The Grapes of Wrath
By: John Steinbeck

Student Packet
AP English Language & Composition
Mrs. Harris & Mrs. Schroeder
2010 - 2011
I. The Novel’s Structure
   A. Chapters 1-11 = Time in Oklahoma
   B. Chapters 12-18 = Experiences on the Road
   C. Chapters 19-30 = Time in California
   D. Intercalary chapters – depict the experience of ALL migrants (universal/philosophical/thematic)
   E. Narrative chapters – depict the struggles of the Joad family (details/imagery/philosophy in action)

II. Philosophy in GOW

   A. Naturalism
      1. use of graphic detail
      2. a “survival of the fittest” attitude
      3. man is often compared to animals
      4. use of symbols
      5. attention to bodily functions
      6. a belief in determinism, that is the belief that one’s choice of actions is not free, but is predetermined, by a sequence of causes independent of one’s will.

   B. Regionalism: “local color” techniques, accuracy of detail in the description of people (Steinbeck portrays the Okies as authentically as possible including their dialect, dress, lifestyle, etc.)

   C. Agrarianism: close identification with and love for the land.

   D. Proletarianism: description of the injustices of the laboring classes. One social class pitted against another.

   E. Communism
      1. stress cooperation
      2. collective efforts
      3. working for the group increases individual self esteem
      4. “government camps” (weedpatch)
      5. “We’re the People, we go on.” – Ma Joad
      6. The laboring man is held in high esteem
      7. References to Marx, Lenin, and Thomas Paine

   F. Pragmatism: to test truth by looking at the outcomes of actions. If it works, its okay. The tendency to makeup a policy as you go along, based on your current need and circumstance.
G. Transcendentalism:
1. **God as Nature**: to look inside yourself for divine guidance in learning to understand
   the nature of God.
2. **Contemplation of Divine Nature**: to live life close to nature, for there a person can
   most successfully contemplate his reason for being.
3. **Search for Meaning**: devote yourself to the search for meaning in life and not to the
   acquisition of material possessions.
4. **Physical and Mental Work**: a person should be both physically and intellectually
   active throughout life.
5. **Know Thyself**: become a person of principle and then live life by these principles.
   Have the courage to follow the dictates of your own conscience.
6. **Time and Personal Growth**: give time priority to personal growth rather than
   working for money.
7. **Least Government Best**: The belief that “that government is best which governs least”.
   Have the courage to practice some form of non-violent law-breaking if you believe the
   law to be in violation of your principles. Of course you have to be willing to accept the
   consequences that the government might invoke.
8. **Determine Truth for Yourself**: Each generation should question for itself all previous
   teachings, all laws, and, indeed, all history, until it finds ideas, institutions, and persons
   worth believing in. In other words, now is the only reality; all else is illusion or
   conjecture.

III. Symbols
A. dust
B. turtle
C. tractor
D. the car
E. the title

IV. Biblical Allusions and Parallels
A. The Joads – Exodus of the Isrealites
B. Jim Casy
   1. Christ-like
   2. self sacrifice, love for mankind
   3. spirit above material
   4. his final words
   5. meditates in the wilderness
   6. reject s the old religion for anew one
   7. both knew they would be rejected
   8. Tom becomes his disciple
   9. Tom’s parting words to Ma
C. Rose of Sharon and the ending
D. Ma: “Cast your bread upon the water…”
E. Uncle John, Rose’s baby, and “Moses”
Levels of Reading John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*

Level One: one family’s (the Joad’s) struggle for survival (narrative chapters)

Level Two: the story of a group’s (the migrants) struggle for survival (intercalary chapters)

Level Three: the story of a nation (America) as it struggles to define its identity in a capitalist system.

Level Four: Moral – Philosophical Meanings – how are right and wrong / good and evil determined? *(see notes)*

Level Five: Ontological Questions – what duty do I owe my fellow man? What is our relationship with the earth? Why are we here? Purpose and meaning in life
Grapes of Wrath (GOW) – Study Questions I

**Directions:** Look at these questions before, during and after you read each chapter. They are NOT merely comprehension question. They are analysis and interpretation questions, and they require thought. Use your own paper; only complete answers will be accepted. **Label & highlight each chapter and number accurately.**

**Chapter 1 - Interchapter**
1. Why does the first chapter deal with the effect of natural disasters on the country folk?
2. What is the significance of the title?

**Chapter 2 - Narrative**
3. What is the significance of the slot machine?
4. What is the role of the truck driver?

**Chapter 3 - Interchapter**
5. What is the significance of the turtle?

**Chapter 4 - Narrative**
6. Why does Tom break the cap to make it look older?
7. What is the significance of Casy’s song?
8. What is implied by Tom’s remark that he should have been a preacher himself?
9. What is Casy’s new moral code? How did he come up with it?
10. How does the recollection of the Christmas card reinforce his feeling?

