

***The Grapes of Wrath* Study Guide**
Chapters 1-3

Chapter 1

1. The Oklahoma setting includes two overwhelming elements – the sun and the dust. Quote at least one reference to each of these elements.
2. Explain this quote (p. 6): “The faces of the watching men ... became hard and angry and resistant ... Then the women knew that they were safe.”

Chapter 2

1. Why does the truck driver feel “trapped” by the hitchhiker’s request for a ride?
2. Why does Steinbeck tell us the hitchhiker’s name, but not the truck driver’s?
3. Name two things that the truck driver notices about Tom Joad.
4. How long has Tom Joad been in McAlester? For what crime? Why has he been released?

Chapter 3

1. In a short paragraph of 5-6 sentences explain the analogy of the turtle and his slow trek across the country.
2. The turtle is symbolic of a struggle for survival. Indicate from the final paragraph of the chapter, two of his actions that are positive and similar to humans.

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Chapters 4-6

Chapter 4

1. Describe the appearance of the man Tom Joad meets who is singing, "Yess, sir, that's my Savior." Note the details that Steinbeck uses.
2. What reason does Jim Casy give for not preaching any longer?
3. Why does Jim Casy seem insecure? What is he insecure about? What does he feel guilty about?
4. What does Casy mean when he says, "There ain't no sin and there ain't no virtue"?
5. How does Casey define the Holy Spirit?
6. Why was Tom Joad in McAlester for four years?
7. Why are Tom and Jim shocked at the appearance of the old family home? Quote one of Casy's statements that expresses his Transcendental beliefs.

Chapter 5

1. Describe how the bank is personified as a monster."
2. How are the tractors also described as monsters?
3. How is the tractor driver part of the monster"?
4. The voices in this chapter are not "real characters" in the novel. How would you describe their role in the novel?

Chapter 6

1. What is so unusual about the fact that all the good planks of wood were left intact on the Joad family home? What does this suggest?
2. What was Grampa's favorite item? What did he hope to do with all his saved up chicken feathers?
3. What information about the Joad family does Muley give to Tom?
4. Why does Muley refuse to go west with his family?
5. What does the reader learn about Tom Joad's act of murder?
6. What did Tom learn from the McAlester inmate who read law books?
7. Why does Jim Casy get the "Sperit"? What does he feel called to do? Why?
8. Muley says that he used to be mean "like a wolf", but now he is mean "like a weasel." What is the difference between these two similes?

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Chapters 7-11

Chapter 7

1. Give three examples from Chapter 7 that illustrate how the car salesmen were taking advantage of the farmers going west.
2. What effect is created by the style of writing in Chapter 7.

Chapter 8

1. How does Tom Joad approach his father after being away from home so long?
2. What plan does Pa have for greeting Ma and the rest of the family?
3. Quote at least two examples of Ma's behavior as "the citadel of the family."
4. What is "strange" about Noah?
5. What has happened to Al while Tom was away? What has happened to Rosasharn?
6. What skills does Al possess which seem to assure Tom and the family that they will survive the "exodus" to California?
7. Report the reference Grampa makes to grapes.
8. Casy says, "But when they're all working together, not one fella for another fella, but one fella kind of harnessed to the whole shebang – that's right, that's holy." Explain how this statement expands on his philosophy of life. (See Chapter 4, Question 8)

Chapter 9

1. The following are typical statements of the dispossessed families:
"You're not buying only junk, you're buying junked lives. "How can we live without our lives? How will we know it's us without our past? Explain the phrases "junked lives" and "live without our lives."
2. In meaning and form, paragraph ten parallels the opening lines of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic." State what Steinbeck is implying in this parallel.

Chapter 10

1. Quote statements by Ma and Tom that serve to foreshadow difficulties.
2. Describe Casy's appearance when he returns to the Joad family. Why does he want to go west?

3. What potential problem does Tom's parole cause?
4. What is typical about the behavior of all these families in the evening, after the trucks have been parked? Write a simile (or metaphor) *of your own* to describe their behavior.
5. How is Grampa "persuaded to go on this trip?"
6. Report Ma's and Grampa's reactions to leaving the farm.
7. Why is Al the driver and not Pa? What does this suggest?

