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Advanced Placement in
English Literature and Composition

Teaching Unit
Individual Learning Packet

The Grapes of Wrath

by John Steinbeck

Written by Eva Richardson

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The Grapes of Wrath

Objectives

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

1. trace the development of the character of Ma Joad.
2. analyze the character of Jim Casy as a messianic, Christ-like figure.
3. explore the theme of endurance as it applies to the characters of Ma Joad, Tom Joad, and Rose of Sharon.
4. discuss the novel as a critical commentary on the plight of the farmers impacted by the Great Depression and the American Dust Bowl.
5. discuss the novel as a critical commentary on the need to implement elements of Socialism into American government and the benefits of actively supporting the formation of labor unions to improve the lives of America's workers.
6. examine the language of *The Grapes of Wrath* and analyze the impact the different narrative styles have on the reader.
7. trace the depiction of changing family structures in the novel and analyze how the novel complicates traditional notions of gender.
8. analyze the relationship between the novel's narrative chapters and its alternating inter-chapters.
9. explain different perspectives on religion presented by the novel.
10. respond to writing prompts similar to those that will appear on the Advanced Placement in English Literature and Composition exam.
11. respond to multiple choice questions similar to those that will appear on the Advanced Placement in English Literature and Composition exam.
12. offer a close reading of *The Grapes of Wrath* and support all assertions and interpretations with direct evidence from the text, from authoritative critical knowledge of the genre, or from authoritative criticism of the novel.

The Grapes of Wrath

Background Information

The American Dust Bowl:

During the 1930s, American farmers in the Great Plains suffered a devastating series of dust storms caused by extensive drought and exploitation of the land. For decades, inappropriate farming techniques—particularly the deliberate removal of grass in order to plant cotton and other crops—had increased erosion of the soil in the farming areas of the Great Plains, particularly in Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, and Arkansas. When the area experienced a severe lack of rain, the dry soil turned into dust and began blowing through the region and across the American continent, causing the development of dust storms and large dust clouds. As a result of these dust storms—also known as “Black Blizzards”—farmers were unable to cultivate their land, feed their families, and pay their rents to the landowners whose land they occupied.

The dust clouds that swept across the continent often darkened the sky completely, destroyed crops, and caused an increase in the incidence of respiratory illness within the farming community. The dust clouds reached as far as Chicago, Boston, New York, and Washington D.C., dropping inches of dust and debris on city streets. The most severe dust storm occurred on April 14, 1935, a day that came to be known as “Black Sunday,” when a number of thick storms hit the Great Plains region and left the area in complete darkness for days. Afterwards, many people suffered from irreversible lung damage and malnutrition.

When tenant farmers were unable to harvest their crops, their families were driven from the land by the landowners, who expected pay for the land-use they provided and consequently foreclosed on the farmers who resided on their soil. Half a million people were forced to leave their homes in search of other places to live. With its mild climate and abundant citrus crop, California seemed like a Promised Land to these displaced farmers. When word reached the Great Plains that landowners in California were looking for hundreds of fruit pickers, an unprecedented westward migration of dispossessed families looking for work began. Most of the migrants moving westward came to be known as “Okies,” even though not all of them originated in Oklahoma.

Okies:

Before the American Dust Bowl that struck the Great Plains region of the United States in the 1930s, the term “Okies” served to identify residents of the state of Oklahoma. When thousands of rural workers tried to escape the ecological disaster of the Dust Bowl, the term “Okies” became a generic term for any dispossessed migrant from the Midwest or other Great Plains states. Thousands of farming families headed west toward California to find work and a new place to live after being driven from their land, and most of the migrants came from Oklahoma. In fact, about 15% of Oklahoma’s population left the state and moved to California during the 1930s.

West Coast residents quickly adopted the term as a collective designation for all migrants fleeing the Dust Bowl, disregarding whether or not they actually originated in Oklahoma. When a growing number of West Coast residents began to object to the huge number of poor and needy refugees who could barely feed their families due to a lack of available work, “Okie” became a derogatory term. Between 1937 and 1941, the state of California enacted a law known as the “Anti-Okie Law,” which made it a misdemeanor for any person to bring impoverished refugees into the state of California.

The Great Depression:

On October 24, 1929, a day that became known as “Black Thursday,” a severe stock market crash started an economic crisis known as the Great Depression. From the United States, the Great Depression spread to Europe and, eventually, to most other countries in the world.

The Great Depression severely affected the productivity of the agricultural sector as well as the production output of other industries. It caused a period of economic stagnation that led to unemployment, poverty, and wide-spread hunger among America’s working classes. President Herbert Hoover, in office until 1933, was unable to stop the collapse of the American economy due to his refusal to make direct relief available to America’s laborers. The volunteer efforts Hoover implemented had little success in alleviating the distress experienced by American workers. When President Franklin Delano Roosevelt took office in 1933, he addressed the problems caused by the Great Depression in his New Deal, a program that was designed to provide relief to agricultural workers, combat unemployment, and aid in the formation of labor unions. By 1940, recovery of the American economy was underway.

Many conservative American political leaders criticized Roosevelt’s New Deal policies, claiming that it advocated a **Socialist** system of government and gave too much power to the central government overseeing relief and reform efforts, while jeopardizing the interests of the American economy’s private business sector.

Socialism:

Socialism is an ideology that advocates the distribution of wealth among all members of a society, achieved through social control over a society’s possessions and means of production. This social control can be administered through small councils or groups or by the government on behalf of the people.

In the late nineteenth century, Karl Marx, along with Friedrich Engels, formulated the principles of modern Socialism. Marx and Engels believed that any capitalist society would ultimately be faced with an inevitable struggle between the poor working classes and the rich bourgeoisie. This confrontation, according to Marx and Engels, would be followed by a Socialist revolution, which would completely eliminate the idea of private ownership of capital by placing the means of production into the hands of the state, thus ending the war between the classes.

Marx envisioned that once a society had passed through the subsequent stages of Capitalism and Socialism it would reach a third and final stage. Marx believed this stage would be marked by a completely classless society he characterized as **Communism**.

In *The Grapes of Wrath*, Jim Casy becomes an advocate for a Socialist system that recognizes the participation of labor unions. Casy has witnessed the injustice of the American economic system that treats workers unfairly and robs them of their ability to find permanent employment and feed their families. Casy's recognition of the need for labor unions reinforces the theme of **Community and fellowship**. He participates in a strike outside the Hooper Ranch and explains how prison taught him the need to value the notion of unity:

It's need that makes all the trouble. I ain't got it worked out. Well, one day they give us some beans that was sour. One fella started yellin', an' nothin' happened. He yelled his head off.....Then another fella yelled. Well, sir, then we all got yellin'. And we all got on the same tone, an' I tell ya, it jus' seemed like that tank bulged an' give and swelled up. By God! Then somepin happened! They come a-runnin', and they give us some other stuff to eat—give it to us. Ya see?

In *The Grapes of Wrath*, the business owners' and landowners' fear of labor unions and Socialist elements is apparent in their derogatory use of the term “reds” for any migrant worker who criticizes or poses a threat to the exploitative system in place. The term “reds” denotes their fear of a developing Socialist—or even communist—state.

Hooverville:

Hooverville is the generic name for the temporary settlements that sprang up across the United States during the Great Depression. Hundreds of homeless families and individuals looking for work lived in tents and cardboard dwellings and suffered from hunger and disease. Hoovervilles were named after President Herbert Hoover, whose failure to provide government relief to disenfranchised workers gained him the disapproval of America's poor. Often, the inhabitants of Hoovervilles across the country were confronted by law enforcement officials who attempted to remove families and eradicate the dismal settlements. In Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, the Joad family arrives in a Hooverville settlement after crossing the California state line. Upon their arrival, one of the Hooverville inhabitants asks Tom, “Never been in Hooverville before?” and Tom counters, “Where's Hooverville?” Poignantly, the man answers “This here's her,” emphasizing the fact that Hooverville, USA, could be found in the “promised land” of California, as well as anywhere across the country where hungry and unemployed families sought a place to call home.

The Theme of Family, Community, and Fellowship:

In the aftermath of the Dust Bowl, hundreds of American farming families were forced to leave their homes and search for new places to live and work. *The Grapes of Wrath* emphasizes the significance of family, community, and fellowship as the Joad family moves westward in order to find employment in California. As the Joad family embarks on their journey, their understanding of family is quickly extended to include even individuals not related by blood or marriage and soon envelops the entire community of migrant farmers. The Joads—like other families—realize that their survival depends on everyone's willingness to take care of one another, to share food and shelter, and to provide moral and practical support whenever needed.

Early in the novel, for example, Ma's decision to allow the preacher Jim Casy to join the Joad family illustrates her conviction that the family must open itself up to individuals in need, even if it means that the family must share their food rations and space on their truck. Ma explains, "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."

The Joad family also benefits from the spirit of fellowship and sharing that pervades the migrant community. When Grampa Joad is on his deathbed, the Wilson family allows him to use their tent and die in peace. In return, the Joads invite the Wilsons to join them on the road to California. When Sairy Wilson asks, "Wouldn' be a burden on you folks?" Steinbeck outlines the new relationship of mutual help clearly: "Ma said, 'You won't be no burden. Each'll help each, an' we'll all git to California. Sairy Wilson he'ped lay Grampa out,' and she stopped. The relationship was plain."

Steinbeck's novel provides numerous other examples that illuminate the importance of community and sharing and illustrate how the family unit expands to incorporate the entire migrant community. The notion of fellowship and sharing culminates in the last scene of the novel, when Rose of Sharon offers her own breast milk to a starving stranger.

The Theme of Change:

Another theme closely connected to the theme of family, community, and fellowship is the theme of change. In the same way that the family unit changes and expands to include the entire migrant community as one entity, other customs, traditions, and societal rules have to change in order to adjust to the migrant lifestyle.

Changing the Definition of Home:

The Joad family's notion of home changes when they are forced to abandon their farm and embark on a journey in search of a new place to live. As the family prepares for departure, Steinbeck describes a shift from the idea of home from a place to a protective or nurturing force:

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. The ancient Hudson, with bent and scarred radiator screen, with grease in dusty globules at the worn edges of every moving part, with hub caps gone and caps of red dust in their places—this was the new hearth, the living center of the family.

The house and land no longer provide for the family those things by which a home is defined. The truck holds all of their hope for survival in the future, and, thus, becomes their new “home.”

Changing the Family Structure:

In *The Grapes of Wrath*, the power hierarchy within the Joad family undergoes a significant change as the plot unfolds. At the onset of the novel, the Joad family functions according to a traditional, patriarchal power structure. The older men in the family embody the family leadership and make decisions for the entire family unit, while the women are responsible for child rearing and housework. When the family prepares to depart from their Oklahoma farm, for example, they discuss the utility of the car purchased by Al. Although Grampa's opinion, due to his advanced age, no longer has the power to determine decisions that impact the whole family, he is the first member of the family who is allowed to share his assessment before other family members are invited to speak:

Grampa was still 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. And the squatting men and the standing women waited for him.

The family adjusts to life on the road and, later, to life in California, and the power structure within the family shifts as Ma takes on more and more responsibility when it comes to making decisions for the entire family. Early in the novel, Ma guides the family in its moral and ethical decisions. It is Ma who decides that Jim Casy can join the family on the road because she maintains that “they's been mean Joads, but never that mean,” and it is likewise Ma who is described as a “healer” who “seemed to know that if she swayed the family shook, and if she ever really deeply wavered or despaired the family would fall.”

As the family is forced to face increasing hardships, Ma begins to take over the reins of the entire family completely, determining how they must proceed on their way to a new life. When the Wilsons' car breaks down and Tom and Casy propose to stay behind by themselves to fix the car while the rest of the family travels on to California, Ma vehemently opposes the proposal, refusing to sacrifice the family unit. Steinbeck writes:

“And now Ma’s mouth set hard. She said softly, ‘On’y way you gonna get me to go is whup me’. She moved the jack handle gently again. ‘An’ I’ll shame you, Pa. I won’t take no whuppin’, cryin’ an’ beggin’. I’ll light into you. An’ you ain’t so sure you can whup me anyways.”

There is now no doubt in any family member’s mind: Ma has taken over the leadership of the family. Steinbeck notes, “The eyes of the whole family shifted back to Ma. She was the power. She had taken control.”

Toward the end of the novel, Ma’s leadership position is firmly established. All other family members abide by Ma’s rules and rely on Ma to keep the family going. At this point, Pa has resigned his reservations and has given his life over to Ma. He explains, “Funny! Woman takin’ over the fambly. Woman sayin’ we’ll do this here, an’ we’ll go there. An’ I don’ even care.”

As the novel draws to a close, the theme of female leadership is extended to the character of the naïve and often insecure Rose of Sharon. By Ma’s example, Rose of Sharon has gathered her courage and made the powerful and crucial decision to offer her breast milk to an old, starving man. Like her mother, Rose of Sharon is beginning to understand that the power to guide the family forward rests in the hands of women.

Ma is fully aware of the fact that the changing family structure and the changing power hierarchy within the family are a direct result of the changes the Joad family endures during their journey. Ma explains, “‘Woman can change better’n a man,’ Ma said soothingly. Woman got all her life in her arms...Woman, it’s all one flow, like a stream, little eddies, little waterfalls, but the river, it goes right on.”

Changing the Customs and Rules of Society:

On the journey to California, the Joad family has to confront other necessary changes to many of society’s rules and customs. When Grampa dies, for example, the family is faced with a difficult decision: they can either inform the authorities of Grampa’s passing and spend their last money on his funeral, or they can save their money for the journey and bury Grampa themselves in secrecy. The family decides that their need to survive is more important than the need to follow often arbitrary social customs, and they bury Grampa in secrecy. As Pa explains, all members of the Joad family are beginning to understand that their new life and the hardships they face require new rules: “‘Sometimes the law can’t be foller’d no way,’ said Pa. ‘Not in decency, anyways. They’s lots a times you can’t....I’m sayin’ now I got the right to bury my own Pa. Anybody got somepin to say?’”

As the family grows to embrace all individuals who are part of the migrant community, the disenfranchised families recognize the need to build new societies with adjusted laws and customs better suited to their needs and lifestyle. Steinbeck explains:

At first the families were timid in the building and tumbling worlds, but gradually the techniques 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 Theme of Endurance and the Cycle of Life:

Endurance is the key quality that enables the Joad family to persevere in the face of incredible injustice and adversity. Early in the novel, Tom, who learned patience and endurance while serving his jail sentence, shares his ideology of perseverance with Ma before the family sets out for California: "I'm a-gonna tell you somepin about bein' in the pen. You can't go thinkin' when you're gonna be out. You'd go nuts. You got to think about that day, an' then the nex' day, about the ball game Sat'dy. That's what you got to do."

If it is Tom who is able to teach Ma how to take life one day at a time, it is Ma herself who carries the weight of the family's survival on her shoulders. When others lose hope, Ma is there to remind them that all individuals are part of the human family, and the cycle of human life will endure. Ma imbues the rest of the family with renewed hope and the strength to go on: "You got to have patience. Why, Tom—us people will go on livin'...we're the people that live. They ain't gonna wipe us out. Why, we're the people—we go on."

When Granma dies, Ma attempts to share her wisdom about the continuity of human life and the cycle of human existence with Rose of Sharon:

Ma raised her eyes to the girl's face. Ma's eyes were patient, but the lines of strain were on her forehead. Ma fanned and fanned the air, and her piece of cardboard warned off the flies. 'When you're young, Rosasharn, ever' thing that happens is a thing all by itself. It's a lonely thing. I know, I 'member, Rosasharn.' Her mouth loved the name of her daughter. 'You're gonna have a baby, Rosasharn, and that's somepin to you lonely and away. That's gonna hurt you, an' the hurt'll be lonely hurt, an' this here tent is alone in the worl', Rosasharn.' She whipped the air for a moment to drive a buzzing blow fly on, and the big shining fly circled the tent twice and zoomed out into the blinding sunlight. And Ma went on, 'They's a time of change, an' when that comes, dyin' is a piece of all dyin', and bearin' is a piece of all bearin', an' bearin' an' dyin' is two pieces of the same thing. An' then things ain't lonely any more. An' then a hurt don't hurt so bad, cause it ain't a lonely hurt no more, Rosasharn. I wisht I could tell you so you'd know, but I can't.'

