### **Symbols**

#### The Death of the Joad’s Dog

When the Joads stop for gas not long after they begin their trip west, they are met by a hostile gas station attendant, who accuses them of being beggars and vagrants. While there, a fancy roadster runs down their dog and leaves it for dead in the middle of the road. The gruesome death constitutes the first of many symbols foreshadowing the tragedies that await the family.

#### Rose of Sharon’s Pregnancy

Rose of Sharon’s pregnancy holds the promise of a new beginning. When she delivers a stillborn baby, that promise seems broken. But rather than slipping into despair, the family moves boldly and gracefully forward, and the novel ends on a surprising note of hope. In the last few pages of his book, Steinbeck employs many symbols, a number of which refer directly to episodes in the Bible. . . The image suggests that the family, like the Hebrews in Egypt, will be delivered from the slavery of its present circumstances. (Spark Notes, 15)

### **List of characters:**

**Tom Joad** – the novel’s main character who had been incarcerated at McAlester State Penitentiary. Tom is a fully developed character, showing the most growth.

**Jim Casy** – a former preacher who travels to California with the Joads. He is the spokesman for the author’s key theories: love and strength in unity.

**Ma Joad** – wife and mother who is the backbone of the Joad family; her main concern is for the family to stay together. (Steinbeck admits that “Ma Joad’s indomitableness owes much to Carol’s – his wife – spirit.

**Pa Joad** - husband and father who is a sharecropper whose land was foreclosed on by the bank; he moves his family to California to find work and a better life

**Rose of Sharon** – eldest daughter who is married to 19-year-old Connie Rivers and who is expecting their first child; she is often considered the most unlikable character due to her self-absorption; yet, at the end she represents life-giving force.

**Granma and Grampa** - the first sharecroppers of the land Pa has now lost; both die during the story.

**Noah Joad** – the oldest son who is slow-moving and emotionally disturbed, possibly caused by an unintentional injury at birth.

**Al Joad** – sixteen-year-old son who admits that only cars and girls interest him; he is responsible for the truck’s maintenance.

**Ruthie Joad** – twelve-year-old Joad daughter who is caught between childhood and adolescence.

**Winfield Joad** – ten-year-old Joad son who was often at the mercy of Ruthie’s mean-spirited nature.

**Muley Graves** – a neighbor in Oklahoma who has been tracted off his land and who decides to stay behind when his family leaves for California; represents those who choose to stay behind

**Ivy and Sarah (Sairy) Wilson** – the Wilsons from Kansas meet the Joads on the trip to California when the Wilsons’ car breaks down. After Al and Tom fix their car, they travel together. They represent people working together, people helping each other.

**Mr. and Mrs. Wainwright** – At the end of the novel, the Wainwrights share a boxcar with the Joads; the theme of human unity is reinforced.

**Agnes Wainwright** – sixteen-year-old daughter who becomes engaged to Al Joad

**Ezra Huston** – chairman of the central committee in the government camp at Weedpatch

**Willie Eaton** – Texan in charge of the entertainment committee at the government camp; committee members thwart a riot attempt by the Farmers Association

**Lisbeth Sandry** – the female religious fanatic at the Weedpatch Camp who warns Rose of Sharon about the dangers of dancing and foreshadows what happens to her baby

**FAMILY MAPS**

Grampa (Will Joad) and Granma Joad
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Tom Married Ma Hazlett	John Uncle John
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Pa (Tom) Joad Ma Joad
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Noah	Tom	Rose of Sharon	Al	Ruthie	Winfield
oldest son	under 30	19 years old	16 years old	12 years old	10 years old

**VOCABULARY**

As you read, make a vocabulary chart with four columns:

Words I Might Know	Words I Need To Learn	Words I Need To Know Only For This Novel	Phrases From the Depression Era

**Chapter One** (an intercalary chapter that sets the tone for the novel)

Vocabulary: possible words for your chart: rivulet (1), dissipated (1), gullies (1), emulsion (3), bemused (3), perplexity (3)

1. Art: Draw the scene to accompany the opening paragraphs.

“In the middle of the night the wind passed on and left the land quiet. The dust-filled air muffled sound more completely than fog does. The people, lying in their beds, heard the wind stop. They awakened when the rushing wind was gone. They lay quietly and listened deep into the stillness. Then the rooster crowed, and their voices were muffled, and the people stirred restlessly in their beds and wanted the morning. They knew it would take a long time for the dust to settle out of the air.” (3) Poor air quality is still a concern today. Research the problems with the air quality in Beijing during the Summer Olympics. What did China do to try to resolve the problem? How did tourists cope? What did the athletes do to reduce the possible damage to their lungs? Some of the worst air quality had been in Los Angeles, which was known for its smog. What did LA do to reverse the poor air quality? Similarly, Denver used to have a “brown cloud.” What did Denver do to eliminate the smog?

- “Men were silent and they did not move often. And the women came out of the houses to stand beside their men – to feel whether this time the men would break. The women studied the men’s faces secretly, for the corn could go, as long as something else remained. . . After a while the faces of the watching men lost their bemused perplexity and became hard and angry and resistant. Then the women knew that they were safe and that there was no break. Then they asked, What’ll we do? And the men replied, I don’t know. But it was all right. The women knew it was all right. Women and children knew deep in themselves that no misfortune was too great to bear if their men were whole.” (3, 4) Compare the situation with the misfortunes many families face today. How does a family cope if the main breadwinner loses his (or her) job? if the family cannot afford food? if the family cannot afford health care? if the family cannot afford gas? if the family cannot make the car payments? the house payments?
- The family unit described in the novel refers to a man, his wife, and their children. Research the family unit today. How many children are raised by single parents? by their mothers? by their fathers? How has this altered family unit affected society?
  - Two **themes** introduced in this chapter are the issues of human dignity coupled with the need for people to work together and to survive. Where in Chapter 1 are these themes introduced? (the huddle of men and the refusal of the men to break during such a monumental environmental disaster)

**Chapter Two** (sets the central plot in motion, provides background, and foreshadows events, introduces Tom)

Vocabulary to add to your chart: hovered (5), cat (slang), protruded (6), bugled (6), chambray (6), hobnailed (6), dogs (slang) (8), judiciously (8), cropper (8), truck skinner (9), proboscis (10)

- This chapter starts with characters frequenting a truck stop. There aren’t too many small-café type of truck stops left in the United States. What caused their demise? Visit Johnston’s Truck Stop outside of Loveland or one south of Colorado Springs. The setting in a truck stop is revisited in Chapter 15. In both chapters the **theme** for human connection is introduced. Why do truck drivers seek refuge from the loneliness of the road? Why did the migrants also look for a human bond? What does the expression “misery loves company” mean? Do you prefer to be alone or to be with other people when you are depressed or troubled? Why?
- “Outside, a man walking along the edge of the highway crossed over and approached the truck. He walked slowly to the front of it, put his hand on the shiny fender, and looked at the *No Riders* sticker on the windshield. For a moment he was about to walk on down the road, but instead he sat on the running board on the side away from the restaurant.” (5, 6) What is the law for truckers picking up passengers today? What regulations govern truckers, such as how many hours they can be on the road?
- “The man’s clothes were new – all of them, cheap and new. His gray cap was so new that the visor was still stiff and the button still on, not shapeless and bulged. . . His suit was of cheap gray hardcloth and so new that there were creases in the trousers. His blue chambray suit was stiff and smooth with filler. The coat was too big, the trousers too short, for he was a tall man. The coat shoulder peaks hung down on his arms, and even then the sleeves were too short and the front of the coat flapped loosely over his stomach. He wore a pair of new tan shoes of the kind called ‘army last,’ hobnailed and with half-circles like horseshoes to protect the edges of the heels from wear.” (6) What does Tom’s clothes suggest to you? What is your impression of Tom at this point? Would you have stopped to give him a ride?
- “The hitch-hiker stood up and looked across through the windows. ‘Could ya give me a lift, mister?’ The driver looked quickly back at the restaurant for a second. ‘Didn’t you see the *No Riders* sticker on the win’shield?’ ‘Sure-I seen it. But sometimes a guy’ll be a good guy even it some rich bastard makes him carry a sticker.’ The driver getting slowly into the truck, considered the parts of this answer. If he refused now, not only was he not a good guy, but he was forced to carry a sticker, was not allowed to have company. If he took the hitch-hiker he was automatically a good guy and also he was not one whom any

rich bastard could kick around. He knew he was being trapped, but he couldn't see a way out. And he wanted to be a good guy.” (7) From this scene, we witness Tom's intelligence and the psychology he used on the trucker. Is this foreshadowing? Why were truckers not allowed to take riders? Why would it be a good idea for a trucker to have company on the trip? Is it safe today for truckers to pick up hitchhikers? Is it safe for anyone to pick up hitchhikers? Is it safe to hitch rides? Fully explain your answers.

5. Note Tom's descriptive language. “My dogs was pooped out.” (8) “I'm just tryin' to get along without shovin' nobody around.” (9) Why would Tom's feet hurt? Is “gettin' along” a good philosophy to have in life? Do you think that Tom will retain that philosophy throughout the novel or will his attitude change? As you can continue to read, record the descriptive language. What is your philosophy for life?

6. “The driver looked significantly at the fields along the road where the corn was fallen sideways and the dust was piled on it. . . The driver said, as though to himself, ‘A forty-acre cropper and he ain't been dusted out and he ain't been tractored out?’ (8) The driver is referring to many small farmers having to leave their farms due to the severe dust storms and to the banks hiring men to use a tractor to tip houses off their foundations so that the people couldn't live there any longer. Why wouldn't Tom have known whether his pa was still farming? Research the dust storms which occurred in the 1930s. Draw a map to show the parts of the United States that were most affected. Then, chart the number of “dusters” each year. Map a storm that carried dust across the country and out to sea.

7. “ ‘I've knew guys that done screwy things while they're drivin' trucks. I remember a guy use' to make up poetry. It passed the time.’ ” (9) Make up poetry to pass the time while you are riding in a vehicle. What games do parents often play with children to help pass the time on a road trip? Do you play games on road trips? Which games do you like to play? “ ‘Well, it ain't no goddamn cinch,’ he said testily. ‘Looks easy, jus' settin' here till you put in your eight or maybe your ten or fourteen hours. But the road gets into a guy. He's got to do somepin. Some sings an' some whistles. Company won't let us have no radio.’ ” Why didn't the trucking company allow radios? What is the controversy today regarding cell phone usage while driving? What is your opinion? Which states have banned cell phone usage while driving? Should Colorado follow suit? If you think so, write to your state legislator.

8. “Well, it makes you mad to hear a guy use big words.” (10) Do you agree with the statement? Why would it make a person mad to hear someone else use “big words”? How does the use of language show the power struggle between classes? What was the level of education in that era? Do people use language today to intimidate people? 9. As they travel, the truck driver seeks hints about Tom. “You gave me a goin'-over when I first got in. . . You know where I come from. . . Don't you?” (12) List indications that he was recently released from prison. When did you know that Tom was a parolee?

10. “I ain't keepin quiet about it. . . I don't give a damn who knows it. An' I'm going to my old man's place so I don't have to lie to get a job.” (12) Most job applications ask whether the applicant has ever been convicted of a felony. Why is that information important for employers to know? Why would some employers be hesitant to hire ex-cons? What jobs are not available to felons today? Are felons allowed to vote? to hold public offices?

11. Tom said that he knew from the very beginning that the truck driver wanted to know why he had been in prison. “But look, when you been in stir a little while, you can smell a question comin' from hell to breakfast. You telegraphed yours the first time you opened your trap.” (13) What did the truck driver say that caused Tom to think that way? Why was Tom in prison?

12. Another **theme** is introduced: the tension between the haves and the have nots. Where is this theme introduced? (when Tom forces the truck driver to decide whose side he is on – the laborers or the bosses.) Record how the theme is developed through the novel.

### **Chapter 3** (an intercalary chapter with the turtle symbolizing the Joads' travels)

Vocabulary : foxtails (14), fetlocks (14), anlage (14), oat beard (14)

1. “And over the grass at the roadside a land turtle crawled, turning aside for nothing, dragging his high-doomed shell over the grass. His hard legs and yellow-nailed feet threshed slowly through the grass, not really walking, but boosting and dragging his shell along. The barley beards slid off his shell, and the clover burrs fell on him and rolled to the ground. . .He came over the grass leaving a beaten trail behind him, and the hill, which was the highway embankment, reared up ahead of him. . .At last he started to climb the embankment. . .But higher and higher the hind legs boosted it, until at last the center of balance was reached, the front tipped down, the front legs scratched at the pavement, and it was up. . .Now the going was easy, and all the legs worked, and the shell boosted along, waggling from side to side. A sedan driven by a forty-year-old woman approached. She saw the turtle and swung to the right. . .And now a light truck approached, and as it came near, the driver saw the turtle and swerved to hit it. His front wheel struck the edge of the shell, flipped the turtle like a tiddly-wink, spun it like a coin, and rolled it off the highway. . .Lying on its back, the turtle was tight in its shell for a long time. But at last its legs waved in the air, reaching for something to pull it over. Its front foot caught a piece of quartz and little by little the shell pulled over and flopped upright. . . and the turtle crawled on.” (15, 16) How does the turtle represent the Joad family? (the turtle struggles but survives, as the Joads who represent exodusters struggle but survive; they both travel in the same direction – southwest). The significance of this symbol becomes clearer by the end of the book. List your personality traits, attitudes, talents, and characteristics and then select an animal that would represent you.

2. Explain the irony in the truck driver purposely hitting the turtle. (It hastened the turtle’s trip to the other side of the highway, its original destination.) Why did the woman swerve to miss the turtle whereas the man made an extra effort to hit it? Why are there aggressive drivers today? Who is more involved in road rage – men or women? Why is road rage even an issue when the purpose of driving is to get from point A to point B safely?

3. Much has been written about the turtle carrying an oat beard in its shell. What is an oat beard? What does it represent? (The oat beard which is carried to the other side of the road is covered by dirt from the turtle’s shell dragging. It is thus “planted” and ready to reproduce. With this symbol, Steinbeck points out that people continue to procreate, to exist regardless of obstacles and setbacks and natural disasters.)

#### **Chapter 4** (Tom going home.)

Vocabulary: protruding (19), horse teeth (20), Burnin’ Busher (20), meetin’ (20), hams (21), piqued (21), dinger (27), prodigal (29)

1. Predict what Tom will find at home.

2. As Tom walks the rest of the way home, he spots the turtle (from Chapter 3), picks it up, and wraps it in his coat. What does Tom plan to do with the turtle? (give it to his little brother) Using your five senses, take a long walk and record your observations. When you return, capture your experiences mimicking Steinbeck’s style.

3. As he walks, Tom spots Jim Casy who is resting under a tree. Casy admits, “ ‘I ain’t preachin’ no more much. The sperit ain’t in the people much no more; and worse’n that, the sperit ain’t in me no more. ‘Course now an’ again the sperit gets movin’ an’ I rip out a meetin’, or when folks sets out food I give ‘em a grace, but my heart ain’t in it.’ ” (20) Research how many churches and synagogues are in the Pikes Peak region. How many different faiths are represented? Why did so many groups select our city? What draws people to practice a religion? What characteristics do they look for in a preacher or a priest or a rabbi?

4. Tom tells Casy why he was in prison. “ ‘I’d do what I done – again,” said Joad. ‘I killed a guy in a fight. We was drunk at a dance. He got a knife in me, an’ I killed him with a shovel that was layin’ there. Knocked his head plumb to squash.’ ” What can push someone to kill someone else?

5. After Casy asks about prison, Tom tells him that the inmates were treated “awright.” ‘You eat regular, an’ get clean clothes, and there’s places to take a bath. It’s pretty nice in some ways. Makes it hard not havin’ no women. . . They was a guy paroled. . .’ Bout a month he’s back for breakin’ parole. A guy ast him why he bust his parole. ‘Well, hell,’ he says, ‘They got no conveniences at my old man’s place. Got no ‘lectric lights, got no shower baths. There ain’t no books, an’ the food’s lousy.’ Says he come back where they got a few conveniences, an he eats regular.’ (26) Overcrowded prisons are a problem for every state. Research Colorado prisons. What can be done to decrease the percentage of prisoners who are repeat offenders? Is (vocational) education the answer so that the prisoners are qualified for a job when they are released? Since Tom has paid his debt to society, will that keep him from re-offending?

