

Bookcard for Advanced Placement English

The purpose of constructing a bookcard on your novels and plays is to give each student a complete record of the individual works that are covered. An added advantage of the card is that the student will have a comprehensive study guide at his or her disposal in preparation for the AP Exam and also for future college English courses.

The card should be typed onto no more than two pages. These pages then are placed front and back creating a one-page document. This page is to be laminated. The following sections need to be included on the card.

- I. **AUTHORIAL BACKGROUND**
 - a. The where, when born, what's going on in his/her country at the time. What happens to make him/her write this work. Also include other significant works he/she has written.
- II. **LITERARY PERIOD/COUNTRY**
 - a. Place the work in the right country and the right literary time period. Define the years of the time period and publication date. What were the general literary movements of the time (realism, naturalism, etc.)? Define and comment on them and how this work fits – or doesn't.
- III. **SETTING**
 - a. Time, place – significance to the work – or not. Milieu – customs of the area – culture.
- IV. **CHARACTERS**
 - a. List the major characters along with the details of each. Use quotes from the work in describing him/her. Be sure to include traits – good and bad.
- V. **THEME(S)**
 - a. After identifying each theme, briefly explain how it is developed.
 - b. A minimum of three themes should be discussed
- VI. **PLOT SUMMARY**
 - a. In one paragraph, provide a detailed summary of the novel or play. Later, this will help you in remembering the book.
- VII. **LITERARY DEVICES UNIQUE TO THE WORK**
 - a. Any particular literary techniques used including symbolism, allusions, motifs, etc. Show how each is developed.
 - b. A minimum of 4 devices should be discussed
- VIII. **SIGNIFICANT PASSAGE**
 - a. Choose a passage(s) from the book that "STRUCK" you as memorable or outstanding. Explain why and relate its significance to the work.
 - b. Be sure to include the page number.
- IX. **LITERARY CRITICISM**
 - a. Cite one example from a critic from the time of the novel's publication.
 - b. Cite one example from a current critic.
 - c. Cite your critique of the novel.

source unknown

Grapes of Wrath

I. Authorial Background

John Steinbeck (1902-1968) was born in Salinas, and lived the early part of his life in Monterey County, California. It was here that Steinbeck developed a knowledge and love of the natural world and the diverse cultures that figure so prominently in his works. During the 1930s, his works included *The Red Pony*, *Pastures of Heaven*, *Tortilla Flat*, *In Dubious Battle*, and *Of Mice and Men*. *The Grapes of Wrath*, published in 1939, earned him a Pulitzer Prize. In the 1940s, Steinbeck spent most of his time living in New York and traveling abroad. By then he was an internationally acclaimed author. While he hobnobbed with the N.Y. elite, he wrote nostalgically of life on the Monterey waterfront in *Cannery Row* and *Sweet Thursday*. He traveled back and forth between the two coasts before settling in New York in 1950. His epic treatment of the Salinas Valley, *East of Eden*, was published in 1952. In the latter decades of his life, Steinbeck traveled extensively around the world, always writing. In 1962, he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. On December 20, 1968, Steinbeck died in Sag Harbor, N.Y. His ashes were returned to California by his widow, Elaine and his younger son, John.

II. Literary Period

Written after the Great Depression in 1939, *Grapes of Wrath* is a part of the Moderns Period (1900-1950).

III. Setting

The setting includes a large part of Oklahoma, portions of other states, and a large area of California in the 1930's.

IV. Main Characters

Pa Joad - a homesteader who, like hundreds of others, has lost his farm due to the dust storm in Oklahoma. He migrates with his family to California where he hopes to find work picking oranges. He loses his identity when his life as a farmer is disrupted, and he cannot adjust to the new circumstances which face him.

Ma Joad - a strong, stern woman who is the binding force of the family. Her concern for the family prompts her not to reveal that Granma has died until they have safely crossed the desert.

Grampa Joad - the grandfather and original settler of the farm which has been lost due to the dust storm in Oklahoma. He is the titular head of the family but no longer rules. Although he talks about how he will sit in a wash-tub full of grapes in California, when the time to leave arrives, he refuses to go and has to be drugged with medicine to be taken along. He dies on the first evening of their journey and is buried in a field beside the road.