As the novel draws to a close, Rose of Sharon demonstrates that she has learned Ma's lesson. She is ready to perpetuate the cycle of life, even in a non-conventional manner and under unsettling circumstances, when she shares her life-giving breast milk with the starving old man the family meets in a barn.

The Theme of Wrath and Dignity:

In *The Grapes of Wrath*, Steinbeck draws a parallel between wrath and dignity from the novel's title to its closing chapter. The title *The Grapes of Wrath* is taken from the lyrics to *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*, written by Julia Ward Howe:

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 hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword:
His truth is marching on.

Forced out of their homes by the landowners, the tenant farmers Steinbeck describes experience extreme poverty and suffering. Throughout the novel, they increasingly recognize the injustice of an agricultural system that favors a select few, powerful landowners and allows crops to waste in the name of profit and price stability while hundreds of families starve. Gradually, a deep anger develops in the hearts of the farmers, who are subject to unjust treatment, inhumane living conditions, and unfair wages. Steinbeck writes, "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."

Despite their anger, the migrant families are able to retain their sense of human dignity. In fact, Steinbeck suggests that it is the anger itself that prevents these families from losing respect for themselves and their fellow refugees. As long as human beings are able to experience wrath, they demonstrate self-respect and the need for human dignity. Through their anger, the migrant families are able to persevere and unite. Some migrants, like Jim Casy, are able to channel their wrath into political efforts to form unions and demand fair working conditions. Thus, Steinbeck conveys a sense of hope that arises out of the farmers' anger: "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."

Literary and Narrative Techniques

Chapter Divisions:

John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* is divided into 30 chapters. Narrative chapters that relate the story of the Joad family are interspersed with shorter inter-chapters, called "intercalary" chapters, that offer a general description of the plight of the migrant farmers during the Dust Bowl without directly referring to the plotline associated with the Joad family. The parallel structure of chapters and inter-chapters enables Steinbeck to establish the universal relevance and validity of his tale: the Joad family is only one of thousands of families that suffered a similar fate and endured extreme hardships during the 1930s.

The narrative and intercalary chapters are closely related in subject matter. For example, in inter-chapter 7, Steinbeck leads his readers into the corrupt world of car sales by illustrating how car salesmen focus on their personal monetary gain without considering the needs and financial difficulties experienced by the migrants who are preparing to travel to California and, thus, are forced to purchase a vehicle. The following narrative chapter picks up the same subject matter when the Joad family discusses the acquisition of the truck that will become their home on the road.

Steinbeck's Use of Language:

The language of *The Grapes of Wrath* is comprised of a variety of styles: the colloquial dialect of the migrant people stands side by side with poetic prose and figurative language. Many of the narrative chapters relating the story of the Joad family use the colloquial language of Midwest farmers, adding verisimilitude and a sense of authenticity to Steinbeck's novel. Many of the inter-chapters incorporate poetic prose language that helps Steinbeck dramatize the universal relevance of his story. Steinbeck's opening lines give his readers an early taste of the dramatic, sweeping prose that characterizes much of the novel:

To the red country and part of the gray country of Oklahoma, the last rains came gently, and they did not cut the scarred earth. The plows crossed and recrossed the rivulet marks. The last rains lifted the corn quickly and scattered weed colonies and grass along the sides of the roads so that the gray country and the dark red country began to disappear under a green cover. In the last part of May the sky grew pale and the clouds that had hung in high puffs for so long in the spring were dissipated. The sun flared down on the growing corn day after day until a line of brown spread along the edge of each green bayonet.

Additionally, several of the novel's inter-chapters utilize fragmentary language and elements of stream-of-consciousness. Chapter 7, for instance, highlights the fast-paced business practices of car salesmen by utilizing short, fragmentary sentences: "Get 'em in a car. Start 'em at two hundred and work down. They look good for one and a quarter. Get 'em rolling.'

Biblical References—Jim Casy as Christ Figure:

The Grapes of Wrath contains a number of biblical references. For example, the fate of the migrant families traveling across the western United States in search of a new homeland evokes images of the story of the Exodus, the Israelites' journey across the desert in the Old Testament.

One of the most striking and significant biblical allusions in *The Grapes of Wrath* is the similarity between the character of the preacher Jim Casy and the figure of Jesus Christ.

Jim Casy does not adhere to traditional Christian doctrine. He used to be a preacher, but has since learned that the teachings of traditional Christianity have little practical value in the everyday lives of common people. Unlike the Joad family, Casy has gradually detached himself from the teachings and practices of organized religion. He has learned that he can only find faith by experiencing the world and the people around him directly. Casy explains, "I don't know nobody name' Jesus. I know a bunch of stories, but I only love people."

Casy's practical religion also paves the way for the prevalent theme of **change**. Casy has understood that rules must be bent or adjusted to fit the lives of individual people and families, and he is teaching the Joad family to expect and accept change. For example, Casy's behavior foreshadows the Joads' decisions when it comes to bending the rules in preparation for Grampa's and Granma's funerals.

In his capacity as a messianic figure, Casy advocates brotherhood and fellowship among all human beings:

I figgered about the Holy Sperit and the Jesus road. I figgered, 'Why do we got to hang it on God or Jesus? Maybe,' I figgered, 'maybe it's all men an' all women we love; maybe that's the Holy Sperit—the human sperit—the whole shebang. Maybe all men got one big soul ever'body's a part of.' Now I sat there thinkin' it, an' all of a suddent—I knew it. I knew it so deep down that it was true, and I still know it.

Jim Casy's initials—J.C.—lay the structural groundwork for his association with the figure of Jesus Christ. Like Jesus, Casy is a wandering preacher who promotes love among humankind. Early in the novel, a halo-like light surrounding Jim Casy further helps establish the link between Casy and Christ. Steinbeck writes that "the preacher walked along, head down. He didn't answer. And the light of the coming morning made his forehead seem to shine."

The most remarkable similarity between Casy and Jesus Christ, however, is the way both die as martyrs. In the same way that Jesus Christ was willing to sacrifice his life for his beliefs and his desire to help humankind, Jim Casy refuses to give up his beliefs when he is persecuted by law enforcement officials who want to put an end to the strike he has organized. According to Casy, the most important realization he has come to in his life is a recognition of the need for all people to unite and speak with one voice for the common good of all individuals. When the policemen kill Casy, he utters a warning that is reminiscent of Jesus' words spoken at his crucifixion. Casy says, "you don' know what you're a-doin'" a statement that clearly echoes Jesus' plea: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do (Luke 23:34).

Casy is willing to sacrifice his life in order to teach his lesson to others, and Tom Joad becomes a disciple who will carry on Casy's work and spread his philosophy among the working poor. Tom tells Ma that he plans to follow in Casy's footsteps:

'Tom,' Ma repeated, 'what you gonna do?'
'What Casy done', he said.
'But they killed him'.
'Yeah', said Tom.

DISCUSSION TOPICS/ ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. How and why does the character of Ma Joad develop over the course of the novel?
2. What is the correlation between Jim Casy and the Socialist elements of the novel?
3. To what extent does the power hierarchy within the Joad family change throughout the novel?
4. What effect do the inter-chapters have on the reader? How do they help reinforce Steinbeck's critical perspective on the plight of the migrant farmers?
5. How does Tom Joad develop as a character? How does he become a disciple of Jim Casy?
6. How does Jim Casy function as a Christ figure throughout the course of the novel? What is his specific role within the Joad family? What is the significance of his teachings for the novel as a whole?
7. Which narrative, stylistic, and structural elements enable Steinbeck to endow his novel with a powerful sense of realism and authenticity?
8. What lessons do Jim Casy and Tom Joad learn while in prison? How do the lessons they learn impact their outlook on life?
9. What are the different perspectives on religion portrayed by Steinbeck?
10. How does the concept of "home" change throughout the novel?
11. What is the significance of community and fellowship for the migrant community? What events challenge the sense of community among the migrant workers and why?
12. Is it plausible to argue that Rose of Sharon is, ultimately, the most significant character in the novel? How might you support this argument? How might you refute it?

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 1:

Read Chapter 3, and write a well-organized essay in which you discuss how the turtle functions as a symbol and suggests the introduction of a theme for the novel. Focus on word choice and imagery in order to establish the turtle's symbolic function.

Do not merely summarize the passage.

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 2:

Carefully read the passage, from Chapter 8, beginning "Come on," said Pa, "come on in now..." and ending near "And she set the pot of tumbling coffee on the back of the stove." Then write a well-organized essay in which you analyze Ma Joad's character, as revealed in this section, and explain the extent to which her personal qualities and her attitudes foreshadow the effectiveness of her role as the family leader.

Do not merely summarize the passage.

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 3:

The brief inter-Chapter 9 illustrates a family's struggle to leave behind their personal belongings as they set out for California. Read the entire chapter carefully and then write a well-organized essay in which you analyze how the author develops the correlation between leaving Oklahoma and moving to California and the need to create completely new identities. Be sure to pay attention to the way in which letting go is a necessary prerequisite for survival for each family member and for the family as a whole.

Do not merely summarize the passage.

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 4:

Study the passage in Chapter 17 that begins "In the evening a strange thing happened," and ends with, "That was a pretty thing to see." Then write a well-organized essay in which you trace the development of community and fellowship on the road and explain how this development reinforces one of the themes of the novel.

Do not merely summarize the passage.

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 5:

Carefully read the passage in Chapter 28, beginning with, “Ma,’ Winfield said,” and ending with, “Ruthie went quietly, heart-brokenly to the other side of the car.” In this passage, Ma learns about Ruthie’s failure to keep Tom’s violent past a secret. Write a well-organized essay in which you explore the impact of the setting, especially the social and historical background on the children in the novel—specifically Ruthie and Winfield. Consider Ruthie’s motivation for sharing the family secret, as well as Ma Joad’s response to Ruthie in your assessment.

Do not merely summarize the passage.

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 6:

Authors manipulate language and style, not only in order to tell their story and build character, but also to affect their readers in certain intellectual, emotional, and psychological ways. In a well-organized essay, evaluate the effectiveness of Steinbeck’s use of language— the colloquial language of the migrants, the narrator’s poetic prose and figurative language, as well as the fragmentary language and elements of stream-of-consciousness of the inter-chapters. Be sure to indicate why Steinbeck chose to use a specific style for particular passages and how his stylistic choices affect the reader.

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 7:

While the duration of time in many novels and plays is left vague, other authors tell their stories over the course of very specific periods of time: a day, a week, a month, etc. *The Grapes of Wrath* takes place over a period of several months, roughly coinciding with the duration of Rose of Sharon’s pregnancy. In a well-organized essay, discuss how Rose of Sharon’s pregnancy illustrates and—at the same time—complicates the novel’s thematic preoccupation with the cycle of life.

Do not merely summarize the plot.

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 8:

Writers sometimes introduce a character whose function is to help develop and shape other characters throughout the text. In a well-organized essay, discuss Steinbeck’s creation of the Christ figure Jim Casy and analyze how Casy’s character serves to enable other characters—particularly Tom—to realize their personal identities and visions.

PRACTICE MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS 1-5:

Read the passage from Chapter 5, beginning with the opening of the chapter and ending with, “And the women went on with the work, but all the time they watched the men squatting in the dust—perplexed and figuring.” Then answer the following questions:

1. Steinbeck’s personification of the banks as monsters has the ironic effect of
 - (A) creating reader sympathy for them.
 - (B) depersonalizing the landowners.
 - (C) soothing the landowners’ guilt.
 - (D) pacifying the evicted tenants.
 - (E) angering the banks.
2. According to this section, planting cotton
 - (A) replenishes the soil.
 - (B) destroys the soil.
 - (C) provides a greater variety of crops.
 - (D) requires more water than other crops.
 - (E) increases profits for the sharecroppers.
3. The extended metaphor used to describe the banks and landowning companies highlights all of the following *except* the
 - (A) power and might of the banks.
 - (B) impersonal nature of the banking business.
 - (C) profit-oriented business policies of the banks.
 - (D) banking business desire to expand by collecting interest.
 - (E) banks’ willingness to cooperate with landowners, but not tenants.
4. The landowners’ insistence that “they were men and slaves, while the banks were machines and masters” suggests that the landowners
 - (A) will not take personal responsibility for their actions.
 - (B) are just as bad off as the farmers.
 - (C) will more than likely lose their land.
 - (D) have no personal and political rights.
 - (E) will sell all their land to the bank.
5. The tenants’ threat to resort to violence only emphasizes their
 - (A) desperation at being evicted.
 - (B) loyalty to their parents’ land.
 - (C) lack of legal and social support.
 - (D) intrinsically violent nature.
 - (E) naïve reliance on the landowners.

PRACTICE MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS 6-10:

Carefully read the passage from Chapter 8, beginning “I hope you’re dead sure of the way,” Jim Casy said,” and ending with, “What’s that ahead?” before you choose your answers.

6. Each of the following explains a contrast of opposites developed in the passage *except*
 - (A) light and darkness.
 - (B) madness and reason.
 - (C) wakefulness and sleep.
 - (D) past and future.
 - (E) community and solitude.
7. The most likely reason Steinbeck gives his reader the stories of Muley and Uncle John is to
 - (A) provide important exposition.
 - (B) add comic relief.
 - (C) show a contrast to Joad and Casy’s companionship.
 - (D) explain why the men must be moving before dawn.
 - (E) foreshadow what Joad and Casy might become.
8. Why is Tom embarrassed after telling Casy the story of Uncle John?
 - (A) Casy now knows too much about the man they are going to see.
 - (B) He made himself vulnerable by admitting his childish love for his uncle.
 - (C) Uncle John was not a religious man, and Casy was a preacher.
 - (D) The story casts the Joad family in an unfavorable light.
 - (E) Tom and Casy have more important things to talk about.
9. All of the following give evidence to the “somepin purty mean” going on *except*
 - (A) Muley’s paranoia.
 - (B) the arrival of a car the night before.
 - (C) a vandalized house.
 - (D) spoiled and lifeless land.
 - (E) Tom and Casy’s traveling before dawn.
10. What do the descriptions of Tom and Casy in the last two paragraphs of the passage suggest about their growing relationship?
 - (A) Casy has an understanding that Tom has not yet acquired.
 - (B) Casy personifies a force for good, while Tom personifies evil.
 - (C) Casy has no family other than the Joads.
 - (D) Tom is resentful that Casy has joined up with the Joad family.
 - (E) Tom has a violent nature that will impact their friendship later on.

PRACTICE MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS 11-15:

Carefully read the passage from Chapter 10, beginning with, “This was Al’s first participation in the conference,” and ending “Casy squatted down like the others, facing Grampa enthroned on the running board,” before you choose your answers.

11. The actions and attitudes of the characters in this passage indicate that the Joads are living in what type of society?
 - (A) matriarchal
 - (B) patriarchal
 - (C) autonomous
 - (D) oligarchic
 - (E) anarchic
12. The way it is used in the passage, the word *titular* means
 - (A) unacknowledged.
 - (B) apparent.
 - (C) former.
 - (D) celebrated.
 - (E) envied.
13. As it is used in the passage, the word *dear* means
 - (A) beloved.
 - (B) flimsy.
 - (C) desired.
 - (D) overused.
 - (E) expensive.
14. Which of the following best explains Ma’s distinction between *can* and *will*?
 - (A) A person’s desires must always be tempered by his or her ability.
 - (B) Having the preacher along will help always them to know God’s will.
 - (C) People who do only what their circumstances and resources allow will never accomplish much
 - (D) Good things always result when a person’s desire and his or her ability coincide.
 - (E) Taking the preacher along is the right thing to do whether they have the means or supplies for him or not.
15. Steinbeck allows Ma to make the ultimate decision about taking Casy along in order to
 - (A) illustrate Ma’s controlling nature.
 - (B) preview the changing gender roles within the family.
 - (C) show that Pa is a weak character.
 - (D) indicate that Ma is extremely fond of Casy.
 - (E) criticize Ma’s tendency to make rash decision.

PRACTICE MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS 16-20:

Carefully read the passage from Chapter 18, beginning with, “Agricultural inspection. We got to look over your stuff,” and ends “Ma raised her eyes and looked over the valley. “Granma’s dead,” before you choose your answers.

