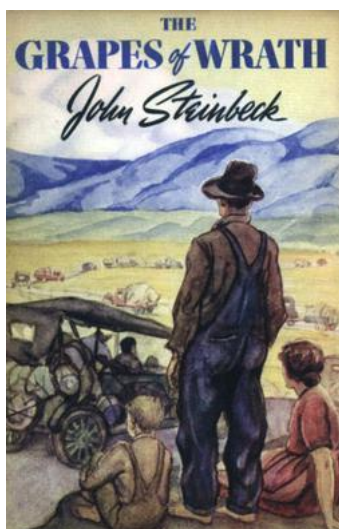


The Grapes of Wrath



ISBN-10 0140247750
 ISBN-13 978-0140247756
 Author Steinbeck, John
 Publisher Penguin Classics
 Copyright 2006
 Lexile 680L
 Genre Novel
 Synopsis The hardships faced by migrant agricultural workers who arrived in California during the Great Depression are depicted by this Nobel Prize-winning California author. This edition features an essay by Studs Terkel.
 Themes Perseverance

Protagonist Male
 Note Over the years, these books have been published in multiple editions. The page numbers in your book may be different than the ones on the lesson plan.

More Information www.scu.edu/character



Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Grapes of Wrath, Day 1



Key Paragraph, p. 19

“You can tell about it in every joint from her to Texola.’ He smiled. ‘So long, fella. You been a good guy. But look, when you been in stir a little while, you can smell a question comin’ from hell to breakfast. You telegraphed yours the first time you opened your trap.’ He spatted the metal door with the palm of his hand. ‘Thanks for the lift,’ he said. ‘So long.’ He turned away and walked the dirt road” (p. 19).

Writing Prompt

Write a narrative paragraph about a situation where someone was looking at you judgmentally without knowing you? Write about a real or imagined experience.

When answering the question above, consider the following:

Were you being responsible at the time?

How did you react to someone looking at you with judgment? Why?

Would you react the same again today? Why?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Grapes of Wrath, Day 2



Key Paragraph, p. 21

“Now the going was easy, and all the legs worked, and the shell boosted along, wagging from side to side. A sedan driven by a forty-year old woman approached. She saw the turtle and swung to the right, off the highway, the wheels screamed and a cloud of dust boiled up. Two wheels lifted for a moment and then settled. The car skidded back onto the road, and went on, but more slowly. The turtle had jerked into its shell, but now it hurried on, for the highway was burning hot.

And now a light truck approached, and as it came near, the driver saw the turtle and swerved to hit it” (p. 21).

Writing Prompt

Tom and Jim start to talk about the past and different things that have happened to the Joads. **Write a narrative paragraph describing how the Joads have changed.**

When answering the question above, consider the following:

What does this chapter tell you about human nature?

Who does the turtle represent?

Why does Steinbeck use a turtle for this metaphor?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Grapes of Wrath, Day 3



Key Paragraph, p. 65

“‘Won’t do no good.’ Muley seemed embarrassed. ‘My wife an the kids an her brother all went to California. They wasn’t nothin to eat. They wasn’t as mad as me, so they went. They wasn’t nothin to eat here.’

The preacher stirred nervously. ‘You should of went too. You shouldn’t of broke up the fambly’” (p. 65).

Writing Prompt

Would you be able to allow your family to leave without you? Do you think Muley will see his family again? Why? Why does Muley stay in a place he has nothing, not even his family? **Write a narrative paragraph describing what you would do if you were Muley. Or write a narrative paragraph describing why Muley stayed behind.**

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Grapes of Wrath, Day 4



Key Paragraph, p. 82

"'I ain't sleepin,' said Casy. 'I got too much to puzzle with.' He drew up his feet and clasped his legs. He threw back his head and looked at the sharp stars. Joad yawned and brought one hand back under his head. They were silent and gradually the skittering life of the ground, of holes and burrows, of brush, began again; the gophers moved, and the rabbits crept to green things, the mice scampered over clods, and the winged hunters moved soundlessly overhead" (p. 82).