Granma Joad - a firm believer in religion. She dies while the family cross the Californian desert.

Noah Joad - the eldest son who fulfills a minor role in the novel. He is unobtrusive and uncommunicative. Although not stupid, he is strange. Pa attributes Noah's strangeness to the night of his birth when Pa panicked and tried to pull and twist Noah during the delivery. Noah decides to stay by the Colorado River as he lacks the will power to continue the tiresome journey to California.

Tom Joad - the chief protagonist of the novel. He is the second son and makes his appearance in the novel after spending four years in McAlester, an Oklahoma state prison, for killing a man in a drunken brawl. His character undergoes development in the novel when he decides to act upon Casy's ideas and take over his work.

Rose of Sharon - the daughter of the Joads who is married to Connie Rivers. When Tom returns from prison, he finds her pregnant. She has great hopes about her life in California and tells Ma that she wants to live in a town rather than in the country with the family. Her child is stillborn and in the final pages of the novel, she is seen breast-feeding a starving man.

V. Themes

Man's Inhumanity to Man - Steinbeck consistently and woefully points to the fact that the migrants' great suffering is caused not by bad weather or mere misfortune but by their fellow human beings. Historical, social, and economic circumstances separate people into rich and poor, landowner and tenant, and the people in the dominant roles struggle viciously to preserve their positions.

The Saving Power of Family and Fellowship - *The Grapes of Wrath* chronicles the story of two "families": the Joads and the collective body of migrant workers. Although the Joads are joined by blood, the text argues that it is not their genetics but their loyalty and commitment to one another that establishes their true kinship. In the migrant lifestyle portrayed in the book, the biological family unit, lacking a home to define its boundaries, quickly becomes a thing of the past, as life on the road demands that new connections and new kinships be formed.

The Dignity of Wrath - The Joads stand as exemplary figures in their refusal to be broken by the circumstances that conspire against them. At every turn, Steinbeck seems intent on showing their dignity and honor; he emphasizes the importance of maintaining self-respect in order to survive spiritually. Nowhere is this more evident than at the end of the novel. The Joads have suffered incomparable losses: Noah, Connie, and Tom have left the family; Rose of Sharon gives birth to a stillborn baby; the family possesses neither food nor promise of work. Yet it is at this moment (Chapter Thirty) that the family manages to rise above hardship to perform an act of unsurpassed kindness and generosity for the starving man, showing that the Joads have not lost their sense of the value of human life.