6. “Maybe you never seen Uncle John the time they baptized him . . . jumped over a feeny bush as big as a piana. Over he’d jump, an’ back he’d jump . . . Well, Pa seen him, an’ Pa figgers he’s the be’ Jesus-jumper in these parts. So Pa picks out a feeny bush ‘bout twicet as big as Uncle John’s feeny bush . . . an’ he takes a run at that feeny bush an’ clears her an’ bust his right leg. That took the sperit out of Pa. Preacher wants to pray to set, but Pa says, no, by God, he’d got his heart full of havin’ a doctor. Well, they wasn’t a doctor, but they was a travelin’ dentist, an’ he set her.” Research one of the issues of health care, including the few physicans and dentists practicing in rural areas, the high cost of health care, the number of people who are uninsured, the speculation that there will be fewer health care providers in the future, some states (like Alaska) approving programs for trained – but not degreed – caretakers, and universal health care. Then, report to the class.

**Chapter 5** (an intercalary chapter generalizing about sharecroppers being told to leave)

Vocabulary: augers (31), tenant (31), sties (33), smolder (34), diesel (35), beseech (35), penes (36), Spam (36), creeping (37)

1. “The owners of the land came onto the land, or more often a spokesman for the owners came. They came in closed cars, and they felt the dry earth with their fingers, and sometimes they drove big earth augers into the ground for soil tests. The tenants, from their sun-beaten dooryards, watched uneasily when the closed cars drove along the fields. And at last the owner men drove into the dooryards and sat in their cars to talk out of the windows. The tenant men stood beside the cars for a while, and then squatted on their hams and found sticks with which to mark the dust.” (31) What psychology was in play here with the spokesmen for the Bank checking out the fields first? What is the legal process today for foreclosures?
2. “And at last the owner men came to the point. The tenant system won’t work any more. One man on a tractor can take the place of twelve or fourteen families. Pay him a wage and take all the crop. We have to do it. We don’t like to do it. But the monster’s sick. Something’s happened to the monster.” (33) The spokesmen for the bank used personification to make the bank into a monster. Why was it necessary for them to de-personalize their message?
3. “The tenant men looked up alarmed. But what’ll happen to us? How’ll we eat?” (33) Use Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs to understand the tenants’ thinking. Where does food (sustenance) fit on the pyramid? Where does taking care of one’s family fit? Has the hierarchy of needs changed over the years? If so, rewrite it.



(www.union.emd.edu)

4. “. . .but it’s our land. We measured it, and broke it up. We were born on it, and we got killed on it, died on it. Even if it’s no good, it’s still ours. That’s what makes it ours-being born on it, working it, dying on it. That makes ownership, not a paper with numbers on it.” (33) Do you agree or disagree with the tenants’ premise? What does it take today to prove real estate ownership? (a title? paying property taxes?) What about during the Civil War era when slaves did most of the work?

5. “We’re sorry. It’s not us. It’s the monster. The bank isn’t like a man. Yes, but the bank is only made of men. No, you’re wrong there-quite wrong there. The bank is something else than men. It happens that every man in a bank hates what the bank does, and yet the bank does it. The bank is something more than men, I tell you. Men made it, but they can’t control it. . .The bank, the monster owns it.” (33, 34) When did the federal government come to be viewed as a “monster”? Why is the IRS often viewed as a monster? Are there any other agencies viewed as monsters? (Some people think that the welfare system, Medicaid, Medicare, and Social Security Administration are in that category.) Would the health care system be viewed as a “monster”? Fully explain your reasons.

6. “And the women went quickly, quietly back into the houses and herded the children ahead of them. They knew that a man so hurt and so perplexed may turn in anger, even on people he loves.” (34) Some literary analysts point to Steinbeck making a point about society, including situations he may have witnessed. Domestic violence is another critical issue in our country. Do people use violence when they feel that they are at the breaking point? Experts often advise one partner to leave the scene of an argument so as to allow tempers to settle down. Read about Steinbeck’s background or his notes while writing this novel to determine his thoughts on the issue.

7. “And the driver said, ‘Can’t think of that. Got to think of my own kids. Three dollars a day, and it comes every day. Times are changing, mister, don’t you know? . . .Thinking about stuff like that don’t feed the kids. Get your three dollars a day, feed your kids. You got no call to worry about anybody’s kids but your own.’ ” (37) “Each man for himself” often seems to be peoples’ attitude today. Yet, - maybe

more than ever – people need to help the less fortunate. How can you personally help the less fortunate? What can your school do?

8. “We all got to figure. There’s some way to stop this. It’s not like lightning or earthquakes. We’ve got a bad thing made by men, and by God that’s something we can change.” (38) What needs fixin’ in our world today? Take one issue and devise a plan. Then, research think tanks, such as Western Strategies based in Colorado Springs. The company’s first hot topic was health care in the Pikes Peak region. What issues did they focus on? What game plan did they devise?

9. The conflict in this chapter is generalized (poor people against the Bank). Steinbeck clearly shows the conflict between the farmer who shares stories of his family’s history and connection to the land and the conglomerate that is behind the foreclosure. Another one of Steinbeck’s social philosophies is related to the theory of Jeffersonian agrarianism. “Funny thing how it is. If a man owns a little property, that property is him, it’s part of him, and it’s like him.” (37) As readers, we will see this **theme** throughout the novel. Relate the tie of property ownership to self-worth today. How does this apply to people who are losing their homes now?

## Chapter 6 (Tom’s homecoming)

Vocabulary: skittering (40), bolls (41), two-by-four (44), truculently (46), hominy (50)

1. Art: Draw the scene Tom encounters at home; then draw the farm as it probably looked when he was sent to prison.

2. It finally dawns on Tom when he sees the stray cat that something is really wrong. “. . . Whyn’t that cat jus’ move in with some neighbors – with the Rances? How come nobody ripped some lumber off this house? Ain’t been nobody here for three-four months, an’ nobody’s stole no lumber. Nice planks on the barn shed, plenty good planks on the house, winda frames-an nobody’s took ’em. That ain’t right. That’s what was botherin’ me, an’ I couldn’t catch hold of her.” (43) Where has everybody gone? Why were people leaving their houses and many of their possessions? Theft is a major issue in the United States today and seems to increase as the economy worsens. Each person in the class is to select an item that is frequently targeted (gasoline, copper, building supplies, vehicles, identity) and research the local and the national statistics and then report to the class.

3. Humor is interspersed in the novel. For example, Tom tells the story of Grampa “savin’ chicken feathers. Says he’s gonna’ have a whole damn bed of feathers. But he never got no feather bed. One time Pa got mad at a skunk under the house. Pa slapped that skunk with a two-by-four, and Ma burned all Grampa’s feathers so we could live in the house.” (44) Keep a list of humorous situations.

4. Grampa is also the one who shot out the tractor’s headlight. As you continue to read, take notes to write a character analysis of Grampa.

5. “ ‘I mean’ – he stumbled – ‘what I mean, if a fella’s got somepin to eat an’ another fella’s hungry – why, the first fella ain’t got no choice. I mean, s’pose I pick up my rabbits an’ go off some wheres an’ eat ‘em. See?’ ”(49) Is Muley right? Do people have a moral obligation to share with others? Interview the director of Care and Share or the Marian House Soup Kitchen. Since Care and Share was running out of food, several organizations held food drives in July. How successful was it? When is the most food collected (Harvest of Love around Thanksgiving, Souper Bowl soup can drive in January, Stamp Out Hunger sponsored by the U. S. Postal Service in May, or Christmas in July, The Empty Bowl in the Tri-Lakes area.)? **Schools and adults are encouraged to participate in a new program created just for APPR. Package a full-meal deal for one meal. For example: Appetizer: small packages of snack-sized cheese and crackers; Main Course: Tuna Casserole (cans of tuna, a package of egg noodles, cans of cream of mushroom soup, small package of potato chips to crumble on top); Vegetable: cans of peas; Dessert: cans of fruit; Beverage: packages of drink mixes, such as kool-aid.**

6. Preacher Casy decides that his true calling is to help the exodusters. “I gotta see them folks that’s gone out on the road. I got a feelin’ I got to see them They gonna need help no preacher can give ‘em. Hope of heaven when their lives ain’t lived? Holy Sperit when their own sperit is downcast an’ sad? They gonna need help. They got to live before they can afford to die.” (52) “I think I got her now. I don’t know if I can say her. I guess I won’t try to say her – but maybe there’s a place for a preacher. Maybe I can preach again. Folks out lonely on the road, folks with no lan’, no home to go to. They got to have some kind of home.” Why did Casy decide to minister to the people on the road? Will they accept him?

7. Tom recalls the fight where he killed a man. “ ‘We was drunk,’ Joad said softly. ‘Drunk at a dance. I don’t know how she started. An’ then I felt that knife go in me, an’ that sobered me up. Fust thing I see is Herb comin’ for me again with his knife. They was this here shovel leanin’ against the schoolhouse, so I grabbed it an’ smacked ‘im over the head. I never had nothing against Herb. He was a nice fella. Come a-bullin’ after my sister Rosasharn when he was a little fella. No, I liked Herb.’ ” (53) Hold Tom’s trial with different students being the judge, the defense attorney, the prosecutor, members of the jury, and witnesses.

8. “ ‘Somebody says they’s Hatfield blood on his mother’s side. . . ’ ” (54) Explain the reference to the Hatfields which is mentioned again in Chapter 8. When Grampa sees Tom, he rants about the injustice of Tom’s having to serve jail time for self-defense. “ ‘An’ ol’ Turnbull, stinkin’ skunk, braggin’ how he’ll shoot ya when ya come out. Says he got Hatfield blood. Well, I sent word to him. I says, ‘Don’t mess with no Joad. Maybe I got McCoy blood for all I know.’ ” (79) What other groups in history have opposed each other? What is the history of the conflict? Why do people continue to be vindictive and vengeful? Have you ever been in a conflict like this? Do you prefer to resolve conflicts, to continue them, or to ignore them?

9. After hiding from the law, the three men walk to a cave to sleep in during the night, but Tom rebels. “Joad settled himself on the clean sand. ‘I ain’t gonna sleep in no cave,’ he said. ‘I’m gonna sleep right here.’ ” (60) Why is Tom reluctant to be confined in a cave?

## **Chapter 7** (an intercalary chapter which is a used car salesman’s pitch)

Vocabulary: blazoned (61), jalopy (61), Cad’, Nash, Hymie (61), De Sotos, Rocknes, Stars, Apperson, Chalmers, Chandler (62), Graham (63), Zephyr (65), roadster (65), pikers (64)

1. “Steinbeck’s literary technique is similar to the newsreel style popularized by his American contemporary, John Dos Passos. The rhythm suggests the franticness of the situation, a situation in which the salesman has complete control. With the speed and confidence of his words, the salesman is able to fluster and manipulate the stricken farmers; and the repetition of his spiel draws attention to the fact that this was an oft-repeated scenario.” (Vlcek, 30) Write a newsreel-style sales pitch for a car today or to report a news event. For an idea, view Len Berman’s report “And Nobody Got Hurt? on *The Today Show*.

2. “God, if I could only get a hundred jalopies. I don’t care if they run or not.” (63) What are the hot cars today? (hybrids, smaller cars, such as the Smart Car, the mini-Cooper, the GEO Metro, which use less gas) Which vehicles are not selling? (large SUVs and trucks, Humvees) Why are some cars selling and other sitting on the lots? (high gas prices)

3. “Sure , we sold it. Guarantee? We guaranteed it to be an automobile. We didn’t guarantee to wet-nurse it. . .He bought a car, an’ now he ain’t satisfied. How’d you think if I bought a steak an’ et half an’ try to bring it back? We’re runnin’ a business, not a charity ward.” (65) Business has certainly changed since then with consumers having more rights. What is the “lemon law”? Can someone sign a contract and cancel within three business days? What is the purpose of the Better Business Bureau?

4. Different kinds of cars (and tractors) are mentioned in this chapter. Rewrite the salesman’s spiel using several car models today. Research cars from that period and create a poster of the cars you like. What do you think are the cars of the future? In the first quarter of 2008, Toyotas outsold Fords in car sales,

although General Motors was first in sales. Yet, General Motors had to lay off employees. Research the decline of America's car industry and what it will take to reverse the trend.

## Chapter 8 (Tom reunited with his family.)

Vocabulary: hackles (70), divert (73), salt pork (73), Mother Hubbard (74), deftly (74), imperturbability (74), lithely (75), hammered sheep (75), timidity (76), meerschaum (71), cantankerous (77), lecherous (77), religiosity (78), malice (79), piss an' vinegar (79), clamored (80), shebang (81), rakishly (84), slavishness (84)

1. The third component of Steinbeck's social philosophy is humanism, which Ma Joad embodies. The other two components were presented earlier. Review Steinbeck's social philosophies: the haves and the have nots; the tenants' connection to the land (agrarianism); and human survival being dependent upon people working together in common causes. Some literary critics claim that Steinbeck's philosophies appear to be based upon the socialist theories of Lenin and Marx with past Americans' theories intertwined. For example, "The Emersonian concept of the Oversoul is expressed in the earthy folk language of Jim Casy, who believes that all person's souls are really just part of one big soul. The symbolic contrasts between the vitality of the land and the 'deadness' of inanimate machines represent the theory of Jeffersonian agrarianism, which holds that the identification of humankind with soil is necessary for the continuation of the life cycle. The pragmatism of Henry James, in which the meaning and the truth of all concepts are defined by their practical consequences, is seen in the active approach of Ma and Tom to adversity." (Vlcek, 11) Read more about these philosophies and the arguments that Steinbeck was a Communist. Then, present your opinion to the class. (See the Further Reading section for recommended titles.)

2. "The preacher laughed softly. 'You know,' he said, 'it's a nice thing not bein' a preacher no more. Nobody use' ta tell stories when I was there, or if they did I couldn' laugh. An' I couldn't cuss. Now I cuss all I want, any time I want, an' it does a fella good to cuss if he wants to.'" (70) What are your feelings about cussing? Look up what S. I. Hiyakawa, author of *Language in Thought and Action* said about cussing. Discuss his idea.

3. After Ma recovers from her shock of seeing Tom, she asks him, "You ain't poisoned mad? You don't hate nobody? They didn' do nothin' in that jail to rot you out with crazy mad?" (76) How have prison conditions changed from the 1930s? What rights do prisoners have? What does it cost taxpayers annually per prisoner? Then, compare that amount with the cost of sending a student to college.

4. "She came near to him then, and stood close; and she said passionately, 'Tommy, don't you go fightin' 'em alone. They'll hunt you down like a coyote. Tommy, I got to thinkin' and dreamin' an' wonderin'. They say there's a hun'erd thousand of us shoved out. If we was all mad the same way, Tommy – they wouldn't hunt nobody down-'" (77) Ma is actually advocating for group action. Why wasn't it possible for the Okies to band together? What groups in history have banded together to battle for their rights? (unions, civil rights, farmers' rights) Research César Chávez. Troublemakers then were called "reds," which was considered inflammatory. By calling the Okies names, they made them feel inferior. What is the psychology behind typecasting? Who would "reds" be today? (terrorists?) Where did the "reds" term come from? Where did we get red and blue states today? Observe this election for words that are derogatory or prejudicial.

5. "Casy ran his fingers through his hair nervously. 'I got to tell you, I ain't a preacher no more. If me jus' bein' glad to be here an' bein' thankful for people that's kind and generous, if that's enough – why, I'll say that kinda grace. But I ain't a preacher no more.'" (80) Rewrite the preacher's blessing. People of different faiths say different forms of grace. Research the different graces. Does your family say grace before a meal? If so, what version do you recite?

## Chapter 9 (an intercalary chapter showing the heartbreak of selling personal possessions)

Vocabulary: ruthless (86), scuffed (88)

1. “In the little houses the tenant people sifted their belongings and the belongings of their fathers and their grandfathers. Picked over their possessions for the journey to the west. The men were ruthless because the past has been spoiled, but the women knew how the past would cry to them in the coming days.” (86) It would be very difficult to select what items to leave behind and what to take. People whose houses are threatened by fires have to make that decision. What would you take if you have only ten items that could fit in the car, along with your family members’ belongings? How did you decide what to take and what to leave?

2. “Well, take it –all junk-and give me five dollars. You’re not buying only junk, you’re buying junked lives. And more-you’ll see-you’re buying bitterness. Buying a plow to plow your own children under, buying the arms and spirits that might have saved you.” (86, 87) The Okies were treated like junk. How are people today being treated like junk? Who are they?

3. “We could have saved you, but you cut us down, and soon you will be cut down and there’ll be none of us to save you.” (87) These words remind some readers of the famous quotation by Martin Niemöller about the Holocaust, “First they came for the Communists, but I was not a Communist so I did not speak out. Then they came for the Socialists and the Trade Unionists, but I was neither, so I did not speak out. Then they came for the Jews, but I was not a Jew so I did not speak out. And when they came for me, there was no one left to speak out for me.” What do the two quotations mean?