16. Ma’s insistence that they get Granma to a doctor, and then her refusal to take Granma to the doctor in Barstow suggest that
 - (A) she used Granma’s illness as an excuse to evade the agricultural inspectors.
 - (B) Granma was so near death, the doctor could not have helped.
 - (C) they could not afford a doctor.
 - (D) Granma was already dead, even at the state line.
 - (E) Ma is simply eager to cross the desert and climb the mountain.
17. What does Al mean when he says he had the car on his soul?
 - (A) He’d given so much for the car, it was like trading his soul.
 - (B) If the car died in the desert, the deaths of the Joad family would be on Al’s soul.
 - (C) The fact that they had trusted him to pick the car moved him to the depths of his soul.
 - (D) He felt a close kinship to the car he’d bought for the family.
 - (E) Worry about the car’s breaking down was a tremendous weight on his soul.
18. What does Ma mean when she says, “I wisht it could be all-nice”?
 - (A) She wished she could give her mother a proper funeral.
 - (B) She wished their new lives in California would be trouble free.
 - (C) She didn’t want to taint their first glimpse of their new lives with news of the death.
 - (D) She regretted the way she spoke to the agricultural inspectors at the state line.
 - (E) She was too tired to appreciate the happy view of the lush California valley.
19. The shift in tone that occurs in this passage could best be described as
 - (A) hope to desperation.
 - (B) sarcasm to sibilance.
 - (C) anxiety to despair.
 - (D) suspense to exuberance.
 - (E) grief to acrimony.
20. What symbol of renewal and rebirth does Steinbeck juxtapose with the Joad family’s first view of the valley?
 - (A) sunrise
 - (B) mountains
 - (C) fruit trees
 - (D) the passage through the desert
 - (E) the trustworthiness of the car

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTIONS 21-25:

Carefully read the passage from Chapter 25, beginning “And first the cherries ripen,” and ending with, “In the souls of the people the grapes of wrath are filling and growing heavy, growing heavy for the vintage,” before answering the questions below.

21. The main purpose of the passage is to
 - (A) introduce the variety of fruits growing in California.
 - (B) describe the lack of fruit pickers on the farms.
 - (C) lament the fruit pickers’ theft of fruit.
 - (D) illustrate the scarcity of fruit.
 - (E) criticize the waste of fruit.

22. The fate of the little farmers is uncertain for all the following reasons *except* the fact that they
 - (A) cannot afford to pay fair wages to fruit pickers.
 - (B) are unable to grow enough fruit.
 - (C) are in debt.
 - (D) cannot afford to own canneries.
 - (E) are bought out by the great land holding companies.

23. The primary contrast in this passage is between
 - (A) acumen and naivety.
 - (B) hope and despair.
 - (C) greed and resignation.
 - (D) abundance and privation.
 - (E) wealth and poverty.

24. The penultimate paragraph of this passage could best be described as a
 - (A) dirge.
 - (B) lament.
 - (C) diatribe.
 - (D) requiem.
 - (E) harangue.

25. The significance of the title of the book is revealed to be a
 - (A) warning of a coming revolution.
 - (B) criticism of the economic policies of the Depression.
 - (C) justification for the migrants’ stealing food.
 - (D) complaint about the decline of the California wine industry.
 - (E) reminder of a simpler time in the past.

MULTIPLE CHOICE ANSWERS

With Explanations

1. Steinbeck's personification of the banks as monsters has the ironic effect of
 - (A) creating reader sympathy for them. The reader does not sympathize with the banks.
 - (B) **depersonalizing the landowners.** By likening the banks threatening foreclosure to monsters, the landowners then liken themselves to slaves and simple instruments to enforce the monsters' will. Thus, they depersonalize themselves as much as they do the banks and bankers.
 - (C) soothing the landowners' guilt. This is certainly one motive of the landowners, but they also desire not to enrage the evicted tenants as much as—if not more than—to ease their own guilt.
 - (D) pacifying the evicted tenants. If we could combine C and D, we would have an acceptable answer, but neither is sufficient alone.
 - (E) angering the banks. There is no evidence to suggest that whatever the landowners said to evict the tenants had any impact at all.
2. According to this section, planting cotton
 - (A) replenishes the soil. The opposite is the case: the soil is depleted from planting cotton.
 - (B) **destroys the soil.**—The Great Plains soil is not suited for the planting of crops such as cotton. It is best suited for animal grazing. Extensive cotton planting destroys the soil's upper layer and contributes to the dust storms.
 - (C) provides a greater variety of crops. Planting cotton will not yield a wider variety of crops, since the soil is not able to recover from overuse and nutritional depletion.
 - (D) requires more water than other crops. All crops are suffering from the lack of water.
 - (E) increases profits for the sharecroppers. The sharecroppers will starve if they plant cotton because they will not have any food to eat. Moreover, cotton will not grow successfully, since the soil has been destroyed.
3. The extended metaphor used to describe the banks and landowning companies highlights all of the following *except* the
 - (A) power and might of the banks.
 - (B) impersonal nature of the banking business.
 - (C) profit-oriented business policies of the banks.
 - (D) banking business desire to expand by collecting interest.
 - (E) **banks' willingness to cooperate with small and large landowners, but not with sharecroppers.**

The banks do not cooperate with the landowners. In fact, they take land away from landowners, who are refusing to evict the tenant farmers currently residing on the land.

4. The landowner's insistence that "they were men and slaves, while the banks were machines and masters" (lines 22-23) illustrates that the landowners
 - (A) **will not take personal responsibility for their actions.** The landowners portray themselves as slaves in order to shed responsibility for their actions. They proclaim that they have no choice but to evict the tenant farmers.
 - (B) are just as bad off as the farmers. Although some landowners are struggling to pay the banks, they are not nearly as destitute as the tenant farmers who have to leave their homes and move to California.
 - (C) will more than likely lose their land. The possibility of this is clear, but it does not seem inevitable.
 - (D) have no personal and political rights. The landowners have rights; they are merely unwilling to take responsibility for their actions and decisions.
 - (E) will sell all their land to the bank. They want to prevent the sale of their land, which is why they evict the tenant farmers in order to employ what they hope will be more profitable farm technology.

5. The tenants' threat to resort to violence only emphasizes their
 - (A) desperation at being evicted. This is certainly true, but not the best possible answer, given the other choices.
 - (B) loyalty to their parents' land. While they do feel loyal to the land, the description of how they lost it and came to be tenants occasions their pleading and whining before they then threaten violence.
 - (C) **lack of legal and social support.** This is established when the landowner threatens to retaliate with legal action. The migrants have no means by which to protest or assert any "right" to stay in their homes.
 - (D) intrinsically violent nature. They plead and reason long before they threaten violence.
 - (E) naïve reliance on the landowners. Their pleading and attempts at reason would probably seem more naïve.

6. Each of the following explains a contrast of opposites developed in the passage *except*
 - (A) light and darkness. This scene takes begins in the dark before dawn and proceeds through sunrise. There are also significant contrasts between Casy's glowing face and Tom's dark face. The colors of the soil and the crops also change as the light changes.
 - (B) madness and reason. Muley's paranoia and the sort of madness that resulted from Uncle John's grief, not to mention the overall madness suggested by the men's stealth and the threat of violence under which they live, are contrasted with their calm and reasonable conversation as they make their way to breakfast at Uncle John's.
 - (C) wakefulness and sleep. All of the prairie is waking up, including the snakes.
 - (D) **past and future.** The men do talk about Uncle John's past, but there is no looking toward the future to contrast this. They are quite firmly rooted in the uncertain and potentially violent present.
 - (E) community and solitude. Tom and Casy keep each other company. There is the Joad family. These are clearly contrasted with Muley's and Uncle John's aloneness.

7. The most likely reason Steinbeck gives his reader the stories of Muley and Uncle John is to
 - (A) provide important exposition.
 - (B) add comic relief.
 - (C) **show a contrast to Joad and Casy's companionship.** This almost a giveaway, given the previous question.
 - (D) explain why the men must be moving before dawn.
 - (E) foreshadow what Joad and Casy might become.

8. Why is Tom embarrassed after telling Casy the story of Uncle John?
 - (A) Casy now knows too much about the man they are going to see. The embarrassment comes only after Tom tells the story of waking up to find the chewing gum Uncle John brought when Tom was a boy.
 - (B) **He made himself vulnerable by admitting his childish love for his uncle.** The source of Tom's "shame" is the possibility that he has "said too intimate a thing."
 - (C) Uncle John was not a religious man and Casy was a preacher. The embarrassment does follow Tom's comparing Uncle John to Jesus, but he is not ashamed of irrelevance, only of having shared something "too intimate."
 - (D) The story casts the Joad family in an unfavorable light. This is the least plausible of the choices.
 - (E) Tom and Casy have more important things to talk about. The men are simply making small talk as they walk to Uncle John's place.

9. All of the following give evidence to the "somepin purty mean" going on *except*:
 - (A) Muley's paranoia. Muley has every reason to be paranoid. Law enforcement is trying to catch him at one of the deserted houses.
 - (B) the arrival of a car the night before. A car arrived and disturbed the dinner Muley was sharing with Tom and Casy the night before. The men had to hide, fearing that they might be arrested.
 - (C) a vandalized house. The houses Muley visits are deserted and in a state of disrepair. The state of these homes indicates the destruction at the hands of the landowners, which the men consider "purty mean."
 - (D) **spoiled and lifeless land.** The lifeless land is an indicator of the ecological disaster affecting the soil, but it does not necessarily reveal anything about the actions taken by law enforcement officials.
 - (E) Tom and Casy's traveling before dawn. Tom and Casy travel before dawn in order to prevent being detected by police.

10. What do the descriptions of Tom and Casy in the last two paragraphs of the passage suggest about their growing relationship?
- (A) **Casy has an understanding that Tom has not yet acquired.** Given a common symbolic application of light and dark, that Casy is a former preacher, that Tom once likened his chewing-gum-giving Uncle to Jesus, and that the fact that Casy's face glows while Tom's remains dark, it is safe to assume that a higher understanding on Casey's part is being suggested.
 - (B) Casy personifies a force for good, while Tom personifies evil. Although good and evil are also common symbolic applications for light and dark, there is nothing else in the passage to suggest that this is the symbolic framework being established.
 - (C) Casy has no family other than the Joads. This may be a fact, but there is no necessary metaphoric or symbolic correlation between light and dark and this relationship.
 - (D) Tom is resentful that Casy has joined up with the Joad family. Again, given a reasonable interpretation of light and dark, this might seem plausible, but is simply not suggested by the rest of the passage.
 - (E) Tom has a violent nature that will impact their friendship later on. This might be plausible given the light/dark dichotomy, but, again, it is not supported by the rest of the passage.

11. The actions and attitudes of the characters in this passage indicate that the Joads are living in what type of society?

The key to answering this question correctly lies in the student's understanding the definitions of the choices, as well as looking into the actual dynamics of the family meeting. On the surface, it would appear to be a patriarchy (B), as the women seem to loiter in the periphery—where Al used to loiter with them until he was brought in to discuss the car. Grampa is still the “titular” or “official” head, although he no longer rules, and when Casy is taken into the family, he is given a place of “eminence” between Pa and Uncle John. Still, when the decision of whether to allow Casy to travel with them must be made, and Pa offers some tentative objections, it is Ma who settles the issue. While the family might appear to be patriarchal, they are clearly matriarchal (A).

- (A) **matriarchal**
- (B) patriarchal
- (C) autonomous—Rule by the self alone. Clearly this “family government” is a collective unit.
- (D) oligarchic Rule—by an exclusive, relatively small, class or caste. The Joad family seems to be closer to a democracy than an oligarchy. At least everyone has a voice, even if their votes do not all carry the same weight.
- (E) anarchic—Lack of a formal system of rule altogether. While it might be argues that the Joad's “system” is not a “formal” one, there clearly is a system in place by which they discuss problems and determine solutions in an orderly and collective manner.

12. The way it is used in the passage, the word *titular* means
- (A) unacknowledged. Although he “no longer rules,” he is still allowed to speak first, so this is eliminated.
 - (B) **apparent**. The fact that “Granpa was *still* the titular head, but *he no longer* ruled,” might suggest either (B) or (C). (C) is eliminated, however, by the fact that he is *still* the titular head. There are no conditions that could be described as “still former,” or “no longer former.”
 - (C) former.
 - (D) celebrated. Clearly, Granpa is respected, but not so much as to make him celebrated.
 - (E) envied. There is also no evidence that he is envied. His position as leader is still respected and acknowledged, even if he is no longer effective in that position.
13. As it is used in the passage, the word *dear* means
- (A) beloved. Certainly this is the most common use of the word, but is not applicable in this case.
 - (B) flimsy. This is not really plausible as it is neither an accepted use of the word nor a likely description of automobile engine parts.
 - (C) desired. This might be tempting but would make the sentence “parts too hard to get and too dear” almost redundant.
 - (D) overused. Again, this is not really a tempting choice.
 - (E) **expensive**. In the sentence before, Al praises the car he’s chosen because it was a popular model and parts are easy to get and cheap. The parts of larger cars are hard to get and too dear. The “hard to get” contrasts the earlier sentence’s “easy to get,” and the “too dear” contrasts the earlier “cheap.” Thus, “dear” can only mean “expensive” in this use.
14. Which of the following best explains Ma’s distinction between *can* and *will*?
Ma says, “It ain’t kin we? It’s will we? ... As far as kin, we can’t do nothin’, not go to California or nothin’, but as far as will, we’ll do what we will.” Clearly, she is making a distinction between allowing outside forces to determine actions and outcomes (*can*) and summoning inner strength to act and determine outcomes (*will*).
- (A) A person’s desires must always be tempered by his or her ability. Finding and following God’s will is not an issue in this passage, except indirectly.
 - (B) Having the preacher along will help always them to know God’s will. Ma’s distinction is articulated during the discussion of whether to allow Casy to travel with them, but, again, she does not invoke God’s will to support her argument.
 - (C) **People who do only what their circumstances and resources allow will never accomplish much**
 - (D) Good things always result when a person’s desire and his or her ability coincide. This is a nice philosophy, but, in Ma’s speech, the two are distinct and almost opposite.
 - (E) Taking the preacher along is the right thing to do whether they have the means or supplies for him or not. This is her point, but is not what she is articulating with her “can vs. will” speech.

15. Steinbeck allows Ma to make the ultimate decision about taking Casy along in order to
- (A) illustrate Ma's controlling nature. Ma is not a controlling figure. She always looks out for the good of the family.
 - (B) **preview the changing gender roles within the family.** This is the first instance in the novel when Ma makes a crucial decision for the entire family. Steinbeck effectively previews Ma's growing role as a family leader.
 - (C) show that Pa is a weak character. This is tempting, as Pa does retreat when Ma advances, but it is too strong a condemnation to call Pa "weak."
 - (D) indicate that Ma is extremely fond of Casy. Ma is not the only one in the family who likes Casy and wants to take him along.
 - (E) criticize Ma's tendency to make rash decisions. Steinbeck does not appear critical of Ma anywhere in the novel.
16. Ma's insistence that they get Granma to a doctor, and then her refusal to take Granma to the doctor in Barstow suggest that
- When they are first stopped, Ma's "face [was] swollen and her eyes hard." Talking to the agricultural inspectors, she "seemed to fight with hysteria," a level of alarm not previously associated with Ma. At Barstow, suddenly, she protests that Granma is "awright—awright." One inspector who commented on Granma's appearance explained that that was why he let the family pass without inspecting their vehicle and luggage. When Ma emerges from the car the next morning, she is so stiff and tired that even Tom notices and fears that she is sick. When she announces, then, that Granma is dead, we can infer that Granma was dead even before they crossed the line into California, and that is why Ma did not want the car inspected. That is also why she did not want—there was no need—for a doctor to see Granma in Barstow.
- (A) she used Granma's illness as an excuse to evade the agricultural inspectors. This is true, but does not tell the whole story.
 - (B) Granma was so near death, the doctor could not have helped. We know from the inspector that Granma's face was such that he knew they needed to get her to a doctor immediately. Yet, even if she were moments away from death, Ma would not have told everyone she was "awright" in Barstow.
 - (C) They could not afford a doctor. Nothing suggests this even though it is probably true.
 - (D) **Granma was already dead, even at the state line.** This, really, is the most plausible explanation for Ma's panic, odd behavior, and physical appearance.
 - (E) Ma is simply eager to cross the desert and climb the mountain. True, but her eagerness would not motivate her near panic at the inspection station.

