



**THE EFFECTS OF ECONOMIC CONDITION IN  
JOHN STEINBECK'S *THE GRAPES OF WRATH***



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NUR ABDAL PATTA  
F21102080

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**SKRIPSI**

**THE EFFECTS OF ECONOMIC CONDITION IN JOHN  
STEINBECK'S *THE GRAPES OF WRATH***

Disusun dan diajukan oleh :

**NUR ABDAL FATTA**

**No. Pokok: F211 02 080**

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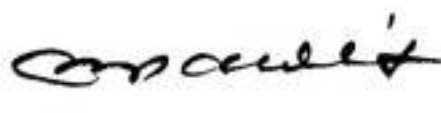
Ketua

  
Dr. Husain Hasyim, M.Hum

Sekretaris

  
Dra. Hamsinah Yasin, M.Hum

Dekan Fakultas Ilmu Budaya

  
Dr. Muhammad Darwis M.S.

Ketua Jurusan Sastra Inggris

  
Dr. Husain Hasyim, M.Hum

**UNIVERSITAS HASANUDDIN**

**FAKULTAS ILMU BUDAYA**

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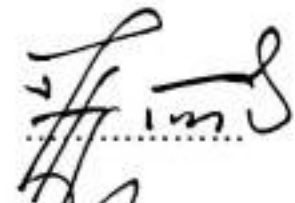
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Makassar, 24 Juli 2008

Panitia Ujian Skripsi :


1. Drs. Husain Hasyim, M.Hum

Ketua



2. Dra. Hamsinah Yasin, M.Hum

Sekretaris



3. Drs. M. Amir P, M.Hum

Penguji I



4. Drs. H. Sudarmin Hamu, M.Hum

Penguji II



5. Drs. Husain Hasyim, M.Hum

Konsultan I



6. Dra. Hamsinah Yasin, M.Hum

Konsultan II



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## ABSTRAK

**Nur Abdal Patta, 2008.** *The Effects of Economic Condition in John Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath* (Supervised by Husain Hasyim, and. Hamsinah Yasin)

Adapun masalah yang dikaji dalam skripsi ini adalah dampak dari perubahan-perubahan ekonomi yang berimbas dalam hubungan social manusia, seperti terefleksi dalam novel karya John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939). Hasil dari pengkajian dari permasalahan tersebut dimaksudkan untuk menemukan dampak dari dua peristiwa yang suram dalam sejarah ekonomi Amerika, "The Dust Bowl" dan "The Great Depression" sekitar tahun 1930 di hampir seluruh penjuru Amerika. Kemunduran ekonomi di wilayah Oklahoma membuat para penduduknya beramai-ramai bermigrasi menuju California yang memiliki keadaan ekonomi yang lebih stabil, dengan harapan untuk mendapatkan makanan dan pekerjaan. Namun ternyata, hal tersebut memicu timbulnya masalah yang lebih besar: konflik yang meluluhlantakkan kemanusiaan antara imigran dari Oklahoma dengan masyarakat California yang menolak kehadiran mereka.

Untuk menemukan hasil yang dimaksud tersebut, maka dilakukanlah pengkajian dengan menggunakan teori pendekatan sastra "genetic strukturalisme". Pendekatan ini digunakan dengan dasar, selain untuk menemukan refleksi permasalahan dalam novel tersebut secara struktural berdasarkan elemen-elemen instrinsik di dalam novel, pengkajian juga perlu dilakukan dengan meninjau elemen-elemen ekstrinsik yang berkaitan dengan novel tersebut, yakni dalam hal ini adalah masalah sosial yang timbul dari keadaan ekonomi pada masa itu. Hasil yang ditemukan adalah tampak jelas bahwa ekonomi memiliki efek yang luar biasa jelas dalam membentuk pandangan-pandangan sosial umat manusia dan juga sekaligus menghancurkannya.

*Kata kunci: John Steinbeck, The Grapes of Wrath, The Dust Bowl, The Great Depression, Oklahoma, California, dampak ekonomi, hubungan sosial*

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND

Different economic condition, aware or not, might create the series of problems regarding this condition. There are different value sets in one area, these problems lead to a degrading of the values, especially on the fields of humanity and mankind. It is obvious that condition in a much richer country might be different with some poor others. This might affect on the perspectives or views of the people living there (good economic condition) and to others out of the area (bad economic condition).

The contacts of this two kinds of group of people might lead to this economic "clash", as the people of the bad-economic area trying to enter the good-economic areas. There are some reasons for this happens. One of it, is possibly the deflation from one country or state, makes people of the place try to seek for a better place with a better offerings in economic terms, a more guaranteed and secure place in economic senses.

Yet sometimes, this effort can face an objection or raise some typical problems, as the people of the good-economic area is refusing to welcome this "poor people". The impact of this situation may be greater and harder than what the deflation itself may bring. A conflict that will degrade people in their humanity and mankind because their economic senses are threatened. The people of the good-economic condition might see these people from bad-economic area



as "intruders" who try to overcome of what belongs to them, and they mind to share it.

That is the main issue of the novel *Grapes of Wrath* written by John Steinbeck years ago, but with an echo that still reflects the condition of the world nowadays. The message is universal though the idea is quite simple. The novel is inspired by a true event in America, The Great Depression, decades ago in the late 30's. A movement of a group of people from Oklahoma to California, caused by their crops failure because of the so-called "Dust Bowl", makes the people of California feel alarmed. People in California that these "Okies" (people from Oklahoma) are trying to take over of their land and their richness, while the Okies do not intend so but to merely seek a better living. The Californians feel insecure of the reality and reject the coming of the Okies. The problems rise and lead to a conflict in economic senses.

## **1.2 IDENTIFICATION OF PROBLEMS**

1. The economic condition in Oklahoma that leads its people moving to seek for a better living in California.
2. The insecurities felt by the Californians by the coming of the Okies to their land.
3. The conflict raised by the different economic condition of both the states, and its impact upon the humanity and mankind of people from both sides.



### **1.3 SCOPE OF PROBLEMS**

Through the entire contents of the novel, the writer learns that the problems in the novel *Grapes of Wrath* lies in the economic issues and perspectives of states, Oklahoma and California. The writer then analyzes the problems based upon the economic context using genetic-structuralism approach. The analysis focused to find the conflict raised by the different economic condition of both states.

### **1.4 STATEMENTS OF PROBLEMS**

In this thesis, the writer found some important problems which will analyze deeply. Therefore, there are three important questions, as follows:

1. Does the economic condition affect people in Oklahoma?
2. Does the economic condition of Oklahoma affect the condition in California regarding to its people and their perspectives of the issue?
3. What are effects caused by the different of economic conditions in Oklahoma and California?

### **1.5 OBJECTIVES OF WRITING**

Based upon the formulation of problems, then the objectives of writing that the writer intends to achieve are:

1. To discover how the economic condition affects people in Oklahoma
2. To define how the economic condition of Oklahoma affects the condition in California regarding to its people and their perspectives of the issue
3. To determine the conflict caused by the different of economic conditions

in Oklahoma and California affecting both states.

## **1.6 METHODOLOGY**

In this research, it is necessary to apply a method. This method intends to construct a well-shaped research in academic track. This methods used in this case are method of collecting data, and method of analyzing data.

### **1.6.1 METHOD OF COLLECTING DATA**

In order to obtain the accurate data for the research, a library study is done. This method is about to discover data through reading upon relevant materials, books with main topic of economic downfall in America during the 30's, culture study books, and other related books to the matters of the research.

The gathering data are classified according to its type. The data obtained from the novel are analyzed then grouped as primary data resource. Meanwhile, the data obtained from the books or other articles are relevant with the research object, called supporting data resource.

### **1.6.2 METHOD OF ANALYZING DATA**

1. The writer concentrates on comprehension of the script itself. Some literatures related to *The Grapes of Wrath* are involved to understand easily the script as a whole.
2. Writer works using library research that is to collect data of some books, journals and anything related to the topic analysis. The data collecting are completed by reading and rereading in order to find out the racial problems in the book. The collected data are then

examined, determined and defined.

3. The Writer employs some particular theories of literature are follows:

- a. *Intrinsic Elements*

The writer uses some intrinsic elements analysis, especially characters of women whom described inside the novel. Somehow, setting affects the behaviour of characters as well and it shows directly of how they act and react.

- b. *Extrinsic Elements*

The writer utilizes another approach to support the analysis. The writer applies sociological approach because the writer believes that the literary work is also a part of the society. Therefore, the social values and life concept are participating in influencing the literary work.