VI. Plot Summary

Section One: The opening chapter deals with the drought in Oklahoma and describes the dust storm and its effect on the people. In chapter two, Tom Joad hitchhikes home with a talkative truck driver. He has just spent four years in McAlester, an Oklahoma state prison, for killing a man in a drunken brawl. Chapter three describes a box turtle crossing a highway with great difficulty. In the fourth chapter, Tom meets Jim Casy, an ex-preacher. They discuss his loss of faith and the problems that have reduced the homesteaders to sharecroppers. Chapter five describes the landowners and tractors forcing the sharecroppers off the land. Casy and Tom reach the Joad farm in chapter six, but find it deserted and damaged. Muley Graves, a neighbor, explains that the Joad family was evicted by the landowners, and is now living at Uncle John's place as they prepare to move to California. Chapter seven describes second-hand car dealers and reproduces the monologue of a dealer who sells second-hand cars to the migrant families. Tom is reunited with his family in chapter eight and learns of the plans to leave for California. The ninth chapter describes the migrants, in general, selling everything that could be sold and burning the rest of their belongings in preparation for the journey to California. In chapter ten, the Joads make their own preparations for the journey to California. They slaughter and salt down pigs in order to have food along the way. They decide to take Casy along with them. They drug Grampa, who refuses to leave the farm. Finally, they depart for California. Chapter eleven describes the deserted houses of the sharecroppers. Section Two: Chapter twelve depicts the movement of the migrants on Highway 66 as they travel westwards to California. In Chapter thirteen, the Joads are seen traveling on Route 66 and spending the first night of their journey. Along the way, Grampa dies of a stroke and is buried by the roadside. Tom and Al repair the Wilsons' car, and the two families agree to travel together. Chapter fourteen outlines the potentiality for social change inherent in the migrants' poignant situation. The next chapter focuses on roadside cafes and truck drivers. In chapter sixteen the Wilsons' car breaks down again, and Al and Tom repair it after buying the spare part cheaply from a one-eyed wrecking yard assistant who hates his boss. At the roadside camp, the Joads learn of the deplorable working conditions and the scarcity of work available in California from a man who is returning home after watching his wife and kids die from starvation. Chapter seventeen describes the roadside camps established every night by the migrants and the development of communal rules. In chapter eighteen, the Joads cross Arizona and reach the Colorado River. Noah leaves the family after a baptismal bath in the river. The Wilsons also discontinue their journey because Sairy is too ill to travel any further. Thus, the Joads cross the dreaded Mojave Desert alone. During the crossing, Granma dies; but Ma does not reveal her death to anybody because she wants the family to get across safely. Section three: Chapter nineteen deals with the pattern of land ownership in California and contains Steinbeck's views on the strife between the landowners and the migrants. In chapter twenty, the Joads stop at Hooverville, a camp for migrants on the fringes of town, where hungry children surround Ma who is making a stew. The Joads are exposed to the reality of the pitiable conditions in California. A labor contractor and a Deputy Sheriff arrive and, when the deputy arrests Floyd Knowles on a false charge, Tom trips the deputy and Casy knocks him unconscious. Casy takes all the blame on himself, thus saving Tom. Uncle John is overwhelmed by Casy's sacrifice and gets drunk to drown his sorrows. Rose of Sharon is deserted by her husband. The Joads leave the camp on learning that angry mobs plan to burn it down during the night. Chapter twenty-one provides a generalizing comment on the resentment and repression of the migrants. In Chapter twenty-two, the Joads arrive at Weedpatch Camp and are happy to learn that it is managed by the migrants themselves. Tom finds work, but it lasts only for a few days. Mr. Thomas, the small farmer who employs him, tells him about some troublemakers who will disrupt the Saturday night dance so as to enable the police to interfere on grounds of rioting. Chapter twenty-three describes the migrants' leisure activities. In chapter twenty-four the committee governing the camp is successful in frustrating the attempt of the troublemakers to disrupt the camp. In chapter twenty-five Steinbeck describes the scientific skill, which results in abundant crops, which are then wasted. In chapter twenty-six the Joads have to leave Weedpatch as they have run out of money, as well as food and are without any work. They find work picking peaches at the Hooper ranch. Here Tom meets Casy who tells him that the Joads are breaking the strike to demand higher wages. Deputies disrupt their meeting, and Casy is killed in a Christ-like manner. Tom kills Casy's murderer and is recognizably wounded. Ma hides him in a cave of mattresses, and the family leaves the camp to protect him. Chapter twenty-seven describes the work of cotton picking. In chapter twenty-eight the family finds work picking cotton, and Tom hides in a nearby cave. Ruthie reveals to a big girl that her brother, who has killed two men, is hiding nearby. Tom tells Ma about his plans to translate Casy's ideas into action. Chapter twenty-nine depicts the migrants' despair during the long wet season when there is no work. In the final chapter the rains flood the boxcar camp where the Joads have been living while picking cotton. The Joads and the other families build an embankment out of mud to prevent the water from flooding them. A fallen tree breaks the embankment and water floods the camp. Rose of Sharon gives birth to a stillborn child. Ma insists that the family find a dry shelter. Al stays back with Agnes Wainwright. The Joads find a barn on high ground in which to shelter. They find a boy and a starving man whom Rose of Sharon nourishes with the milk intended for her baby.

VII. Literary Devices

Symbols - Rose of Sharon's Pregnancy - Rose of Sharon's pregnancy holds the promise of a new beginning.

The Death of the Joads' Dog - When the Joads stop for gas not long after they begin their trip west, they are met by a hostile station attendant, who accuses them of being beggars and vagrants.

Mood - The Grapes of Wrath is a tragic story of the dispossession of the Joads, and the predominant mood is dark and gloomy.

VIII. Significant Passages

"...the Joads. We don't look up to nobody."

Says one time he went out in the wilderness to find his own soul, an' he foun' he didn't have no soul that was 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, an' was whole.

