

**Discussion Questions for “The Grapes of Wrath” by John Steinbeck**  
**September 24, 2022**

1. What did you make of the novel's structure of chapters jumping focus from the main protagonists to the overall landscape of the Dust Bowl migration?
2. How is the idea of hard-work and capitalism combining to help achieve the American Dream presented by Steinbeck in *The Grapes of Wrath*?
3. At different points in the novel different characters say something along the lines of, “A fella’s got to eat.” Do you think Steinbeck’s formulation of these scenes lent itself to its success? Do you think if the novel were published today, it would be as popular?
4. Does nature function as a force for either good or evil?
5. When the narrator says, “men ate what they had not raised, had no connection with the bread,” the implication is that this break diminishes humanity. Can spirituality be maintained with increasing automation?
6. As his land is destroyed, an anonymous tenant says, “We've got a bad thing made by men, and by God that's something we can change.” Is Steinbeck suggesting that a just social order is possible?
7. The Grapes of Wrath is comprised of a cast of characters, that are central and peripheral to the novel's plot. Which character(s) struck a chord with you?
8. In chapter 13, Ma Joad says her function within the family dynamic is to provide daily subsistence. “That’s all I can do. I can’t do no more. All the rest’d get upset if I done any more’n that.” Do you agree or disagree that Ma Joad’s impact on the family is minimal/peripheral?
9. What did you think of Rose of Sharon’s characterization? Do you think her action in the final scene of the novel is true to her character?
10. What did you make of the final scene, is it in line with the realism of the novel?