## 1.7 SEQUENCE OF CHAPTERS

### *Chapter I - Introduction*

Introduction chapter with general insight of the whole papers includes backgrounds, identification of problems, scope of problems, and statement of problems, objective, methodology, and sequence of chapter.

### *Chapter II - Literary Review*

This chapter includes library study exemplifying theory based on data analysis.

### *Chapter III - Analysis*

The main chapter which covers explanation of the structural aspect, especially the character and the setting, within the novel which will bring some insights in order to operate the social psychological approach of the study. The study then followed by the main discussion that focuses on the analysis of the characters through affiliation concept of social approach, and how it values the story includes data analysis with explanations of data analyzing progress in descriptive method as conversed in the previous chapter.

### *Chapter IV - Conclusion*

Closing chapter covers conclusion of the matters based on the analysis and suggestions for future readings and writings.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERARY REVIEW

#### 2.1 GENETIC-STRUCTURALISM APPROACH

Genetic-structuralism approach is the development of structuralism approach. In general, the types of approach are commonly used by researchers of literature are intrinsic and extrinsic approaches (Welleck and Warren, 1970: 41).

In applying the theoretical of structuralism genetic approach, the first point to observe is the structural elements of the literary work, then the social situation, as stated by Goldman in quotation of Iswanto (1996:5):

*Pandangan dunia yang ditampilkan pengarang lewat problematic hero merupakan suatu structural global yang bermakna. Pandangan dunia ini bukan semata-mata pandangan empiris yang bersifat langsung, tetapi merupakan suatu gagasan, aspirasi dan perasaan yang dapat mempersatukan kelompok sosial masyarakat. Pandangan dunia itu memperoleh bentuk konkrit di dalam karya sastra. Pandangan dunia bukan fakta. Pandangan dunia tidak memiliki eksistensi obyektif, tetapi merupakan ekspresi dari kondisi dan kepentingan suatu golongan masyarakat tertentu.*

Genetic-structuralism approach is the approach used to analyze literary work in reaction of pure structuralism approach. The lack in structuralism approach is fulfilled with literary genetics. Structuralism approach or commonly known as objective approach merely focus the analysis upon the literary intrinsic elements, such as plot, characters, setting, theme, background, perspective, and so on (Jabrohim, Ed., 2002:79).



Genetic-structuralism approach exemplifies that in process of creating a literary work is undeniably influenced by the backgrounds of history, era, social situation and experience of the author. It means that the existence of particular society and particular author would result in particular work as well. This is commented by Iswanto (in Jabrohim, Ed., 2002:78) that:

*Karya sastra lahir ditengah-tengah masyarakat sebagai hasil imajinasi pengarang serta refleksinya terhadap gejala-gejala sosial disekitarnya. Oleh karena itu, kehadiran karya sastra merupakan bagian dari kehidupan masyarakat. Pengarang sebagai subyek individual mencoba menghasilkan pandangan dunianya kepada subyek kolektifnya. signifikansi yang dielaborasikan subyek individual terhadap realitas sosial yang disekitarnya menunjukkan sebuah karya berakar pada kultur dan masyarakat tertentu.*

Thus, the literary work that is analyzed with genetic-structuralism approach then supposed to concern the intrinsic as the sociological factors to realize that the work created by employing imagination.

## **2.2 INTRINSIC ELEMENTS**

### **2.2.1 Characters**

Intelligence of authors could be reviewed and observed through the characters they invent. Characters could be used as basic commentary of quality in a literary work. When a character is stuck, then the whole work would seem weak and monotonous, and the author simply fails literally. In a literary work as well, it always formulates messages to exemplify by the author whether implicitly or explicitly through the characters.

In attempting to make a reasonable analysis of the novel, some literary references will be cautiously driven. The references will be emphasized as pointers to lead the analysis path and, in some parts, to be the supporting theory of the analysis that will be stated to meet the objective of the study. The references are arrived from two different fields which likely to be the main focus of the study. Structural approach will be operated together to interpret the intrinsic element of the novel and the social reference which function as the tool in interpreting the problem of study.

One of the most important intrinsic elements of a novel is the character. The characters are considered as the means of expression to drive the plot and let the story run. The characters are expressed through their own nature. The author's intelligence and sensitivity are tremendously demanded in making his character come into being on the page. In literary works, characters own an importance. Temper of the characters in fiction could be considered as partial from individuals in society. Author creates the characters by first concerning the importance of society they bring, where they are expected to possibly expose social messages.

In the position and function, the characters scope protagonist-antagonist and supporting roles. To simply distinguish protagonist from antagonist, the writer refers to a definition by Sumarjo dan Zaini (1991:14) as follows:

*Protagonis, tokoh yang pertama-tama menghadapi masalah dan terlibat dalam kesukaran-kesukaran. Biasanya kepadanya pula pembaca terutama bersimpati. Lawan protogonis adalah antagonis. Antagonis berperan penghalang dan masalah bagi protagonis.*



Based upon above definition, then the protagonist is concluded as heroic role and antagonist is identic with evil and peril. As well, to distinguish the supporting roles from major characters in literature, the writer consults to a concept developed by Sudjiman (1991:18), as follows:

1. *Intensitas keterkaitan tokoh dalam peristiwa yang membangun cerita*
2. *Jangka waktu penceritaan tokoh*
3. *Tokoh yang berhubungan dengan tokoh-tokoh.*

Furthermore, to recognize characters in literary work, the writer refers to typical elaborated by Sumardjo and Zaini (1991:66) as follows:

1. *Melalui apa yang diperbuatnya*
2. *Melalui ucapan-ucapannya*
3. *Melalui pengembangan fisik para tokoh*
4. *Melalui pikiran-pikirannya*
5. *Melalui penjelasan pengarang.*

### **2.2.2 Plot**

Generally, a plot is comprehended as a simultancy of story in casual relation. It is also stated that plot is constructed by comprehension of the story, as reflected by Luxemburg, et.al (1982:149):

*Alur adalah konstruksi yang dibuat pembaca mengenai deretan sebuah peristiwa yang secara logic dan kronologis saling berkaitan dan saling diakibatkan atau dipahami oleh para pelaku.*

On the other hands, Sumardjo and Zaini (1991:49-50), say that plot is built by the author to guide the readers along the story. Based upon both

comments, the writer assumes that plot is constructed by the author to be next explored by the readers. The author presents the characters in variety according to the theme of the story, known with characterization. The whole story then happens in exact place as the background that is constructed in simultaneity of each event described or better known as plot.

### **2.2.3 Setting**

According to Sumardjo (1984:69-60) setting is a place and time where the story happens, but Abrams has a different definition who states that setting is just related to place, not time.

Setting is the background where the novel takes place and moment. Through the narrative it can illustrate not only the environment and the types of people who lived at the time but also the kind of town or countryside which they inhabited. The setting includes the details of background set forth in the narrative (Blair, 1948:70).

Setting is an essential element that supports the events in literary work. Simply, the setting is often defined as the background of place and time of the story, but in literary work, setting is considered as hints or notes that would possibly explain the characters, themes, tones, atmospheres and relativities to society. Upon this matter, Sudjiman (1991:84) states that setting is every clue and hint related to time, place and atmosphere of the events in literary work.

### **2.2.4 Theme**

Themes are the fundamental and often universal ideas explored in a literary work. Theme is the control center of the story, concept, ideas or moral

values that authors elaborate in their works. Theme is what is developed and framed in the story itself. "Theme is a generalization about meaning"

Concisely, theme is the general idea or perspective that is told. In some stories, theme is so explicitly clear to be seized. In others, theme was sometimes implied blurrily. In several stories, it does not even need any moral values at all. Sometimes theme comes up implicitly. Theme appears in characters development, dialogues, setting and plot progress. Theme is not something separated and exists independently out of the story.

As in *Grapes of Wrath*, the economic condition and its impact upon the social life and society are the main theme of the story. The ever changing values of economic stability and condition result in the social relation, regarding to the humanity and mankind of the society. *Grapes of Wrath* talks about how the economic condition may affect our perspective in social aspects. So, the novel is more about how the economy defines the social values.

## **2.3 EXTRINSIC ELEMENTS**

### **2.3.1 Genetics of the Work**

The genetic aspect of the novel that is going to be identified is the economic condition effects upon the condition of two states in America, Oklahoma and California, as highlighted motif in the novel, specifically upon the matter of humanity and mankind, in social perspective. Thus there are several elements of extrinsic points we can find in the novel, i.e: the events of The Dust Bowl and The Great Depression in America.