17. What does Al mean when he says he had the car on his soul?
- (A) He'd given so much for the car, it was like trading his soul. Earlier, we learn that the car was in good condition and reasonably priced.
 - (B) **If the car died in the desert, the deaths of the Joad family would be on Al's soul.** Tom's response that Al did a good job picking suggests this as the correct answer.
 - (C) The fact that they had trusted him to pick the car moved him to the depths of his soul. This may have been a tempting choice had he said it at the meeting when they were discussing the car.
 - (D) He felt a close kinship to the car he'd bought for the family. Although he is proud that he was able to help his family, there is nothing to suggest an overly sentimental attachment to the car.
 - (E) Worry about the car's breaking down was a tremendous weight on his soul. This is the second-most plausible choice, excluded only because (B) is more specifically worded.
18. What does Ma mean when she says, "I wisht it could be all nice"?
- A She wished she could give her mother a proper funeral. This might tempt some students, especially if they think back to Granpa's burial, but there is no mention anywhere in this passage that Granma's funeral is a concern.
 - B She wished their new lives in California would be trouble free. If this were the correct answer, Ma would not be speaking in the past tense.
 - C **She didn't want to taint their first glimpse of their new lives with news of the death.** *Chances are, Ma has lived with the knowledge that Granma has died since before they entered California, so this is the burden she must unload and taint their arrival in the Edenic California.*
 - D She regretted the way she spoke to the agricultural inspectors at the state line. This choice has no relevance.
 - E She was too tired to appreciate the happy view of the lush California valley. Ma has never thought or acted purely selfishly, so she would not be likely to spoil this moment for her family because she was tired.
19. The shift in tone that occurs in this passage could best be described as
- A hope to desperation. The passage begins with Ma's panic at the Agricultural Inspection Station.
 - B sarcasm to sibilance. There is no evidence of either in the passage.
 - C **anxiety to despair.** The passage begins with the near panic at the state line. There is happiness for a brief time when the family first sees the fertile valley, but then the passage ends in the despair of Ma having to announce Granma's death.
 - D suspense to exuberance. The joy of seeing the valley is too quiet to be called exuberance, and it is fairly quickly eclipsed by Ma's sad announcement.
 - E grief to acrimony. Ma's initial anxiety might be called "grief," but there is no acrimony in the passage.

20. What symbol of renewal and rebirth does Steinbeck juxtapose with the Joad family's first view of the valley?
- (A) **sunrise**—The sunrise at their backs as they leave the desert, climb the mountain, and then view the valley on the other side is a powerful symbol of the beginning of their new and hopeful lives.
 - (B) mountains—Mountains sometimes symbolize the divine, and may figure into human encounters with the divine, but are not typically associated with rebirth or renewal.
 - (C) fruit trees—Fruit trees can be used to symbolize fecundity, but only perhaps while budding in spring would the tree symbolize renewal.
 - (D) the passage through the desert—The crossing of the desert is accomplished rather matter-of-factly. Steinbeck avoids much of the difficulties an actual family might encounter in this journey, so this answer is flawed.
 - (E) the trustworthiness of the car—This might, perhaps symbolize the indefatigable spirits of the family, but not rebirth.
21. The main purpose of the passage is to
- (A) introduce the variety of fruits growing in California.
 - (B) describe the lack of fruit pickers on the farms.
 - (C) lament the fruit picker's theft of fruit.
- All of the above are mentioned in the passage, but as details in a larger picture, not as the picture itself.
- (D) illustrate the scarcity of fruit.
This is simply not true.
 - (E) **criticize the waste of fruit.**
Steinbeck severely criticizes an economic policy that destroys abundance and allows hardworking people to perish simply to maintain artificially high prices for the goods.
22. The fate of the little farmers is uncertain for all the following reasons *except* the fact that they
- (A) are unable to pay fair wages to fruit pickers.
 - (B) **are unable to grow enough fruit.** The farmers produce plenty of fruit, and that is, ironically, the source of their trouble. The abundance keeps the price low, so they cannot sell their fruit for enough money to pay pickers a decent wage. In order to raise the price of the fruit, they allow it to rot on the tree or vine, or they destroy it to prevent theft. (If people are stealing the fruit—getting it for free—they are not buying it.)
 - (C) are in debt.
 - (D) cannot afford to own canneries.
 - (E) are bought out by the great land holding companies.

23. The primary contrast in this passage is between
- (A) acumen and naivety. The skill of agricultural scientists is mildly mocked, but there is no naivety in the passage.
 - (B) hope and despair. There is not hope in the passage, only condemnation.
 - (C) greed and resignation. The passage ends in wrath, not resignation.
 - (D) **abundance and privation**. This is the primary contrast. The abundance of fruits and vegetables, the stench of rot and decay, are contrasted with the severe hunger of the people, who are prevented from even so much as fishing unwanted potatoes from the river.
 - (E) wealth and poverty. There is poverty here, and abundance, but not wealth. Even the farmers who can produce this bounty are poor and in debt.
24. The penultimate paragraph of this passage could best be described as a
- (A) dirge. The paragraph does read like a mournful song, but not necessarily a funeral song.
 - (B) **lament**. There is clearly a combination of complaint and mourning in this paragraph.
 - (C) diatribe. The paragraph is too quiet and sad to be a diatribe.
 - (D) requiem. Again, the poem does not lament the dead, but the waste that will lead to many deaths.
 - (E) harangue. The paragraph is too quiet and sad to be a harangue.
25. The significance of the title of the book is revealed to be a
- (A) **warning of a coming revolution**. The people are angry. They are hungry. They are storing up the “grapes of wrath,” and will soon begin to trample the vintage. The allusion to the Battle Hymn is an ominous warning of the coming of a time when the poor will rise up for food and rights and employments.
NOTE: do not let students remain overly confused if they acknowledge that no such revolution ever took place. At the time Steinbeck wrote the book, he could not know that the social revolution he was predicting would not occur.
 - (B) criticism of the economic policies of the Depression. Certainly this passage does that, but that is not the point of the allusion to the Battle Hymn.
 - (C) justification for the migrants’ stealing food. We are told that the guards and the poisoning by kerosene prevent the stealing of food.
 - (D) complaint about the decline of the California wine industry. The wine is certainly of poor quality, but that is not a huge issue in this passage, let alone the book.
 - (E) reminder of a simpler time in the past. The title does allude to a Civil War song, but that is the only indication of the past.

The Grapes of Wrath

Advanced Placement in English Literature and Composition Teaching Unit

Study Guide Teacher's Copy

Chapter 1

1. What tragedy is foreshadowed by the suggestion that “the leaves of the young corn became less stiff and erect; they bent in a curve at first, and then, as the central ribs of strength grew weak, each leaf tilted downward”?

The line suggests the coming famine that will cause poverty, death, and the great migration west. The corn is suffering from drought. The crops are slowly dying from lack of moisture in the soil.

2. Why does the sky darken?

The sky is covered by the large dust clouds that are blowing through the land.

3. What does Steinbeck suggest about the power of wrath when he writes that as long as the men were “hard and angry and resistant, ...no misfortune was too great to bear”?

The men are watching the devastation of the dust storm with worry and concern, but their faces “became hard and angry and resistant.” This line stands as an early reference to the theme of the novel’s title, the idea of wrath, which is presented by Steinbeck as a necessary quality that will enable his characters to retain their dignity throughout the hardships they have to endure. It helps them to retain their sense of humanity, even when they have to live under inhumane conditions.

4. Why does Steinbeck not introduce any of his major characters in this chapter?

The opening chapter sets the background for the novel. It describes the effects of the dust storms on the crops and on the farming families. The Joad family is not yet introduced in this chapter because Steinbeck wants to emphasize the universal validity and applicability of his story. The Joads are an example for thousands of other families. Their plight is just one story of many.

Chapter 2

1. To what extent does the description of Tom Joad's new clothes serve as a narrative clue about his past?

Tom is outfitted with a set of "cheap and new" clothes. This is intended to be a clue to the reader that Tom has recently been released from prison.

2. What is significant about the way Tom convinces the driver to violate his "No Riders" policy?

Tom convinces the truck driver that they are both members of the same social class, oppressed by the wealthy company owner/capitalist. By having Tom suggest that the policy was probably imposed on the driver by his boss, Steinbeck is beginning to set up his socialist theme of the oppression of the masses by the capitalist.

3. Why was Tom incarcerated for four years?

Tom committed homicide in self defense.

Chapter 3

1. What human characteristics does the turtle exemplify?

The turtle exemplifies the qualities of strength and endurance. It gets struck twice on its way across the street. Yet, the turtle resumes its path patiently and continues to endure and move ahead against all odds.

2. To what extent does the turtle's encounter with the car and the truck parallel the fate of the Joad family as they are driven off their land?

The turtle's life is put in jeopardy by the fast and careless progression of automobiles on the highway. In the same way that the turtle has to struggle against the inhuman and mechanical threat posed by these vehicles, the Joad family has to fight for survival in a world that is becoming increasingly dominated by big industries and corporations.

Chapter 4

1. Why does Jim Casy profess he cannot preach any more?

Jim explains that he has “a lot of sinful idears.” In the past, he sometimes had sex with the girls he preached to. Casy has lost faith in religious doctrine because he is beginning to realize that religious doctrine does not necessarily pave the way for an honorable life.

2. What might Steinbeck be suggesting by making the preacher’s name Jim Casy?

Jim Casy’s initials—J.C.—are the same as the initials of Jesus Christ. His character functions as a Christ-like figure who breaks with traditional religious values and seeks his own personal vision of salvation and spirituality.

3. What does Casy’s attitude toward sin contribute to the unfolding theme of the novel?

Casy believes that there is no such thing as “sin” or “virtue,” and that all behaviors are part of human nature: “There’s just stuff people do.” This is in sharp contrast to the more rigid morality of the migrants who will want to classify all things as either good or bad. Steinbeck is beginning to lead to the suggestion that the migrants are not “good” and the wealthy landowners and bankers “bad,” but everyone is simply within the dictates of human nature.

4. How does Tom’s being a paroled convict fit into this theme?

Tom has killed a man and been sentenced to prison for homicide, but Steinbeck is also careful to tell the reader that the knifing was in self defense. Tom is not a cold-blooded killer, but he did what he had to do to preserve his own life.

5. Why does Casy not profess to love Jesus?

Casy explains that he cannot love a man he does not know. He only knows stories about Jesus, but not the man himself. Instead, Casy insists that he can only love people.

6. According to Casy, what is the Holy Spirit?

Casy considers the human spirit shared by all human beings to be the expression of the Holy Spirit. He believes that all humans are part of one soul.

Chapter 5

1. How sincere is Steinbeck in calling the banks monsters? How do you know?

Steinbeck is probably being thoroughly ironic—the demand that the landowners make their mortgage payments is a fully legitimate one, just as the landowners' desire to make as much income from their land is a thoroughly legitimate desire. What Steinbeck is protesting is how the landowners will not take responsibility for their own decisions and actions. First of all, many of the landowners sent representatives instead of coming to speak to their tenants themselves. Secondly, rather than simply being honest with the tenants, they portray the bank as monsters and themselves as victims.

2. Why do most landowners send spokesmen or representatives to talk to the tenant farmers?

For the most part, the landowners are cowards, not wanting to face their tenants. The landowners are themselves subject to the power of the banks and large lending corporations, so the decisions they have had to make may be justified in the current capitalistic system, but the fact remains that the landowners refuse to take personal responsibility for their actions.

3. What is the significance of the goggles worn by the tractor drivers?

On a literal level, the goggles are to protect the tractor drivers' eyes. On a more symbolic level, the tractor drivers wear goggles to avoid having to face the farming families directly. The goggles lend them a sense of anonymity. Many of the tractor drivers were originally farmers themselves, and they are ashamed to admit that they are now working for the "other side."

4. Why would it be pointless for the farmers to shoot the tractor drivers in order to avoid eviction?

If a tractor driver were shot or hurt by an angry tenant farmer, the landowner would simply replace him with another tractor driver. When the driver says "you're not killing the right guy," he explains that he is simply following orders. The tractor driver does not have any power to decide whether the farmers can stay, and he could be easily replaced on orders of the ones who are really in charge. The tractor driver also implies that the people who make the decisions are completely out of the tenant farmers' reach and can, therefore, not be destroyed.

Chapter 6

1. What do we learn about the Joad farm when we read that “the cotton grew in the dooryard and up against the house”?

The statement reveals that the Joad family was forced to abandon the farm quite some time ago.

2. What does the turtle’s continued journey in a southwestern direction foreshadow?

The turtle suggests the perseverance and endurance that the Joad family will, likewise, have to demonstrate. Like the turtle, the family will soon be migrating to the south and west. Interestingly, the image of the turtle in its shell resembles the migrants, who will carry all of their worldly goods in trucks and cars as they migrate.

3. What is the significance of the dry well on the Joad farm?

When Tom arrives at his family’s farm and realizes that it has been deserted, he takes a piece of dirt and drops it down the well, saying that “she was a good well.” The well, here, is significant for its life-giving qualities because without water, nothing can survive. Now that the well is empty, all human life has vanished from the farm. The well also symbolizes the drought which is really at the root of everyone’s problems. Ultimately, the plight of the Joads and the other migrants is merely complicated by greed and mismanagement; it is caused by the drought.

4. What effect does Steinbeck’s use of colloquialism and regional dialect?

Steinbeck’s use of colloquialisms and regional dialect lends a sense of realism, honesty, and verisimilitude to the novel as a whole. Readers will find the characters to be more believable and authentic.

5. To what extent is Muley Graves’ name indicative of the consequences he will face if he stays in Oklahoma?

Muley is stubborn (as a mule) in his refusal to leave Oklahoma. His stubbornness, however, can only result in his death (Graves), as there is no way for him to sustain his life in Oklahoma.

6. What is significant about this simile: “The gray cat sneaked away toward the open barn shed and passed inside like a shadow”?

Comparing the cat to a shadow emphasizes how the substance of life has gone from the land.

7. What is significant about Tom’s prediction that Pa Joad will be critical of the writing skills he acquired in jail?

Tom explains that “ever’ time Pa seen writin’, somebody took somepin away from ’im.” Pa has come in contact with writing only in the form of legal documents: mortgages, foreclosures, leases, eviction notices, etc., all negatives, from his point of view.

Chapter 7

1. How do the pace and tone change in this chapter? How does Steinbeck achieve this new pace and tone?

The pace quickens and the tone becomes more detached, no longer a narrator telling a story about people to an audience, but almost as if the audience were watching a hidden-camera program.

Steinbeck achieves the fast pace by using a series of short sentences and sentence fragments. He also limits his punctuation—e.g., no quotation marks for the limited dialogue.

He achieves the distant tone by merely stating action without detailing it. He states action, but does not develop a motivation or an emotional state.

2. Why does Steinbeck use the shift in tone and pace?

The chapter does not narrate the specific and exclusive story of the Joads, but sets the tone that everyone is in need of a car—fast and cheap. The crisis in Oklahoma has left hundreds homeless with no other option than to leave. For that they need transportation.

3. What aspects of the Dust Bowl crisis does Steinbeck suggest in this chapter?

By widening his focus beyond the Joads to include a number of anonymous car-seekers, Steinbeck is suggesting that hundreds of people are affected similarly to the Joads; it is a widespread problem. Also, the interactions between the two car salesmen, Jim and Joe, suggest dishonesty in their willingness to sell unfit cars to desperate people at a tremendous profit.

Chapter 8

1. Although Uncle John drinks and has licentious tendencies, the reader still has sympathy, if not admiration, for this character. How does Steinbeck accomplish this?

Steinbeck describes Uncle John as a very pitiable character, guilt-ridden over the death of his young wife. Tom says that it “Took ’im two years to come out of it, an’ then he ain’t the same.” Uncle John is also a very generous man, giving away his possessions and leaving surprises for children. He is a character who has made mistakes in his life, but is fully aware of his shortcomings and desires to redeem himself. Readers will be able to relate to him as an average human being with faults and a good heart.

2. How does Steinbeck use light and darkness to suggest character and developing relationships?

As the sun rises, the face of Jim Casy—the former preacher and potential Christ-figure—seems to glow, suggesting a state of grace or enlightenment. Tom, who is not yet that enlightened, but will eventually become Casy’s disciple, appears dark.