4. “But you can’t start. Only a baby can start. You and me-why, we’re all that’s been. The anger of a moment, the thousand pictures, that’s us. This land, this red land, is us; and the flood years and the dust years and the drought years are us. We can’t start again. The bitterness we sold to the junk man – he got it ; all right, but we have it still. And when the owner men told us to go, that’s us; and when the tractor hit the house, that’s us until we’re dead. To California, or any place-every one a drum major leading a parade of hurts, marching with our bitterness. And some day-the armies of bitterness will all be going the same way. And they’ll all walk together, and there’ll be a dead terror from it.” (87, 88) Although the tenant farmers realize that the merchants are taking advantage of them by low balling their possessions, they are powerless to help themselves; they are desperate for the money. Remember that the book’s title comes from *The Battle Hymn of the Republic* and that Steinbeck insisted that the song lyrics be printed in full on the inside covers. Review the lines of the song. How do the lyrics reflect the peoples’ attitudes in this chapter?

5. “The women sat among the doomed things, turning them over and looking past them and back. This book. My father had it. He liked a book. *Pilgrim’s Progress*.” (88) Why did she have to leave the book behind? “Think we could get this china dog in? Aunt Sadie brought it from the St. Louis Fair.” (88)

When was the St. Louis (World) Fair? What popular concoction was invented there? (ice cream cones)

Look at various world fairs throughout the years. Where were they held? What were their purposes?

What landmarks do we still have that were built specifically to be showcased during world fairs? What do we have today to fill the same purpose? During world fairs, there seemed to be a need for people to come together for a common cause. Does that need still exist today? If so, how is it attained?

6. “How can we live without our lives? How will we know it’s us without our past? No. Leave it. Burn it.” (88) Draw a timeline of key events in your past that make up your history. What do you know of your own family’s history? Who are you?

## Chapter 10 (California, Here We Come)

Vocabulary: handbills (90), scrounged (91), roiled (91), spluttered (92), scrooge around (93), sun-shook (93), obscured (95), trifle (95), inveterate (95), snipes (95), voluptuous (95), provocatively (95), demure

(95), hoyden (95), celibate (96), jake (96), paralytic (96), sated (96), ammeter (96), tappets (97), assailed (97), fatuously (98), complacent (99), lucent (99), stereopticon (99), globules (99), nucleus (100), differential (100), splayed (101), titular (101), relinquished (101), dissent (102), eminent (103), a purchase (103), whetted (104), restiveness (105), taut (108), cutlery (109), sauntered (110), giddy (112)

1. Ma expressed her uncertainty about the future. “Tom, I hope things is all right in California. . . Seems too nice, kinda. I seen the han’bills fellas pass out, an’ how much work they is, an’ high wages an’ all; an’ I seen in the paper how they want folks to come an’ pick grapes an’ oranges an’ peaches. That’d be nice work, Tom, pickin’ peaches. Even if they wouldn’t let you eat none, you could maybe snitch a little ratty one sometimes. An’ it’d be nice under the trees, workin’ in the shade. I’m scared of stuff so nice. I ain’t got faith. I’m scared somepin ain’t so nice about it.” (90, 91) Ma’s fears foreshadow what life will be like in California. Predict what their life will be like. When did California lose its favor as the golden state, as *the* place to live? What caused the change? What is the population of California now? What are some of the issues facing California? (smog, unemployment, traffic, traffic jams, crime, homeless people, litter, high prices, deficits for government spending) What immigrant issues exist today in California?

2. Tom? I seen it on a map, big mountains like on a post card, an’ we’re going’ right through ‘em. How long ya s’pose it’ll take to go that far, Tommy?” Tom replies that it could take up to two weeks. Predict how long it will take. Map their route.

3. “But, I like to think how nice it’s gonna’ be, maybe, in California. Never cold. An’ fruit ever’ place, an’ people just bein’ in the nicest places, little white houses in among the orange trees. I wonder – that is, if we all get jobs an’ all work – maybe we can get one of them little white houses.” (91) Ma dreams of a better life in California. What is your dream for the future?

4. Grampa has his own ideas of what California will be like. “Well, sir, we’ll be a-startin’ ‘fore long now. An’, by God, they’s grapes out there, just a-hangin’ over into the road. Know what I’m gonna do? I’m gonna pick me a wash tub full a grapes, an’ I’m gonna set in ‘em, an’ scrooge aroun’, an’ let the juice run down my pants.” (93) “Grampa is the character most associated with the references to the ‘grapes’ of the novel’s title. Grapes in the novel are a symbol of both plenty and bitterness. At this point in the narrative, grapes represent the hope of plenty, the dream of a greater life. Even as Grampa is rejoicing in these possibilities, however, the seeds of bitterness are being sown.” (Vlcek, 37) How do grapes represent plentitude? bitterness? Recap why the Okies are bitter.

5. This chapter reinforces the strong image of a patriarchal society. List the examples:

a. When the preacher asks whether he can ride along to California, Ma said, “Let him (Tom) have the chance (to speak first) that was his right.” (94)

b. Ma also tells him that “all the men’ll talk tonight and figger when we gonna start. I guess maybe we better not say till all the men come.” (94)

c. “The sun was setting when the truck came back, and the earth was bloody in its setting light. Al sat bent over the wheel, proud and serious and efficient, and Pa and Uncle John, as befitted the heads of the clan, had the honor seats beside the driver.” (95)

d. “They (the women) took their places behind the squatting men.” (100)

e. “Grampa was the titular head, but he no longer ruled. His position was honorary and a matter of custom. But he did have the right of first comment, no matter how silly his old mind might be.” (101)

f. As Ma is salting down the pork, “the preacher stepped beside her. ‘Leave me salt down this meat,’ he said. ‘I can do it. There’s other stuff for you to do. . .’ ‘It’s women’s work,’ she said finally. . .’ ‘It’s all work,’ the preacher replied. ‘They’s too much of it to split it up to men’s or women’s work.’ ” Explain how Casy is different from the other men in the story. Did Pa, Noah, Tom, or Al ever help Ma with her workload? Has a patriarchal society disappeared? How would you describe society today?

6. “The family met at the most important place, near the truck. The house was dead, and the fields were dead; but this truck was the active thing, the living principle.” (99) The family meeting is apparently the way the Joads decide on important issues and is, thus, a form of government. Later in the novel, there will be a form of community government. Does your family hold meetings? Does your neighborhood belong to a neighborhood group? Is your neighborhood governed by a covenant? What form of government rules your school? How does it operate? What issues should be addressed?

8. As the family discusses whether the preacher can travel with them, Pa asks Ma whether they can feed an extra mouth. “Ma cleared her throat. ‘It ain’t kin we? It’s will we? . . . it’s a long time our folks been here and east before, an’ I never heerd tell of no Joads or no Hazletts, neither, ever refusin’ food an’ shelter or a lift on the road to anybody that asked.” (102) Essentially, Ma underscores the principle of people helping other people. Hold a food drive in your school for the less fortunate. What other kinds of drives can you hold to help people? (suitcases for foster children; pop tabs for the Ronald McDonald House; plastic tablecloths for rain capes for the homeless; socks for the homeless; winter caps, gloves, and mittens for the needy; personal care items for TESSA or the Red Cross Shelter; blankets, bath towels and washcloths for the Red Cross Shelter)

9. “Ma set her lantern on the floor. She reached behind one of the boxes that had served as chairs and brought out a stationery box, old and soiled and cracked at the corners. She sat down and opened the box. Inside were letters, clippings, photographs, a pair of earrings, a little gold signet ring, and a watch chain braided of hair and tipped with gold swivels. She touched the letters with her fingers, touched them lightly, and she smoothed a newspaper clipping on which there was an account of Tom’s trial. For a long time she held the box, looking over it. . . And at last she made up her mind. She picked out the ring, the watch charm, the earrings, dug under the pile and found one gold cuff link. . . She folded the envelope over and put it in her dress pocket. . . And then she stood up, took her lantern, and went back into the kitchen. She lifted the stove lid and laid the box gently among the coals.” Analyze what Ma kept in terms of sentimental value and monetary value? What are your most precious possessions that you couldn’t bear to part with? Why are they so important to you?

10. This is the last time that the entire Joad family will be together as family unit. As you continue to read, note that the problems with the truck will parallel the upheaval in the family. Predict what will happen to the family.

### **Chapter 11** (an intercalary chapter in which the land and man vs. mechanics is contrasted)

Vocabulary: corrugated (115), vitality (115), nitrates (115), phosphates (115), contemptuous (116), debris (116)

1. “The houses were left vacant on the land, and the land was vacant because of this.” (115) Steinbeck uses this chapter to emphasize the bleakness of abandoned houses and lands. He cites the domino effect: one thing causes another and then another and then another . . . But, who toppled the first domino? Who started the problems associated with the Dust Bowl? Research. Read more about it. See the Further Reading list for suggestions.

2. “And when a horse stops work and goes into the barn there is a life and a vitality left, there is a breathing and a warmth, and the feet shift on the straw, and the jaws champ on the hay, and the heat and smell of life. But when the motor of a tractor stops, it is as dead as the ore it came from. The heat goes out of it like the living heat that leaves a corpse.” (115) In many experts’ opinion, the dust bowl was caused by man – and by the tractor and the plow. Read *The Worst Hard Time* by Timothy Egan and/or attend Mr. Egan’s lecture on October 2<sup>nd</sup> in Colorado Springs. Then, determine whether you agree as to the reasons for the worst disaster in America’s history. Compare man’s connection with the land and with animals to the disconnect with machinery, such as tractors. Today’s “machinery” has been replaced by technology. Would you rather spend an afternoon with a friend or text messaging? Will we lose our interpersonal

skills due to technology? How does this depersonalization affect relationships? Compare the interactions of your family unit (immediate family and others you've welcomed into your family) with the Joads' interaction with the people whom they welcomed into their lives.

3. This chapter reintroduces the theme of Jeffersonian agrarianism, which focuses on the life-giving bond between the farmers and the land. Grow something from seeds. (Remember the elementary school science project of growing a sweet potato plant?) Then, donate your plant to a nursing home for a resident who receives few gifts. Why are community gardens popular again? Where is the community garden in Colorado Springs?

**Chapter 12** (This chapter marks the end of the Joads' family time in Oklahoma and starts their travels.)

Vocabulary: tributary (118), the mother road (118)

1. "Highway 66 is the main migrant road. 66 – the long concrete path across the country, waving gently up and down on the map from Mississippi to Bakersfield . . ." Draw the route on a United States' map.

2. "Clarksville and Ozark and Van Buren and Fort Smith on 64, and there's an end to Arkansas. And all the roads into Oklahoma City, 66 down from Tulsa, 270 up from McAlester. 8 from Wichita Falls south, from Enid north. Edmond, McLoud, Purcell. 66 out of Oklahoma City; El Reno and Clinton. Going west on 66. Hydro, Elk City, and Texola; and there's an end to Oklahoma. 66 across the Panhandle of Texas. . . And, oh, my God, it's over." (118, 119) Locate the areas mentioned on a map. Do the same thing with Colorado: record the towns on main highways. For example, on Highway 24 at the Kansas border: Burlington, then . . . The highway system in the U. S. and other infrastructures, such as bridges, are crumbling. What would happen if we lost these major roads and accesses which are part of the larger arteries that connect the country?

3. ". . . The whole United States ain't that big. It ain't that big. There ain't room enough for you an' me, for your kind an' my kind, for rich and poor together all in one country, for thieves and honest men. For hunger and fat." ( 120) Agree or disagree with this statement. Add contrasting pairs to the list:

Contributions To The Country

American citizens	immigrants

Now, what is your opinion? If it changed, why did it change?

4. "Fella in business got to lie an' cheat, but he calls it somepin else. That's what's important. You go steal that tire an' you're a thief, but he tried to steal your four dollars for a busted tire. They call that sound business." (121) Research which businesses have the best reputations overall. Which ones have the worst reputations? How far would you be willing to go ethically to make money? What companies have clearly placed profit over ethics? (oil companies, insurance companies, unscrupulous realtors, some mortgage companies) Have you or your family ever been victimized in a business deal? What happens when someone posts false information online, such as on Ebay? My Space? Would you ever lie to sell something or cheat some one to get rid of it quickly? Cheating is a problem in society whether in business or school. How does cheating affect students? 5. "Two hundred and fifty thousand people over the road. Fifty thousand old cars-wounded, steaming. Wrecks along the road, abandoned. Well, what happened to them? What happened to the folks in that car? Did they walk? Where are they? Where does the courage

come from? Where does the terrible faith come from?” (122) Answer the questions. An old expression is “make do.” Look at your school and your home. What items do we waste that we could recycle, give to someone else to use, or re-use ourselves? During the Depression, the people practiced the three R’s of recycling before it was even popular: reuse, reduce, recycle. As you read the story, find examples.

### **Chapter 13** (The family loses and gains.)

Vocabulary: listlessly (125), truculent (125), Gila monster (129), wizened (135), serene (138), pauper (140)

1. Al and Ma discuss the truck’s load and whether they should not have brought the preacher. “ ‘You’ll be glad a that preacher ‘fore we’re through,” said Ma. “That preacher’ll help us.’ ” (124) What are traditional roles for preachers? Predict whether Casy will be asked to perform any traditional roles – and whether he will.
2. Ma is the pragmatist. When Al asks whether she is scared, she replies, “ ‘A little. . . Only it ain’t like scared so much, I’m jus’ a settin’ here waitin’. When somepin happens that I got to do somepin – I’ll do it.’ ” (124) As you continue to read, record Ma’s taking action.
3. “ ‘I don’t know what the country’s comin’ to,’ the fat man continued.” (126) Answer the question for the gas station owner and then answer it in regards to today. Then, compare “then” and “now.” What issues are the same? What issues are different? Track what they pay for gas for the entire trip. What would it cost for gas today?
4. “Casy said, ‘I been walkin’ aroun’ in the country. Ever’body’s askin’ that. What we comin’ to? Seems to me we don’t never come to nothin’. Always on the way. Always goin’ and goin’. Why don’t folks think about that? They’s movement now. We know why, an’ we know how. Movin’ ‘cause they got to. That’s why folks always move. Movin’ ‘cause they want somepin better’n what they got. An’ that’s the on’y way they’ll ever git it. Wantin’ it and’ needin’ it, they’ll go out an’ git it. It’s bein’ hurt that makes folks mad to fightin’. I been walkin’ aroun’ the country, an’ hearin’ folks talk like you.’ ” (127, 128) Is this scenario still true in the United States today? Look up newspaper articles printed in the summer regarding Denver, Colorado Springs, etc., being the biggest growth area. Why are people relocating here? Compare Casy’s statements of exodusters to immigrants today.
5. “He (Tom) said, ‘I didn’t mean to sound off at ya, mister. It’s the heat. You ain’t got nothin’. Pretty soon you’ll be on the road yourse’f. And it ain’t tractors put you there. It’s them pretty yella stations in town. Folks in movin’ . . . An’ you’ll be movin’, mister.’ ” (129) The issue of big stores or companies putting “the little guy” out of business has long been debated. Take one element, such as grocery stores, gas stations, retail stores, pharmacies, restaurants, etc. How many mom-and-pop grocery stores are still in business today? How many privately owned gas stations or pharmacies exist today? Most retail stores (clothing, jewelry, auto parts) in small towns were put out of business when Wal-Mart built a store in the area. Now, internet shopping has cut into even big stores’ profits. What is next? What do shoppers want? What is the percentage of failure for small businesses? What happens to those people? Why do chain stores succeed and so many small businesses fail? In the past, neighborhood stores were the norm. With high gas prices, will neighborhood stores come back into vogue?
6. As we know, Tom broke his parole by leaving the state. When Ma asks him about it, he replies, “ ‘Don’t you worry,’ he said. ‘I figgered her out. They’s lots a fellas out on parole an’ they’s more goin’ in all the time. If I get caught for anything else out west, well, then they got my pitcher an’ my prints in Washington. They’ll sen’ me back. But if I don’t do no crimes, they won’t give a damn.’ ”(133) Tom’s statement foreshadows what will happen in California. What kind of crime do you think Tom will commit? Will he be caught? Will he be sent back to prison?
7. Tom asked Ivy Wilson whether they could camp next to them. “Tom insisted. ‘Anyways you’re here an’ we ain’t. You got a right to say if you wan’ neighbors or not.’ ” (134) Do people show such common

courtesy today? What is civility? What is your pet peeve regarding rudeness? (e. g., hanging up the phone when reaching a wrong number instead of apologizing first)

8. As the families introduce themselves, we learn that Mr. and Mrs. Wilson are from Kansas. This was Steinbeck's way of telling his readers that the Dust Bowl didn't happen in just Oklahoma. Map which areas were the most affected by the Dust Bowl. Read other accounts of the Dust Bowl. See the appendix for suggestions, including *The Worst Hard Time* by Timothy Egan. Many people are surprised to learn the number of "dusters" that occurred in each year of the 1930s and that the dusters occasionally blew dust and debris out to the Atlantic Ocean.

9. Ma's notion that the preacher would be needed on the road is first proved when he is asked to take a look at sick Grampa. The second time is after Granma orders him to pray for Grampa, who is sick. The third is at Grampa's funeral. Will the preacher be needed in the future?