Writing Prompt

Write a **narrative paragraph** about a time when you had to figure out the **right thing to do. Write about a real or imagined experience.**

When answering the question above, consider the following:

Describe the situation.

Were you being responsible?

Were you doing the right thing at the right time? Why?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Grapes of Wrath, Day 5



Key Paragraph, p. 88

“There’s a dumb-bunny lookin’ at that Crysler. Find out if he got any jack in his jeans. Some a these farm boys is sneaky. Soften ‘em up and’ roll em in to me, Joe. You’re doin’ good” (p. 88).

Writing Prompt

What is this manager of a car lot saying about his customers? **Write a narrative paragraph describing a time when you were judged while in a store. Write a real or imagined experience using sequence of events.**

When answering the question above, consider the following:

How did that make you feel?

Is this a responsible way to treat others? Why or why not?

Would you make that judgment if someone you didn’t know came into your work? Why?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Grapes of Wrath, Day 6



Key Paragraph, p. 120

“They sat and looked at it and burned it into their memories. How’ll it be not to know what land’s outside the door? How if you wake up in the night and know-and know the willow tree’s not there? Can you live without the willow tree? Well, no you can’t. The willow tree is you. The pain on that mattress there-that dreadful pain-that’s you” (p. 120).

Writing Prompt

Reread the key paragraph. **Write a narrative paragraph revealing the authors sentiment behind the paragraph.**

When answering the question above, consider the following:

What does this paragraph mean?

How did the author use metaphor in this paragraph?

Have you ever felt this way? What were you doing?

Did you change your future plans after feeling this way? Why?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Grapes of Wrath, Day 7



Key Paragraph, p. 140

“Casy got to his feet. He knew the government of families, and he knew he had been taken in to the family. In deed his position was eminent, for uncle John moved sideways. Leaving space between pa and himself for the preacher. Casy squatted down like the others, facing Grandpa enthroned on the running board” (p. 140).

Writing Prompt

What does Casy mean when he says “government of families?” **Write a narrative paragraph reflecting what “government of families” means.**

When answering the question above, consider the following:

Does your family have a government?

Who makes the laws?

Who is the president? Why?

Will you run your own family when you have one the same way? Why?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Grapes of Wrath, Day 8



Key Paragraph, p. 156

“The people on the top of the load did not look back. They saw the house and the barn and a little smoke still rising from the house and the barn and a little smoke rising from the chimney. They saw the windows reddening under the first color of the sun. They saw Muley standing forlornly in the dooryard looking after them. And then the hill cut them off. The cotton fields lined the road. And the truck crawled slowly through the dust toward the highway and the west” (p. 156).

Writing Prompt

Why didn't the people on the top of the load look back? **Write a narrative describing this event in details.**

When answering the question above, consider the following:

What would happen if they looked back?

Is looking forward being responsible?

What happens when you always look back?

Do you know someone who always looks back and never looks forward?

Is this someone who is successful and responsible? Why or why not?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Grapes of Wrath, Day 9



Key Paragraph, p. 183

“The appeal to hospitality had an instant effect. The lean face broke into a smile. ‘Why, sure, come on off the road. Proud to have ya.’ And he called, ‘Sairy, there’s some folks goin ta stay with us. Come on out an’ say how d’ya do. Sairy ain’t well,’ he added. The tent flaps opened and a wizened woman came out—a face wrinkled as a dried leaf and eyes that seemed to flame in her face, black eyes that seemed to look out of a well of horror. She was small and shuddering. She held herself upright by tent flap, and the hand holding onto the canvas was skeleton covered with wrinkled skin” (p. 183).

Writing Prompt

How do these new people treat the Joads? What do you think is wrong with Sairy? Have you ever experienced a time when things were hard and people welcomed you and were courteous to you? What were the circumstances? **Write a narrative paragraph reflecting on a real or imagined experience where people were courteous to you during a difficult circumstance.**

When answering the question above, consider the following:

Why were they nice to you?