### 2.3.1.1 The Dust Bowl

The Dust Bowl, or the dirty thirties, was a period of severe dust storms causing major ecological and agricultural damage to American and Canadian prairie lands from 1930 to 1936 (in some areas until 1940), caused by severe drought coupled with decades of extensive farming without crop rotation or other techniques to prevent erosion. It was a mostly man-made disaster caused when virgin top soil of the Great Plains was exposed to deep plowing, killing the natural grasses - the grasses normally kept the soil in place and moisture trapped, even during periods of drought and high winds. However, during the drought of the 1930s, with the grasses destroyed, the soil dried, turned to dust, and blew away eastwards and southwards in large dark clouds. At times the clouds blackened the sky, reaching all the way to East Coast cities like New York and Washington D.C., with much of the soil deposited in the Atlantic Ocean. The Dust Bowl consisted of 100,000,000 acres (400,000 km<sup>2</sup>), centered on the panhandles of Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Colorado, and Kansas.

The storms of the Dust Bowl were given names such as Black Dark Blizzard and Black Roller because visibility was reduced to a few feet. The Dust Bowl was an ecological and human disaster. It was caused by misuse of land and years of sustained drought. Millions of acres of farmland became useless, and hundreds of thousands of people were forced to leave their homes. Degradation of dry lands claimed peoples' cultural heritage and livelihoods. Hundreds of thousands of families from the Dust Bowl (often known as "Okies," since so many came from Oklahoma) traveled to California and other states, where they found

Conditions little better than those they had left. Owning no land, many traveled from farm to farm picking fruit and other crops at starvation wages. John Steinbeck later wrote the classic Pulitzer Prize-winning novel "The Grapes of Wrath" and also "Of Mice and Men" about such people.

There was more than one cause of the Dust Bowl. The major one was the expansion of agriculture. The catastrophe, which began as the economic effects of the Great Depression were intensifying, caused an exodus from Texas, Oklahoma, and the surrounding Great Plains, with more than 500,000 Americans left homeless, one storm causing 356 houses to be torn down. Many Americans migrated west looking for work while many Canadians fled to urban areas like Toronto. Two-thirds of farmers in "Palliser's Triangle", in the Canadian province of Saskatchewan, had to rely on government aid. This was due mainly to drought, hailstorms, and erratic weather rather than to dust storms such as those occurring on the U.S. Great Plains. Some residents of the Plains, especially in Kansas and Oklahoma, fell prey to illness and death from dust pneumonia and malnutrition.

The Dust Bowl is closely associated with the Great Depression, as the two events were contemporaneous.

The Dust Bowl exodus was the largest migration in American history. By 1940, 2.5 million people had moved out of the Plains states; of those, 200,000 moved to California. With their land barren and homes seized in foreclosure, many farm families were forced to leave. Migrants left farms in Kansas, Texas, and New Mexico, but all were generally referred to as "Okies". The plight of Dust Bowl migrants became widely known from the novel *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck.

### **2.3.1.2 The Great Depression**

The Great Depression was a dramatic, worldwide economic downturn beginning in some countries as early as 1928. The beginning of the Great Depression in the United States is associated with the stock market crash on October 29, 1929, known as Black Tuesday and the end is associated with the onset of the war economy of World War II, beginning around 1939.

The depression had devastating effects in both the industrialized countries and those which exported raw materials. International trade declined sharply, as did personal incomes, tax revenues, prices, and profits. Cities all around the world were hit hard, especially those dependent on heavy industry. Construction was virtually halted in many countries. Farming and rural areas suffered as crop prices fell by 40 to 60 percent. Facing plummeting demand with few alternate sources of jobs, areas dependent on primary sector industries such as farming, mining and logging suffered the most. At the time, Herbert Hoover was President of the United States. Even shortly after the Wall Street Crash of 1929, optimism persisted. John D. Rockefeller said that "These are days when many are discouraged. In the 93 years of my life, depressions have come and gone. Prosperity has always returned and will again."

The Great Depression ended at different times in different countries; for subsequent history see Home front during World War II. The majority of countries set up relief programs, and most underwent some sort of political upheaval, pushing them to the left or right. In some states, the desperate citizens turned toward nationalist demagogues - the most infamous being Adolf Hitler - setting the stage for World War II in 1939.

Recession cycles are thought to be a normal part of living in a world of inexact balances between supply and demand. What turns a usually mild and short recession or "ordinary" business cycle into a great depression is a subject of debate and concern. Scholars have not agreed on the exact causes and their relative importance. The search for causes is closely connected to the question of how to avoid a future depression, and so the political and policy viewpoints of scholars are mixed into the analysis of historic events eight decades ago. The even larger question is whether it was largely a failure on the part of free markets or largely a failure on the part of governments to not exacerbate widespread bank failures and the resulting panics and reduction in the money supply. Those who believe in a large role for governments in the economy believe it was mostly a failure of the free markets and those who believe in free markets believe it was mostly a failure of government that expounded the problem.

Current theories may be broadly classified into three main points of view. First, there is orthodox classical economics: monetarist, Austrian Economics and neoclassical economic theory, all which focus on the macroeconomic effects of money supply and the supply of gold which backed many currencies before the Great Depression, including production and consumption.

Second, there are structural theories, most importantly Keynesian, but also including those of institutional economics, that point to underconsumption and overinvestment (economic bubble), malfeasance by bankers and industrialists or incompetence by government officials. Another theory revolves around the surplus of products and the fact that many Americans were not purchasing but

saving. The only consensus viewpoint is that there was a large scale lack of confidence. Unfortunately, once panic and deflation set in, many people believed they could make more money by keeping clear of the markets as prices got lower and lower and a given amount of money bought ever more goods.

Third, there is the Marxist critique of political economy. This emphasizes contradictions within capital itself (which is viewed as a social relation involving the appropriation of surplus value) as giving rise to an inherently unbalanced dynamic of accumulation resulting in an overaccumulation of capital, culminating in periodic crises of devaluation of capital. The origin of crisis is thus located firmly in the sphere of production, though economic crisis can be aggravated by problems of disproportionality between spheres of production and the underconsumption of the masses.

There were multiple causes for the first downturn in 1929, including the structural weaknesses and specific events that turned it into a major depression and the way in which the downturn spread from country to country. In terms of the 1929 small downturn, historians emphasize structural factors like massive bank failures and the stock market crash, while economists (such as Peter Temin and Barry Eichengreen) point to Britain's decision to return to the Gold Standard at pre-World War I parities (US\$4.86:£1).

## **2.4 PREVIOUS STUDY**

During the research, the writing of this thesis, the writer found previous study regarding the issues in the novel "Grapes of Wrath" by John Steinbeck first was a thesis entitled "Dampak Depresi Ekonomi terhadap Masyarakat Amerika





yang Tercermin dalam Novel Grapes of Wrath” by Sarifa 2008.

This thesis has a similar study with the subject analyzed in this thesis. The subject of thesis in previous study indeed analyzed the economic aspect as in thesis theory. The only different in the previous study of the novel was more on the economic aspect analyzed from the intrinsic of the novel with genetic structuralism. But ever since the previous study only analyzed economic aspect from intrinsic element of the novel, then the study is not complete in its analysis. While the genetic structuralism approach should be used in analyzing work also from the genetic, which is the external element.

Regarding this matter, the writer of this thesis offered more complete study of the novel by using genetic structuralism approach in doing analysis also from the genetic of the work itself, which is the economic aspect reflected in the novel as the extrinsic element.

## CHAPTER III

### ANALYSIS

#### 3.1 STRUCTURE OF THE NOVEL

In this chapter, including the sub-chapters, the writer analyzes certain aspects such as characters, setting, plot and themes before elaborating more on the impacts of economic deflation upon the social aspect in America, as portrayed in the novel *Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck.

##### 3.1.1 CHARACTERS

###### Tom Joad

Protagonist of the story; the Joad family's second son. Tom is a plainspoken, forthright and direct man, yet he still retains some of his violent tendencies. Named for his father.

*"I'll tell you anything. Name's Joad, Tom Joad. Old man isol' Tom Joad." His eyes rested broodingly on the driver. (Steinbeck, 1970:9)*

In beginning of the novel, Tom meets Tom Casy, the reverend. As Casy doesn't know that Tom has been imprisoned, later Tom tells Casy why he was in jail: he was at a dance drunk, and got in a fight with a man. The man cut Tom with a knife, so he hit him over the head with a shovel. Tom tells him that he was treated relatively well in McAlester.