10. Grampa dies from a stroke. (138) What causes strokes? What are the symptoms? Did Grampa have earlier symptoms? If so, cite passages from the book to prove your answers. What were the health issues then? What are the health issues today?

11. "The family became a unit." (139) In times of trouble, many families bind together. However, here it refers to a larger unit to include the Wilsons. This emphasizes Steinbeck's social philosophy of the need to help each other. "The concept of the individual family is being replaced by a larger concept of a world family." (Vlcek, 43) In return, Al and Tom repair the Wilson's car. After the death, Sairy Wilson helps with the burial preparation and says. ". . . We're proud to help. . . People needs – to help." (141) Do people have an inner NEED to help others? How does the molding of our country by the leadership impact all of us? What impact does it have on society when our leaders inspire us to interact and to help each other? Reflect on John F. Kennedy's inaugural address on January 20, 1961: "And so, my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." How did we get to be a what's-in-it-for-me society? What can YOU do?

12. Another legal quandary appears. By law, they are required to report Grampa's death. But, it cost \$40 for the undertaker. That is \$40 the family can't spare. Pa reflects upon his grandpa's death. "Pa said softly, 'Grampa buried his pa with his own hand, done it in dignity, an' shaped the grave nice with his own shovel. That was a time when a man had the right to be buried by his own son an' a son had the right to bury his own father. . . Sometimes a fella got to sift the law. I'm sayin' now I got the right to bury my own pa.' " (140) Pa used "situation ethics." Do you agree or disagree with his decision? Explain your reasons. What are the laws in Colorado regarding burials? Who made the laws? Evergreen and Fairview cemeteries may become "green," if/when the City Council approves earth-friendly burials. People would be buried in egg-crate boxes called ecopods which would biodegrade. What is your opinion of ecopods?

13. "The occasion of Grampa's death reveals Steinbeck's dissatisfaction with organized religion and illustrated Casy's pragmatism. Pragmatism, which focuses on what "is" as opposed to what "ought to be," is one of the aspects of Steinbeck's social theory. Casy's unconventional blessing over Granpa's body contrasts the impracticality of religion and prayer with the practical nature of the new human-based spirituality: The people who are still living in this world are the ones in most need of faith support." (Vlcek, 43) Discuss the issues mentioned in this quotation.

#### **Chapter 14** (an intercalary chapter which documents the beginning of a social shift)

Vocabulary: Thomas Paine (1737-1809), American Revolutionary patriot, writer, and political theoretician, born in England; Karl (Heinrich) Marx (1818-1883), German social philosopher and economist, in London after 1850, founder of modern socialism; Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (1870-1924), Russian leader of the Communist revolution of 1917, premier of the U. S. S. R. from 1917 – 1924; Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), American statesman, third president of the United States from 1801 to 1809, drew up the Declaration of Independence; zygote (151), anlage (151)

1. Steinbeck focuses on the widening gulf between the haves and the have nots and the lack of understanding (150):

The Great Owners	Commoner/Man
Widening governments	Hunger in a stomach
Growing labor unity	Hunger in a soul
New taxes	Hunger for joy and security
Plans	Muscles and minds aching to grow, to work, to create

Create a similar chart for the world today.

2. “The great owners, nervous, sensing a change, knowing nothing of the nature of the change. . .not knowing these things are results, not causes. . .The causes lie deep and simply.” (150) In the question above, you created a chart. Now, focus on what changes America needs to make in the future. Has the current administration’s approach to have faith-based organizations picking up the slack to assist people been successful in alleviating the problems in the country? If every faith-based organization in the country had assisted in Hurricane Katrina (etc.) relief efforts, would the problem would have been resolved?

Many churches were among the first responders. If the approach that Steinbeck advocated in this book had been used, would the problem have been solved? How did F. D. Roosevelt pull the country out of this terrible situation (the Dust Bowl era)? What organizations did he initiate? (WPA, CCC) What acts were passed to facilitate this? How did his fatherly fire-side chats maintain communication with U. S. citizens?

3. “For man, unlike any other thing organic or inorganic in the universe, grows beyond his work, walks up the stairs of his concepts, emerges ahead of his accomplishments. This you may say of man-when theories change and crash, when school, philosophies, when narrow dark alleys of thought, national, religious, economic, grow and disintegrate, man reaches, stumbles forward, painfully, mistakenly sometimes. Having stepped forward, he may slip back, but only half a step, never the full step back. This you may say and know it and know it. This you may know when the bombs plummet out of the black planes on the market place, when prisoners are stuck like pigs, when the crushed bodies drain filthily in the dust. You may know it this way. If the steps were not being taken, if the stumbling-forward ache were not alive, the bombs would not fall, the throats would not be cut. Fear the time when the bombs stop falling while the bombers live-for every bomb is proof that the spirit has not died. And fear the time when the strikes stop while the great owners live-for every little beaten strike is proof that the step is being taken. And this you can know-fear the time when Manself will not suffer and die for a concept, for this one quality is the foundation of Manself, and this one quality is man, distinctive in the universe.” (150, 151) Discuss Steinbeck’s theories. What is your concept of mankind? Discuss which points you agree with and disagree with.

4. “For here ‘I lost my land’ is changed; a cell is split and from its splitting grows the thing you hate . . .The danger is here, for two men are not as lonely and perplexed as one. And from this first “we” there grows a still more dangerous thing: ‘I have a little food’ plus ‘I have none.’ If from this problem the sum is ‘We have a little food,’ the thing is on its way, the movement has direction. Only a little multiplication now. . .Here, take this blanket. It’s wool. It was my mother’s blanket-take it for the baby. This is the thing to bomb. This is the beginning-from ‘I’ to ‘we.’ If you who own the things people must have could understand this, you might preserve yourself. . .For the quality of owning freezes you forever into ‘I,’ and cuts you off forever from the ‘we.’ (151, 152) Where is the United States today-in a “we” or an “I” state? Prove your answer with examples. Where does the United States go from here to move forward? Consider the use of pronouns from the singular “I” to the plural “we.” “If this tractor were **ours**

it would be good – not **mine**, but **ours**. If **our** tractor turned the long furrows of **our** land, it would be good. Not **my** land, but **ours**. **We** could love that tractor then as **we** have loved this land when it was **ours**. But the tractor does two things – it turns the land and turns **us** off the land. There is little difference between this tractor and a tank. The people are driven, intimidated, hurt by both. **We** must think about this. Why does Steinbeck make such a strong distinction between the singular and the plural? What is his message?

### **Chapter 15** (an intercalary chapter with alternating intercalary paragraphs)

Vocabulary: languid (155), insignia (155), lodges (155), whangs (158)

1. The diner reflects the small world that most people build around themselves – while the rest of the world zips by. Define the world inside the diner and outside the diner. Then, define *your* world and the world in general. What do you want the world to be? Write a letter to the person you will be in 20 years. Write about the way the world will be, your goals, your career, your family. Save it to read in the future.
2. The decade is clearly described with the songs and the singers of the 1930s. What songs were popular then? Which entertainers were popular then? With our songs being so diverse, can those same questions be answered today? If so, who are the most popular singers (rappers) today? entertainers? Look at the song lyrics then and today. Are some of the themes the same? (More songs are listed on p. 199.)
3. Likewise, the products of the day are listed. Seek Publishing publishes memory books each year titled “Remember When . . . A Nostalgic Look Book in Time.” Why isn’t Black Sunday included in the list of key events for 1935? Rewrite the book for 1935 or write the book for 2008.
4. “ ‘We seen a wreck this mornin’, his companion said. ‘Big car, Big ‘Cad, a special job and a honey, low, cream-color, special job. Hit a truck. Folded the radiator right back into the driver. Must a been doin’ ninety. Steerin’ wheel went right on through the guy an’ lef’ him a-wigglin’ like a frog on a hook. Peach of a car. A honey. You can have her for peanuts now. Drivin’ alone, the guy was . . . This guy come by us doin’ ninety-r’ared up on two wheels just to pass us, an’ a car’s comin’ so he cuts in an whangs this here truck. Drove like he’s blin’ drunk. Jesus, the air was full a bed clothes an’ chickens an’ kids. Killed one kid. Never seen such a mess. . . ’ ” (158) The accident brings the outside world into the diner. Was there a speed limit on highways then? If not, research when speed limits were first imposed. Federal legislators are discussing whether to lower the speed limit – to save gas and to save lives. Write to your congressman stating your opinion. What is the current law about people riding in open trucks? What are the differences in challenges and dangers of the road? Why do we even have the Good Samaritan Law today? Research the cars in the 1930s and compare them to cars today.
5. The poor family wanting to buy a loaf of bread for ten cents also brings in the outside world and forces Mae to see others’ plights. Why did the cook convince her to sell the loaf of bread? “From behind her Al growled, ‘God Almighty, Mae, give ‘em bread.’ ” (159) Why was Al more compassionate than Mae? How many women worked outside of the home during the 1930s? Why was Al compassionate and Mae wasn’t? Did Al understand the hardship of trying to raise a family?
6. Mae does show compassion when she sells the nickel candy for two-for-a-cent candy. The two truckers reward her kindness by leaving her a big tip. What does this part of the novel show about humans’ kindness to others? What is meant by the term “what goes around, comes around”? Explain the idea of “paying it forward.” Start a chain of kindness.

### **Chapter 16** (movin’ on)

Vocabulary: con-rod bearing (166), babbitt (166), johnrabbit (169), crescent wrench (172), jack (176), cotter-pins (179), lay down his dogs (182), shim (183), labor faker (190), querulously (192), nimsy-mimsy (192), bolshevisky (192), vagrant (186)

1. Rose of Sharon tells Ma of Connie and her plans to live in town when they reach California. This distresses Ma, and she replied, “We don’t want you to go ‘way from us. . .It ain’t good for folks to break up.” (165) Are families moving distances away from core family still an issue? With the communications available today, is it still such an issue? What does the term “nuclear family” mean? What are the challenges that face your family in regards to keeping or having the family together? What does lack of family support do to the homeless people? In your class what are the percentages of people living in the same town as both of their parents? grandparents? great grandparents? aunts and uncles? cousins? If your immediate family does not have family members living close to you, do you “adopt” others to form a family unit?

2. Tom suggests that everyone move on towards California and that he and the preacher stay behind to repair the car. The men (the decision makers in the family) agree that it is the smartest plan. But, Ma revolts and declares that she isn’t leaving. “And now Ma’s mouth set hard. She said softly, ‘On’y way you gonna get me to go is to whup me.’ ” (168, 169) “The eyes of the whole family shifted back to Ma. She was the power. She had taken control. ‘The money we’d make wouldn’t do no good,’ she said. ‘All we got is the family unbroken. Like a bunch of cows, when the lobos are ranging, stick all together. I ain’t scared while we’re all here, all that’s alive, but I ain’t gonna see us bust up.’ ” (169, 170) This was a patriarchal society, meaning that the men controlled. Why does Ma take control? How does Pa feel about it?

3. “ ‘Pa’s all mad about it costs fifty cents jus’ to camp under a tree. . .Says nex’ thing they’ll sell ya a little tank a air.” (175) Today we do pay for air at gas stations when we want to put air into our tires. What else do we pay for today that would have been inconceivable in the past? (television, bottled water) What might we be required to pay for in the future that is free to us today?

4. Al asks Tom for details about his time in prison. Tom replies on his thoughts about incarcerating men. “Thirty days is all right. . .An’ a hundred an’ eighty days is all right. But over a year-I dunno. There’s somepin screwy about the whole idear a lockin’ people up.” (177) What alternatives might work better than incarceration? What percentage of the prison populations are men? women? What percentage represent the different races? ages? What is the education level of most prisoners? What is the family backgrounds of most prisoners? What percentage are illiterate? What percentage have learning disabilities?

5. When Tom and Al go to the junkyard to buy used parts, they meet a man who complains about his lot in life. Tom has no sympathy for the man. “Now look-a-here, fella. You got that eye wide open. An’ ya dirty, ya stink. Ya jus’ askin’ for it. Lets ya feel sorry for yaself. ‘Course ya can’t get no woman with that empty eye flappin’ around’. Put somepin over it an’ wash ya face.” (179) Do you think that the man will take Tom’s advice? Why or why not? Does the way we maintain our personal appearance reveal self image?

6. Tom gets into a heated conversation with the camping grounds’ proprietor about charging people for a place to sleep. Is Tom passive aggressive? List the evidence of Tom’s rising anger:

- Asking the proprietor if the sheriff is his brother-in-law
- Being resentful of being called a “bum”
- Sassing the proprietor about charging people
- Throwing a clod of dirt at the light.

7. Tom’s anger toward the camp proprietor for capitalizing on the misfortune of the migrant families echoes Steinbeck’s attitude concerning the crimes of profit-hunters. Steinbeck believed that humans must not work for independent benefit, but for the good of all. Will Tom’s knowledge that he has no choice

except to get involved lead him into trouble in California? Think of examples of profit-hunters (tow truck drivers waiting on hills to pull cars out of snow banks and charge an exorbitant amount, since the people have few options available). Do you agree or disagree with Steinbeck's theory? Fully explain your answer.

8. At the camp, Pa and Tom encounter a man who is returning from California and tells them what to expect: little work, poor living conditions, low wages. Is the man telling the truth? If so, why doesn't the family return to Oklahoma? (nothing left there, have come too far, still clinging to hope) Why does the camp manager ask the man if he is a labor faker?

### **Chapter 17** (an intercalary chapter of self-government)

Vocabulary: scuttled (193), timid (194), ostracism (194), gullied (198)

1. "Thus it might be that one family camped near a spring, and another camped for the spring and for company, and a third because two families had pioneered the place and found it good. And when the sun went down, perhaps twenty families and twenty cars were there. In the evening, a strange thing happened: the twenty families became one family, the children were the children of all. The loss of home became one loss. . .they grew to be units of the camps. . ." (193) How did this shared experience create unity? How does a disaster unify a community. (Think of communities such as Holly, Colorado, that were destroyed by tornadoes or floods.)

2. "At first the families were timid in the building and tumbling worlds, but gradually the technique of building worlds became their technique. Then leaders emerged, then laws were made, then codes came into being. . .The families learned what rights must be observed – the right of privacy in the tent; the right to keep the past 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 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 things. And the families learned, although no one told them what rights are monstrous and must be destroyed: the right to intrude upon privacy, the right to be noisy while the camp slept, the right of seduction or rape, the right of adultery and theft and murder. These rights were crushed, because the little worlds could not exist for even a night with such rights alive. . .rules became laws, although no one told the families. It is unlawful to foul near a camp; it is unlawful in any way to foul the drinking water; it is unlawful to eat good rich food near one who is hungry, unless he is asked to share." (194) Draw a poster listing the rights and the forbidden behaviors. Which rights should be in existence today? For example, people who stay in motels or hotels should expect quiet at a certain time of night. Which rights exist in your classroom? How do the lists compare with the Ten Commandments?

3. "We are all part of one being; therefore, if we all follow laws (or rights) that arise out of common sense, experience, and respect for others, it is possible to govern ourselves. . .The **theme** of survival by pragmatism is illuminated by the inhabitants of these transitory, self-governing camps. Those people who are able to be flexible, to adapt to new circumstances, are the ones who will survive, and adaptability is gained through group action. People isolated into "I" thinking are static, while those who join together to create a "we" community are always changing." (Vlcek, 52) Agree or disagree with the statements. How did hippie compounds exist? Why do polygamist compounds survive? Today the slogan is "There is no 'I' in 'team.'" Can you think of other slogans we use to encourage teamwork?

4. "In the worlds, social conduct became fixed and rigid, so that a man must say, "Good morning," when asked for it." (194) What are the social pleasantries expected today? (to greet someone in return, to hold a door open for the person behind, not to cut in line)

5. "And when a baby died a pile of silver coins grew at the door flap, for a baby must be well buried, since it has had nothing else of life." (195) What does this generosity show about the attitude towards children and the willingness to sacrifice for strangers? Do we have a parallel today such as the media

asking for donations for a specific cause or churches taking a special collection? Why wasn't there the same outpouring when Grampa died? When do you reach out to others?

6. "Early comers moved over; and States were exchanged, and friends and sometimes relatives discovered. . . And a new unit was formed. The dusk came, but before the dark was down the new family was of the camp. A word had been passed with every family. They were known people – good people." (197) What was the purpose of getting acquainted? Some entertainment places like the Flying W Ranch ask people where they are from. What is their purpose? What is the purpose in having people who didn't know each other previously sit together at a table? In parts of Europe, restaurants seat people together until a table is filled – not necessarily in groups of pre-existing friends. Why do they have that seating arrangement? What is the advantage for the patrons? Why does this practice make many Americans uncomfortable?