Would we be better off as a country if we worried more about helping each other instead of being so individualistic? Why?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Grapes of Wrath, Day 10



Key Paragraph, p. 202

“Ma said, ‘You won’t be no burden. Each’ll help each, an’ we’ll git to California. Sairy Wilson he’ped lay Grandpa out,’ and she stopped. The relationship was plain” (p. 202).

Writing Prompt

What does Ma realize as she is convincing the Wilsons to travel with them?

Write a narrative paragraph that reflects on why Ma decided to welcome the Wilsons.

When answering the question above, consider the following:

What does it mean when the author states, “The relationship was plain?”

Have you ever met someone that you right away knew was a good person and without knowing them were willing to help them?

Do you still have the same relationship now? Why?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Grapes of Wrath, Day 11



Key Paragraph, p. 206

"If you who own the things people must have could understand this, you might preserve yourself. If you could separate causes from results, if you could know that Paine, Marx, Jefferson, Lenin were results, not causes, you might survive. But that you cannot know. For the quality of owning freezes you forever into 'I,' and cuts you off forever from the 'we'" (p. 206).

Writing Prompt

Reread the key paragraph. **Write a narrative paragraph describing the author's message.**

When answering the question above, consider the following:

Does this fit our theme of responsibility?

As humans, shouldn't we be responsible for others as well as ourselves?

Would you rather go on in your life as an "I" or a "we"? Why?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Grapes of Wrath, Day 12



Key Paragraph, p. 231

“Ma’s face softened, but her eyes were still fierce. ‘You done this ‘thout thinkin’ much,’ Ma said. ‘What we got lef’ in the worl’? Nothin but us. Nothin but the folks. We come out an’ Grandpa, he reached for the shovel-shelf right off. An’ now, right off, you wanna bust up the folks—” (p. 231).

Writing Prompt

Reread the key paragraph. **Write a narrative paragraph revealing Ma’s message.**

When answering the question above, consider the following:

What is more important to you: the “folks” or the material items? Why?

What do you have left when you lose everything else?

Are the material things really that important if you don’t have others?

Do you agree with Ma or not? Why?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Grapes of Wrath, Day 13



Key Paragraph, p. 255

“Tom was silent for a long time. His dark eyes looked slowly up and down at the proprietor. ‘I don’t wanta make no trouble,’ he said. ‘It’s hard thing to be named a bum. I ain’t afraid,’ he said softly. ‘I’ll go for you an’ your deputy with my mitts—here now, or jump Jesus. But there ain’t no good in it’” (p. 255).

Writing Prompt

Reread the key paragraph. **Write a narrative paragraph explaining why Tom was upset.**

When answering the question above, consider the following:

What is Tom trying to express to the proprietor?

What happens when people see others as less than human?

Is this how this person justified taking money from these people?

Was Tom being responsible when he spoke to the proprietor?

Was the proprietor being responsible by calling Tom a bum? Why?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Grapes of Wrath, Day 14



Key Paragraph, p. 282

"The man sat up and faced him. 'Look, mister. I don' know ever'thing. You might go out there an' fall into a steady job, an' I'd be a liar. An' then, you might never get no work, an' I didn' warn ya. I can tell ya mos' of the folks is purty mis'able.' He lay back in the water. 'A fella don' know ever'thing,' he said" (p. 282).

Writing Prompt

Reread the key paragraph. **Write a narrative paragraph describing what this man is trying to warn Pa and Tom about.**

When answering the question above, consider the following:

Have you ever been warned not to do something, but did it anyway?

Were you being responsible?

What did you learn after you did it?

Would you heed warning in the future? Why?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Grapes of Wrath, Day 15



Key Paragraph, p. 314

“Tom laughed. ‘Jesus, are we gonna start clean! We sure ain’t bringin’ nothin’ with us.’ He chuckled a moment, and then his face straightened quickly. He pulled the visor of his cap down low over his eyes. And the truck rolled down the mountain into the great valley” (p. 314).