*"I'd do what I done--again," said Joad. "I killed a guy in a fight. We was drunk at a dance. He got a knife in me, an' I killed him with a shovel that was layin' there. Knocked his head plumb to squash." (Steinbeck, 1970:26)*

Tom is the central character of the novel, he is a recently released inmate imprisoned for murder who returns home to find that his family has lost their farm and is moving west to California.

*They moved over the curving top of the hill and saw the Joad place below them. And Joad stopped. "It ain't the same," he said. "Looka that house. Somepin's happened. They ain't nobody there." The two stood and stared the little cluster of building. (Steinbeck, 1970:31)*

### **Ma Joad**

Matriarch who tries to hold the family together. The mother of Noah, Tom, Rose of Sharon, Ruthie and Winfield, Ma Joad is a woman accustomed to hardship and deprivation.

*Ma tried to look back, but the body of the load cut off her view. She straightened her head and peered straight head along the dirt road. And a great weariness was in her eyes. (Steinbeck, 1970:125)*

Ma Joad is a forceful woman who is determined to keep her family together at nearly all costs, yet remains kind toward all, even sparing what little the family has for those even less fortunate.

*The eyes of the whole family shifte back to Ma. She was the power. She had taken control. "The money we'd make wouldn't do no good," she said. "All we got is the family unbroke. Like a bunch a cows, when the lobos are ranging, stick all together. I ain't scared while we're here, all that's alive, but I ain't gonna see us bust up. The Wilsons here is with us, an' the preacher is with us. I can't say nothin' if they want to go, but I'm a-goin' cat-wild with this here piece a bar-arn if my own folks busts up." Her tone was cold and final. (Steinbeck, 1970:185-186)*

## Pa Joad

Patriarch, also named Tom. Although Pa Joad is the head of the Joad household, he is not a forceful presence. Without the ability to provide for his family, he recedes into the background, playing little prominent role in deciding the fate of his family.

*Pa sniffed. "Seems like times is changed," he said sarcastically. "Time was when a man said what we'd do. Seems like women is tellin' now. Seems like it's purty near time to get out a stick."*  
*Ma put the clean dripping tin dish out on a box. She smiled down at her work. "You get your stick, Pa." she said. "Times when they's food an' a place to set, then maybe you can use your stick an' keep your skin whole. But you ain't a-doin' your job, either a-thinkin' or a-workin'. If you was, why, you could use your stick, an' women folks'd sniffle their nose an' creep-mouse aroun'. But you jus' get you a stick now an' you ain't lickin' no woman; you're a-fightin', 'cause I got a stick all laid out too."*  
*Pa grinned with embarrassment. "Now it ain't good to have the little fellas hear you talkin' like that." he said. (Steinbeck, 1970:388)*

## Uncle John

Older brother of Pa Joad, a morose man prone to depression and alcoholism, Uncle John believes himself to be the cause of the family's misfortune. He blames himself for the death of his wife several years ago, and has carried the guilt of that event with him.

*"No, somepin jus' bust in her. Ap-appendick or somepin. Well, Uncle John, he's always been a easygoin' fella, an' he takes it hard. Takes it for a sin. For a long time he won't have nothin' to say to nobody. Jus' walks aroun' like he don't see nothin' an' he prays some. Took 'im two years to come out of it, an' then he ain't the same. Sort of wild. Made a damn nuisance of hissself. Ever' time one of us kids got worms or gutache Uncle John brings a doctor out. Pa finally tol' him he got to stop. Kids all the time gettin' a gutache. He figures it's his fault his woman died. Funny fella. He's all the time makin' it up to somebody--givin' kids stuff, droppin' a*

*sack of meal on somebody's porch. Give away about ever'thing he got, an' still he ain't very happy. Gets walkin' around alone at night sometimes. He's a good farmer, though. Keeps his lan' nice."* (Steinbeck, 1970:73)

### **(Reverend) Jim Casy**

A preacher who loses his faith after committing fornication numerous times. He represents in the book all that is holy. A fallen preacher who too often succumbed to temptation, Casy left the ministry when he realized that he did not believe in absolute ideas of sin.

*"I was a preacher," said the man seriously. "Reverend Jim Casy--was Burning Busher. Used to howl out the name of Jesus to glory. And used to get an irrigation ditch so squirmin' full of repeated sinners half of 'em like to drowned. But not no more," he sighed. "Jus Jim Casy now. Ain't got the call no more. Got a lot of sinful idears--but they seem kinda sensible."* (Steinbeck, 1970:20)

After time in jail, Jim Casy becomes mostly involved with labor activists.

Casy is a martyr for his beliefs, murdered in a confrontation with police.

*Casy said sadly, "I wisht they could see it. I wisht they could see the on'y way they can depen' on their meat--Oh, the hell! Get tar'd sometimes. God-awful tar'd. I knowed a fella. Brang 'im in while I was in the jail house. Been tryin' to start a union. Got one started. An' then them vigilantes bust it up. An' know what? Them very folks he been tryin' to help tossed him out. Wouldn't have nothin' to do with 'im. Scared they'd get saw in his comp'ny. Say, 'Git out. You're a danger on us.' Well, sir, it hurts his feelin's purty bad. But then he says, 'It ain't so bad if you know.' He says, 'French Revolution--all them fellas that figgered her out got their heads chopped off. Always that way,' he says. 'Jus' as natural as rain. You didn't do it for fun no way. Doin' it 'cause you have to. 'Cause it's you. Look a Washington,' he says. 'Fit the revolution, an' after, them sons-a-bitches turned on him. An' Lincoln the same. Same folks yellin' to kill 'em. Natural as rain.'" (Steinbeck, 1970:425)*

## **Al Joad**

The second youngest son who cares mainly for cars and girls; looks up to Tom, but begins to find his own way.

*Al said, "I'm a-gonna save up. I'll save up an' then I'm a-goin' in a town an' get me a job in a garage. Live in a room an' eat in restaurants. Go to the movin' pitchers ever' damn night. Don' cost much. Cowboy pitchers." His hands tightened on the wheel. (Steinbeck, 1970:404)*

Over the book's course Al gradually matures and learns responsibility. He dreams of becoming a mechanic, and becomes engaged to Aggie Wainwright by the end of the novel.

*There were creeping steps on the cat-walk, and then Al came in past the curtain. "Hullo," he said. "I thought you'd be sleepin' by now."  
"Al," Ma said. "We're a-talkin'. Come set here."  
"Sure--O.K. I wanta talk too. I'll hafta be goin' away pretty soon now."  
"You can't. We need you here. Why you got to get away?"  
"Well, me an' Aggie Wainwright, we figgers to get married, an' I'm gonna git a job in a garage, an' we'll have a rent' house for a while, an'--" He looked up fiercely. "Well, we are, an' they ain't nobody can stop us!" (Steinbeck, 1970:468)*

## **Rose of Sharon Rivers ("Rosasharn")**

Tom Joad's younger sister, recently married to Connie Rivers and pregnant with his child, Rose of Sharon is the one adult character in the novel, who retains a sense of optimism in the future.

*"Well, we talked all about it, me an' Connie. Ma, we wanna live in a town." She went on excitedly. "Connie gonna get a job in a store or maybe a fact'ry. An' he's gonna study at home, maybe radio, so he can git to be a expert an' maybe later have his own store. [...]" (Steinbeck, 1970:180)*

She dreams of a middle-class life with her husband and child, but becomes paranoid and disillusioned once her husband abandons her when they reach California.

*"I was--but I don' know. I wisht Connie was here." Her voice rose. "Ma, I wisht he was here. I can't hardly stan' it." (Steinbeck, 1970:372)*

Rose of Sharon is portrayed pregnant in the beginning of the novel, delivers a stillborn baby, probably as a result of malnutrition.

*The air was fetid and close with the smell of the birth. Uncle John clambered in and held himself upright against the side of the car. Mrs. Wainwright left her work and came to Pa. She pulled him by the elbow toward the corner of the car. She picked up a lantern and held it over an apple box in the corner. On a newspaper lay a blue shriveled little mummy. "Never breathed," said Mrs. Wainwright softly. "Never was alive. (Steinbeck, 1970: 489)*

Impractical, immature daughter who develops as the novel progresses and grows to become a mature woman. She symbolizes regrowth when she helps the starving stranger by breastfeeding him.