Chapter 11

1. Following are two descriptions from the chapter: "the dead motor of a tractor" and "a machine man, driving a dead tractor on land he does not know and love." What overall picture is portrayed in the first half of this chapter?
2. How does this behavior and outlook differ from the Joads' attitude toward farming?
3. Give at least three details of life in the barren and broken homes portrayed here.

Extra Credit

1. Compose a poem portraying an abandoned house.

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Chapters 12-16

Chapter 12

1. List the states that Route 66 traverses. How many mountain ranges are there to cross.
2. Explain the irony in this statement: "It's a free country."

Chapter 13

1. What does the conversation with the gas station attendant reveal about the Joads?
2. How does Ma react to Rose of Sharon's squeamishness at the dead dog?
3. Ma is uneasy about Tom's parole. How do his views and hers differ?
4. Who dies? Why are there problems burying the body?
5. How does Rose of Sharon react to the death?
6. What kind of "farewell" does Casy say at the funeral?
7. What information does Wilson give to the Joads about the orange handbill?
8. How do the Wilsons and the Joads help each other?

Chapter 14

1. Explain what Steinbeck means by the word "Manself?" Why is the word capitalized?
2. Explain the significance of the statement, "This is the beginning – from "I" to "we."

Chapter 15

1. Report one particular image, feeling or tone in this chapter, which presents the viewpoint of individuals in roadside restaurants.

Chapter 16

1. Describe Connie and Rose of Sharon's dreams for the future.
2. When the car breaks down, how do the Wilsons and Joads plan to solve the problem? Why don't they separate and go to California independently?

3. Describe Ma's rebellion. Why is it significant?
4. Explain what Tom means when he says, "I rather jus' – lay one foot down in front a the other."
5. What angers Tom in his conversation with the owner of the campground?
6. The ragged man explains why there is no work in California. Briefly state his explanation, which also serves as foreshadowing of difficulties for the Joads.
7. Generally, how does Ma begin to regard the journey west to California?

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Chapters 17-19

Chapter 17 (Interchapter)

1. Steinbeck writes, "Twenty families became one family," and "the group was welded to one thing." How do these statements reinforce one of the themes of this novel?
2. What are the strengths of the "migrant men"?

Chapter 18

1. What information about California do the Joad men gather while they are washing in the river?
2. Explain the effect that land and cattle companies have on agriculture in California.
3. "Okies" becomes a derogatory term. Why are the land owners afraid of Okies?
4. Prophetically, Ma says to Tom, "Family's falling apart." Give three instances from Chapter 18 in which the family becomes smaller.
5. What is significant about the food being prepared for the night in the Joad tent, especially the vegetable being served?
6. How does the behavior of Ma Joad, considered a pillar of the family, begin to change throughout this chapter?
7. Why does the California border patrol allow the Joads to cross without too much trouble?

Chapter 19 (Interchapter)

1. Explain the negative results of "farm[ing] on paper."
2. A contrast is made between the physical activity of a farmer working his own land and the type of labor involved here. Cite two examples of this contrast.
3. Quote the description of the homes in Hooverville camps.
4. Explain this paradox: "the great owners ... had become through their holdings more and less than men."

Enrichment

1. Draw sketches of a Hooverville from the details provided in the novel.
2. Make an enlarged map of the travels of the Joads.

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Chapters 20-22

Chapter 20

1. What “habit” of the road do Ruthie and Winfield automatically assume?
2. Why do the officials or state patrolmen so easily spy “leaders”?
3. What is the blacklist?
4. What is the role of “bull simple” for Tom and several other migrants?
5. Where in California does Floyd suggest that the Joads find work.
6. Describe Connie’s attitude toward the family’s difficulties. What action does he take?
7. Why is Casy arrested? How is this action a change in Casy’s behavior?
8. How do Ruthie and Winfield surprise Tom and Al?
9. Although the police try to force the Joads toward Tulare, where do they head? Why?

Chapter 21 (Interchapter)

1. This chapter describes the hate, anger, and cruelty that are increasing. What has changed the migrants into frustrated, angry individuals? Give the quote.
2. On the other hand, what arouses the townspeople?
3. “Explain the quote: “The great owners were glad ... And pretty soon we’ll have serfs again.”