Writing Prompt

Reread the key paragraph. How are the Joads starting out clean? **Write a narrative paragraph using precise words and phrases to convey a vivid picture of what Tom means by “clean”.**

When answering the question above, consider the following:

What time in your life have you needed to clear your conscience and start out clean? What was happening?

Were you being responsible? Why?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Grapes of Wrath, Day 16



Key Paragraph, p. 326

“And hands went into pockets and little coins came out. In front of the tent a little heap of silver grew. And the family found it there.

Our people are good people; our people are kind people. Pray God some day kind people won't all be poor. Pray God some day a kid can eat” (p. 326).

Writing Prompt

Reread the key paragraph. **Write a narrative paragraph concluding why poor people are generous.**

When answering the question above, consider the following:

Why are only poor people kind in this novel?

Is this true for today?

What would the United States look like if everyone were kind no matter how much money they had? Do you think this could happen? Why?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Grapes of Wrath, Day 17



Key Paragraph, p. 336

"The young man grinned. 'I didn' mean it. You ain't been here. Folks figgered that out. An' the folks with the peach orchard figgered her out too. Look, if the folks gets together, they's a leader—got to be—fella that dos the talkin'. Well, first time this fella opens his mouth they grab 'im an' stick 'im in jail. An' if they's another leader pop up, why they stick 'im in jail'" (p. 336).

Writing Prompt

Write a narrative paragraph describing the importance of responsible leadership.

When answering the question above, consider the following:

What happens when a repressed, poor group is organized and led by someone strong?

Give an example of this from history.

What happens when this leader is taken away?

Have you ever had a model leader? Who was it?

What did you learn from them?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Grapes of Wrath, Day 18



Key Paragraph, p. 365

“Well, don’ tell ‘em. Go down the river an’ stick your head under an’ whisper ‘em in the stream.

Pa nodded his head slowly at Ma’s words. ‘She’s right,’ he said. ‘It gives a fella relief to tell, but it jus’ spreads out his sin’” (p. 365).

Writing Prompt

Reread the key paragraph. **Write a narrative paragraph explaining what Uncle John is trying to do.**

When answering the question above, consider the following:

Why does Ma think he should go to the stream and whisper?

What happens when you don’t deal with things that are bothering you?

Is it right not to talk to people about it?

Have you ever had something that bothered you that you didn’t tell anyone?

What happened?

Did you end up telling someone?

Or does it still bother you today? Why?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Grapes of Wrath, Day 19



Key Paragraph, p. 403

“‘You wait here.’ Thomas walked quickly to the house. The door slammed after him. In a moment he was back and he carried a newspaper in his hand. ‘Did you see this? Here, I’ll read it: ‘Citizens, angered at red agitators, burn squatters’ camp. Last night a band of citizens, infuriated at the agitation going on in a local squatters’ camp, burned the tents to the ground and warned agitators to get out of the county’” (p. 403).

Writing Prompt

Why doesn’t Tom speak up after Mr. Thomas reads him the newspaper article?

Write a narrative paragraph explaining the sequence of events using sensory language.

When answering the question above, consider the following:

Why does the paper report a group of citizens?

Who do you think it really was?

Why was it necessary for them to burn down the camp?

How does it make people feel when incidents like this happen?

Who is in charge of keeping these people repressed?

Does this happen today? How and why?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Grapes of Wrath, Day 20



Key Paragraph, p. 426

“There could be no doubt that it was the committee; three ladies, washed, dressed in their best clothes: a lean woman with stringy hair and steel-rimmed glasses, a small stout lady with curly gray hair and a small sweet mouth, and a mammoth lady, big of hock and buttock, big of breast, muscled like a dray-horse, powerful and sure. And the committee walked down the road with dignity” (p. 426).

Writing Prompt

Reread the key paragraph. **Write a narrative paragraph comparing the setting of the three ladies with the Joads’ family setting. Describe both settings with details to create a vivid picture of each setting.**

When answering the question above, consider the following:

What does dignity mean?

Have you ever been a part of a group that was able to walk down the street with dignity? What was the group?

