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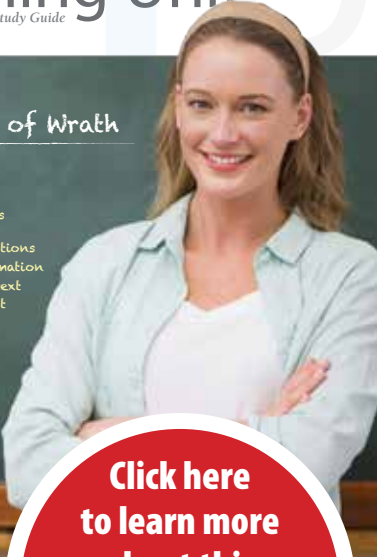
Prestwick House
Literature
Teaching Unit
Chapter-by-Chapter Study Guide



The Grapes of Wrath

by John Steinbeck

- Learning objectives
- Study Guide with short-answer questions
- Background information
- Vocabulary in context
- Multiple-choice test
- Essay questions
- Literary terms



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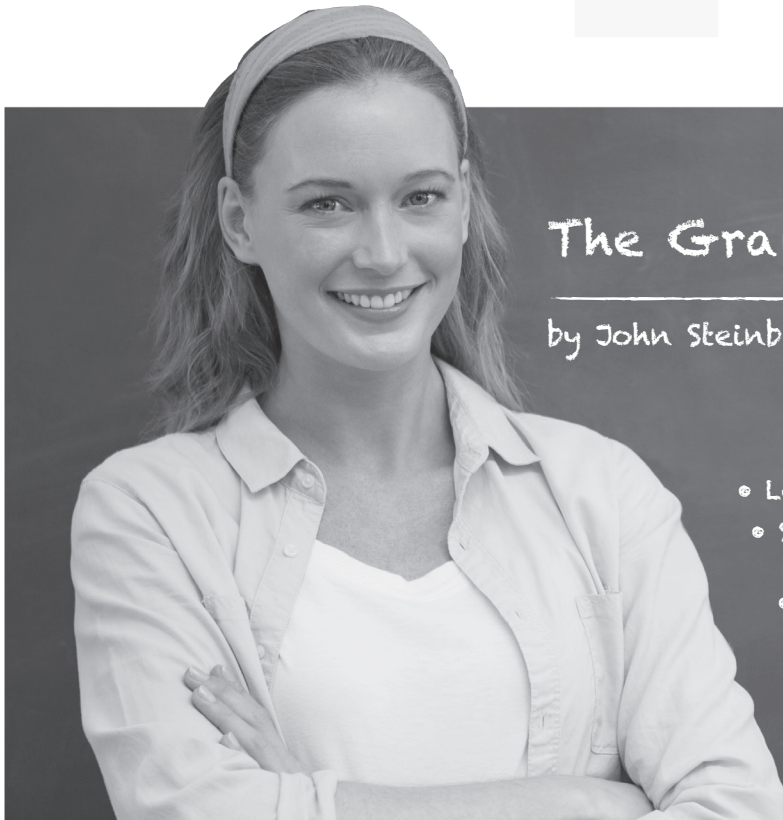
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The Grapes of Wrath

Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. discuss and trace the development of the following themes in this novel:
 - All men are a part of the family of man.
 - A bond exists between the land and the people who work it.
 - People, as long as they retain their spirit, cannot be defeated.
2. write a two-page paper on the topic: “Heroes and Villains in *The Grapes of Wrath*.”
3. write a one-page paper on the topic: “*The Machine Age and Social Change*.”
4. discuss whether Steinbeck’s novel is a socialist attack on capitalism.
5. explain the significance of the novel’s title and the allusion to which it refers.
6. discuss the reasons why some critics see Jim Casy as a Christ figure.
7. trace the fragmentation of the Joad family.
8. state Steinbeck’s treatment of the following topics:
 - unionism
 - the role of the local, the state, and the federal governments in regard to migrants
9. discuss how Steinbeck structures this novel and what he loses or gains by structuring it in that fashion.
10. compare and contrast Steinbeck’s style of writing in this novel with the style of one other novel with which you are familiar.

The Grapes of Wrath

Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Who is the hero in this novel, Ma or Tom Joad?
2. Write a brief character sketch for each, and describe how each character changes during the course of the novel:
 - Tom Joad
 - Ma
 - Pa
 - Rose of Sharon
3. Discuss the role of machinery in this novel; state how and what social changes came about as a result of machines.
4. The heroes in this novel are the people who continue to persist despite the obstacles. Identify and discuss who the villains are.
5. Identify those comments and incidents in this novel that appear to be an attack on capitalism and/or a call for socialism.
6. Relate the novel's title, *The Grapes of Wrath*, to the allusion to which it refers, and state why it is significant for this novel.
7. Point out at least three items from the novel that lead critics to suggest that Jim Casy is a Christ figure.
8. Since Ma Joad's goal was to keep the family together, does the fact she was unable to do so mean that Ma is a failure in this regard?
9. What role did Steinbeck see for unions and unionism in the U.S.A.? What role does he see the federal government playing in regard to aiding the poor?
10. Comment on the structure of this novel; be sure to mention the function of the "interchapters."
11. Comment on Steinbeck's style, particularly his use of dialect in this novel, and compare and contrast it with the style of other novels you have read.
12. Although the historical circumstance that gave rise to the novel have changed since the novel was published in 1939, what makes this novel a popular and powerful book for many readers today?

The Grapes of Wrath

Chapter One

Vocabulary

bemused – dazed; stunned
dissipated – scattered and vanished
emulsion – suspension
perplexity – confusedness

1. As the novel opens, what is devastating the land?

2. When the men's faces become hard and angry and resistant, why are the women relieved?

3. What theme of the novel is exemplified in this quote from the last paragraph of the chapter: "Women...knew deep in themselves that no misfortune was too great to bear if their men were whole"?

4. Find elements of personification and simile in this chapter. Explain them.

Chapter Four

Vocabulary

declivity – slope
fallow – cultivated but left inactive during the growing season
freshet – stream
furrows – wrinkles
hypocrite – one who puts on a false appearance of virtue
minced – walked with short steps in a prim, affected manner
piqued – resentful; irritated
shebang – everything involved in what is under consideration
shoat – a young hog
slavering – drooling; slobbering
swale – low-lying wet stretch of land
“the prodigal” – the prodigal son in the Bible, a spendthrift who returned penniless to his family
wane – to dwindle; to decrease
zenith – highest point

1. Why did Jim Casy give up being a preacher?

2. What is Casy's conclusion about love, the soul, and the Holy Spirit?

5. What philosophical ideas about killing and prison does Tom wonder about?

6. How does Willy Feely's opinion about helping others differ from Muley's?

7. What is ironic about Tom's reaction to the arrival of the men who are trying to keep people off the land?

8. At the end of this chapter, Casy cannot sleep; he says he has too much to think about. From comments he has made earlier, what do you suppose he is thinking about?