7. "Fella says to me, gov'ment fella, an' he says, she's gullied up on ya. Gov'ment fella. He says, if ya plowed 'cross the contour, she won't gully. Never did have a chance to try her. An' the new super' ain't plowin' 'cross the contour. Runnin' a furrow four miles long that ain't stoppin' or goin' aroun' Jesus Christ Hissself." (198) Read *The Worst Hard Time* by Timothy Egan for more information on contour plowing in the Dust Bowl. What farming practices are used today that are ecologically/environmentally sound?

8. The families discussed the advantages of living in California. "If we can get work it'll be fine. Won't have no cold in the winter. Kids won't freeze on the way to school. I'm gonna take care my kids don't miss no more school. I can read good, but it ain't no pleasure to me like with a fella that's used to it." (199) Why is school attendance so important? Why is an education so important? Research what percentage of students graduate from high school. What ethnic groups have the highest percentage of graduates? the lowest percentage? Then, research the calculations for the difference in wages a college-educated person can make in a career compared to someone with only a high school diploma. Governor Ritter has an education commission to suggest changes in public schools. If you were on that commission, what changes would you suggest? Then, look up the commission's recommendations and compare them with your suggestions.

9. Music: Along the road, "perhaps a man brought out his guitar to the front of his tent. . . The man played and the people moved slowly in on him until the circle was closed and tight, and then he sang 'Ten-Cent Cotton and Forty-Cent Meat' And the circle sang softly with him. And he sang 'Why Do You Cut Your Hair, Girls?' And the circle sang. He wailed the song, 'I'm Leaving Old Texas.' " (199) Find the lyrics to these songs. " 'Ten-Cent Cotton' also known as 'Seven-Cent Cotton and Forty-Cent Meat' is a country blues song from the 1920s lamenting conditions for the cotton farmer." (Bender, 101-102). 'Why Do You Bob Your Hair, Girls' was written in the 1920s and recorded by the West Virginia preacher Blind Alfred Reed." (Bender, 102) What is the purpose of singing? How does singing unite people? How do songs and music enhance life? What do the lyrics of a song reveal about a period of history?

## **Chapter 18** (The end of the second section, the road trip.)

Vocabulary: pinnacles (201), reedy (202), fightin' hard scrabble and rocks (204), sun-bitten (204), Okie (205-206), imperiously (209), epaulets (213), muskrat (214), decorous (216), Jenny Lind (219)

1. When the men take a bath in the Colorado River, they talk to a man who is returning from California and who warns them what to expect. "Well, if you truly wanta know, I'm a fella that's asked questions an' give her some thought. She's a nice country. But she was stole a long time ago. You git across the desert an' come into the country aroun' Bakersfield. An' you never seen such purty country – all orchards an' grapes, purtiest country you ever seen. . . People gonna' have a look in their eye. They gonna look at you an' their face says, 'I don't like you, you son-of-a-bitch.' Gonna be deputy sheriffs, an' they'll push

you aroun'. (205) Compare the description of California and the experiences the Okies can expect with the immigrants who are coming from Mexico into America today.

2. "You gonna see in people's face how they hate you. An' – I'll tell you somepin. They hate you 'cause they're scairt. They know a hungry fella gonna get food even if he got to take it. . . Well, Okie use' ta mean you was from Oklahoma. Now it means you're a dirty son-of-a-bitch. Okie means you're scum."

(206) When did the term, Okie, start? Why are derogatory terms used to describe people? Does the description of hating someone because of being scared of them still apply to today? What is the percentage of different ethnic groups in America today? Make a pie chart.

3. When Pa asks whether California is nice, the man replies, "Sure, nice to look at, but you can't have none of it. They's a grove of yella oranges – an' a guy with a gun that got the right to kill you if you touch one. They's a newspaper fella near the coast, got a million acres." (206) Who is the newspaperman who owns a million acres? (Hearst) In the U. S. today, somepeople can still buy their piece of the "American dream." When did the American dream become a part of our culture? Many U. S. companies such as Anheuser Busch are being sold to foreign investors. Why is America for sale?

4. Ma tells Rose of Sharon that death is hard and lonely when you're young. "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, Rosasharn. I wisht I could tell you so you'd know, but I can't." (209, 210) What did Ma mean? Find two quotations about life that you'd give to someone else or write two of your own. Topics might include popularity, not making a team.

5. Noah decides that he is staying there and not moving to California with the family; he implores Tom to tell Ma. Write what Tom will tell Ma. Then compare your version to what Tom actually says on page 216.

6. Ma again becomes feisty when she is confronted by the sheriff. How far will Ma go to protect her family? When she tells Tom about the confrontation, he laughed. "Tom grabbed her arm and shook her roughly and loosely, and he laughed. He sat down on the ground, still laughing. 'My God, Ma. I knowed you when you was gentle. What's come over you?' " (215) Answer the question Tom posed.

7. "Ma was silent a long time. 'Family's fallin' apart,' she said. 'I don' know. Seems like I can't think no more. I jus' can't think. They's too much.'" (216) Recap who is no a longer part of the family. This also foreshadows other losses. Predict who else will leave the family unit. At the end of the book, review your predictions.

8. As they prepare supper, Ma said, "I pray God we gonna be let to wash some clothes. We ain't never been dirty like this. Don't even wash potatoes 'fore we boil 'em. I wonder why? Seems like the heart's took out of us." (217) One issue mentioned is the lack of water. With Colorado facing a drought this past summer, water use becomes a hot topic – again. What can each of us do to conserve water? Do you think that we will ever return to the days when most people share bath water? Can we capture the bath/shower water and use it for watering outside? Develop a plan. What inventions do we have that have made us wasteful? How have conveniences made us less environmentally concerned? (e. g., water heaters).

Monitor your family's use of electricity, heat, air conditioning, water, and commercial products such as light bulbs and then develop a plan to be more environmentally efficient. Check your utility bill to see if your plan made a difference.

9. Sairy says that she is too ill to go on to California, but that she doesn't want to tell her husband. "I'm jus' pain covered with skin. I know what it is, but I won't tell him. He'd be too sad. He wouldn't know what to do, anyways. Maybe in the night, when he's a-sleepin' – when he waked up, it won't be so bad." (219) What is wrong with Sairy? Does she have access to health care? What health care options do the poor have today?

10. "Tom grinned. 'It don't take no nerve to do somepin when there ain't nothin' else you can do.' " (221) Is this an aphorism? Explain.

11. "Casy said quickly, 'I know this-a man got to do what he got to do. . . On'y one thing in this worl' I'm sure of, an' that's I'm sure nobody got a right to mess with a fella's life. He got to do it all hisself. Help him, maybe, but not tell him what to do.' " (224) Give examples from people you know who followed this

philosophy. Interview your parents to ask them to add to your list. Write guidelines that you try to live by. Rank order them. Share your list with the class.

12. After Ma admits that Granma died miles ago, “the family looked at Ma with a little terror at her strength. . .Casy said in wonder, ‘All night long, an’ she was alone. . .John, there’s a woman so great with love-she scares me.’ ” Why didn’t Ma tell anyone earlier that Granma had died? Was it strength that enabled Ma to remain quiet? Do you agree that Ma is a woman so great with love that she is scary? Critics say that Ma is a physical symbol of the humanism strand of Steinbeck’s social theory. Do you agree or disagree with the critics? Around Mother’s Day, some national magazines name the Mother of the Year. Research some of their stories. Give examples of incredible courage during the Holocaust, 9-11, war, etc. Many people have the capacity to compartmentalize in order to be able to deal with situations. Did Ma have that ability? Did any of the other characters? Prove your answer with examples.

### **Chapter 19** (an intercalary chapter about land ownership in California)

Vocabulary: stoop crops (232), penitent (232), straw bosses (232), nebulous (233), goad (234), Hooverville (234), jimson weed (235)

1. Recap the story of the large California landowners, including bringing in foreign workers. “Now farming became industry, and the owners followed Rome, although they did not know it.” (232) Explain the reference to Rome’s history. Is the United States “following Rome” today? Debate the issue. Look for specific parallels between the decline of Rome and the reasons for many of America’s current problems. Examples: the affinity for violence, violent video games and horror movies and the Roman masses going to the Coliseum to watch violence. Compare vomitoriums in Rome to the problems of eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia and overindulgence in America today. Also this era provided an example of not being able to have it both ways. If they (we) want the laborers, we must be able to provide services. Provide examples today (education, health care, housing) “A man may stand to use a scythe, a plow, a pitchfork; but he must crawl like a bug between the rows of lettuce, he must bend his back and pull his long bag between the cotton rows, he must go on his knees like a penitent across a cauliflower patch.” (232) How many Americans today are willing to do this work?

2. “And then the dispossessed were drawn west-from Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico; from Nevada and Arkansas families, tribes; dusted out, tractored out. Carloads, caravans, homeless and hungry; twenty thousand and fifty thousand and a hundred thousand and two hundred thousand. They streamed over the mountains, hungry and restless-restless as ants, scurrying to find work to do-to lift, to push, to pull, to pick, to cut-anything, any burden to bear, for food. . .We ain’t foreign. Seven generations back Americans, and beyond that Irish, Scotch, English, German. One of our folks in the Revolution, an’ they was lots of our folks in the Civil War-both sides. Americans. . . And they had hoped to find a home, and they found only hatred.” (233) Why did the landowners in California hate the Okies? What threat did the Okies pose? How does that compare to the attitude toward immigrants today There is concern today about farms in California being productive enough to meet some of America’s demands for food. What needs to be done to maintain farming ground and our food supply?

3. “He drove **an** old car into a town. He scoured the farms for work. Where can we sleep the night? Well, there’s Hooverville on the edge of the river. There’s a whole raft of Okies there. He drove his old car to Hooverville. He never asked again, for there was a Hooverville on the edge of every town. The rag town lay close to water; and the houses were tents, and weed-thatched enclosures, paper houses, a great junk pile.” (234) With the mortgage crisis in 2008, tent cities sprung up – temporarily – in Los Angeles.

Access *The Los Angeles Times* archives or

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/player/nol/newsid\\_7290000/newsid\\_7293500/7293507.stm?bw=nb&mp=wm&news=1&nol\\_story=7293507&bbcws=1](http://news.bbc.co.uk/player/nol/newsid_7290000/newsid_7293500/7293507.stm?bw=nb&mp=wm&news=1&nol_story=7293507&bbcws=1) to view the tent cities, which are no longer there. Who forced the squatters to take them down and to move on? Why couldn’t the people stay in their tents?

4. “Now and then a man tried; crept on the land and cleared a piece, trying like a thief to steal a little richness from the earth. Secret gardens hidden in the weeds. A package of carrot seeds and a few turnips. Planted potato skins, crept out in the evening secretly to hoe in the stolen earth.” (235) During this past summer, Colorado College students planted a garden near the college as a class project – but a neighbor complained. Use *The Gazette’s* archives to read this story. Volunteers maintain flower gardens around town, but mostly downtown. Should those flower beds be turned into vegetable gardens to feed the hungry?

5. “And then the raids-the swoop of armed deputies on the squatters’ camps. Get out. Department of Health orders. This camp is a menace to health.” (237) What does the El Paso County Health Department do? With recent budget cuts, what services had to be eliminated? During the U. S. Senior Open held at the Broadmoor, El Paso County food inspectors ensured that on-site vendors and caterers had proper permits. According to reports, on-site vendors complained that food was being sold by nearby neighbors off-site. Food inspectors investigated and found a fund-raising group selling sodas, snacks, and ice-cream bars. State law requires that all dairy products sold at events have proper permits which the group did not have. Therefore, the inspectors asked the group to stop selling the ice-cream bars, and they complied. The inspectors also shut down a child’s lemonade stand located in the family’s driveway. The Health Department did apologize publicly. What is your opinion about these two incidents?

6. “And the great owners, who must lose their land in an upheaval, the great owners with access to history, with eyes to read history and to know the great fact: when property accumulates in too few hands it is taken away. And that companion fact: when a majority of the people are hungry and cold they will take by force what they need. And the little screaming fact that sounds through all history: repression works only to strengthen and knit the repressed.” (238) Cite examples from history to prove this statement. “The money was spent for arms, for gas to protect the great holdings, and spies were sent to catch the murmuring of revolt so that it might be stamped out. The changing economy was ignored, plans for the change ignored; and only means to destroy revolt were considered, while the causes of revolt went on.” (238) Is history repeating itself? Prove your answer. Give examples of our trying to destroy a problem rather than considering the source of a problem first.

7. “Our people are good people; our people are kind people. Pray God some day kind people won’t all be poor. Pray God some day a kid can eat.” (239) Hunger in the United States - considered to be one of the wealthiest nations-is a national shame. What is the answer to eliminating hunger? Write a plan.

## Chapter 20 (Hooverville)

Vocabulary: subdued (240), tuckered out (244), bull simple (244), belligerently (246), sardonically (246), blacklist (247), vagrant (247), shoat (250), Durham (251), roused (255), scrabblin’ (256), moonin’ (259), circuitousness (262), talkin’ red (263), tourniquet (267), candyin’ (268), self-abasement (269), pertly (270), servile (279), Sam Browne belts (279), American Legion (279)

1. The family stayed outside while Ma and Pa and Uncle John talked with the coroner. “And they sat in the sun while the examination went on, while the cause of death was found and the certificate signed.” (240) What was the cause of death?

2. Ma is sad because they cannot afford a nice funeral. “I jus’ can’t get it outa my head what store she set by a nice funeral.” (241) Research the cost of a funeral today. Due to the high cost, many people are returning to simpler funerals, such as just a pine box. What do laws require for a body to be buried? What do people do when they can’t afford burial for a loved one? What is a pauper? Is there a “county” graveyard in El Paso County near Bear Creek Park?

3. “Some says they don’ want us to vote; keep us movin’ so we can’t vote. An’ some says so we can’t get on relief. An’ some says if we set in one place we’d get organized.” (244) In history what have been the controversial practices to prevent certain groups from being able to vote? What are the voting rights in

different states? What is your opinion about voting rights being consistent across states for national elections? Look at some of the more recent issues concerning elections including hanging chads, malfunctioning machines, votes not counted. How might absentee ballots be a questionable practice in terms of corruption or lost ballots?

4. When Tom questions the purpose of the orange handbills, the young man laughed. “They say they’s three hundred thousan’ us folks here, an’ I bet every dam’ fam’ly seen them han’bills. . . Look. . . S’pose you got a job a’ work, an there’s jus’ one fella wants the job. You got to pay ‘im what he asts. But s’pose they’s a hundred men. . . 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. . . That’s why them han’bills was out. You can print a hell of a lot of han’bills with what ya save payin’ fifteen cents an hour for fiel’ work.” (245) With the unemployment rate so high in the U. S. today, a lot of applicants apply for one job. Research examples of too many people applying for the same job, of people who have been out of work for a long time and still can’t find suitable jobs. What advice do experts give to these people? What advice would you provide? With the high unemployment rate, summer jobs were harder for teens to find. Interview teens who worked this summer and teens who were unable to find jobs. Many jobs are advertised in newspapers, on websites, and posted at locations. Some people believe that unemployed people should take any job available. Look at what some of the advertised jobs pay. How many jobs would it take to maintain your family’s lifestyle if family members were paid minimum wages? What are the other factors in taking a job, such as the cost of transportation, child care, the hours required to work. What if child care may not be available?

5. Tom quickly sums up the situation. “So we take what we can get, huh, or we starve; an’ if we yelp we starve.” (247) Tom gets mad at the situation and is determined to do something. The young man he has been talking with tells him that he’ll come to get him that night. (248) What is brewing? Why is the young man’s advice to act “bull simple” valid? What do you think “bull simple” means?

6. When Tom looks for Casy, he finds him with his shoes off. “Agrarian philosophy, a strong component of Steinbeck’s social thought, is symbolized by the desire of people to be close to the land. In this chapter, Casy, like many of the novel’s characters, facilitates his thinking by placing his feet in the dirt. This image is rampant throughout the narrative, from the small children of Chapter 1, who ‘draw figures in the dust with bare toes,’ to Tom Joad, whose first gesture on the road to home is to take off his shoes and wiggle his toes in the dirt.” (Vlcek, 60) The importance of the earth is continued with Grampa having to be buried in the ground without a coffin and the many references to farming, to growing crops. Do people today share the desire to be close to the land? Why did so many people leave small farming communities and why are so many now returning? Why is organic food so popular? Why do people have more of a desire to grow their own food? Spend time outside with friends and pay attention to nature. Describe the experience. How is children’s play today different from children’s play then? Are poorer people more likely to be creative and imaginative because they are required to solve their own problems? Do they have better coping skills?

7. Trouble enters the camp when Floyd talks back to the work contractor, asking the contractor to put in writing how many men he wants to hire and how much he will pay. When a deputy gets out of the passenger side, the situation worsens. Why did the deputy want to arrest Floyd? Why did Tom trip the deputy? Why did the deputy shoot the woman’s hand? Why did Casy kick the deputy? Why did Casy insist on taking the blame?