*For a minute Rose of Sharon sat still in the whispering barn. Then she hoisted her tired body up and drew the comfort about her. She moved slowly to the corner and stood looking down at the wasted face, into the wide, frightened eyes. Then slowly she lay down beside him. He shook his head slowly from side to side. Rose of Sharon loosened one side of the blanket and bared her breast. "You got to," she said. She squirmed closer and pulled his head close. "There!" she said. "There." (Steinbeck, 1970:501)*

### **Connie Rivers**

The shiftless husband of Rose of Sharon, Connie dreams of taking correspondence courses that will provide him with job opportunities and the



possibility of a better life. When he reaches California and does not find work, he immediately becomes disillusioned and abandons his pregnant wife. Connie regrets his decision to come with the Joads. He says that if he had stayed in Oklahoma he could have worked as a tractor driver.

*Rose of Sharon demanded, "You seen Connie?"*

*"Yeah," said Al. Way to hell an' gone up the river. He's goin' south."*

*"Was--was he goin' away?"*

*"I don' know."*

*"Ma turned on the girl. "Rosasharn, you been talkin' an' actin' funny. What'd Connie say to you?"*

*Rose of Sharon said sullenly, "Said it would a been a good thing if he stayed home an' studied up tractors." (Steinbeck, 1970:301)*

### **Noah Joad**

The oldest son who is the first to willingly leave the family. Injured at birth, described as "strange", he may be slightly mentally handicapped or autistic. Tom's older brother, he suffers from mental disabilities that likely occurred during childbirth.

*[...] Pa thought he knew why Noah was strange, but Pa was ashamed, and never told. For on the night when Noah was born, Pa frightened at the spreading thighs, alone in the house, and horrified at the screaming wretch his wife had become, went mad with apprehension. Using his hands, his strong fingers for forceps, he had pulled and twisted the baby. The midwife, arriving late, had found the baby's head pulled out of shape, its neck stretched, its body warped; and she had pushed the head back and molded the body with her hands. But Pa always remembered, and was ashamed. [...] (Steinbeck, 1970:85)*

The Joads family loses yet another member once they reach California when Noah decides to leave. Noah, who has been frequently ignored, decides that he will stay at the river and support himself by fishing.



*And Noah said lazily, "Like to jus' stay here. Like to lay stay here forever. Never get hungry and never get sad. Lay in the water all life long, lazy as brood sow in the mud." (Steinbeck, 1970:223-225)*

### **Grandpa Joad**

An energetic, feisty old man, Grampa refuses to leave Oklahoma with the rest of his family, but is forcibly taken on the journey after he is drugged by the other family members.

*"I ain't sayin' for you to stay," said Grampa. "You go right on along. Me--I'm stayin'. I give her a goin' over all night mos'ly. This here's my country. I b'long here. An' I don't give a goddamn if they's oranges an' grapes crowdin' a fella outa bed even. I ain't a-goin'. This country ain't no good, but it's my country. No, you all go ahead. I'll just stay right here where I b'long." (Steinbeck, 1970:121)*

Soon afterward, unable to bear leaving the area where he had long lived, Grampa dies of a stroke. He is drugged, and subsequently dies as a result of this. Symbolically, it is due to his spirit staying at the farm.

*A long gasping sigh came from the open mouth, and then a crying release of air.  
"Give us this day--our daily bread--and forgive us--" The breathing had stopped. Casy looked down into Grampa's eyes and they were clear and deep and penetrating, and there was a knowing serene look in them. (Steinbeck, 1970:150)*

### **Granma Joad**

The religious wife of Grandpa Joad, seems to lose will to live (and consequently dies) after her husband's death. Granma Joad does not survive much longer than her husband. She becomes severely ill on the journey to California, and dies not long after they reach the state.

*They climbed back on the load, and they avoided the long stiff figure covered and tucked in a comforter, even the head covered and tucked. They moved to their places and tried to to keep their eyes from it--from the hump on the comforter that would be the nose, and the steep cliff that would be just the chin. They tried to keep their eyes away, and they could not. Ruthie and Winfield, crowded in a forward corner as far away from the body as they could get, stared at the tucked figure. And Ruthie whispered, "Tha's Granma, an' she's dead." Winfield nodded solemnly. "She ain't breathin' at all. She's awful dead." (Steinbeck, 1970:252).*

### 3.1.2 PLOT

The novel begins with the description of the conditions in Dust Bowl Oklahoma that ruined the crops and instigated massive foreclosures on farmland. No specific characters emerge initially, a technique that Steinbeck will return to several times in the book.

*[...] They knew it would take a long time for the dust to settle out of the air. In the morning the dust hung like a fog, and the sun was as red as ripe new blood. All day the dust sifted down from the sky, and the next day it sifted down. An even blanket covered the earth. It settled on the corn, piled up on the tops of the fence posts, piled up on the wires; it settled on roofs, blanketed the weeds and trees. (Steinbeck, 1970:3)*

Tom Joad, a man not yet thirty, approaches a diner dressed in spotless, somewhat formal clothing. He hitches a ride with a truck driver at the diner, who presses Tom for information until Tom finally reveals that he was just released from McAlester prison, where he served four years for murdering a man during a fight.

*Joad said pleasantly, "Might's well tell you now an' get it over with. But if you was still preaching' I wouldn't tell, fear you get prayin' over me." He drained the last of the pint and flung it from him, and the flat brown bottle skidded lightly over the dust. "I been in McAlester them four years." (Steinbeck, 1970:26)*

On his travels home, Tom meets his former preacher, Jim Casy, a talkative man gripped by doubts over religious teachings and the presence of sin. He gave up the ministry after realizing that he found little wrong with the sexual liaisons he had with women in his congregation.

*"I was a preacher," said the man seriously. "Reverend Jim Casy--was Burning Busher. Used to howl out the name of Jesus to glory. And used to get an irrigation ditch so squirmin' full of repeated sinners half of 'em like to drowned. But not no more," he sighed. "Jus Jim Casy now. Ain't got the call no more. Got a lot of sinful idears--but they seem kinda sensible." (Steinbeck, 1970:20)*

Casy espouses the view that what is holy in human nature comes not from a distant god, but from the people themselves. Steinbeck contrasts Tom's return with the arrival of bank representatives to evict the tenant farmers and the tractors to farm the land.

*He loved the land no more than the bank loved the land. He could admire the tractor--its machined surfaces, its surge of power, the roar of its detonating cylinders; but it was not his tractors. [...]* (Steinbeck, 1970:37)

When Tom and Casy reach the Joad's house, it has been deserted. Muley Graves, a local elderly man who may not be sane, tells them that the Joads have been evicted, and now stay with Uncle John. Muley's own family has left to find work in California, but Muley decided to stay himself.

*"Where's my folks?" Joad spoke angrily. "What I'm telling you. Took three trips with your Uncle John's wagon. Took the stove an' the pump an' the beds. You should a seen them beds go out with all them kids an' your granma an' grampa settin' up against the headboard, an' your brother Noah settin' there smokin' a cigarette, an' spittin' la-de-da over the side of the wagon." Joad opened his mouth to speak. "They're all at your Uncle John's," Muley said quickly. (Steinbeck, 1970:48)*

Tom Joad finds the rest of his family staying with Uncle John, a morose man prone to depression after the death of his wife several years before. His mother is a strong, sturdy woman who is the moral center of family life. His brother, Noah, may have been brain damaged during childbirth, while his sister, Rose of Sharon (called Rosasharn by the family) is recently married and pregnant. Her husband, Connie Rivers, has dreams of studying radios. Tom's younger brother, Al, is only sixteen and has the concerns befitting that age. Tom comes back to his family.

*She looked up pleasantly from the frying pan. And then her head sank slowly to her side and the fork clattered to the wooden floor. Her eyes opened wide, and the pupils dilated. She breathed heavily through her open mouth. She closed her eyes. "Thank God," she said. "Oh, thank God!" And suddenly her face was worried. "Tommy, you ain't wanted? You ain't bust loose?" "No, Ma. Parole. I got the papers here." He touched his breast. (Steinbeck, 1970:80)*

The Joads plan to go to California based on flyers they found advertising work in the fields there. These flyers, as Steinbeck will soon reveal, are fraudulent advertisements meant to draw more workers than necessary and drive down wages.