3. Why is the Joad family at first apprehensive when they see Tom is not in jail any more?

The Joad family at first fears that Tom has broken out of jail, since he was originally sentenced to seven years and is returning after only four years. The family is relieved when they hear that Tom has been paroled.

4. What does the following description reveal about Ma's character and her standing in the Joad family: "And since Tom and the children could not know hurt or fear unless she acknowledged hurt and fear, she had practiced denying them in herself"?

This description reveals that Ma has lived through many hard times and has suffered enough to have "practiced" pretending that she is all right for the sake of her family. The passage also reveals that the family depends on Ma for guidance. Ma's reaction to difficult situations paves the way for the entire family to deal with hardship.

5. What is the "strange, silent house" in which Noah lives?

The "strange, silent house" in which Noah lives is his own mind.

6. Why does Pa feel ashamed that Noah is such an "awkward" child?

When Noah was born, Pa helped to pull the baby out of Ma's womb, but his fear and inexperience caused him to "warp" the baby's head, and he suspects that this event affected Noah and turned him into a "listless" child. Pa cannot overcome the sense of shame and guilt he associates with Noah's birth.

7. To what extent does Casy's failure to say "Amen" at the end of his prayer illustrate the difference between his religious convictions and the religious convictions held by families like the Joads?

Unlike the Joads, Casy has detached himself from the teachings and doctrines of organized religion. He has learned that he can find faith only by experiencing the world and the people around him directly. Casy has turned away from impersonal, organized religion toward a practiced faith that enables him to actively improve the lives of his fellow human beings. The Joads, on the other hand, uphold religious beliefs almost out of habit and a sense of tradition. They have not yet learned that religious practice is pointless if it does not serve to improve their everyday lives.

8. To what extent does Casy's failure to say "Amen" at the end of his prayer foreshadow the need for the Joad family to adjust or abandon their adherence to rules and artificially imposed doctrines as they embark on their journey west?

Casy feels a strong sense of spirituality and connectedness to the people around him, but he does not recognize a need for organized religion. He has already learned that rules must be bent or adjusted in order to fit the lives of individual people and families. Casy, here, is leading the way for the Joad family. He is beginning to teach them that they will need to turn toward a more practical spirituality. For example, Casy's behavior foreshadows the Joads' decisions when it comes to bending the rules in preparation for Grampa's and Granma's funerals.

Chapter 9

1. How do the descriptions of people sorting out their belongings prior to leaving for California affect the reader?

The descriptions of people making decisions about which belongings to take and which to leave behind illustrates how drastically the lives of the tenant farming families will change. Readers will also understand that, for these families, leaving Oklahoma means leaving behind everything they have known and loved. They will have to start building their lives all over again, as illustrated by the lament: “How will we know it’s us without our past?”

2. What does the line, “But I warn you, you’re buying what will plow your own children under,” indicate about the relationship between the people leaving Oklahoma and the people staying behind?

The tenant farmers have to make difficult decisions as they prepare for their journeys to California. They know that there is a growing division between the people staying behind and the people leaving the state. By taking advantage of those who are selling their belongings, the buyers are perpetuating the system of the banks and large companies pushing people off the land and setting in motion a course of action that can result only in their and their children’s deaths.

Chapter 10

1. How does Ma’s vision of California resemble the biblical Eden and the Promised Land? What promises are conveyed by means of the biblical imagery?

Ma describes California in terms reminiscent of how the Jews in the book of Exodus anticipated their land “flowing with milk and honey.” She further presents an Edenic vision of the West: “Never cold. An’ fruit ever’ place, an’ people just bein’ in the nicest places, little white houses in among the orange trees.” Ma envisions a land that offers plentiful food and comfortable weather. Additionally, Ma’s vision includes the hope of a peaceful community for all people and the promise of ownership. The “little white houses” Ma dreams about convey a sense of innocence and freshness, as if promising a new start for a new life.

2. What did Tom learn in prison that he is able to convey to Ma when she enquires about the length of the journey ahead of them?

In prison, Tom has learned the importance of patience. Especially in times of uncertainty, patience can serve as a survival mechanism that prevents human beings from losing sight of their goals or losing hope. Tom cannot tell Ma for sure how long it will take to get to California. He explains that she has to take things one day at a time to keep her sanity. He says, “Jus’ take ever’ day.”

3. How does Ma respond to Tom's fear that there are too many people looking for work in California?

Ma clings to her hopes of a better life by recalling a flyer Pa received that stated the need for workers: "Your father got a han' bill on yella paper, tellin' how they need folks to work."

4. How has pregnancy affected Rose of Sharon?

Pregnancy has turned Rose of Sharon into a careful and more serious person. She thinks only of her baby and its well-being. Indeed, "[h]er whole thought and action were directed inward on the baby." Being a mother-to-be gives Rose of Sharon a special status because she now carries the future of the family within her. She takes her role as life-giver very seriously.

5. How can we evaluate Uncle John's attitude toward women—and toward Rose of Sharon in particular—when we learn that he "would have liked Rose of Sharon to sit [in the honor seat]. This was impossible, because she was young and a woman."?

Uncle John adheres to the traditional structure of a patriarchal family when he takes his honor seat next to Pa in the front of the truck, but he does so with hesitation. Uncle John is haunted by the death of his wife; his feelings of guilt and the assumption that he is responsible for his wife's death make him especially attentive toward the needs of women. He clearly shows a desire to amend his past mistakes by treating Rose of Sharon with care. The pregnant Rose of Sharon carries the future of the family, and Uncle John wants to ensure that he does not, yet again, cause the demise of a family member or the discomfort of a delicate woman.

6. Before the Joads leave for California, "The family met next to the most important place, near the truck." What made the truck so central to the Joad family?

The truck is the only means of transportation for the Joad family; without it, they have no chance of getting to California. The truck replaces the house as the physical center of the family; it becomes the new family home on the road, the "new hearth, the living center of the family."

7. What new role emerges for Al?

Al has recently spent a lot of time chasing girls, but he becomes an important part of the new family structure on the road because of his thorough knowledge of cars. Al will be responsible for maintaining the car on the trip to California. He is, thus, an indispensable part of the Joad family.

8. Who makes the final decision about taking along Casy, and what does this decision reveal about the power hierarchy in the Joad family?

Ma makes the decision to take along Casy. On the outside, the Joad family is a patriarchy. The older men are the family leaders, the younger men's opinions have precedence over the women's opinions, and the women are responsible for food preparation and child rearing. On the inside, however, the family respects Ma's opinions. Ma is the moral compass of the family. She knows what is right and what is wrong, and the other family members completely trust her decisions.

9. Why does Ma decide to burn the personal belongings she is unable to take to California?

Ma can only take a few personal items to California. She burns all her other keepsakes to make a fresh start. Ma knows that she must eradicate the memories of her old life in order to allow herself to freely look forward to a new life. Ma knows that, if she remains stuck in the past, she will not have the strength to move forward. By burning her personal items, Ma does not give herself a chance to look back.

10. What mood is created in the last paragraph of this chapter, and what word choices and images does Steinbeck employ in order to establish the mood?

In the final paragraph of this chapter, the mood is sorrowful and nostalgic. As the family sets out for California, they look back and catch a glimpse of everything they leave behind. The descriptions of the barn and “little smoke still rising from the chimney” illustrate that the family is not merely leaving their house and farm, but their home, their happy memories, and their family history.

Chapter 11

1. What idea does Steinbeck convey with the simile, “The heat goes out of it like the living heat that leaves a corpse”?

The simile contrasts a horse at the end of a day’s plowing with the inanimate tractor. The horse, at the end of the day, is tired but is still a living thing with a body that eats and rests. But a tractor is a machine; it is not a living thing, so when it is shut down, it is like a corpse with the life force drained from it.

2. What does Steinbeck suggest when he claims that “the land is so much more than its analysis”?

This statement gives gravity to the “human” element, both of the farm and of the land. The significance of the soil transcends its chemical and biological make-up. Because human beings depend on the soil to sustain themselves and their families, the land becomes closely entwined with human existence and human identity. Thus, farmers so easily identify with their land, because it offers them life and a sense of identity.

3. How does Steinbeck emphasize the desolation left behind after the migration of the tenants?

First Steinbeck contrasts the life that was on the farm when the farm was populated with humans and living animals with the dead farm populated by tractor drivers and machines. Then he describes the city children coming out to the farms to break the windows and otherwise vandalize the deserted farm buildings, creating ruins where there once were homes.

Chapter 12

1. What road is the main route for migrants traveling west?

Highway 66.

2. What is the purpose of listing all of the towns passed by the migrants on the way to California?

By listing the different towns, Steinbeck demonstrates that the migration westward was a shared experience for families coming from many different places. Because the cities listed in the chapter are actual cities readers might recognize or identify on the map, Steinbeck has added a sense of verisimilitude to the chapter. The list of towns further illustrates the theme of community on the road. People from many different places converge on Route 66 and pursue a common goal. The story of the Joads is just one of many stories that can be told about the migrant experience of the 1930s.

3. What do the specific car problems mentioned in this short chapter refer to?

In this chapter, travelers are plagued with blown tires and broken rear axles. These refer the reader to Chapter 7 in which the dishonest car salesmen hid the patched spot of the worn tire and poured sawdust in the rear end to stop its rattling. Now we see the effect of the salesmen's dishonesty: poverty-stricken migrants are stranded without the means to continue their journey.

4. What do the travelers learn about the California border patrol, and to what extent does this warning foreshadow events that will occur later in the novel?

Travelers hear rumors about the border patrol turning migrants away, sending them back the way they came. The Joads will later experience first-hand that law enforcement in California is hostile toward the migrant travelers.

5. Why does Steinbeck end the chapter with the anecdote about the stranded family and the seadn?

Steinbeck wants to end the chapter on a note of optimism, to establish that, in this period of intense suffering and rampant greed, positive aspects of human nature are still also operative.

Chapter 13

1. What does Steinbeck suggest when he writes that Al “had become the soul of the car”?

Al knows the car, respects its abilities and its limitations, and loves the car he was trusted to choose. He knows how to coax it to get the best performance, Steinbeck also says, “Al was one with his engine.”

2. In what way are the yellow gas stations that are putting the fat man out of business reminiscent of the tractors that destroy the farmhouses in Oklahoma?

The yellow gas stations and tractors are part of larger companies that are putting small companies and farmers out of business. Just as the tractors pushed the Joads off their farm, the yellow gas stations will eventually shut down the fat man’s business and he will have to move on and find another occupation.

3. What is the significance of the death of the Joads’ dog at this early stage in the family’s travels?

The Joads’ dog is run over not long after they begin their journey and stop for gas. A “swift car” hits the dog and rushes onward without stopping. The death of the dog not only foreshadows that the family will have to endure a series of tragedies, including deaths, but also indicates that people who are better off than the Joads will ultimately come to pose a threat to the family. The manner of death also indicates the indifference of the mechanized world.

4. Why does Oklahoma City embarrass Ruthie and Winfield “with its bigness and its strangeness”?

As children, Ruthie and Winfield know nothing more of the world than what they have seen near their home on the farm. The city makes them aware of how big the world is and how small they are by comparison. It is also the first time they encounter wealth and a lifestyle other than the farming lifestyle they were accustomed to, which might lead them to begin judging their own situation in a different light.

5. How does Tom appease Ma’s fears that he will be arrested for violating the terms of his parole?

Tom assures Ma that if he does not commit any crimes, he will not fall under the radar of law enforcement in the West. Tom fails to live up to his assuring promises later and is forced to leave Ma and the family behind.

6. How does Grampa's death affect the relationship between the Joads and the Wilsons?

The Wilsons make their tent available for Grampa when he dies. They proudly offer their help and consolation to the Joad family during this difficult time. Grampa's death enhances the sense of community that the Joads and Wilsons are experiencing on the road. Both families learn that they have to pool their resources to survive on their journey west. Family structures change as people—like the Wilsons—who are unrelated to the Joads become part of the family community. Both families, thus, learn that they have to extend the hand of friendship beyond the boundaries of their biological families.

7. Why is the Joad family at first apprehensive about burying Grampa without informing the authorities?

The family wants to give Grampa a proper burial instead of burying him like a common pauper. Uncle John says, "We never did have no paupers." The Joads also feel apprehensive about breaking the law.

8. What is significant about the Joads' decision to bury Grampa without informing the proper authorities, even though they are apprehensive at first?

The fact that the Joad family buries Grampa without informing the authorities not only illustrates their poverty, but it also shows how they must realign some of their principles and morals. The Joads have to accept that the rules and laws they observed while they lived on the farm do not apply to life on the road because the rules have changed and are now impractical. As Pa says, "sometimes the law can't be foller'd no way."

9. How are the Joads beginning to act more like members of a larger community than they did at the beginning of their journey to California?

The Joads, who were once concerned that Jim Casy would be too much of a burden to take to California, now ask the Wilsons to travel with them. They are beginning to see that joining together makes them stronger, not weaker.

10. What makes Sairy Wilson a heroic character even though she is physically weak?

Sairy Wilson is a heroic character because of her enduring will to go forward and not to allow the immense physical pain she feels to make her appear pitiful in any way.

11. What does Casy imply when he says that "Grampa didn't die tonight. He died the minute you took 'im off the place"?

Casy explains that Grampa's death was inevitable. Grampa was too old and too set in his ways and habits to be uprooted and taken to a different state to start a new life. Casy wants the Joads to understand that Grampa's identity was so closely connected to his life on the farm that he never had a chance to survive in a different environment. The other members of the family are younger and better able to build a new life and identity for themselves in a different location.

Chapter 14

1. What does Steinbeck mean by “Manself”?

Manself is that quality of the human being that he or she invests in every cause that is undertaken. It is the spirit that drives progress—the hunger, the discontent, that fuels revolutions and strikes and allows the human race always to move forward toward equality and justice.

2. What, then, is the significance of the paragraph that ends, “fear the time when Manself will not suffer and die for a concept”?

This entire passage is a paeon to the human spirit, showing how social upheaval, even violence, is a positive sign that this human spirit is strong and moving forward. This paragraph concludes, then, that one need not fear the bombs that provide evidence of the spirit's life, but we need to fear when the bombs stop, for that would indicate that the spirit has died. Steinbeck is suggesting that it is this spirit, this “Manself,” that will see families like the Joads through their current crisis. The true tragedy would be for these families to give up the struggle against their oppressors.

3. Why is the change, as Steinbeck puts it, “from ‘I’ to ‘we,’” such a momentous development for the disenfranchised migrant families?

On their own, individuals cannot do much to change their plight, but there is strength in numbers. When individual injustices become a single, unified cause that people can rally around, those people become more powerful. Not only can they help each other to survive, but they can also exchange ideas and coordinate resources which will make a true and lasting change more likely. Steinbeck emphasizes the power of numbers by the figures, “a half-million people... a million... ten million...”

4. What is the social significance of this change? When does Steinbeck make it most clear?

By introducing the concepts of “our tractor” and “our land,” Steinbeck is inviting his reader to begin thinking about how Socialism would better serve the poor and displaced than Capitalism has done. Capitalism, according to Steinbeck, has resulted in debt, foreclosure, and eviction. Collectivism, or Socialism, would result in the people's strength and ability to stand up to those who would use money, political power, or physical force to oppress them.

This Socialist theme becomes most clear at the end of the third-from-last paragraph: “...the quality of owning freezes you forever in ‘I,’ and cuts you off forever from the ‘we.’”

5. What does Steinbeck achieve by shifting to the second person at the end of the chapter?

Here, what had been a subtle suggestion becomes more a direct warning. Steinbeck is predicting a revolution of sorts, and he is warning those who read this book what they need to understand in order to survive it.

6. Why are the Western States “nervous”?

With “a half-million people moving over the country; a million more restive, ready to move...” the Western States are the first to be aware of the coming change, Steinbeck’s predicted revolution.

NOTE: Again, do not allow students to be confused that the revolution Steinbeck and some others predicted did not, in fact, happen. The importance is that, at the time, the country seemed ripe for just such an upheaval.

Chapter 15

1. What was Steinbeck’s purpose for including the license plates and car types of the vehicles driving west on Highway 66?

Steinbeck uses the states on the license plates and different cars to reinforce the idea that the migrants consist of a wide variety of people from all over the country. The problem of disenfranchisement is not a local, or even regional, one; it is affecting the entire nation.