Were you being responsible? Why?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Grapes of Wrath, Day 21



Key Paragraph, p. 441

“Ma smiled. ‘Remember?’ she said. ‘Remember what we’d always say at home? ‘Winter’s a-comin’ early,’ we said, when the ducks flew. Always said that, an’ winter come when it was ready to come. But we always said, ‘She’s a-comin’ early.’ I wonder what we meant” (p. 441).

Writing Prompt

After Ma has reflected on what has happened to her family recently, Pa mentions that he has seen the ducks. After Ma’s reflection, what has Pa done? Why does he mention the ducks at this time? What does Ma reflect on after he mentions the ducks? Do the ducks have anything to do with the loss she experienced? **Write a narrative paragraph to develop a well-structured event sequence of Ma and Pa’s reflection.**

When answering the question above, consider the following:

What do you think the ducks represent?

Have you experienced a time when you were sad and someone mentioned a good memory?

What happened?

What was the good memory?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Grapes of Wrath, Day 22



Key Paragraph, p. 470

“Huston’s head sank down for a moment, and then he said, softly, ‘O.K. Don’t tell. But looka here. Don’t knife your own folks. We’re tryin’ to get along, havin’ fun an keepin’ order. Don’t tear all that down. Jes’ think about it. You’re just harmin’ yourself” (p. 470).

Writing Prompt

Reread the key paragraph. **Write a narrative paragraph explaining how these men are just “harmin’” themselves by ruining this dance. Describe the consequences that may follow.**

When answering the question above, consider the following:

Why would they consider doing this?

Who do you think they are working for?

What would happen if everyone worked together? Can you think of a time when you had to stand up for your people not to harm each other or yourself?

What happened?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Grapes of Wrath, Day 23



Key Paragraph, p. 476

“The decay spreads over the State, and the sweet smell is a great sorrow on the land. Men who can graft the trees and make the seed fertile and big can find no way to let the hungry people eat their produce. Men who have created new fruits in the world cannot create a system whereby their fruits may be eaten. And the failure hangs over the State like a great sorrow” (p. 476).

Writing Prompt

Reread the key paragraph. **Write a narrative paragraph reflecting on the author’s message.**

When answering the question above, consider the following:

What does the great sorrow on the land mean?

Why are they not able to feed the hungry?

Does this happen today? Why?

What would you do if you had enough food to feed the hungry?

What is the responsible thing to do for the people?

Who should be doing this?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Grapes of Wrath, Day 24



Key Paragraph, p. 499

“In the front seat of the truck Ma and Tom and Al were overcome with happiness. ‘I ain’t really felt so good for a long time,’ Ma said. “F we pick plenty peaches we might get a house, pay rent even, for a couple months. We got to have a house” (p. 499).

Writing Prompt

Reread the key paragraph. **Write a narrative paragraph to explain why the Joads are overcome with happiness? Where are they getting their hope?**

When answering the question above, consider the following:

What do you predict will happen?

With all the bad things that have happened, how do they still have hope that everything will be okay?

Has there been a time when you really looked forward to something you thought would happen?

What happened?

What would happen if it didn’t happen?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Grapes of Wrath, Day 25



Key Paragraph, p. 535

"It's awright. I wisht you didn' do it. I wisht you wasn' there. But you done what you had to do. I can't read no fault on you.' She went to the stove and dipped a cloth in the heating dishwater. 'Here,' she said. 'Put that there on your face'" (p. 535).

Writing Prompt

Reread the key paragraph. **Write a narrative paragraph that explains what Ma is trying to tell Tom? When she says, "I wisht you wasn' there," what does that mean?**

When answering the question above, consider the following:

When should Tom have been responsible?

Have you been in a situation where you were not looking for trouble but you were at the wrong place at the wrong time?

What should you have done to be more responsible?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Grapes of Wrath, Day 26



Key Paragraph, p. 545

“Ma covered her mouth with her fingers and coughed to clear her throat. ‘You can’t,’ she said. ‘They wouldn’t be no way to hide out. You couldn’t trust nobody. But you can trust us. We can hide you, and we can see you get to eat while your face gets well” (p. 545).