Chapter 22

1. Report two particular differences between the government camp at Weedpatch and a Hooverville.
2. Timothy invites Tom to join Wilkie and him at work, even though it means fewer hours for the Wallaces. How does this action contribute to the “we” theme of the novel?
3. Explain the connection between the Bank of the West and the Farmers Association.
4. Why does the Association dislike the government camps for migrants?
5. What does Ma mean when she says, “We come home to our own people ... Why, I feel like people again”?
6. What tip does Thomas give for a dance night?

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Chapters 23-25

Chapter 23 (Interchapter)

1. What possible uses of 20 cents exist for the migrants?
2. Why is a harmonica an important prop in this chapter?
3. What kind of dancing do the farmers do?
4. What is the “labor” of a preacher nearby at an irrigation ditch?

Chapter 24

1. Why is Huston worried about Willie’s possible behavior at the dance?
2. How was Al dressed for the dance?
3. What is the “entertainment Committee” actually?
4. Why would some men work for twenty cents an hour even if they were ordinarily “two-bit” men?
5. Report how the troublemakers at the Saturday dance are dealt with. What does the solution indicate about concerted action? About violence?
6. Explain the irony Huston discovers when he talks to the three men.
7. What happened in another part of the USA, when some mountain boys had a turkey shoot? Why do the migrants think the turkey shoot is a good idea?

Chapter 25 (Interchapter)

1. List the bountiful fruit and vegetables that spring produces in California.
2. Why, then, is there “great sorrow” in the State?
3. Quote the reason given for this destruction and wanton waste.
4. The chapter closes with this statement: “In the souls of the people, the grapes of wrath are filling and growing heavy for the vintage.” Explain both the literal meaning and the symbolic implication of this statement.
5. Explain the contrast between the grapes of this chapter and those of Chapter 8.

Enrichment

1. You are a relative of a migrant worker in the 1930’s. Write a letter to a member of Congress, outlining your complaints about working conditions. Request or suggest specific solutions.

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Chapters 26-27

Chapter 26

1. Why is Ma's anger an effective weapon against the Joad family's lethargy and/or despair?
2. Why is Pa "all right" and "ain't beat" according to Ma?
3. What kind of promises does Al make to his girlfriend?
4. Jule explains why deputies do not intrude on the camp. Quote and explain the main point of his reasoning.
5. Quote a statement that indicates Ma's unfailing courage is flagging.
6. In house sixty-three "a fear had fallen on them." What contributed to that fear?
7. Earning \$1.00 for a day's work has several implications for the Joad's daily and future lives. Identify and state these implications.
8. Give the specific reasons for the striking and picketing at the Hooper farm. Also, explain Casy's involvement.
9. Describe the event(s) which cause to go into hiding.
10. According to Ma, Tom's being in hiding has a definite effect on the family. Report Ma's observation about the family **and** her request regarding Tom.

Chapter 27 (Interchapter)

1. One of the difficulties in picking cotton is obtaining a fair wage. Report the unfair practices that may occur.
2. Quote the reference about winter which is portentous for the migrants

Enrichment

1. Ma's American dream was to have a little white house and a plot of land to own. Write an essay in which you make clear the details of your own American dream.

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Chapters 28-30

Chapter 28

1. State three facts about the living conditions in the Joad's boxcar.
2. What special treat does Ma consent to buy for Ruthie and Winfield?
3. What led to Ruthie telling about her older brother Tom?
4. Where does Ma find Tom to give him his dinner and to advise him?
5. What does Ma insist that Tom accept?
6. Tom quotes Casy, who had cited Scripture: "For if they fall, the one will lif' up his fellow, but woe to him that is alone when he falleth, for he hath not another to help him up." State the significance of the statement in relation to the theme of the novel.
7. Tom refers to the possibility of his own death. Quote what he says about the soul. What does this quote echo?
8. Both Pa and Uncle John refer to life being over, to people giving up. Quote Ma's reply to these concerns.
9. Although the Joads have a job picking cotton, how is that situation depressing?

Chapter 29 (Interchapter)

1. Why are anger and hatred directed at the migrants?
2. As they had done in the opening of the novel, the women watch the men for signs of breaking. Quote how anger has a direct connection as to whether or not a person "broke."

Chapter 30

1. Why do the Joad's remain in the boxcar instead of driving out, ahead of the floodwater?
2. State one possible cause of Rose of Sharon's stillborn baby.
3. The theme of nourishment – its necessity and the results from the lack of it – is developed in this chapter. State at least one other theme also continued in this chapter.