8. According to literary critics, Casy is the Christ-figure in the novel, even having the same initials. “Like Christ, he goes into the wilderness to experience a spiritual rebirth; and in this chapter, he sacrifices himself for Tom.” (Vlcek, 60) Others discount this theory as “stretching.” What is your opinion?

9. Earlier in the novel, Ma was sassy and goaded Pa to hit her. Now, “Ma smiled slowly. ‘He (Connie) might smack you. You got it comin’ with whinin’ aroun’ an’ candyin’ yaself. If he smacks some sense in you I’ll bless ‘im.’ ” (268) Therefore, it appears that it was acceptable for men to “smack” their women if

they needed it. Verify or dispute that thinking with other examples from the book. Why did people discipline their children differently in that era? Will people return to “old-fashioned” discipline? How were you disciplined? How do you plan to discipline your children?

11. Connie has apparently deserted Rose of Sharon. Find evidence in the novel to show that he wasn't a good man, as Pa said he knew all along. (didn't help with any of the family's packing, working on the cars, etc.) Was he more of an immature dreamer?

12. As the family is leaving Hooverville, the men arm themselves. “Tom said, ‘They comes a time when a man gets mad. . . I know, Ma. I'm a-tryin'. But them deputies – If it was the law they was workin' with, why, we could take it. But it *ain't* the law. They're a-workin' away at our spirits. They're a-tryin' to make us cringe an' crawl like a whipped bitch. They tryin' to break us. Why, Jesus Christ, Ma, they comes a time when the on'y way a fella can keep his decency is by takin' a sock at a cop. They're workin' on our decency.’ ” (278, 279) Is the media balanced in reporting events involving police and showing the situations they face? Discuss.

13. When a group of men stops the family and demands to know where they are going, “Tom said, ‘Well – and then his voice took on a servile whine. ‘We're strangers here,’ he said. ‘We heard about they's work in a place called Tulare.’ ” (279) Where did Tom learn to speak with a “servile whine”? Did his speech pattern serve the purpose? This gang mentality reminds readers of other examples in the country's history when posses took the law into their own hands. Cite specific examples. Ma had a steadying hand of Tom's arm and quieted him while he talked to the men. “Why, Tom-us people will go on livin' when all them people is gone. Why, Tom, we're the people that live. They ain't gonna wipe us out. Why, we're the people – *we* go on.” (280) Consider Ma's view of the poor's ability to cope with different circumstances. What can we learn from her?

## **Chapter 21** (an intercalary chapter attacking commercial farming and the disregard for human decency)

Vocabulary: rove (282), paradoxes (282), degenerate (283), rachitic (284), pustules (284), pellagra (284)

1. “In the West there was panic when the migrants multiplied on the highways. Men of property were terrified for their property. Men who had never been hungry saw the eyes of the hungry. Men who had never wanted anything very much saw the flare of want in the eyes of the migrants. And the men of the towns and of the soft suburban country gathered to defend themselves; and they reassured themselves that they were good and the invaders bad, as a man must do before he fights.” (283) Does this mirror the fear some people have regarding immigrants today? The Guardian Angels form groups of citizens to patrol their own streets to keep them safe. Research more about the Guardian Angels. Is there a branch in Colorado Springs? What do you think of their mission? How are the Guardian Angels different from neighborhood watch groups? What was said earlier about being “scairt” and what does it do to a man in power?

2. “. . .and they reassured themselves that they were good and the invaders bad, as a man must do before he fights.” (283) Does this type of attitude provide justification for some our decisions today? How does this attitude affect the ability to have cohesiveness within your neighborhood? school? city? county? state? nation? How does this attitude affect man's ability to have world peace?

3. “And now the great owners and the companies invented a new method. A great owner bought a cannery. And when the peaches and pears were ripe, he cut the price of fruit below the cost of raising it. And as cannery owner, he paid himself a low price for the fruit and kept the price of canned goods up and took his profit. And the little farmers who owned no canneries lost their farms. . . And the companies, the banks worked at their own doom and they did not know it. The fields were fruitful, and starving men moved on the roads. The granaries were full, and the children of the poor grew up rachitic, and the pustules of pellagra swelled on their sides. The great companies did not know that the line between hunger and anger is a thin line. And money that might have gone to wages went for gas, for guns, for

agents and spies, for blacklists, for drilling. On the highways the people moved like ants and searched for work, for food. And the anger began to ferment.” (284) Today many Americans are angry at the government for outsourcing too many jobs overseas. The issue, of course, is complicated. Why did companies send jobs to workers outside of the United States? How is this practice of having people in other countries do the job for lower wages similar to the migrant workers in California? What do the presidential candidates and the legislators who are seeking (re)election say on this issue? What is more important to you – paying less for products or keeping more jobs in America?

4. “By maintaining an extended allusion to Julia Ward Howe’s “The Battle Hymn of the Republic,” Chapters 21 and 25 create a mood of apocalyptic reckoning. The context of the book’s title in the song refers to the Book of Revelation (Rev. 14:19), ‘The angel swung his sickle on the earth, gathered its grapes and threw them into the great winepress of the God’s wrath.’ The first four lines of the song are:

‘Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord  
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored.  
He has loosed the fateful lightning of his terrible swift sword,  
His truth is marching on.’

Steinbeck describes the armies of bitterness marching in Chapter Nine and ends this chapter with a warning that the anger of the migrant workers is beginning to ‘ferment.’ ”(Vlcek, 63) Steinbeck’s wife Carol had suggested the book’s title. Half of the book’s dedication reads: To CAROL, who willed this book.” Steinbeck liked her suggestion for the title so much that he wanted all of the lyrics to “The Battle Hymn of the Republic” printed on the endpapers. Covici (his editor) wanted to print only the verse in which the title phrase appears. Steinbeck prevailed. Find the complete song lyrics and determine how they apply to the novel and to its message. The lyrics are printed on the inside covers of early editions of *The Grapes of Wrath*. Why did subsequent printers discontinue printing the lyrics, particularly since Steinbeck had to argue with his original editor, Pascal Covici, to include the full lyrics? Research the full conversation. What impact would copyright laws have on the decision to print the song?

## **Chapter 22** (Weedpatch Camp)

Vocabulary: destitute (287), shirtwaist (289), dungarees (290), muckstick (297), Central Committee (297), contrite (300), pone (302), frawny (303), a-kyoodlin around (306), disconsolately (306), clutch-an’-hug dancin’ (308), reverential (314), skitters (315), cowed (316), imperceptibly (317), clout (321), dinky (323),

1. Compare the Weedpatch Camp to Hooverville.
2. Many people live in government-subsidized housing today. Research more about government housing and then compare those housing units to Weedpatch. After Hurricane Katrina, FEMA purchased basic trailers for families to live in. What was wrong with the trailers? How much money was wasted? What have Americans learned since then about providing needed assistance?
3. Why did the Weedpatch Camp work so well? “Why ain’t they more places like this?” (288) Answer the question. Compare the differences between the Weedpatch democracy where it comes from the people and democracy which is imposed on cultures in other countries today.
4. A commendable organization is Habitat for Humanity. Research the organization, visit houses people have built in Colorado Springs, and interview people who have volunteered to build the houses. What can you do to help?
5. When they start working for Mr. Thomas, the salary is thirty cents an hour. The next morning he tells them the rate is down to twenty-five cents an hour. “ ‘Well, I belong to it. (the Farmer’ Association) We had a meeting last night. Now, do you know who runs the Farmers’ Association? I’ll tell you. The Bank of the West. That bank owns most of this valley, and it’s got paper on everything it don’t own. So last night the member from the bank told me, he said, ‘You’re paying thirty cents an hour. You’d better cut it

down to twenty-five. . .If you pay thirty, it'll only cause unrest. And by the way,' he says, 'you going to need the usual amount for a crop loan next year.?' ” (295) The banker who lends money to Mr. Thomas to plant his crop coerced him into paying his migrant workers the same wage as everyone else. Explore wages and laws today. What is the minimum wage? What was the controversy surrounding the minimum wage being raised recently? What laws affect equal pay for equal work? What does the law say about the number of hours a person can work in a week? What is the purpose of the Labor Department?

6. Mr. Thomas also warns his workers about trouble at the Saturday night dance. “Well, the Association don't like the government camps. Can't get a deputy in there. The people make their own laws, I hear, and you can't arrest a man without a warrant. Now if there was a big fight and maybe shooting – a bunch of deputies could go in and clean out the camp.” (297) When Tom demanded to know why the Association wouldn't leave them alone, Mr. Thomas replied, “I'll tell you why. Those folks in the camp are getting used to being treated like humans. When they go back to the squatters' camps they'll be hard to handle.” (296) Why did Mr. Thomas warn his workers? Why wouldn't law enforcement accept residents governing themselves? What did they fear? How does self-government work today? (e. g., Neighborhood Associations, Neighborhood Watch, peer reviews, teen court)

7. Timothy relates the story of a young worker asking his employer to define a “red.” The landowner explains, “A red is any son-of-a-bitch that wants thirty cents an hour when we're payin' twenty-five!” (298) Usually a “red” refers to communism and the “red scare.” According to Wikipedia, the term “red scare” has been retroactively applied to two distinct periods of strong anti-Communism in United States history. . .The “First Red Scare” began during World War I in which the United States fought from 1917-1918. Tensions were further elevated during this time frame owing to a widespread campaign of violence by various groups inspired by the Bolshevik revolution in Russia.” Research more about the First Red Scare and how it heightened xenophobia in America. Compare the red scare to situations in the U. S. since then. When was the second Red Scare? Who were hurt by this scare?

8. After Ma acquaints herself with the Weedpatch Camp's facilities and after being treated respectfully, she says, “Why, I feel like people again.” (307) What does her comment say about the basic need for human dignity? What is the Golden Rule? Does it work?

9. A “crazy” lady tells Rose of Sharon that her baby will be born dead – if she sins by clutch-and-hug dancing or by acting in a play. However, the camp manager reassures her. “Look!” he said. “Listen to me. I know them too. They were hungry and too tired. And they worked too hard. And they rode on a truck over bumps. They were sick. It wasn't their fault.” (308-310) Does this foreshadow the baby's birth? Research prenatal care. Colorado has one of the highest percentages of low-weight babies. Why is that? What services are available to pregnant women who can't afford health care?

10. “There could be no doubt that it was the committee; three ladies, washed, dressed in their best clothes . . .and the committee walked down the road with dignity.” (312) Compare the Ladies' Committee to the Welcome Wagon which operates in many communities today.

11. At the Weedpatch Camp, Ruthie is insistent that the other children allow her to play croquet NOW! The children comply by leaving the game. Why is this method so effective? What lesson did Ruthie learn? How do you think that she will behave from now on?

12. Read *Children of the Dust Bowl: The True Story of the School at Weedpatch Camp* by Jerry Stanley or other books about a Weedpatch Camp.

**Chapter 23** (an intercalary chapter prefigures the camp dance in the next chapter)

Vocabulary: scrabbling (325), Geronimo (325), uppity (327), newsreel (327), Chicken Reel (329),

1. “The migrant people, scuttling for work, scrabbling to live, looked always for pleasure, dug for pleasure, manufactured pleasure, and they were hungry for amusement. Sometimes amusement lay in speech, and the climbed up their lives with jokes. And it came about in the camps along the roads, on the

ditch banks beside the streams, under the sycamores, that the story teller grew into being, so that the people gathered in the low firelight to hear the gifted ones. And they listened while the tales were told, and their participation made the stories great.” (325) Hold a storytelling festival. During each summer, The Rocky Mountain Storytelling Festival is held in Palmer Lake; contact John Stansfield to attend next year. During hard times today, more people go to the movies. Research whether this is true for 2008.

2. Music: For entertainment and to forget for awhile how tough life was, bands formed, and they held a square dance. Hold a square dance. How do we deal with hard times today?

3. Music: “Play more – play the story songs – ‘As I Walked through the Streets of Laredo.’ (330) Look for songs that tell a narrative. Bring them in to share with the class. Examples include Gordon Lightfoot’s “The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald” and Bobbie Gentry’s “Ode to Billie Joe.” Write a song yourself to tell a story about conditions today.

### **Chapter 24** (the dance and peaceful solution)

Vocabulary: gingham (331), relief (333), jollyin’ (337), pinioned (343), skirled (344) turkey shootin’ club (345)

1. Note that it is the men who make the decisions. Provide specific examples

2. “Well, a raggedy kid with no shoes, an’ them other kids with socks on, an’ nice pants, an’ them a-yellin’ ‘Okie.’ (339) Unfortunately, some students are still teased about “inferior” clothes which is one of the reasons schools consider uniforms. Debate the topic of school uniforms. What would you think if your school required uniforms?

3. The Weedpatch Camp leaders require that situations are handled peacefully. Give examples from Chapter 23 and from Chapter 24. Peaceful solutions seem to work when people’s basic needs (food, shelter, respect) are met. Outside of Weedpatch, the Okies’ anger is fermenting. Predict what will happen.

### **Chapter 25** (an intercalary chapter of harvest and hunger)

Vocabulary: quickens (346), sulphur (346), ferment (348), formic acid, tannic acid (348), mash (348), putrescence (349), denunciation (349)

1. “The men who work in the fields, the owners of the little orchards, watch and calculate. The year is heavy with produce. And men are proud, for of their knowledge they can make the year heavy. They have transformed the world with their knowledge.” (347) Steinbeck is referring to the gains made in agriculture to allow farmers to produce more. What chemicals do many farmers use to increase production? What other advancements have increased production? What are the concerns about spraying and crop dusting?

2. “The men who work in the experimental farms have made new fruits: nectarines and forty kinds of plums, walnuts with paper shells. And always they work, selecting grafting, changing, driving themselves, driving the earth to produce.” (347) Research what new food products have been introduced or popularized in the last century. (e. g., sushi, tofu, Big Macs) What new food products came from different ethnic groups? Look in the phone book to find restaurants that specialize in ethnic food. Try a new restaurant.

3. “The decay spreads over the State, and the sweet smell is a great sorrow on the land. Men who can graft the trees and make the seed fertile and big can find no way to let the hungry people eat their produce. Men who have created new fruits in the world cannot create a system whereby their fruits may be eaten. . . The works of the roots of the vines, of the trees, must be destroyed to keep up the price, and this is the saddest, bitterest thing of all. . . A million people hungry, needing the fruit – and kerosene sprayed over the golden mountains . . . Dump potatoes in the rivers and place guards along the banks to keep the hungry people from fishing them out. Slaughter the pigs and bury them, and let the putrescence drip down

into the earth. There is a crime here that goes beyond denunciation. . . There is a failure here that topples all our successes.” (349) The amount of food wasted in the United States is also a crime, particularly with so many hungry people. Get the facts first. Assign each student in a group to look at one aspect of food waste (hotels throwing away food after a banquet or luncheon, grocery stores throwing away food that doesn’t look as good as it should, students discarding lunches, school cafeterias discarding food, etc.) Determine the policies and the roadblocks for leftovers to be donated to food banks. Devise a plan to feed more people and to waste less food. Could this be a class project? an Eagle Scout project? a service club project? Read more about this topic in *The Worst Hard Time*.

4. “And children dying of pellagra must die because a profit cannot be taken from an orange.” (349) Why are children dying of starvation today?

5. “The people come with nets to fish for potatoes in the river, and the guards hold them back; they come in rattling cars to get the dumped oranges, but the kerosene is sprayed. . .in the eyes of the people there is the failure; and in the eyes of the hungry there is a growing wrath. In the souls of the people the grapes of wrath are filling and growing heavy. . .” (349) Steinbeck concludes the chapter with an obvious reference to the “Battle Hymn of the Republic” and speculates that the people will revolt. Access the lyrics at [www.contemplator.com/america/battle.html](http://www.contemplator.com/america/battle.html). “At the beginning of September 1938 Carol Steinbeck had come up with a brilliant idea for the title of the new book. The title gave the book a dynamic focus, and the words of the hymn if referred to could be applied in numerous ways to the novel’s content.” (Bender, 40) Could a similar revolt happen in the U. S. today? Fully explain your position. Research Carol Henning Steinbeck and her influence on her husband’s political stance, the armature of the novel, and the reason it is considered one of the great American novels of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. (Steinbeck admitted that Ma Joad was based on his wife Carol’s character more than on anyone else.)