2. What attitude toward the migrant farmers is exemplified by Mae and Al at the hamburger stand?

The relationship between Mae and Al exemplifies the struggle the owners of the hamburger stand have to go through every day as they encounter more and more families in need: On the one hand, they are business people who need to make a living; on the other hand, they cannot help but feel moved by the plight of the migrant farmers. The hamburger stand owners are, themselves, in a class between the rich business people and the poor migrant farmers.

3. Explain the ambiguity of truck drivers’ response to Mae’s kindness.

On the one hand, the truck drivers repay Mae’s kindness with more kindness by leaving her an enormous tip. However, they also question her generosity and perform their own deeds gruffly. Perhaps Steinbeck is exploring the complexities of human nature. On the one hand, Mae is a practical business person and knows she needs to maintain her business and make a living, but she desires to help the needy. Likewise, the truckers know that they are better off than many others and are willing to help, but there seems to be some resentment that they are expected to pay full price, while others receive kindnesses.

4. What is the significance of Al's taking the nickels from the cash register to win the jackpot in the slot machine?

In the midst of his and Mae's kindness and generosity, there is still this act of greed and theft. By watching the play the machines get and calculating when a machine is likely to pay a jackpot, Al is essentially stealing from those who legitimately play the machine.

5. Why does Steinbeck have this incident occur to an anonymous family and not the Joads?

Again, Steinbeck wants to emphasize that the poverty of the Depression and the Dust Bowl was not an individual, private crisis, but a national one.

Chapter 16

1. What is the "new technique of living" the families are settling into? What does it suggest about the way life on the road changes the migrant families?

The families learn that they have to make peace with their migrant lifestyle instead of fleeing from it by desperately trying to drive as many miles a day as possible. The road changes from being a way to bridge the distance between two points to becoming the center of life and existence itself: "the highway became their home and movement their medium of expression."

2. How does Steinbeck demonstrate Rose of Sharon's naiveté and immaturity in this chapter?

When Rose of Sharon speaks to her mother about her plans for the future, she is overly optimistic, and her unbridled excitement shows how naïve she still is when it comes to the hardships of life. She does not merely believe that she will have the life she desires, she speaks of having it all ready for a baby who is due in a few months. Ma, who has learned to be more cautious, is more skeptical about what the future holds.

3. What course of action does Tom suggest when the Wilson's touring car breaks down?

Tom suggests that he and Casy stay behind and repair the car while everybody else travels on to California in the Joads' truck. He insists that the sooner some family members reach California, the quicker they can find work and make money for the family.

4. What is significant about Ma's refusal to comply with Tom's proposal?

Up until this point, Ma has spoken her mind and exerted a subtle influence, but she had not spoken directly against the men. Here, for the first time, we see her exert her influence to the fullest extent. She not only speaks her mind, but threatens Pa with physical harm if he tries to make her leave. Clearly, she is beginning to emerge as the family's leader.

5. How does Tom and Al's exchange with the one-eyed man support Steinbeck's Socialist theme?

The one-eyed man in the junk yard is a member of the oppressed, angry with his boss who treats him unfairly. He sides with Tom and Al about the revolution, allowing them to use the boss's tools and buy supplies cheaply.

6. What do the Joads learn about the handbills when they talk to the ragged man at the campsite?

The ragged man is on his way back from California. He tells the migrants at the campsite that he was unable to find good, permanent work. He has seen the yellow fliers Pa and many other families received, and he explains that the more workers move to California, the lower the wages will be, because "they's still five hunderd that's so goddamn hungry they'll work for nothin' but biscuits."

Chapter 17

1. Why is it easy for the families in the camps to form communities?

The families have a lot in common: They come from the same social background and have had to leave their homes for the same reasons. They also quickly learn that if each family contributes something to the common good, they all fare better. What these families share more than anything is the loss of identity and the need to create a new life in an unfamiliar place: "The loss of home became one loss, and the golden time in the West was one dream." Community not only allows these families to survive, but it also enables them to retain a sense of hope with regard to the future.

2. To what extent does the community that forms in the camps on the road resemble a traditional, non-transient society?

The communities on the road develop in much the same way that any traditional, non-transitory society has developed: "[l]eaders emerged, then laws were made, then laws came into being." Like traditional communities, the roadside communities experiment with the rights each individual can enjoy and then make decisions about which right to uphold and which right to deny.

3. In these communities, it is a “right” of hungry people to be fed. To what extent does this right differentiate the roadside communities from the world existing outside of these communities and illustrate Steinbeck’s Socialist ideals?

Inside the roadside communities, fellowship among all members of the community is of extreme importance, because the community depends on each individual for its survival. The hungry will be fed in these communities because every member of the community knows that he or she may be the next one who will need assistance from others. Nobody is safe from starvation and personal tragedy. Only as one can these communities stand against the often hostile outside world, where individuals fend for themselves and often disregard the needs of others. Steinbeck formulates his Socialist ideals by suggesting that common people who want to achieve a particular goal have to stand together because they can gain power only through numbers and unity.

4. Explain the threat to the migrant farmers that is foreshadowed by the simile in the following line: “But along the highway the cars of the migrant people crawled out like bugs, and the narrow concrete miles stretched ahead.”

The simile likens the migrant farmers to insects, indicating that there are masses of migrants swarming west. The simile highlights the threat many migrant farmers will likely face both on the way to and once they reach California: too many people in the same situation, all looking for work. To the employers, these migrants will all look the same; they will not be interested in helping the individuals, because, to the California employers, all migrants are part of an interchangeable and innumerable multitude.

Chapter 18

1. Some adjectives used to describe the landscape seen by the Joads when they are crossing over from Arizona into California are “jagged,” “pale,” “broken,” and “terrible.” What impact do descriptions like these have on the tone of the chapter?

Describing the landscape leading into California in such negative terms gives the chapter a very foreboding and ominous tone. It warns readers that the Joads may have reached California, but their hardships are far from over.

2. Why does the man bathing in the river insist that the people in California are “scairt”?

Again, Steinbeck is predicting the coming of a revolution. All of the land in California is owned by capitalist enterprises, and there is no room for an individual to own land to farm. Further, the land-owning businesses allow vast numbers of acres to sit unused—even in the face of tremendous poverty and starvation. The bathing man says the landowners are scared because of the tremendous numbers of poor and hungry, who will feed themselves in any way they can—the revolution.

3. How did the word “Okie” devolve into a derogatory term?

Originally, an “Okie” was simply used to mean a person from Oklahoma. However, since so many of the poor migrants were not from Oklahoma, “Okie” soon came to mean migrant worker. As more and more migrants—from all over the country—flooded into California, so that there was not enough work for them, the locals who felt that their own financial security was threatened started to consider the “Okies” poor, dirty, and illiterate. Thus, “Okie” became an insult.

4. Why does Steinbeck include the story of the journalist with the million acres?

Again, Steinbeck is criticizing the private ownership of land. For one man to own so much land, just to own it, is a sign of how empty he is inside.

5. Why does the bathing man regret telling the others about the hardships in California?

He tells his son that the warning did no good—the Joads are going to continue anyway—and now they have lost the joy of anticipating happiness and success. As he tells his son, “they’ll be mis’able ’fore they hafta.”

6. What does Ma mean when she tells Rose of Sharon, “bearin’ and dyin’ is two pieces of the same the thing”?

Ma is explaining that life and death are all part of the cycle that connects all human beings. She encourages Rose of Sharon not to see these events as being separate and individual, but as parts of a larger, unified whole that is necessary in order to continue the cycle of life and sustain humanity.

7. Why is Ma afraid that the policeman will talk to Tom?

Ma knows that Tom easily loses his temper. She is afraid that he will become violent toward the policeman, which might lead to his arrest and the discovery that he violated the terms of his parole by leaving Oklahoma.

8. How does Steinbeck foreshadow the unraveling of the Joad’s California dream?

First, Noah inexplicably decides to stay and walk the river, fishing for his sustenance. Then the Wilsons also decide to stay, as Sairy is too ill to travel. The family and community—earlier so necessary for survival—are beginning to unravel. Likewise, the warnings that there will be no work for them when they arrive at the Coast, and their rude treatment by the policemen all foreshadow that the Joads will not find California as welcoming as they had dreamed.

9. What does Steinbeck suggest about the nature of prejudice in the following lines uttered by the young boy working at the service station: “Okies got no sense and no feeling. They ain’t human. A human being wouldn’t live like they do.”?

Steinbeck demonstrates the dehumanizing nature of prejudice and suggests that prejudice is the result of ignorance, judging the appearance rather than the circumstances that force a person to look or act a certain way.

10. When the Joads stop at the inspection station, Ma’s face is “swollen and her eyes [are] hard.” What does this description suggest about Ma?

This description of Ma suggests that she has either been crying or is attempting to hold back tears. Readers will later learn that Ma is the only one who knows that Granma has died on the truck, but she is protecting the family from delays by not revealing what has happened to anyone.

11. What biblical allusion is embedded in the passage that describes the Joads traveling across the desert before they reach a land filled with orchards and rich, fertile soil?

The Joads’ journey across the desert is reminiscent of the biblical story of Exodus, when the Israelites traveled across the desert in search of the Promised Land. Of course, the “Promised Land” of California will turn out to present many more obstacles to the Joad family.

Chapter 19

1. Why does Steinbeck begin the chapter with the fact that California once belonged to the Mexicans who were pushed off it by Americans hungry for land?

The history of the Americans taking the land from the Mexicans calls to mind the beginning of the novel when we are told how the farmers had to mortgage their farms, lost them in foreclosure, became tenants, and then were evicted.

2. Why does Steinbeck compare the farming industry in California to the Roman Empire?

The farming business in California has turned into a big industry. The vast land is controlled by fewer and fewer people, and the owners begin considering their profits above everything else. Just as Rome depended on the importation of slave labor, California depends on the importation of cheap labor: “They imported slaves, although they did not call them slaves.”

3. What are the three “facts” that forebode an ominous future for the landowners?

The landowners are afraid that “when property accumulates into too few hands it is taken away,” “when a majority of people are hungry and cold they take by force what they need,” and “repression works only to strengthen and knit the repressed.”

4. Why do the landowners hate the Okies?

The landowners hate the Okies because the Okies are hard and hungry, while they themselves are soft and satisfied. The landowners remember stories of how the hard and hungry Americans took the land from the not-hungry Mexicans. The landowners are afraid that this is what will happen again, only this time it will be the Okies taking the land.

5. Why is Steinbeck devoting so much of this chapter to discussion of land ownership, squatting, and how one comes to “own” land?

As a writer with Socialist leanings, Steinbeck is protesting the concept of private land ownership. According to Steinbeck, one cannot own the land, one can only have use of it to sustain life and then pass the use of it onto someone else.

6. What does the following mean: “For every manload to lift, five pairs of arms extended to lift it; for every stomachful of food available, five mouths to open”?

So many people were displaced from their homes in the east, and the California landowners recruited cheap labor to such an extreme that there are no far more migrants in California than the system can sustain. The obvious result is much lower wages, since many people were competing for the same few jobs.

7. On what kind of note does this chapter end?

The chapter ends on another ominous note with Steinbeck speaking directly to readers, admonishing them to pray for justice for the poor, and a warning to the unjust rich that a revolution is indeed coming.

Chapter 20

1. How does the concept of survival by community effort begin to evolve in this chapter? What inspires this idea for Tom?

The notion of community begins to evolve into the idea of a labor union. When Floyd Knowles tells Tom about the overabundance of available workers and the resultant low wages and lack of opportunity for work, Tom gets the idea for the workers to band together and refuse to work if they are not paid a fair wage.

2. Why, according to Knowles, have the landowners over-advertised for labor?

Recruiting too many workers allows the landowners to keep the wages low. If one person refuses to work for what the owner is offering, there are several others who will be more than happy to accept that wage.

3. What happens to workers who try to organize a labor union?

They are labeled as “reds,” or Communists and they are blacklisted so that no landowner will ever hire them.

4. How do law enforcement officials deal with disorderly, demanding, or inquisitive migrant workers?

Tom learns that policemen do not shy away from killing any migrant they consider to be a potential “troublemaker.” Since the migrants do not own property or have any official record in California, their deaths are usually reported as “vagrant found dead.”

5. Which statements by Connie foreshadow his later disappearance?

Connie is shocked to realize that the living conditions in the Californian migrant camps are hardly better than the living conditions he was facing at home in Oklahoma. He has to admit that his dreams about California were unrealistic and naïve, and he questions his decision to join the Joad family on their journey west. Connie states, “If I’d of knowed it would be like this I woul’n’ of came.” Connie now believes he would be better off studying about tractors at home in Oklahoma and finding a job there.

6. What does Connie’s consideration to “study tractors” reveal about his loyalty to the Joad family and to other farmers in Oklahoma?

When Connie considers that he should have remained in Oklahoma and “studied tractors,” he implies that he would have been better off working for the land owners and banks instead of siding with the tenant farmers. Connie admits that he would willingly drive a tractor and destroy farmhouses in Oklahoma because his own well-being is more important to him than the survival of simple farmers like the Joads.

7. To what extent does Ma’s decision to share dinner with the hungry children at the camp reflect the moral dilemma faced by the poor and disenfranchised with regard to their responsibilities toward their own families and toward the larger migrant community?

Ma is aware of the importance of community on the road. She knows that the migrants as a whole stand a better chance of survival when they stick together and help one another. Throughout her journey west, Ma has learned to share everything she owns with other families like the Wilsons. In Hooverville, Ma is faced with a moral dilemma: she knows the value of community, but the family has lost most of their money. If Ma does not turn away the hungry children, she will not have enough food for the family. On the other hand, if Ma fails to share her meal with the hungry children, she disregards a moral obligation to share what she has with everyone in the migrant community.

8. Why does Floyd share his knowledge of work in the North with the Joads, but not with other families, and to what extent does his decision reflect challenges faced by the migrant communities?

Floyd has heard that there is work available farther north in California. He shares his knowledge with the Joads because Al helped him in repair his vehicle. He knows, however, that, if he shares this knowledge with everyone in the camp, too many people will move north and there will not be any work left once he gets there. Floyd's decision indicates that—once in California—the laws that govern the migrant camps change. On the road, the migrants formed a generous community of like-minded people. In California, however, the migrants become one another's competition. People can share only with others who can offer them something in return.

9. Why does Jim Casy accept the blame for Tom when he attacks the police officer?

Jim Casy is thankful to the Joad family for everything they have done for him. He has no children and no family of his own, and he knows that Tom is indispensable to the Joad family. His decision to take the blame for Tom foreshadows the later sacrifice of his own life for the common good.

10. Why do the Joads plan to move to the government camp?

The government camp is a place that provides running hot water and showers. Most importantly, police officers are not allowed inside the government camps.

Chapter 21

1. How does the simile in the closing paragraph of this chapter underline the correlation between hunger and anger?

The simile in the last paragraph of this chapter likens the migrant workers to “ants [in search] for work, for food.” Ants appear to be insignificant, milling aimlessly around, and the simile works on this literal image alone—migrants crawling throughout the state like ants. Beneath the surface, ants maintain an incredibly organized society, each one performing its role toward a common goal. The migrants, moving like ants, might suggest the very beginnings of their organizing into unions with the common goal of securing fair wages and secure labor for all of them.

Chapter 22

1. How does the description of the white buildings in the Weedpatch camp affect the tone of this chapter?

White is traditionally associated with cleanliness and light and sets a positive tone for this chapter. For the first time, the Joad family is able to enjoy running water and a place to live. The white buildings are reminiscent of the white houses Ma dreamed about before coming to California. Of course, although Weedpatch offers the best accommodations the Joad family has known yet, the houses don't fulfill the dream of ownership and independence outlined by Ma earlier on.

2. What aspects of the Weedpatch camp are reminiscent of a Socialist system?
 - *The Weedpatch camp does not allow outside law enforcement to enter its premises.*
 - *A Central Committee keeps order in the camp and decides on any rules that need to be observed.*
 - *The women in the camp have a separate committee. They work together for the common good by sharing tasks such as cleaning and baby sitting.*
 - *Everybody in the camp has a chance to be on the committee and even serve as the leader of the committee for a limited period of time. Since the leadership in the committees changes frequently, members are assured that no one person can take control and that all voices are heard.*
3. How does Timothy Wallace's failure to introduce himself by name illustrate the theme of moving from concern for the individual to concern for the community?