*"That's a good way," she said, and she filled up her bucket with hot water from the stove, and she put in dirty clothes and began punching them down into the soapy water. "Yes, that's a good way. But I like to think how nice it's gonna be, maybe in California. Never cold. An' fruit ever'place, and people just bein' in the nicest places, little white houses in among orange trees. I wonder--that is, if we all get jobs an' all work--maybe we can get one of them little white houses. An' the little fellas go out an' pick oranges right off the tree. They ain't gonna be able to stand it, they'll get to yellin' so." (Steinbeck, 1970:98-99)*

Jim Casy asks to accompany the Joads to California so that he can work with people in the fields rather than preach at them. Before the family leaves, Grampa Joad refuses to go, but the family gives him medicine that knocks him unconscious and takes him with them.

*"I ain't sayin' for you to stay," said Grampa. "You go right on along. Me--I'm stayin'. I give her a goin' over all night mos'ly. This here's my country. I b'long here. An' I don't give a goddamn if they's oranges an' grapes crowdin' a fella outa bed even. I ain't a-goin'. This country ain't no good, but it's my country. No, you all go ahead. I'll just stay right here where I b'long." (Steinbeck, 1970:121)*

Almost immediately into the journey, the Joad family loses two members. The first victim is the family dog, which is run over during their first stop. The second is Grampa Joad, who dies of a stroke. The Wilson family helps the Joads when Grampa dies helping to bury him by themselves--rather than giving him proper burial but they have to pay for it.

*"Then what'll we do?" Uncle John asked.  
"We go in like the laws says an' the they'll come out for him. We on'y got a hundred an' fifty dollars. They take forty to bury Grampa an' we won't get to California--or else they'll bury him a pauper." The men stirred restively, and they studied the darkening ground in front of their knees. (Steinbeck, 1970:152)*

The Wilson's car soon breaks down, and Tom and Casy consider separating from the rest of the family temporarily to fix the car, but Ma Joad refuses to let the family break apart even temporarily. Tom and Al do find the necessary part to fix the car at a junkyard. Before the Joads set out on their journey again, they find a man returning from California who tells them that there is no work there, and the promises of work in the flyers are a fraud.

*"Look," said the man. "It don't make no sense. This fella wants eight hundred men. So he prints up five thousand of them things an' maybe twenty thousan' people sees 'em. An' maybe two-three thousan' folks gets movin' account a this here han'bill. Folks that's crazy with worry."*

*"But it doesn't make no sense." Pa cried. (Steinbeck, 1970:209)*

The Joads and Wilsons reach California, where they are immediately subjected to intimidation by police officers who derisively call them and other migrant laborers "Okies." At the first camp where they stay, Granma becomes quite ill, but receives some comfort from proselytizing Jehovahites who merely annoy Ma Joad. The police force them out of the camp, but the Wilsons choose the possibility of arrest instead, since Sairy Wilson is too sick to continue. The next time that the police stop the Joads on their travels, Ma Joad forces them to let them pass without inspection. She does this to hide from the police the fact that Granma has died.

*They climbed back on the load, and they avoided the long stiff figure covered and tucked in a comforter, even the head covered and tucked. They moved to their places and tried to to keep their eyes from it--from the hump on the comforter that would be the nose, and the steep cliff that would be just the chin. They tried to keep their eyes away, and they could not. Ruthie and Winfield, crowded in a forward corner as far away from the body as they could get, stared at the tucked figure.*

*And Ruthie whispered, "Tha's Granma, an' she's dead."*

*Winfield nodded solemnly. "She ain't breathin' at all. She's awful dead." (Steinbeck, 1970:252)*

At the next camp where the Joads stay on their search for work, they learn about Weedpatch, a government camp where the residents do not face harassment by police officers and have access to amenities including baths and toilets. When more police officers attempt to start a fight with Tom and several other migrant



workers, Tom trips him and Casy knocks him unconscious. To prevent Tom from taking the blame, for he would be sent back to jail for violating his parole, Casy accepts responsibility for the crime and is taken away to jail.

*Casy turned to Al. "Get out," he said. "Go on, get out--to the tent. You don't know nothing'.  
"Yeah? How 'bout you?"  
Casy grinned at him. "Somebody got to take the blame. I got no kids. They'll jus' put me in jail, an' I ain't nothin' but set aroun'."  
(Steinbeck, 1970:293)*

The rest of the family begins to break apart as well. Uncle John leaves to get drunk, Noah decides to leave society altogether and live alone in the woodlands, and Connie abandons his pregnant wife. Before they must move on, Tom does retrieve Uncle John, who is still consumed with guilt over his wife's death. They head north toward the government camp.

*"Yeah, but where we goin'?" Pa spoke for the first time. "That's what I want ta know."  
"Gonna look for that gov'ment camp," Tom said. "A fella said they don't let no deputies in there, Ma--I got to get away from 'em. I'm scairt I'll kill one."  
"Easy, Tom." Ma soothed him. "Easy, Tommy. You done good once. You can do it again." (Steinbeck, 1970:310)*

At the government camp, the Joads are shocked to find how well the other residents treat them and how efficiently this society in which the camp leaders are elected by the residents functions. Tom even finds work the next day, but the contractor, Mr. Thomas, warns him that there will be trouble at the dance at Weedpatch that weekend. Since the police can only enter the camp if there is trouble, they intend to plant intruders there who will instigate violence.

*"No," said Huston. "That's what they want. No, Sir. If they can git a fight goin', then they can run in the cops an' say we ain't orderly. They tried it before--other places." He turned to the sad dark boy from Unit Two. "Got the fellas together to go roun' the fences an' see nobody sneaks in?"*  
*The sad boy nodded. "Yeah! Twelve. Tol' em not to hit nobody. Jes' push 'em out ag'in." (Steinbeck, 1970:366)*

The Joads settle into a comfortable existence at the government camp, and during the dance that Saturday, Tom and several other residents defuse the situation, preventing the police from taking control of the camp. Nevertheless, after a month in Weedpatch none of the Joads have found steady work and realize that they must continue on their journey. They arrive at Hooper Ranch, where the entire family picks peaches. The wages they receive are higher than normal, for they are breaking a strike.

*The man fingered his gold football. "Well, there's plenty of work for you about forty miles north."*  
*"We'd sure admire to get it," said Tom. "You tell us how to get there, an' we'll go a-lopin'."*  
*"Well, you go north to Pixley, that's thirty-five or six miles, and you turn east. Go about six miles. Ask anybody where the Hooper ranch is. You'll find plenty of work there." (Steinbeck, 1970:402)*

Tom finds out that the leader of the labor force that is organizing the strike is Jim Casy. After his time in prison, Casy realized that he must fight for collective action by the working class against the wealthy ruling class. Tom, Casy and the other strike leaders get into a fight with strike breakers, and one of them murders Casy with a pick handle.

*The heavy man swung with the pick handle. Casy dodged down into the swing. The heavy club crashed into the side of his head with a dull crunch of bone, and Casy fell sideways out of the light.*  
*"Jesus, George. I think you killed him."*



*"Put the light on him," said George. "Serve the son-of-a-bitch right." The flashlight beam dropped, searched and found Casy's crushed head. (Steinbeck, 1970:426-427)*

Tom struggles with the man and wrests away the weapon. He, in turn, kills the man who murdered Casy, and barely escapes capture by the police.

*[...] He wrenched the club free. The first time he knew he had missed and struck a shoulder, but the second time his crushing blow found the head, and as the heavy man sank down, three more blows found his head. The light danced about. There through brush. Tom stood over the prostrate man. [...]* (Steinbeck, 1970:427)

Although Tom wishes to leave the family to spare them from taking responsibility for him, the Joads nevertheless decide to leave Hooper Ranch for a location where Tom can be safe. They reach cotton fields up north, where Tom hides in the woods while the family stays in a boxcar. Although the family attempts to keep Tom's identity and location a secret, young Ruthie Winfield reveals it during a fight with another child. When Ma tells Tom about this, he decides to leave the family, determined to fight for the cause for which Casy died, and vows to return to his family one day.

*"An', Tom, later--when it's blowed over, you'll come back. You'll find us?"*

*"Sure," he said. "Now you better go. Here, gimme your han'." He guided her toward the entrance. Her fingers clutched his wrist. He swept the vines aside and followed her out. "Go up to the field till you come to a sycamore on the edge, an' then cut acrost the stream. Good-by." (Steinbeck, 1970:464)*

The raining season arrived almost immediately after Tom left the family, causing massive flooding. The Joads are caught in a dangerous situation: they cannot escape the flooding because Rose of Sharon suddenly goes into labor.