## Chapter 26 (Hooper Ranch)

Vocabulary: creep-mouse around (352), jauntily (353), a-jollyin’ (353), hell on wheels (355), roused (359), blustered (360), spluttered (360), a-badgerin’, rains cats (362), beveled (364), a-lopin’ (364), insignia (366), pall (370), forlornly (370), docilely (371), sateen (373), belligerently (375), J. P. Morgan (377), contemptuously (377), obscure (378), haycocks (380), taut (380), wizened (382), cowflops (383), wizened (385), prostate (386), wrassle (395),

1. “Ma said fiercely. ‘You ain’t got the right to get discouraged. This here fambly’s goin’ under. You jus’ ain’t got the right.’” With that Ma brings it out for a family discussion – not just the men this time – about how little food is left, no work in the area, and Rosasharn’s due date. . . ‘We’ll go in the mornin’, she said.’ ”(352) Has the family structure changed? Review who is no longer with them. (Grampa, Granma, Noah, Ivy and Sairy Wilson, Jim Casy, and Connie.)

2. “Pa sniffed. ‘Seems like times is changed,’ he said sarcastically. ‘Time was when a man said what we’d do. Seems like women is tellin’ now. Seems like it’s purty near time to get out a stick.’ Ma replies that she has a stick, too. ‘You get your stick, Pa. . .Times when they’s food an’ a place to set, then maybe you can use your stick an’ keep your skin whole. But you ain’t a-doin’ your job, either a-thinkin’ or a-workin’. If you was, why, you could use your stick, an’ women folks’d sniffle their nose and creep-mouse aroun’’. Ma tells Tom that she was just goading Pa on. . . ‘Take a man, he can get worried an’ worried, an’ it eats out his liver, an’ purty soon he’ll jus’ lay down and die with his heart et out. But if you can take an’ make ‘im mad, why, he’ll be awright.’ (352) Explain how the family dynamics have changed. What indications can you find that Ma has often been in charge? Look for examples in the book when Ma was trying to stir up trouble, when she was trying to channel his anger in order to stimulate his courage.

3. When Pa tells Huston that they are leaving in the morning, he says that he’ll miss the baths. “We had a bath ever’ day here. Never was so clean in my life. Funny thing-use ta be I on’y got a bath ever’ week an’ I never seemed to stink. But now if I don’t get one ever’ day I stink. Wonder if takin’ a bath so often

makes that?" (356) When did it become commonplace to bathe daily? Research the history of bathing and personal hygiene. Why is it a misunderstanding to blame the poor and the homeless for being unclean?

4. Tom and his two friends discuss the benefits of belonging to a union. Is unionization still popular in this country? Have each student in a group select one union to research and to report to the class. What are the benefits of a union? the downfalls? Do all workers have to belong to a union automatically when they are hired in a specific field? What rights do individuals have in a union? A ballot issue in the fall will allow voters to decide whether or not Colorado will join other "right-to-work" states with constitutional provisions that say workers cannot be forced to join a union even when most of their coworkers are union members. Opponents say that the amendment isn't needed since it is already covered under Colorado law (but isn't in the constitution). Research the issue more. What is your opinion?

5. "Fella can't feed his fam'ly on his work now, an' it gettin' worse all the time. It ain't gonna do no good to set aroun' an' starve. I don' know what to do. If a fella owns a team a horses, he don't raise no hell if he got to feed 'em when they ain't workin'. But if a fella got men workin' for him, he jus' don't give a damn. Horses is a hell of a lot more worth than men. I don' understan' it." (358) What is your view? There is a great concern and media coverage when animals are abused. What about when children or women are abused?

6. "There came a harsh hissing from the front of the truck. Tom grabbed the wheel tight and he thrust the brake down to the floor. The truck bumped to a stop. . . Al leaped out and ran to the right front tire. 'Great big nail,' he called." (363) Recall that each time there is a mechanical problem, there is another problem for the Joads. What do you think the issue will be this time? When Steinbeck traveled with his dog, he named that truck. However, there is no record of his naming the truck here. Do you consider the truck to be a character in the novel? Explain. What would you name the truck?

7. "Ma said excitedly, 'With four men a-workin' maybe I can get some credit right off. Fust thing I'll get is coffee, 'cause you been wanting that, an' then some flour an' bakin' powder an' some meat. Better not get no side-meat right off. Save that for later. Maybe Sat'dy. An' soap. Got to get soap. . .'" (365) This section points out people live from paycheck to paycheck or from one day's pay (or tips) to the next. Why is it better to have the money in hand before spending it? Was this type of credit the beginning of credit problems in the U. S.? Does your family buy food on credit? (using a credit card at grocery stores or at restaurant) (Some people do charge many items in order to amass points, which isn't a problem, as long as they can pay off their balance monthly.) Look at ads or commercials which have increased the idea that it is better to use credit cards instead of cash or checks. Research the average balance Americans carry on credit cards today. What is the total amount Americans as a group owe on credit cards? How has the overuse of credit cards led to peoples' debt problems?

8. When the family is escorted onto the Hooper Ranch, they realize that something is amiss. Why are the peach pickers striking? Have you ever seen a strike? What do you think about teachers striking? Many people believe that teachers need to put the kids first – and not strike.

9. At first the store clerk sasses Ma, but she puts him in place with her understanding. Then, when she asks for credit for sugar, he lends her a dime. Ma replied, "I'm learnin' one thing good. Learnin' it all a time, ever' day. If you're in trouble or hurt or need – go to poor people. They're the only ones that'll help – the only ones." (376) Is there any truth in what Ma says? Who is the millionaire who spoke up recently to press other millionaires to give more to the poor? (Warren Buffett) Do you think that wealthy people should be required to give a certain percentage to the poor? Debate the issue. Research wealthy people today who donate a portion of their money to help others. (Bill Gates, Brad Pitt, for example)

10. After dinner, Tom decides to find out what is going on outside of the camp and is reunited with Casy. The strike comes to a head when Casy is killed with a pick handle and when Tom retaliates by killing the man who killed Casy. Before Casy is killed, he says, "You don't know what you're doin'. Literary scholars say that this is another Christian reference, particularly to Christ's last words on the cross. Do you think that Steinbeck had this in mind when he wrote it – or are people just looking for references? "He (Tom) says, 'French Revolution-all them fellas that figgered her out got their heads chopped off. Always

that way. . . Jus' as natural as rain. You didn't do it for fun no way. Doin' it 'cause you have to.' ” (384) Research to find figures who are actually visionary but who were persecuted or even assassinated because they advocated change.

11. When Tom tells the family about the strikebusters and that he'll have to leave, Ma says, “An' I ain't gonna have Tom out alone. No, sir.” (391) It is Ma who makes the decision again and whose primary concern is keeping the family together. Ma continued, “Tom! They's a whole lot I don' un'erstan'. But goin' away ain't gonna ease us. It's gonna bear us down. . . Don' go, Tom. Stay an' help.” (392, 393) It seems like Tom is being asked to step up as the head of the family. Is he qualified to lead the family? Give specific examples to support your answer.

101 Yet, Tom decides to hide out in the culvert while the family lives in a box car and picks cotton. Recap the different places the family lived and compare it to their dream when they left Oklahoma.

### **Chapter 27** (an intercalary chapter of picking cotton and a respite)

Vocabulary: bolls (406), inquisitive (407), clean as a whistle (407), side meat (408)

1. Steinbeck uses the newsreel literary style which are short dramatic clips of an event with a collage of voices relating migrants' experiences. Pick a newscast for one day and rewrite it in a newsreel style and add a collage of voices discussing the news.

2. “Back with the empty sack. Got our own book. Mark in the weight. Got to. If they know you're marking', then they don't cheat. But God he'p ya if ya don' keep your own weight.” (407) Today, many people believe that everyone is out to cheat the other person, meaning that all financial transactions have to be verified. How did people come to this belief? Is it true? What can merchants do to restore customers' faith? Isn't it worthwhile to keep track of your own financial records? Isn't it your responsibility?

3. “This is good work. Kids runnin' aroun'. Heard 'bout the cotton-pickin' machine? . . . Think it'll ever come? (407) Who invented the cotton-picking machine? In what year? What changes did it make in production? Earlier in the novel Steinbeck talks about the tractor and the plow making such a difference in farming – not all good. What other machines have been both good and bad? (the internet, for example)

4. “Try for God's sake ta save a little money!” (408) One of the problems with the economy in the U. S. today is the overuse of credit cards; in hard times, many people use their credit cards for everyday expenses. What amount of money do economists recommend people save? Why aren't more Americans saving more money? Would an increase in the interest rate encourage more people to save? What other forms of savings (beside bank accounts) should be considered?

### **Chapter 28** (the boxcar)

Vocabulary: aristocrats (410), Cracker Jack (410), brooding (410), cynically (414), cleated cat-walk (414), dung-hill rooster (422), jerks (423),

1. As the family relocates to the boxcar, Ma sets the tone. “ ‘It's nice,’ she said. ‘It's almost nicer than anything we had 'cept the gov'ment camp.’ ” (409) Review how Ma has tried to see their situation as a “glass half full instead of half empty.” How can a positive attitude determine how people handle situations? How does attitude affect how you handle situations? What is a “Pollyanna” attitude?

2. When Uncle John, Pa, and Ma shop, they comment on items on the shelves. “ ‘Funny thing, I wanta buy stuff. Stuff I don't need. Like to git one a them safety razors. Thought I'd like to have some a them gloves over there. Awful cheap. . . An' I don't need no safety razor, neither. Stuff settin' out there, and jus' feel like buyin' it whether you need it or not.’ ” (411) Research marketing and the theories behind

store displays. For example, how do store managers decide where to place items? What items are generally placed by the checkouts? Is there any research available on “impulse shopping”? What are your shopping habits? Do you like to browse or do you pick up what you need and leave? How does art and graphic design influence your decision to purchase products?

3. List what new items the Joads were able to buy. Would that improve their outlook on life? Sometimes people buy things to relieve depression. Does that work? Have you ever done that?

4. When Ruthie wouldn't share her Cracker Jacks, the other children get mad and grab the box. During the scuffle, Ruthie blurts out, “Oh, yeah? Well, our brother's a-hidin' right now from killin' a fella, an' he can kill that big girl's brother too.” (413) Why is this a disastrous thing for Ruthie to do? Give at least one other example of Ruthie's temper getting her in trouble. (demanding to play croquet) How does this show that she is still a child? Ma recognizes that she meant no harm by refusing to “whup her.” Cite Ma's wisdom in how she handled the situation, including how she went to see Tom. Have you ever gotten in trouble for blurting a family secret? How did you feel?

5. Ma tells Tom that he has to leave, and he replies that he wanted to leave all along. “I know. But I wanted you near. I was scared for you. I ain't seen you.” (416) Ma re-emphasizes her desire to keep the family together. Why is family so important? Ma also lays guilt on Tom when he refuses to take the money she saved. “Tom. . .you take this money. You hear me? You got no right to cause me pain.” (418) Has anyone ever tried “to guilt” you into doing something you didn't want to do? Is guilt part of peer pressure? How can teens today be strong enough to avoid peer pressures?

6. Tom tells Ma that he has been thinking a lot since he was in hiding. He learned this lesson: “But I know now a fella ain't no good alone.” (418) Steinbeck is reinforcing the theme of people needing to stick together, particularly for a common cause. Research clubs or organizations that youngsters and young adults can join. How do gang leaders use the promise of “family” to encourage kids to join gangs? Research the Youth Gang Alternative Program in Denver and determine the reasons for the group's success. Interview Rev. Leon Kelly, the founder of the Youth Gang Alternative Program.

7. Tom continued, “An' I been wonderin' if all our folks got together an' yelled, like them fellas yelled, only a few of 'em at the Hooper ranch--” (418) Research labor unions.

8. When Ma worries about Tom being killed, he tells her not to worry. “Then it don't matter. Then I'll be all aroun' in the dark. I'll be ever-where-whenever you look. Wherever they's a fight so hungry people can eat, I'll be there. Wherever they's a cop beatin' up a guy, I'll be there.” Has Tom been inspired by Casy? Is he planning to channel his anger into positive action? What are ways that gang members can channel their anger and frustration in positive ways? How could the community help gang members to channel their frustration and anger in a positive way? Look at movies like *Stand By Me*, *Freedom Writer*, and *The Great Debaters*. What can we do about gangs in Colorado Springs? Develop a plan for Dream City/Vision 2020 and present it to them.

9. Ma and Pa again face the issue of who is running the family. When Aggie's parents share concerns with Pa and Ma about Aggie possibly getting pregnant, Ma is the one who promises action. “Pa'll talk to Al. . .or if Pa won't, I will.” (422) Ma sort of apologizes to Pa for taking control. He replies, “I know. I ain't no good any more.” (422) What caused Pa to feel that he is worthless?

10. Ma tells him, “Woman can change bett'n a man. . .Woman got all her life in her arms. Man got it all in his head. . .Man, he lives in jerks – baby born an' a man dies, an' that's a jerk-gets a farm an' loses his farm, an' that a jerk. Woman, it's all one flow, like a stream, little eddies, little waterfalls, but the river, it goes right on. Woman looks at it like that. We ain't gonna die out. People is goin' on-changin' a little, maybe, but goin' right on.” (423) Explain what Ma meant. Do you agree or disagree? Discuss what you see are the ways males and females think. Give examples of something you have experienced to demonstrate how boys and girls think differently.

11. Throughout the novel, we've read about the poor families hunting wood to make a fire. Today, much more wood is thrown into the trash, particularly after storms have broken off branches or after trees are

trimmed. Where can branches and sticks be recycled for people to be able to claim, if they want them? Research the recycling program for Christmas trees.

## **Chapter 29** (an intercalary chapter of floods instead of drought)

Vocabulary: freshets (433)

1. “When the first rain started, the migrant people huddled in their tents, saying, It’ll soon be over, and asking, How long’s it likely to go on?” (433) The migrants were upset by the heavy rains because they couldn’t work. Then, because it made life difficult and uncomfortable. Make a classroom collage of floods in Colorado on one section and floods in other parts of the country on the other section.

2. “Then some went to the relief offices, and they came sadly back to their own people. They’s rules-you got to be here a year before you can git relief. They say the gov’ment is gonna help. They don’ know when. (433) What are the rules today regarding residency for help? Which agencies apply those rules? What is the intention of the rules? Are the rules fair? Should the rules be changed? Should the government be the agency to help? Is it the role of government to help? Debate the issue. What impact has FEMA had?

3. Life just got worse for the people. Create a visual to show the decline.

- Rain
- Floods
- Cars wouldn’t start
- No relief available
- No work
- Hunger
- Illness
- Death

4. “And under the begging, and under the cringing, a hopeless anger began to smolder. And in the little towns pity for the sodden men changed to anger, and anger at the hungry people changed to fear of them. Then sheriffs swore in deputies in droves . . .Frantic men pounded on the doors of the doctors, and the doctors were busy. . .Compare life then with indigent peoples’ lives today. Does hunger and poverty justify crime? What would you do in a similar situation?

5. “Then the boys went out, not to beg, but to steal; and the men went out weakly, to try to steal. . .and the comfortable people in tight houses felt pity at first, and then distaste, and finally hatred for the migrant people.” (434) This is despair. Compare the migrants at this point to homeless people and to indigent people today. What services are available to these people? Are more people willing to help today? What is the general attitude toward the homeless population? Look at incidents in your own life with the loss of a pet or a family member. Does your compassion have a time limit? Does a person’s grief last longer than a person’s compassion? How long were (are) people willing to help after a natural disaster?

6. “The women watched the men, watched to see whether the break had come at last. The women stood silently and watched. And where a number of men gathered together, the fear went from their faces, and anger took its place. And the women sighed with relief, for they know it was all right – the break had not come; and the break would never come as long as fear could turn to wrath.” (434, 435) This section echoes the first chapter. Research primary and second feelings to determine whether you agree with Steinbeck that men will not break as long as they are angry, because anger usually results in action. Steinbeck also moves forward his social theory of people working together to accomplish more. Give examples of this theory in action.

## **Chapter 30** (the flood, life force)

Vocabulary: sullen (436), Rochester lamp (438), fetid (443), clambered (443), soddently (450), hoarded (450), intermittent (450), gaunt (454)

1. The theme of working together comes to a head in this chapter when Pa convinces the other men to build a dam to keep the water back. Predict whether it will hold.

2. When Rose of Sharon starts to have labor pains, “Mrs. Wainwright took a paring knife from her apron pocket and slipped it under the mattress. ‘Maybe it don’t do no good,’ she said apologetically. ‘Our folks always done it. Don’t do no harm, anyways.’ Ma nodded. ‘We used a plow point. I guess anything sharp’ll work, long as it can cut birth pains.’ ” (438) Burying a sharp object to reduce birth pains is a superstition. List superstitions and their origins. Are there any superstitions you believe in? Discuss superstitions with the class.