Timothy Wallace explains that "you git outa the habit a mentionin' your name. They's so goddamn many." His explanation highlights the fact that there are numberless individuals the migrants encounter every day—too many to remember. Friendships are transitory, and one friend or acquaintance will quickly be replaced by another one who is in the same situation. On the other hand, Timothy Wallace emphasizes the community among the camp inhabitants. He sees himself as one of the "fellas" and values every other migrant worker as a valuable individual.

4. What differentiates Mr. Thomas from many of the other landowners and employers?

Mr. Thomas has a great regard for his workers. He personally works side by side with them in the field every day and does not set himself above them. Mr. Thomas lowers the wages he pays only because the Farmer's Association forces him to do so. He also warns the men about a riot the Farmer's Association wants to stage inside the camp on the following Saturday during the dance.

5. What does Thomas mean when he says that the Bank of the West has “paper on everything it don’t own”?

The few farms the Bank does not own are indebted to it through loans and mortgages.

6. What is ironic about the existence of a “Farmers’ Association”?

It seems a lot like a union, only this one exists with the purpose of establishing rules under which the migrants must work and the wages they will be paid. It is ironic that the bank is allowed to organize the farmers for the purposes of collective bargaining—to enforce low wages—while the migrants are not allowed to organize—to raise wages and improve working conditions.

7. Why is the Farmer’s Association not able to enter the camp unless there is a riot?

Weedpatch camp is a government camp and, thus, outside of the control of local law enforcement officials. People inside the camp make their own laws, and police are not allowed to enter and interfere unless there is a significant disturbance that requires law enforcement to intervene.

8. How does Steinbeck create comic relief in this chapter?

When Ruthie and Winfield see a toilet for the first time, their reactions are both innocent and humorous, especially to modern readers. Winfield accidentally pulls the flush on one of the toilets, and Ruthie immediately blames him for breaking the toilet when the water begins to flow.

9. What is the issue of “reds” and “red agitators”?

A “red” is a Communist, someone who would oppose the United States’ capitalist economy. Those who own capital (the banks and landowners) fear the possibility of a Communist takeover, as this would result in their losing their private property and holdings. Therefore, to the banks and landowners, “A red is any son-of-a-bitch that wants thirty cents an hour when we’re payin’ twenty-five!”—in other words, anyone who threatens to take their wealth. The workers do not understand why they are called “reds.” All they are interested in is fair wages for a day’s work.

10. What does Ma’s reaction to hearing that the Ladies’ Committee will be coming to her tent reveal about her sense of personal pride?

When Ma hears that the Ladies’ Committee will visit her tent, she immediately cleans herself and the children thoroughly and takes her first bath in weeks. She wants to make a good impression on the Committee and show herself as the proud and respectable woman she truly is, instead of the poor and filthy migrant she has been regarded as. Ma’s reaction shows that she has not lost her sense of personal pride even in the face of enormous hardship. It also reveals that Ma hopes that life for the Joad family will improve at Weedpatch, and she is hoping to return to her old habits as soon as possible.

11. Why is Ma reassured when the camp manager accepts a cup of coffee at her tent?

The fact that the manager drinks Ma's coffee proves to her that he does not set himself above any of the migrant families. He respects the migrants and is eager to befriend them and treat them with dignity.

12. Why does Ma suddenly begin to reminisce about the sad times when she finally reaches a place where she can relax and be happy?

Ma only begins to think about the sad times when she reaches a happier place because she had to focus all her energy on her family's survival while they were traveling. Ma knows that she would not have had sufficient strength to go on if she had dwelled on the negative aspects of their journey before arriving at the Weedpatch camp.

13. Why is Rose of Sharon frightened of the religious woman?

The religious woman warns Rose of Sharon that she will lose her baby if the girl behaves in an immoral manner. She condemns the dances that take place at the camp every Saturday night because the young people are "hug-dancing." Rose of Sharon is afraid because—according to these extreme principles—she has sinned in the past when she was dancing and having a good time.

Chapter 23

1. What activities provide entertainment for the migrant families?

Entertainment includes storytelling, drinking, and playing music.

2. What is ironic about the "religious life" of the commune?

The preachers and their "fire-and-brimstone" sermons are simply another form of entertainment for the campers. Life is hard, and even the threat of eternal damnation cannot really move the people away from the few "sinful" enjoyments they have. As Casy discovered some time before the beginning of the book, this form of religion is irrelevant to the way humans really live.

Chapter 24

1. How does the discovery and expulsion of the would-be agitators illustrate the power of community?

The men at the Weedpatch camp are organized into committees and have worked out a detailed surveillance plan that will enable them to immediately spot any attempt at starting a riot. They effectively delegate responsibilities to men from the different committees. They all work together, keeping one another under control. The successful prevention of the riot illustrates Steinbeck's belief of how a Socialist society can be strong through cooperation.

2. How does Pa's discussion with the man in the black hat exemplify the growing labor problem?

Pa's reasons for taking the work at a lower wage (and, thus, putting the man in the black hat out of work) is exactly what the landowners count on. They recruit more workers than they need and then pit the workers against one another, hiring those who are willing to work for the lowest wage—even if they cannot live on that low wage.

In order for all of the migrants to receive fair wages, they would have to unite and all refuse to work until they are all paid a decent wage. This reflects the theme that Steinbeck has been developing from the beginning of the book: individual effort fails, while unified effort succeeds. Individually, the migrants have no power to improve their conditions, but in a union, they would be able to.

Chapter 25

1. How does Steinbeck create a change of tone and mood between the beginning of the chapter and the end? Why does Steinbeck employ this change in tone and mood?

In the first several paragraphs, Steinbeck emphasizes the lushness and luxury of the abundance. The imagery and colors suggest the promise of prosperity. The "fruit blossoms," which are "fragrant pink," as well as "white waters" and "full green hills" that are "round and soft" stand in contrast to the earlier hardness of the soil and razor-jaggedness of the mountains.

A third of the way into the chapter, however, the mood and tone change significantly. The abundance becomes decay. The "fragrant pink" becomes a "sweet smell" that is a "sorrow on the land."

The change in tone and mood illustrates the stark difference between the potential offered by the fertile land in California and the deliberate destruction of food and cattle at the hands of the landowners that is actually taking place.

2. Why do the landowners destroy the food even though thousands of people are starving to death?

This is the basic economic law of supply and demand. While supplies are high, prices will be low (just as the cost of labor is cheap when there are too many laborers). But when supplies are limited, costs rise. The landowners destroy the food because there is “too much” food on the market and the prices have dropped. In order to raise prices, the landowners destroy some of the harvest to create a false scarcity. They are interested in their own profit and disregard the needs of the starving families.

3. What significance does this chapter have for the title of the novel?

This chapter explains, “In the souls of the people the grapes of wrath are filling and growing heavy, growing heavy for the vintage.” The hungry migrants are watching the crops being destroyed while they are going hungry. The title suggests that the wrath and anger building up within the migrant farmers will have consequences when it becomes too much to bear.

Chapter 26

1. What is significant about the fact that it is Ma who decides when the family should move on?

Ma was gaining influence and authority since the meeting when she convinced the others to let Jim Casy travel with them. Now she is in full control, determining the family’s needs and making decisions on her own.

2. How does this shift in power exemplify Steinbeck’s Socialist theme?

Ma, the woman and wife—both traditionally powerless roles, has gained power in the wake of the “legal” authority’s failure to work for the common good. When Pa threatens to assert his authority over his wife (“Seems like it’s purty near time to get out the stick.”), Ma counters, “Times when they’s food an’ a place to set, then maybe you can use your stick.” This mirrors the revolution Steinbeck has been predicting. The legal authority has become weak and has failed to meet the needs of those it rules. The people, then, have the right to assume the power and authority to rule themselves.

3. What reason does Ma give Tom for making Pa angry? How does this support Steinbeck's theme of wrath?

Ma tells Tom that she had to make Pa angry in order to keep him going. She knows that anger will provide the necessary motivation Pa is lacking. If he focuses on his anger at Ma, he can forget about the worries that are otherwise paralyzing him. Ma explains that a man "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."

Even from the beginning of the book, Steinbeck has been asserting that the situation will be all right as long as the men do not lose their anger, their wrath, their spirit to fight to make things better.

4. How does the men's recognition of the benefits and strengths of the Weedpatch camp help establish the theme of Socialism?

The men begin to realize that they are more powerful when they stick together. The police are not able to harass the people at their camp because the people no longer act as individuals, but as a unified group. The people are beginning to understand how they can stand up to injustice and really make a difference: law enforcement officials will pick on one man, but they will shy away from the power of the masses. Once the men recognize that the success of the Weedpatch camp lies in its Socialist structure, they consider forming unions in other, non-government camps in order to utilize the power of numbers speaking as one: "Jus' stick together. They ain't raisin' hell with no two hunderd men. They're pickin' on one man."

5. How is Steinbeck able to convey the idea that—despite all the hardships they have already endured—the Joad family is clinging to a sense of hope to keep them going forward as they leave the Weedpatch camp to move a new farm in search of work and lodging?

The Joad family knows by now that moving to another farm does not guarantee work and lodging. Yet, they understand that hope is all they have to keep them alive, and they cling to their hope to gather the necessary motivation for moving forward. Every time they leave one place, the family re-vitalizes the dream of a better life. Ma talks about all the grocery items she will purchase once the men get work; she dreams about having "coffee," "bakin' powder," "some meat," "milk," while Tom thinks he "might even get ... a sack a Durham." Both Ma and Tom know that their dream may be crushed yet again, but they continue to hope for a better life.

6. Jim Casy tells Tom that he believes the men he met in jail "was nice fellas" and that it was "need that makes all the trouble." What has Casy realized?

Casy believes that most people are inherently good and that they turn to crime and violence because they are left with no other choice. If poverty and a need for basic necessities breeds crime, then the solution to preventing crime would not be arresting more people, but improving conditions in impoverished areas.

7. How has Casy's experience in prison enabled him to realize the necessity to build a Socialist society?

Casy has met all kinds of people while in prison, and he has learned that, as long as people share a common goal, they can come together to achieve that goal and make a difference. Casy has learned the importance of forming unions: The people in power depend on the common workers, and bosses and owners are afraid of an uprising of the masses.

8. Why do the policemen murder Casy?

The policemen kill Casy because they want to put an end to the strike he has been leading. The strike poses a threat to the landowners because it demonstrates to all the workers how much influence and power they have as long as they stick together and speak up for their common good. By killing Casy, the policemen hope to make an example of him that will warn the other workers that they must obey and accept the rules established by the landowners if they want to live.

9. How does Casy's death establish him as a Christ figure?

According to Casy, the most important realization he has come to in life is a recognition of the need to unite and speak with one voice for the common good of all people. He is willing to sacrifice his life to teach this lesson to others. When the policemen kill Casy, he utters a warning that is reminiscent of Jesus' last words spoken at his crucifixion. Casy says, "you don't know what you're a-doin'," a statement that clearly echoes Jesus' plea to God: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

Chapter 27

1. How is the cotton industry corrupt on the part of the landowners as well as the pickers? What is ironic about this corruption?

Many—but not all—of the landowners manipulate the scales to avoid paying a fair price for a bale of cotton. It is impossible to know which ones do and which ones don't. As a consequence, the cotton pickers add rocks to their cotton bags to make them heavier.

This is ironic because the pickers, who are tired of being cheated out of fair wages, might actually be cheating honest landowners. The situation becomes self-perpetuating: the landowners suspect they are weighing bales with rocks, so they adjust their scales. The pickers suspect the landowners are using adjusted scales, so they load their bales with rocks.

2. How does this chapter emphasize the theme of human endurance?

The migrant workers and their families have reached a point where they are pleased to get even one good day's work but once they had hoped to find steady employment. They have long realized that their dreams of California as a Promised Land will never be realized, yet, they make due with the opportunities they have. Although they know that time is running out because winter is approaching, they continue to persevere, cling to their hopes, and move forward.

Chapter 28

1. What does the fact that the Joads buy new clothes for themselves reveal about their financial situation?

The Joads buying new clothes for themselves shows that they have enough financial stability to spend money on items not directly related to their survival. While this is a small margin of stability, it is more than they have had since they left their home in Oklahoma.

2. How does Tom's new philosophy/theology—which he learned from Casy—reflect Steinbeck's Socialist views?

According to Casy and Tom's philosophy, just as each individual is a part of a larger collective, so too is each individual soul merely a part of a larger group soul. To the Socialists, the individual has no value except as a part of the greater whole.

Tom understands that Casy was not only an advocate of a Socialist political system that would be fair to all workers, but that he also saw an inherent connection between all human beings on a spiritual level. According to Tom, human fellowship must find its place within the political and practical, as well as the personal and spiritual realm. He explains to Ma that Casy "went out in the wilderness to find his own soul, an' he foun' he didn' have no soul that is his'n. Says he foun' he jus' got a little piece of a great big soul. Says a wilderness ain't no good, cause his little piece of a soul wasn't no good 'less it was with the rest."

3. In this chapter, Uncle John says that he "don't need no safety razor, neither. Stuff settin' out there, you jus' feel like buyin' it whether you need it or not." How does his statement function as a criticism of the nature of capitalism?

In a capitalist society, goods are not manufactured on the basis of need, but on the basis of desirability and marketability. People are confronted with the temptation to buy items that may not be absolutely necessary for their personal survival. A capitalist society encourages people not to save money, but to spend it on a wide variety of items so that the money continues to circulate in the system.

4. How does Tom's conversation with Ma establish him as a disciple of the Christ-like figure, Casy? How does Tom adopt Casy's religious convictions?

Since he has been in hiding, Tom has spent a considerable amount of time thinking about Casy's teachings. In this conversation, he echoes Casy's non-conformist and non-institutionalized religious ideals that are grounded in a practical sense of togetherness. Tom vows to become Casy's disciple by following in his footsteps. When Ma asks him what he intends to do, he responds, "what Casy done."

5. What is significant about Al and Aggie's announcement?

The fact that the two can still imagine a future together and that Al has still not abandoned his dream of working in a garage indicates that, despite everything, hope is not dead.

Chapter 29

1. What is ironic about the fact that the torrential rains and the floods they bring cause so much sickness and death among the migrants in this chapter?

In the beginning of the novel, a major drought led to the Dust Bowl which caused the families to be pushed off their land. Toward the end of the novel, the rain needed so badly by the migrant families in their home states now becomes the cause of misery and death for these families. Many people made it all the way across the country trying to escape the drought and dust only to be killed by the floods.

2. How does the chapter correlate the rainfalls with the theme of wrath?

The rain severely threatens the migrant families, and the women fear that the disaster is too much for the men to bear. The men realize that it is the landowners who are causing their hardship because they are not paid when rain prevents work. The men are turning angry because they are beginning to understand that workers should have a certain degree of job security. They should be paid even if the weather does not allow them to work in the fields. The wrath that develops inside the men's hearts reminds them that they are human beings who deserve to be treated with respect and dignity. The women know that "the break would never come as long as fear could turn to wrath."

Chapter 30

1. How do the sense of community and cooperation between the migrant workers in the cotton camp disintegrate in this closing chapter?

Pa convinces the other men that they need to help build a dam to keep the water out of the boxcars. Some of the men want to leave the camp while they can still use their vehicles, but Pa presses them to stay because his family cannot leave in light of Rose of Sharon's labor. Pa expects the community to continue, but some of the other men believe that they have to look out for the good of their own immediate families. After the men help Pa build the dam that is ultimately unable to stop the water, they become angry because their cars have been soaked and don't start anymore, leaving them no opportunity for escape.

2. What is the significance of the fate of Rose of Sharon's baby for the cycle of life theme?

Rose of Sharon gives birth to a stillborn baby. Her baby's fate threatens to destroy the cycle of life that Ma has been counting on for the future of the family. The baby's death indicates that the family has been pushed beyond the limits of what human beings can survive. Although Ma has kept hope for the family alive, the family's future is, indeed, threatened.

3. How does Steinbeck use religious imagery connected with the burial of Rose of Sharon's dead baby in order to further the novel's political agenda?