While other families evacuate the camp near the rapidly rising creek, the Joads remain and attempt to stop the flood waters. Without the aid of others, the Joads are unsuccessful, and they must seek refuge on the top of their car. Rose of Sharon delivers a stillborn child that Uncle John sends in a box down the creek.

*The air was fetid and close with the smell of the birth. Uncle John clambered in and held himself upright against the side of the car. Mrs. Wainwright left her work and came to Pa. She pulled him by the elbow toward the corner of the car. She picked up a lantern and held it over an apple box in the corner. On a newspaper lay a blue shriveled little mummy. "Never breathed," said Mrs. Wainwright softly. "Never was alive." (Steinbeck, 1970: 489)*

The family eventually reaches higher ground and finds a barn for shelter. Inside the barn is a starving man and his young son. Steinbeck ends the novel with Rose of Sharon, barely recovered from the delivery, breastfeeding the dying man to nurse him back to health.

*For a minute Rose of Sharon sat still in the whispering barn. Then she hoisted her tired body up and drew the comfort about her. She moved slowly to the corner and stood looking down at the wasted face, into the wide, frightened eyes. Then slowly she lay down beside him. He shook his head slowly from side to side. Rose of Sharon loosened one side of the blanket and bared her breast. "You got to," she said. She squirmed closer and pulled his head close. "There!" she said. "There." (Steinbeck, 1970:501)*

### 3.1.3 SETTING

In some ways *The Grapes of Wrath* is a travel book. In its pages we are taken on a 2000-mile journey from eastern Oklahoma to central California. Because the main characters are sharecroppers turned into migrants, most of the book takes place out-of-doors. So the weather, the land and water, and the road are as important to the novel as almost any character or theme.

*To the red country and part of gray country of Oklahoma, the last rains came gently, and they did not cut the scattered earth. The plows crossed and recrossed the rivulent marks. The last rains lifted the corn quickly and scattered weed colonies and grass along the sides of the road so that the gray country and the dark red country began to disappear under green cover. (Steinbeck, 1970:1)*

The coming of a long drought to America's midsection in the 1930s sets the book into motion. Farmers can't survive on dried-out land. Nor can the banks that own the land make a profit when the tenant farmers don't grow enough to feed even themselves.

*He loved the land no more than the bank loved the land. He could admire the tractor--its machined surfaces, its surge of power, the roar of its detonating cylinders; but it was not his tractors. [...]* (Steinbeck, 1970:37)

During the early 1930s, a severe drought led to massive agricultural failure in parts of the southern Great Plains, particularly throughout western Oklahoma and the Texas panhandle. In the absence of rain, crops withered and died; the topsoil, no longer anchored by growing roots, was picked up by the winds and carried in billowing clouds across the region.

Huge dust storms blew across the area, at times blocking out the sun and even suffocating those unlucky enough to be caught unprepared. The afflicted region became known as the "Dust Bowl."

*[...] They knew it would take a long time for the dust to settle out of the air. In the morning the dust hung like a fog, and the sun was as red as ripe new blood. All day the dust sifted down from the sky, and the next day it sifted down. An even blanket covered the earth. It settled on the corn, piled up on the tops of the fence posts, piled up on the wires; it settled on roofs, blanketed the weeds and trees. (Steinbeck, 1970:3)*

In contrast to the parched Dust Bowl, California is fertile and lush. Its orchards and fields grow fruit, nuts, cotton, and vegetables of every sort. It's the Promised Land, the land of milk and honey. It's paradise, except for the people trying madly to keep the migrants at bay. For hundreds of thousands of migrants, including the Joads, of course, California turns out to be a lost paradise.

*We're sorry, said the owner men. The bank, the fifty-thousand-acre owner can't be responsible. You're on land that isn't yours. Once over the line maybe you can pick cotton in the fall. Maybe you can go on relief. Why don't you go on west to California? There's work there, and it never gets cold. Why you can reach out anywhere and pick orange. Why, there's always some kind of crop to work in. Why don't you go there? And the owner men started their cars and rolled away. (Steinbeck, 1970: 35)*

But the farm country of California quickly became overcrowded with the migrant workers. Jobs and food were scarce, and the migrants faced prejudice and hostility from the Californians, who labeled them with "Okie."

*Tom said, "Okie? What's that?"*  
*"Well, Okie use' ta mean you was from Oklahoma. Now it means you're dirty son-of-a-bitch. Okie means you're a scum. Don't mean nothing itself, it's the way they say it. [...]"*  
(Steinbeck, 1970:225)

These workers and their families lived in cramped, impoverished camps called "Hoovervilles," named after President Hoover, who was blamed for the problems that led to the Great Depression. Many of the residents of these camps starved to death, unable to find work.

*"[...] But I can't tell you nothin'. You got to go there. I hear there's three thousan' of our people there—an' livin' like hogs, 'cause ever'thing in California is owned. They ain't nothin' left. An' them people that owns is gonna hang on to it if they got ta kill ever'body in the worl' to do it. An' they're scairt, an' that makes 'em mad. You got to see it. You got to hear it. Purtiest goddamn*

*country you ever seen, but they ain't nice to you, them folks. They're so scairt an' worried they ain't even nice to each other."* (Steinbeck, 1970:225-226)

### 3.1.4 THEME

By the mid-1930s, the drought had crippled countless farm families, and America had fallen into the Great Depression. Unable to pay their mortgages or invest in the kinds of industrial equipment now necessitated by commercial competition, many Dust Bowl farmers were forced to leave their land. Without any real employment prospects, thousands of families nonetheless traveled to California in hopes of finding new means of survival.

*We're sorry, said the owner men. The bank, the fifty-thousand-acre owner can't be responsible. You're on land that isn't yours. Once over the line maybe you can pick cotton in the fall. Maybe you can go on relief. Why don't you go on west to California? There's work there, and it never gets cold. Why you can reach out anywhere and pick orange. Why, there's always some kind of crop to work in. Why don't you go there? And the owner men started their cars and rolled away.* (Steinbeck, 1970: 35)

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.

*"[...] But I can't tell you nothin'. You got to go there. I hear there's three thousan' of our people there—an' livin' like hogs, 'cause ever'thing in California is owned. They ain't nothin' left. An' them people that owns is gonna hang on to it if they got ta kill ever'body in the worl' to do it. An' they're scairt, an' that makes 'em mad. You got to see it. You got to hear it. Purtiest goddamn country you ever seen, but they ain't nice to you, them folks. They're so scairt an' worried they ain't even nice to each other."* (Steinbeck, 1970:225-226)

In order to protect themselves from such danger, the landowners create a system in which the migrants are treated like animals, shuffled from one filthy roadside camp to the next, denied livable wages, and forced to turn against them. The novel draws a simple line through the population—one that divides the privileged from the poor.

*"[...] People gonna have a look in their eye. They gonna look at you an' their face says, 'I don't like you, you son-of-a-bitch.' Gonna be deputy sheriffs, an' they'll push you aroun.' You camp on the roadside, and they'll move you on. You gonna see in people's face how they hate you. An'—I'll tell you somepin. They hate you 'cause they're scairt. [...]"* (Steinbeck, 1970:225)

### 3.2 REACTIONS OF "THE OKIES" AND CALIFORNIANS

"The Great Depression" was a dramatic, worldwide economic downturn beginning in some countries as early as 1928. And The Dust Bowl, or the *dirty thirties*, was a period of severe dust storms causing major ecological and agricultural damage to American and Canadian prairie lands from 1930 to 1936 (in some areas until 1940), caused by severe drought coupled with decades of extensive farming without crop rotation or other techniques to prevent erosion. Both events are two main factors affecting the people in Oklahoma, as elaborated in John Steinbeck's novel *The Grapes of Wrath*. The Dust Bowl is highly associated with the Great Depression, as the two events were related one another.

*[...] They knew it would take a long time for the dust to settle out of the air. In the morning the dust hung like a fog, and the sun was as red as ripe new blood. All day the dust sifted down from the sky, and the next day it sifted down. An even blanket covered the earth. It settled on the corn, piled up on the tops of the fence posts, piled up on the wires; it settled on roofs, blanketed the weeds and trees.* (Steinbeck, 1970:3)

Besides that, their loans to the bank are as well the corresponding factors of their migration. As the bank takes over their lands as payback for their loans, then the people in Oklahoma, has no more choices to stay on their own land.