3. “The stream eddied and boiled against the bank. Then, from up the stream there came a ripping crash. The beam of the flashlight showed a great cottonwood toppling. The men stopped to watch. . . And then the bank washed quickly down, washed around ankles, around knees. The men broke and ran, and the current worked smoothly into the flat, under the cars, under the automobiles. . . When the dike swept out, Al turned and ran. His feet moved heavily. The water was about his calves when he reached the truck. He flung the tarpaulin off the nose and jumped into the car. He stepped on the starter. The engine turned over and over. . . The motor was full of water, the battery fouled by now. . . Al went slowly around the truck, reached in, and turned off the ignition.” (443) Steinbeck again shows that a mechanical problem goes with a personal problem. How is the author tying up loose ends as the novel ends?

4. We learn that the baby was stillborn. Review why the baby didn’t have a chance due to the mother’s diet, etc.? Why is prenatal care so important? In recent years, what percentage of babies born in Colorado has been premature? What percentage of mothers received adequate prenatal care? Considering the superstitions spouted by the woman in the Weedpatch Camp, what do you think Rose of Sharon’s feelings might be as to why her baby died?

5. Ma thanks Mrs. Wainwright for assisting with the birth. “Use’ ta be the fambly was fust. It ain’t so now. It’s anybody. Worse off we get, the more we got to do.” (445) Ma sums it up for all of us. What do we all have to do to improve life for indigent people?

6. Uncle John was asked to bury the baby’s body which was placed in an apple box. “In the gray dawn light Uncle John waded around the end of the car, past the Joad truck; and he climbed the slippery bank to the highway. He walked down the highway, past the boxcar flat, until he came to a place where the boiling stream ran close to the road. . . He put his shovel down, and holding the box in front of him, he edged through the brush until he came to the edge of the swift stream. For a time he stood watching it swirl by, leaving its yellow foam among the willow stems. He held the apple box against his chest. And then he leaned over and set the box in the stream and steadied it with his hand. He said fiercely, ‘Go down an’ tell ‘em. Go down in the street an’ rot an’ tell ‘em that way. That’s the way you can talk. 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.’ ” (447, 448) Know what? What message is the baby’s body to carry? to whom? If Uncle John could have included a note with the body, what would he have written? Compose that note. Explain the Christian reference of a baby floating down a stream. (Moses floating down the Nile)

7. After the Joads enter the dry barn, they encounter a dying man and his son. The boy tells them that his father is starving to death. “ ‘Hush,’ said Ma. She looked at Pa and Uncle John standing helplessly gazing at the sick man. She looked at Rose of Sharon huddled in the comfort. Ma’s eyes passed Rose of Sharon’s eyes, and then came back to them. And the two women looked deep into each other. The girl’s breath came short and gasping. She said, ‘Yes.’ Ma smiled. ‘I knowed you would. I knowed. . . For a minute Rose of Sharon sat still in the whispering barn. Then she hoisted her tired body up and drew the comfort about her. She moved slowly to the corner and stood looking down at the wasted face, into the wide, frightened eyes. Then slowly she lay down beside him. He shook his head slowly from side to side. Rose of Sharon loosened one side of the blanket and bared her breast. ‘You got to,’ she said.’ ” (455)

Were you surprised by the ending? Discuss the ending with the class. The ending has often been debated; research what scholars say about sustaining life under all circumstances. What did Steinbeck's critics and friends say about the ending? The movie version has a different ending. Watch the movie and decide which ending you prefer – or write your own ending. Is there a suitable ending for problems that seem to have no ending in sight? (poverty, hunger, hatred) See the appendix.

## Appendix

### The Ending and the controversy

Although Pat Covici, his editor, was greatly impressed by the novel, but, along with other editors at Viking, felt that some of the language and imagery needed softening, particularly in the sexually explicit scene at the end of the novel. Steinbeck believed in the integrity of his work and would not alter it, especially the ending. Viking tried to persuade him to at least introduce the dying man earlier in the manuscript so that he would not be a complete stranger when he is suckled by Rose of Sharon. Steinbeck refused. "The giving of the breast has no more sentiment than the giving of a piece of bread," he argued. (Bender, 25)

When it was published, "the novel was an immediate best-seller and would remain so for many months. Not surprisingly, reviews of the controversial work were mixed; most frequently criticized was the ending, which *New Yorker* book critic Clinton Fadiman called 'the tawdriest kind of fake symbolism.' But Steinbeck never had much use for the critics. He had finally written his big book, and he would stand by it." (Bender, 25-26)

"A few years ago Theodore Pollack called attention once again to the conclusion of *The Grapes of Wrath*, arguing that far from being an example of 'rank sentimentalism' or 'overdone symbolism,' the ending 'successfully and artfully' concluded the important theme of reproduction that threads its way through the book. . . The storm at the end may as easily – and more convincingly – be seen as just one more tribulation heaped upon the Joads. . . The book could have ended with the picture of life in Weedpatch, the government camp. . . By ending the book here, Steinbeck would have abandoned a chief function of serious literature, which is to do justice to a complex rather than a black-and-white or programmatic version of reality." (Bender, 50-54)

Critics also pointed out the unlikelihood of such a scene actually happening. "There is no prenatal care . . . In actual birth the presence of a doctor is a rare exception. Sometimes in the squatters' camps a neighbor woman will help at the birth. There will be no sanitary precautions nor hygienic arrangements. The child will be born on a newspaper in the dirty bed. . . The mother, usually suffering from malnutrition, is not able to produce breast milk (thus the final scene could not have happened)." (Bender, 48)

Steinbeck ends his book on a quiet note: that life can go on, and that people can and must succour one another. (Bender, 57)

### A Letter from Pascal Covici to John Steinbeck regarding the ending of the book:

Pascal Covici wrote him a very enthusiastic letter saying that two other readers and himself were left "emotionally exhausted." Nevertheless, despite their feeling that it would be "a sacrilege to suggest revisions in so grand a book," they thought they would not be good publishers if they failed to point out a possible weakness or fault-the ending:

Your idea is to end the book on a great symbolic note, that life must go on and will go on with a greater love and sympathy and understanding for our fellowmen. The episode you use in the end is extremely poignant. Nobody could fail to be moved by the incident of Rose

of Sharon giving her breast to the starving man yet, taken as the finale of such a book with all its vastness and surge, it struck us on reflection as begin all too abrupt . . . As the end of the final episode it is perfect; as the end of the whole book not quite. It seems to us that the last few pages need building up. The incident needs leading up to, so that the meeting with the starving man is not so much an accident or chance encounter, but more an integral part of the saga of the Joad family.

And it needs something else leading away from it so that the symbolism of the gesture is more apparent in relation to the book as a whole. . .

Again I repeat. All this seems like sacrilege. Now do as you think best. (Lisca, 857)

### **Steinbeck Defends His Ending**

On January 9, 1939, Steinbeck's friend and editor at Viking Press, Pascal Covici, wrote him a letter addressing the ending.

In this excerpt of the letter to "Pat" Covici, Steinbeck explains why he will not change the ending despite Covici's request:

Los Gatos  
January 16, 1939

Dear Pat:

I have your letter today. And I am sorry but I cannot change that ending. It is casual—there is no fruity climax, it is not more important than any other part of the book—if there is a symbol, it is a survival symbol not a love symbol, it must be an accident, it must be a stranger, and it must be quick. To build this stranger into the structure of the book would be to warp the whole meaning of the book. The fact that the Joads don't know him, don't care about him, have no ties to him — that is the emphasis. The giving of the breast has no more sentiment than the giving of a piece of bread. I'm sorry if that doesn't get over. It will maybe. . .

The incident of the earth mother feeding by the breast is older than literature. You know that I have never been touchy about changes, but I have too many thousands of hours on this book, every incident has been too carefully chosen and its weight judged and fitted. The balance is there. One other thing—I am not writing a satisfying story. I've done my damndest to rip a reader's nerves to rags, I don't want him satisfied. . .

I know that books lead to a strong deep climax. This one doesn't except by implications and the reader must bring the implication to it. If he doesn't, it wasn't a book for him to read. Throughout I've tried to make the reader participate in the actuality, what he takes from it will be scaled entirely on his own depth or hollowness. There are five layers in this book, a reader will find as many as he can and he won't find more than he has in himself." (from Elaine Steinbeck and Robert Wallsten, ed., *Steinbeck: A Life in Letters*.)

Fittingly, Steinbeck has the final words. What did you take from reading *The Grapes of Wrath*? For in-depth discussions, we refer you to the "For Further Reading" section.

### **Steinbeck's Suggestion for an Interview with Joseph Henry Jackson**

After the publication of *The Grapes of Wrath*, Steinbeck found himself besieged with requests for guest appearances, speeches, and interviews. Being very shy and suspicious of the effects of publicity on the integrity

of his work, he acceded to very few of these demands. When asked by his friend Joseph Henry Jackson of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, however, he sent the following suggestion for the kind of questions and answers he would prefer in such an interview.

QUESTION: Why did you choose the migration from the dust bowl to California as the theme for a novel?

ANSWER: Well, whether a writer knows it or not, or wants it or not, he simply sets down what the people of his own time are doing, thinking, wanting. He can't help that. It is all the writer knows. I have set down what a large section of our people are doing and wanting, and symbolically what all people of all time are doing and wanting. This migration is the outward sign of the want.

QUESTION: And, what, in all time, are all people doing and wanting?

ANSWER: They use different symbols in different times but universally, people want comfort and security and out of these a relationship with one another. In the growth of our country they symbol of these things was new land. That was the security. The writer sets down the desire of his own time, the action of the people toward attaining that desire, the obstacles to attainment and the struggles to overcome the obstacles.

QUESTION: In the growing American literature there was no such cleavage between so called classes as seems to be at the core of present-day writing. Can you account for that?

ANSWER: Easily. Before the country was settled, the whole drive of the country by both rich and poor was to settle it. To this end they worked together. The menaces were Indians, weather, loneliness, and the quality of the unknown. But this phase ended. When there was no longer unlimited land for everyone, then battles developed for what there was. And then as always, those few who had financial resources and financial brains had little difficulty acquiring the land in larger and larger blocks. I speak in terms of land, but the same applies of course to all people in their original desire for the security symbol, land, but this time the menace (as they say in Hollywood) had changed. It was no longer Indians and weather and loneliness, it had become the holders of the land. In this discussion, I am ignoring justice and law although it is pretty impossible to acquire half a million acres of land justly and lawfully. Now, since the people go on with their struggle, the writer still sets down that struggle and still sets down the opponents. The opponents or rather the obstacles to the desired end right now happen to be those individuals and groups of financiers who by the principle of ownership withhold security from the mass of the people. And since this is so, this is the material the writer deals in.

QUESTION: And do you think that by removing this principle of ownership, the people will gain their desire?

ANSWER: To a certain extent. But the greatness of the human lies in the fact that he never attains his desire. His desire keeps bounding ahead of his attainment and his search is endless. Out of this he has grown stronger slowly and constantly during the ages. There is little question in my mind that the principle of private ownership of means of production is not long with us. This is not in terms of what I think is right or wrong or good or bad, but in terms of what is inevitable. The province of the writer is to set down what is and what may come of it with as little confusion and as little nonsense as possible. The human like any other life form will either die or will overcome the condition either by mutation or by destroying the unhealthful condition. Since there seems little tendency for the human race to become extinct, and since one cannot through biological mutation overcome the necessity for eating, I judge that the final method will be the one chosen.

QUESTION: During the middle period of American writing, many books were written about owners and financiers, in a word about the controllers of financial destiny, the empire builders and such. Lately there are no such books. Books are written about the poor. Can you account for this?

ANSWER: Boileau said that kings, Gods, and Heroes only were fit subjects for literature. The writer can only write about what he admires. Present-day kings aren't very inspiring, the gods are on a vacation and about the only heroes left are the scientists and the poor. In the time you speak of, the time of the empire builders, those giants may have been outrageous but they had courage. When they did a thing they took the credit or the blame. Rockefeller at Leadville earned the hatred of the whole country for shooting miners. But at present there are no heroic giants. Ownership is hidden in interlocking directorates, labor spying and labor war is carried on by agents provocateurs, owners hide under the names of proxies and corporation titles. In a word, they have ceased being Heroes and have become cowardly and contemptible. And as such they have become, in Boileau's sense, unworthy of literature. But the poor are still in the open. When they make a struggle it is an heroic struggle with starvation, death or imprisonment the penalty if they lose. And since our race admires gallantry, the writer will deal with it where he finds it. He finds it in the struggling poor now. When the rich are hurt they show a tendency to jump off office buildings, or, as several doctors have assured me, to become sexually impotent.

QUESTION: Then you admire the migrant people you describe in this book? Will you tell me why?

ANSWER: I admire them intensely. Because they are brave, because although the technique of their life is difficult and complicated, they meet it with increasing strength, because they are kind, humorous and wise, because their speech has the metaphor and flavor and imagery of poetry, because they can resist and fight back and because I believe that out of those qualities will grow a new system and a new life which will be better than anything we have had before." (Lisca, 859-862)

## Fun And Interesting Facts

1. After his first marriage, John still collected a monthly allowance from his father.
2. In his early years, Steinbeck was considered to be a shy mama's boy.
3. His mother (Olive Hamilton Steinbeck) was a teacher who read to her children. Selections included fairy tales, passages from the Bible, animal stories, *Treasure Island*, *Robin Hood*, and *Ivanhoe*.
4. John credits his Aunt Molly (his mother's sister) with instilling a love of reading with *Le Morte d'Arthur*, the tale of Camelot and the Arthurian round table, by Sir Thomas Malory.
5. The summer after high school graduation. Steinbeck worked with Mexicans, Chinese, and other unskilled laborers who comprised Monterey County's common labor force.
6. Steinbeck achieved some writing success at Stanford, publishing stories in the school newspaper.
7. In 1927, *Smoker's Companion* accepted his story "The Gifts of Ivan," which he had submitted under the pseudonym of John Stern.
8. His former Stanford professors, Elizabeth Smith and Edith Mirrielees, encouraged him to try to publish *Cups of Gold*. Publishers would not consider a manuscript written in longhand; when a vacationing secretary, Carol Henning, offered to type it for him, he accepted.
9. For a long time, Steinbeck struggled to find his voice caught between Arthurian stories and the life of the common people. When he was able to combine the two, his career took off.
10. Steinbeck wondered about and wrestled with several profound issues in his writing: What was the individual's place in society? Were humans caught between their animal instincts and the rational dictates of their minds? Why were there so many poor and hungry people in a land of plenty?
11. A government-run camp for migrants known as Weedpatch was among the few promising sights Steinbeck observed. The camp was run by Thomas Collins, a government employee. The two quickly became friends, and it is Collins whose name appears in the dedication: To Tom, who lived it.
12. When *In Dubious Battle* was published, some people blamed the novel and Steinbeck for inciting workers.
13. The *San Francisco News* delayed publication of the articles it had commissioned for fear that their anti-corporate stance would alienate potential advertisers.

14. Steinbeck made a “false start” on the migrant issue with his satire, *L’Affaire Lettuceberg*, which he later destroyed.

15. Steinbeck wrote the novel in a 100-day-burst between late May (some say June) and late October 1938.

16. He had written the 200,000-word novel (751 typed pages) in long hand. Simultaneously, he kept journal entries. Ninety-nine entries constitute the true history of the writing of this novel.

17. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt had visited the migrant camps and had stated publicly that Steinbeck’s account was disturbingly accurate. Her admiration for Steinbeck led to a personal meeting between President Roosevelt and Steinbeck.

18. In 1940 *The Grapes of Wrath* was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for fiction. “The selection was not an easy one, with two prominent members of the Pulitzer advisory board coming out strongly against the novel. Nevertheless, other members prevailed, and Steinbeck won the award at the height of his career. The Pulitzer served as a confirmation that Steinbeck had indeed become a major American novelist.” (Bender, 145) “To the jury of Professors Krutch, Fletcher, and Lovett, *The Grapes of Wrath* was the book of the year, and there was no argument about it. In his report, Krutch wrote: ‘We are unanimously agreed to recommend as our first choice *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck. Despite the fact that it is marred by certain artistic blemishes, this novel has, we believe, excellences which make it the most powerful and significant of all the works submitted for our consideration.’ When the report was distributed to the Advisory Board, two of the members were outraged. One of them, predictably enough, was Walter M. Harrison of the *Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman*, and the other was Robert Lincoln O’Brien of the *Boston Herald*. Both wrote letters to try to influence their colleagues against *The Grapes of Wrath* in advance of the Advisory Board meeting of May 3, 1940. . . When the award was voted by the university Trustees and made public, it was received with universal approval.” (Bender, 146-147)

19. These other cities or states selected *The Grapes of Wrath* for their one book-one community project: California (2002-2003); Bakersfield, CA (2002); Sierra Madre, CA (2003); Sonoma County, CA (2002); Boise, ID (2002); Bath/Brunswick, ME (2007); Syracuse/Central New York (2004); Scranton, PA (2007), and Salt Lake City (2007).

20. The term “dust bowl” was originated by an Associated Press dispatch sent by staff writer Robert Geiger from Guymon, Oklahoma, on April 14, 1935.

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