Uncle John is charged with burying the body of Rose of Sharon's dead baby. He carries an apple box containing the baby out of the boxcar. Instead of digging a hole and burying the box, Uncle John decides to place the box into the stream of water and send it flowing down toward town. The imagery of the baby's burial is reminiscent of the biblical story of Moses who is placed in a wicker basket and sent down the river. Of course, unlike baby Moses, Rose of Sharon's baby has no hope of a better life, since it is already dead when Uncle John places it in the stream. Uncle John hopes that the dead baby will be a wake-up call for the people living in town. He hopes it will serve to remind them that the migrants living in the camps are starving and dying. Uncle John sends the baby off saying, "Go down in the street an' rot an' tell 'em that way. That's the way you can talk."

4. How does the final scene of this novel, which is both poignant and controversial, illustrate Casy's notion of the human soul?

Rose of Sharon, who has been an insecure, naïve, and superstitious character throughout the novel, reaches a point of maturity when she willingly gives something as personal as the breast milk meant for her baby to a starving old man. Rose of Sharon demonstrates Casy's idea that all human beings are part of one large soul. Rose of Sharon is willing to do her part in this community of human life that transcends the boundaries of family.

5. How does the final scene draw a correlation between the theme of the cycle of life and the theme of change?

Rose of Sharon has not been able to perpetuate the cycle of life in a traditional sense, since her baby was born dead. However, she recognizes the value of all human life, and she knows that her milk will be able to sustain the starving stranger. Like Ma, she believes that human beings have to go on, no matter what, even if hope for survival is scarce. It is up to women to generate hope against all odds. In this last scene, Rose of Sharon also participates in the theme of change: the rules of birth and life have changed under these difficult conditions. When people suffer, they have to adjust the rules of life according to their immediate, practical needs.

The Grapes of Wrath

Advanced Placement in English Literature and Composition Teaching Unit

Study Guide Student Copy

Chapter 1

1. What tragedy is foreshadowed by the suggestion that “the leaves of the young corn became less stiff and erect; they bent in a curve at first, and then, as the central ribs of strength grew weak, each leaf tilted downward”?
2. Why does the sky darken?
3. What does Steinbeck suggest about the power of wrath when he writes that as long as the men were “hard and angry and resistant, ...no misfortune was too great to bear”?
4. Why does Steinbeck not introduce any of his major characters in this chapter?

Chapter 2

1. To what extent does the description of Tom Joad's new clothes serve as a narrative clue about his past?
2. What is significant about the way Tom convinces the driver to violate his "No Riders" policy?
3. Why was Tom incarcerated for four years?

Chapter 3

1. What human characteristics does the turtle exemplify?
2. To what extent does the turtle's encounter with the car and the truck parallel the fate of the Joad family as they are driven off their land?

Chapter 4

1. Why does Jim Casy profess he cannot preach any more?
2. What might Steinbeck be suggesting by making the preacher's name Jim Casy?
3. What does Casy's attitude toward sin contribute to the unfolding theme of the novel?
4. How does Tom's being a paroled convict fit into this theme?
5. Why does Casy not profess to love Jesus?
6. According to Casy, what is the Holy Spirit?

Chapter 5

1. How sincere is Steinbeck in calling the banks monsters? How do you know?
2. Why do most landowners send spokesmen or representatives to talk to the tenant farmers?
3. What is the significance of the goggles worn by the tractor drivers?
4. Why would it be pointless for the farmers to shoot the tractor drivers in order to avoid eviction?

Chapter 6

1. What do we learn about the Joad farm when we read that “the cotton grew in the dooryard and up against the house”?
2. What does the turtle’s continued journey in a southwestern direction foreshadow?
3. What is the significance of the dry well on the Joad farm?
4. What effect does Steinbeck’s use of colloquialism and regional dialect?
5. To what extent is Muley Graves’ name indicative of the consequences he will face if he stays in Oklahoma?
6. What is significant about this simile: “The gray cat sneaked away toward the open barn shed and passed inside like a shadow”?
7. What is significant about Tom’s prediction that Pa Joad will be critical of the writing skills he acquired in jail?

Chapter 7

1. How do the pace and tone change in this chapter? How does Steinbeck achieve this new pace and tone?
2. Why does Steinbeck use the shift in tone and pace?
3. What aspects of the Dust Bowl crisis does Steinbeck suggest in this chapter?

Chapter 8

1. Although Uncle John drinks and has licentious tendencies, the reader still has sympathy, if not admiration, for this character. How does Steinbeck accomplish this?
2. How does Steinbeck use light and darkness to suggest character and developing relationships?
3. Why is the Joad family at first apprehensive when they see Tom is not in jail any more?
4. What does the following description reveal about Ma's character and her standing in the Joad family: "And since Tom and the children could not know hurt or fear unless she acknowledged hurt and fear, she had practiced denying them in herself"?

5. What is the “strange, silent house” in which Noah lives?
6. Why does Pa feel ashamed that Noah is such an “awkward” child?
7. To what extent does Casy’s failure to say “Amen” at the end of his prayer illustrate the difference between his religious convictions and the religious convictions held by families like the Joads?
8. To what extent does Casy’s failure to say “Amen” at the end of his prayer foreshadow the need for the Joad family to adjust or abandon their adherence to rules and artificially imposed doctrines as they embark on their journey west?

Chapter 9

1. How do the descriptions of people sorting out their belongings prior to leaving for California affect the reader?
2. What does the line, “But I warn you, you’re buying what will plow your own children under,” indicate about the relationship between the people leaving Oklahoma and the people staying behind?

Chapter 10

1. How does Ma's vision of California resemble the biblical Eden and the Promised Land? What promises are conveyed by means of the biblical imagery?
2. What did Tom learn in prison that he is able to convey to Ma when she enquires about the length of the journey ahead of them?
3. How does Ma respond to Tom's fear that there are too many people looking for work in California?
4. How has pregnancy affected Rose of Sharon?
5. How can we evaluate Uncle John's attitude toward women—and toward Rose of Sharon in particular—when we learn that he “would have liked Rose of Sharon to sit [in the honor seat]. This was impossible, because she was young and a woman.”?

6. Before the Joads leave for California, “The family met next to the most important place, near the truck.” What made the truck so central to the Joad family?
7. What new role emerges for Al?
8. Who makes the final decision about taking along Casy, and what does this decision reveal about the power hierarchy in the Joad family?
9. Why does Ma decide to burn the personal belongings she is unable to take to California?
10. What mood is created in the last paragraph of this chapter, and what word choices and images does Steinbeck employ in order to establish the mood?

Chapter 11

1. What idea does Steinbeck convey with the simile, “The heat goes out of it like the living heat that leaves a corpse”?
2. What does Steinbeck suggest when he claims that “the land is so much more than its analysis”?
3. How does Steinbeck emphasize the desolation left behind after the migration of the tenants?

Chapter 12

1. What road is the main route for migrants traveling west?
2. What is the purpose of listing all of the towns passed by the migrants on the way to California?
3. What do the specific car problems mentioned in this short chapter refer to?
4. What do the travelers learn about the California border patrol, and to what extent does this warning foreshadow events that will occur later in the novel?
5. Why does Steinbeck end the chapter with the anecdote about the stranded family and the seadn?

Chapter 13

1. What does Steinbeck suggest when he writes that Al “had become the soul of the car”?
2. In what way are the yellow gas stations that are putting the fat man out of business reminiscent of the tractors that destroy the farmhouses in Oklahoma?
3. What is the significance of the death of the Joads’ dog at this early stage in the family’s travels?
4. Why does Oklahoma City embarrass Ruthie and Winfield “with its bigness and its strangeness”?
5. How does Tom appease Ma’s fears that he will be arrested for violating the terms of his parole?

6. How does Grampa's death affect the relationship between the Joads and the Wilsons?
7. Why is the Joad family at first apprehensive about burying Grampa without informing the authorities?
8. What is significant about the Joads' decision to bury Grampa without informing the proper authorities, even though they are apprehensive at first?
9. How are the Joads beginning to act more like members of a larger community than they did at the beginning of their journey to California?
10. What makes Sairy Wilson a heroic character even though she is physically weak?
11. What does Casy imply when he says that "Grampa didn' die tonight. He died the minute you took 'im off the place"?

Chapter 14

1. What does Steinbeck mean by “Manself”?
2. What, then, is the significance of the paragraph that ends, “fear the time when Manself will not suffer and die for a concept”?
3. Why is the change, as Steinbeck puts it, “from ‘I’ to ‘we,’” such a momentous development for the disenfranchised migrant families?
4. What is the social significance of this change? When does Steinbeck make it most clear?
5. What does Steinbeck achieve by shifting to the second person at the end of the chapter?
6. Why are the Western States “nervous”?

Chapter 15

1. What was Steinbeck's purpose for including the license plates and car types of the vehicles driving west on Highway 66?
2. What attitude toward the migrant farmers is exemplified by Mae and Al at the hamburger stand?
3. Explain the ambiguity of truck drivers' response to Mae's kindness.
4. What is the significance of Al's taking the nickels from the cash register to win the jackpot in the slot machine?
5. Why does Steinbeck have this incident occur to an anonymous family and not the Joads?

Chapter 16

1. What is the “new technique of living” the families are settling into? What does it suggest about the way life on the road changes the migrant families?
2. How does Steinbeck demonstrate Rose of Sharon’s naiveté and immaturity in this chapter?
3. What course of action does Tom suggest when the Wilson’s touring car breaks down?
4. What is significant about Ma’s refusal to comply with Tom’s proposal?
5. How does Tom and Al’s exchange with the one-eyed man support Steinbeck’s Socialist theme?
6. What do the Joads learn about the handbills when they talk to the ragged man at the campsite?

Chapter 17

1. Why is it easy for the families in the camps to form communities?

2. To what extent does the community that forms in the camps on the road resemble a traditional, non-transient society?

3. In these communities, it is a “right” of hungry people to be fed. To what extent does this right differentiate the roadside communities from the world existing outside of these communities and illustrate Steinbeck’s Socialist ideals?

4. Explain the threat to the migrant farmers that is foreshadowed by the simile in the following line: “But along the highway the cars of the migrant people crawled out like bugs, and the narrow concrete miles stretched ahead.”

Chapter 18

1. Some adjectives used to describe the landscape seen by the Joads when they are crossing over from Arizona into California are “jagged,” “pale,” “broken,” and “terrible.” What impact do descriptions like these have on the tone of the chapter?
2. Why does the man bathing in the river insist that the people in California are “scairt”?
3. How did the word “Okie” devolve into a derogatory term?
4. Why does Steinbeck include the story of the journalist with the million acres?
5. Why does the bathing man regret telling the others about the hardships in California?
6. What does Ma mean when she tells Rose of Sharon, “bearin’ and dyin’ is two pieces of the same the thing”?

7. Why is Ma afraid that the policeman will talk to Tom?
8. How does Steinbeck foreshadow the unraveling of the Joad's California dream?
9. What does Steinbeck suggest about the nature of prejudice in the following lines uttered by the young boy working at the service station: "Okies got no sense and no feeling. They ain't human. A human being wouldn't live like they do."?
10. When the Joads stop at the inspection station, Ma's face is "swollen and her eyes [are] hard." What does this description suggest about Ma?
11. What biblical allusion is embedded in the passage that describes the Joads traveling across the desert before they reach a land filled with orchards and rich, fertile soil?

Chapter 19

1. Why does Steinbeck begin the chapter with the fact that California once belonged to the Mexicans who were pushed off it by Americans hungry for land?
2. Why does Steinbeck compare the farming industry in California to the Roman Empire?
3. What are the three “facts” that forebode an ominous future for the landowners?
4. Why do the landowners hate the Okies?
5. Why is Steinbeck devoting so much of this chapter to discussion of land ownership, squatting, and how one comes to “own” land?
6. What does the following mean: “For every manload to lift, five pairs of arms extended to lift it; for every stomachful of food available, five mouths to open”?
7. On what kind of note does this chapter end?

Chapter 20

1. How does the concept of survival by community effort begin to evolve in this chapter? What inspires this idea for Tom?
2. Why, according to Knowles, have the landowners over-advertised for labor?
3. What happens to workers who try to organize a labor union?
4. How do law enforcement officials deal with disorderly, demanding, or inquisitive migrant workers?
5. Which statements by Connie foreshadow his later disappearance?

6. What does Connie's consideration to "study tractors" reveal about his loyalty to the Joad family and to other farmers in Oklahoma?
7. To what extent does Ma's decision to share dinner with the hungry children at the camp reflect the moral dilemma faced by the poor and disenfranchised with regard to their responsibilities toward their own families and toward the larger migrant community?
8. Why does Floyd share his knowledge of work in the North with the Joads, but not with other families, and to what extent does his decision reflect challenges faced by the migrant communities?
9. Why does Jim Casy accept the blame for Tom when he attacks the police officer?
10. Why do the Joads plan to move to the government camp?

Chapter 21

1. How does the simile in the closing paragraph of this chapter underline the correlation between hunger and anger?

Chapter 22

1. How does the description of the white buildings in the Weedpatch camp affect the tone of this chapter?
2. What aspects of the Weedpatch camp are reminiscent of a Socialist system?
3. How does Timothy Wallace's failure to introduce himself by name illustrate the theme of moving from concern for the individual to concern for the community?
4. What differentiates Mr. Thomas from many of the other landowners and employers?
5. What does Thomas mean when he says that the Bank of the West has "paper on everything it don't own"?
6. What is ironic about the existence of a "Farmers' Association"?

7. Why is the Farmer's Association not able to enter the camp unless there is a riot?
8. How does Steinbeck create comic relief in this chapter?
9. What is the issue of "reds" and "red agitators"?
10. What does Ma's reaction to hearing that the Ladies' Committee will be coming to her tent reveal about her sense of personal pride?
11. Why is Ma reassured when the camp manager accepts a cup of coffee at her tent?
12. Why does Ma suddenly begin to reminisce about the sad times when she finally reaches a place where she can relax and be happy?
13. Why is Rose of Sharon frightened of the religious woman?

Chapter 23

1. What activities provide entertainment for the migrant families?
2. What is ironic about the “religious life” of the commune?

Chapter 24

1. How does the discovery and expulsion of the would-be agitators illustrate the power of community?
2. How does Pa’s discussion with the man in the black hat exemplify the growing labor problem?

Chapter 25

1. How does Steinbeck create a change of tone and mood between the beginning of the chapter and the end? Why does Steinbeck employ this change in tone and mood?
2. Why do the landowners destroy the food even though thousands of people are starving to death?
3. What significance does this chapter have for the title of the novel?

Chapter 26

1. What is significant about the fact that it is Ma who decides when the family should move on?
2. How does this shift in power exemplify Steinbeck's Socialist theme?
3. What reason does Ma give Tom for making Pa angry? How does this support Steinbeck's theme of wrath?
4. How does the men's recognition of the benefits and strengths of the Weedpatch camp help establish the theme of Socialism?
5. How is Steinbeck able to convey the idea that—despite all the hardships they have already endured—the Joad family is clinging to a sense of hope to keep them going forward as they leave the Weedpatch camp to move a new farm in search of work and lodging?

6. Jim Casy tells Tom that he believes the men he met in jail “was nice fellas” and that it was “need that makes all the trouble.” What has Casy realized?
7. How has Casy’s experience in prison enabled him to realize the necessity to build a Socialist society?
8. Why do the policemen murder Casy?
9. How does Casy’ death establish him as a Christ figure?

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5. How does the final scene draw a correlation between the theme of the cycle of life and the theme of change?

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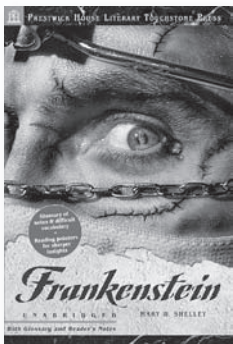
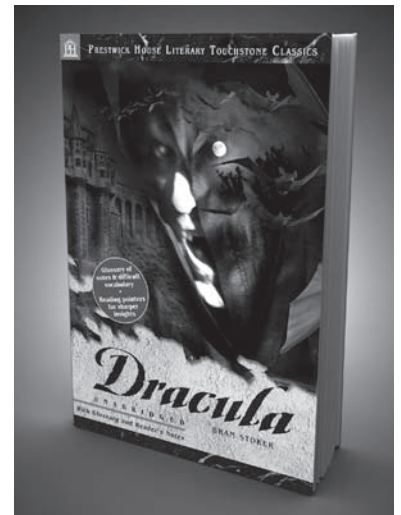
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