**Chapter 5 - Interchapter**
12. What hierarchy is established in this chapter?
13. What point does Steinbeck make about qualifications for ownership?
14. How is the tractor described?
15. What is the significance of the conversation between the farmers and the driver?
16. Why does Steinbeck use the phrase “I got to figure”?

**Chapter 6 - Narrative**
17. Why does Tom mention, for the second time, that the Joad’s weren’t people to write?
18. What is the significance of the turtle’s release?
19. What is the function of Muley Graves?
20. What is Casy’s reaction to Muley’s tale?
21. How does Tom describe prison?
22. Why does Tom refuse to sleep in the cave?

**Chapter 7 - Interchapter**
23. What is the significance of the car dealer?
   a.
   b.
   c.
Chapter 8 - Narrative
24. What is the significance of the dogs?
25. How are Ma and Pa Joad described?
26. What is the meaning of the reference to Pretty Boy Floyd?
27. What change does Ma notice in Tom?
28. What message does Casy bring to the family?

Chapter 9 - Interchapter
29. What “bitterness” is being bought?
30. What is the significance of Pilgrim’s Progress?
   a.
   b.

Chapter 10 - Narrative
31. What foreshadowing emerges from the conversation between Tom and Ma about California?
32. What characterization is given of Ma?
33. What is the significance of the preparations?

Chapter 11 - Interchapter
34. What is important in the placement of the interchapter closing Part I?

END PART I OF THE BOOK
Grapes of Wrath (GOW) – Study Questions II

Directions: Look at these questions before, during and after you read each chapter. They are NOT merely comprehension question. They are analysis and interpretation questions, and they require thought. Use your own paper; only complete answers will be accepted. Label & highlight each chapter and number accurately.

Chapter 12 - Interchapter
1. What contrasts emerge from this chapter?

Chapter 13 - Narrative
2. What is the significance of the gasoline attendant’s complaint?
3. What is revealed as the Joad’s make camp the first night?
4. What changes occur as a result of Granpa’s death?

Chapter 14 - Interchapter
5. How does Steinbeck view man in this interchapter?

Chapter 16 - Narrative
6. Describe the power shift that takes place in this chapter?

Chapter 17 - Interchapter
7. What biblical parallels can be drawn from this chapter?

Chapter 18 - Narrative
8. What is Casy’s reaction to the story of the man with a million acres?
9. What facet’s of the family’s life are stressed here?
10. What is revealed in Ma’s encounter with the religious woman and the law respectively?
   a.
   b.

END PART II OF THE BOOK
Grapes of Wrath (GOW) – Study Questions III

Directions: Look at these questions before, during and after you read each chapter. They are NOT merely comprehension question. They are analysis and interpretation questions, and they require thought. Use your own paper; only complete answers will be accepted. Label & highlight each chapter and number accurately.

Chapter 19 - Interchapter
1. Why is the historical information of California included here?

Chapter 20 - Narrative
2. What is the significance of Granma’s funeral?
3. What elements of society’s attitude toward migrants emerge during their experience at the Hooverville?
4. What is the truth about the handbills?
5. What hints of future events are provided?
6. How does the family react to the incident between Floyd and the deputy?

Chapter 21 - Interchapter
7. What emotions are investigated in this chapter?

Chapter 22 - Narrative
8. What is the fundamental difference between Hooverville and Weedpatch?
9. Is Weedpatch Steinbeck’s version of paradise? Is it realistic?

Chapter 23 - Interchapter
10. Why does this interchapter stress the pleasures of the migrants?

Chapter 24 - Narrative
11. What facts emerge from the scene in which the attempt is made to break up the dance?
12. What impressions are given by the conversations about wages?

Chapter 25 - Interchapter
13. What aspect of human ability is discussed here?

Chapter 26 - Narrative
14. What takes the lead now?
15. What realization does Tom reach?
16. How is the theme of fellowship extended in the activities of Tom and Al in the car?
17. What is the significance of Tom’s tale of the convict?
18. What aura pervades the Pixley camp?
19. What happens during the interview with the store keeper?
20. What is the import of Casy’s conversation with Tom?
21. What is the symbolic value of Casy’s death?
22. What is Rose of Sharon’s attitude toward Tom?
23. What report do the men bring about the day’s work?

Chapter 27 - Interchapter
24. What changes does this interchapter reflect?
Chapter 28 - Narrative
25. What is the significance of the boxcar?
26. What mood is evoked at the beginning of the chapter?
27. What scriptural passage does Tom quote?
28. How does the chapter end?

Chapter 29- Interchapter
29. What emotion characterizes this final interchapter? (tone)

Chapter 30- Narrative
30. What is the significance of the levee?
31. What meaning is evoked in the baby’s birth?
32. Why is this the “right” way to end this novel?
33. How does the Joad flight have parallels to the Old Testament?

Congratulations! You made it to the END!!