Writing Prompt

Reread the key paragraph. Pretend you are Tom. **Write a narrative paragraph as a letter describing why you think you need to leave the family.**

When answering the question above, consider the following:

Is it responsible? Why or why not?

Will Tom be able to escape the law and consequences of what he has done?

Are you able to hide from wrong doings forever?

At some point, do you and others end up with consequences? Why?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Grapes of Wrath, Day 27



Key Paragraph, p. 571

“‘Yeah,’ said Tom. ‘He didn’ duck quick enough. He wasn’ doing nothin’ against the law, Ma. I been thinkin’ a hell of a lot, thinkin’ about our people livin’ like pigs, an’ the good rich lan’ layin’ fallow, or maybe one fella with a million acres, while a hundred thousan’ good farmers is starvin’. An’ I been wonderin’ if all our folks got together an’ yelled, like them fellas yelled, only a few of ‘em a the Hooper ranch—’” (p. 571).

Writing Prompt

Reread the key paragraph. **Write a narrative paragraph to reflect on Tom’s decision.**

When answering the question above, consider the following:

Is Tom acting responsibly? Why?

Is there a time when you should stand up?

Is there a time when you need to take care of your own responsibilities?

How do you know the difference?

How do we decide what to stand up for?

At what cost is it worth it?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Grapes of Wrath, Day 28



Key Paragraph, p. 577

“No it ain’t,’ Ma smiled. ‘It ain’t, Pa. An’ that’s one more thing a woman knows. I noticed that. Man, he lives in jerks—baby born an’ a man dies, an’ that’s a jerk—gets a farm an’ loses his farm, an’ that’s a jerk. Woman, it’s all one flow, like a stream, little eddies, little waterfalls, but the river, it goes right on. Woman looks at it like that. We ain’t gonna die out. People is goin’ on—changin’ a little, maybe, but goin’ right on” (p. 577).

Writing Prompt

Reread the key paragraph. **Write a narrative paragraph explaining how Ma sees men and women differently? Provide your own conclusion based on Ma’s reflection.**

When answering the question above, consider the following:

Do you agree with Ma?

What difference do you see in men and women?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Grapes of Wrath, Day 29



Key Paragraph, p. 591

“Huddled under sheds, lying in wet hay, the hunger and the fear bred anger. Then boys went out, not to beg, but to steal; and men went out weakly, to try to steal” (p. 591).

Writing Prompt

Write a narrative paragraph that describes what happens when large populations of people are angry. Use precise words and phrases that convey a vivid picture of this circumstance.

When answering the question above, consider the following:

Why did they stop begging and start stealing?

How bad did it get before good people turned to stealing to live?

Is this being responsible? Why?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Grapes of Wrath, Day 30



Key Paragraph, p. 619

“There.’ Her hand moved behind his head and supported it. Her fingers moved gently in his hair. She looked up and across the barn. And her lips came together and smiled mysteriously” (p. 619).

Writing Prompt

Write a narrative paragraph about what Rose of Sharon has done. Write a well-structured sequence of events.

When answering the question above, consider the following:

Was her pregnancy for nothing?

When you are able to save a life, is it worth doing something you would not normally do?

Would you be able to do whatever that person needed in order to save their life? Why?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

The Grapes of Wrath, Final Assignment



Autobiographical Essay

Task: Write an autobiographical essay.

Although this is a fictional story, it follows a family and shows the different things that happen in their lives and stories they have. You have spent 6 weeks with the Joads. What is your story?

Using the writing projects you kept over the six weeks, **write an autobiography sharing a period of time in your life.** You should use the section on Autobiographical Writing to guide you through this exercise. Remember that one paragraph should flow into the next. In order to produce this effect, you may have to re-write some sentences or paragraphs from your daily projects and writings. You may also need to add leading or unifying sentences at the beginning or end of paragraphs to aid your reader in following the direction of your essay.

- Pre-write to organize your ideas
- Rough draft
- Edit/peer edit
- Final Draft turn in