*We're sorry, said the owner men. The bank, the fifty-thousand-acre owner can't be responsible. You're on land that isn't yours. Once over the line maybe you can pick cotton in the fall. Maybe you can go on relief. Why don't you go on west to California? There's work there, and it never gets cold. Why you can reach out anywhere and pick orange. Why, there's always some kind of crop to work in. Why don't you go there? And the owner men started their cars and rolled away. (Steinbeck, 1970: 35).*

They who have no choice upon the unfortunate events, gets the news of the possibility available for them in California, to get job. The information is spread through flyers, and soon they decided to take the chances moving to California, migrating.

*"Well—nothing. Seems too nice, kinda. I seen the han'bills fellas pass out, an' how much work they is, an' high wages an' all; an' I seen in the paper how they want folks to come an' pick grapes an' oranges an' peaches. That'd be nice work, Tom pickin' peaches. Even if they wouldn't let you eat none, you could maybe snatch a little ratty one sometimes. An' it'd be nice under the trees, workin' in the shade. I'm scared of stuff so nice. I ain't got faith. I'm scared somepin ain't so nice about it." (Steinbeck, 1970:97)*

To the people of Oklahoma, California becomes such a Promise Land. They come to seek for better life in California. And indeed they are amazed by the fertile and fruitful lands of California.

*They drove through Tehachapi in the morning glow, and the sun came up behind them, and then suddenly—they saw they great valley below them. Al jammed on the brake and stopped in the middle of the road, and, "Jesus Christ! Look!" he said. The vineyards, the orchards, the great flat valley, green and beautiful, the trees set in rows, and the farm houses. (Steinbeck, 1970:250)*

Later on, they learn that the information they got from the flyers are fraud. It is on the occasion before the Joads set out on their journey again, they find a man returning from California who tells them that there is no work there, and the promises of work in the flyers are a fraud.

*"Look," said the man. "It don't make no sense. This fella wants eight hundred men. So he prints up five thousand of them things an' maybe twenty thousan' people sees 'em. An' maybe two-three thousan' folks gets movin' account a this here han'bill. Folks that's crazy with worry."*

*"But it doesn't make no sense." Pa cried. (Steinbeck, 1970:209)*

Hundreds of thousands of families from the Dust Bowl (often known as "Okies," since so many came from Oklahoma) traveled to California and other states, where they found conditions little better than those they had left. Owning no land, many traveled from farm to farm picking fruit and other crops at little wages.

*Casy said, "I been walkin' aroun' in the country. Ever'body's askin' that. What we comin' to? Seems to me we don't never come to nothin'. Always on the way. Always goin' and goin'. Why don't folks think about that? They's movement now. People moving. We know why, an' we know how. Movin' 'cause they got to. That's why folks always move. Movin' 'cause they want somepin better'n what they got. An' that's the on'y way they'll ever git it. Wantin' it an' needin' it, they'll go out an' git it. It's bein' hurt that makes folks mad to fightin'. I been walkin' aroun' the country, an' hearin' folks talk like you." (Steinbeck, 1970:138)*

The reaction of the people in California of not welcoming them is something the people of California has to deal with. They know how the people of California sees them as intruders, and even starts calling them "Okies".

*"I don't wanta go to no school. Ruthie don't, neither. Them kids that goes to school, we seen 'em, Ma. Snots! Calls us Okies. We seen 'em. I ain't a-goin'." (Steinbeck, 1970:412).*



The condition hardly changes to the "Okies". The reaction of the people in Californian seeing them as stranger is somehow an unbearable reality for them. The same events as the factors, The Great Depression and The Dust Bowl, affect the economic condition in two states of Oklahoma and California. But different reactions raised from the Californians, as the "Okies" (how the Californians call the people of Oklahoma), enter their lands. People in California is frightened by the coming of the Okies, threatening their privileges.

*"Good lan', you say? An' they ain't workin' her?"*

*"Yes, sir. Good lan' an' they ain't! Well, sir, that'll get you a little mad, but you ain't seen nothin'. People gonna have a look in their eye. They gonna look at you an' their face says, 'I don't like you, you son-of-a-bitch.' Gonna be deputy sheriffs, an' they'll push you aroun.' You camp on the roadside, and they'll move you on. You gonna see in people's face how they hate you. An'—I'll tell you somepin. They hate you 'cause they're scairt. They know a hungry fella gonna get food even if he got to take it. They know that fallow lan's a sin an' somebody' gonna take it. What the hell! You never been called 'Okie' yet." (Steinbeck, 1970:225)*

Afraid of the coming of the "Okies", the Californians set series of unwelcoming actions to the people of the Oklahoma. This is mostly clear through the way they treat the Okies. How the avoid to make contact to them, but glance at them with such vengeful eyes. This creates such a feeling of dislike of the people of Californian to the Okies. But however, the reactions of the Californians are merely caused by their intention to protect of what belongs to them, their property and prosperity.

*"[...] People gonna have a look in their eye. They gonna look at you an' their face says, 'I don't like you, you son-of-a-bitch.' Gonna be deputy sheriffs, an' they'll push you aroun.' You camp on the roadside, and they'll move you on. You gonna see in people's face how they hate you. An'—I'll tell you somepin. They hate you 'cause they're scairt. [...]" (Steinbeck, 1970:225)*

The ever increasing problems of this condition are elaborated by Steinbeck upon the Chapter Twenty-One of the novel, leading to bigger conflicts of clash between people of the two states. The condition of people of Oklahoma, is getting worse. They, as the migrants, are demanding for jobs and hungry for food. And they become such a bigger threat to the people of Californian.

*The moving, questing people were migrants now. Those families who had lived on the little piece of land, who had lived and died on forty acres, had now the whole West to rove in. And they scampered about, looking for work; and the highways were streams of people and ditch banks were lines of people. (Steinbeck, 1970:311)*

The condition, of the hungry and jobless migrants creates such a bigger fear for the Californians. They are panicked and terrified by the threats brought by the streams of migrants with ever increasing numbers to their lands. The Californians from town and suburban gather to defend themselves from dangers that may be coming from the migrants. They start growing the "trees of hatred" for the people of Oklahoma to pick the fruits. They start define values, the degrading points of the Okies as the intruders.

*In the West there was panic when migrants multiplied on the highways. Men of property were terrified for their property. Men who had never been hungry saw the eyes of the hungry. Men who had never wanting anything very much saw the flare of want in the eyes of the migrants. And the men of the towns and of the soft suburban country gathered to defend themselves; and they reassured themselves that they were good and the invaders bad, as a man must do before he fights. They said, These goddamned Okies are dirty and ignorant. They're degenerate, sexual maniacs. Those goddamned Okies are thieves. They'll steal anything. They've got no sense of property rights. (Steinbeck, 1970:312)*

The sense of dislike is continuing to grow for the Okies. Comments about this "Okies" keep rising. Some of them see the Okies as uneducated people, while some other think that they are sources of diseases, filthy and disgusting people. For them, the Okies are strangers. They don't want the Okies on their own lands.

*And the latter was true, for how can a man without property know the ache of ownership? And the defending people said, They bring diseases, they're filthy. We can't have them in the schools. They're strangers. How'd you like to have your sister go out with one of 'em? (Steinbeck, 1970:312)*

The people of California then sets the union of squads, or keep their selves armed with weapons, to defend themselves, anticipating from whatever danger the Okies may bring.

*The local people whipped themselves into a mold of cruelty. Then they formed units, squads, and armed them—armed them with clubs, with gas, with guns. We own the country. We can't let these Okies get out of hand. And the men who were armed did not own the land, but they thought they did. [...](Steinbeck, 1970:312)*

The prejudice keeps rising for the Okies. While the situation gets no better for them, while it turns to be worse. They have no foods. They are hungry. And they need works to fulfill it. Thus, whenever there is job available, they will compete for it, causing the decreasing amount of wages for them.

*And the migrants streamed in on the highways and their hunger was in their eyes, and their need was in their eyes. They had no argument, no system, nothing but their numbers and their needs. When there was work for a man, ten men fought for it—fought with a low wage. If the fella'll work for thirty cents, I'll work for twenty-five.  
If he'll take twenty-five, I'll do it for twenty.  
No, me. I'm hungry. I'll work for fifteen. I'll work for food. The kids. You ought to see them. Little boils, like, comin' out, an' they can't run aroun'. Give 'em some windfall fruit, an' they bloated up. Me, I'll work for a little piece of meat. (Steinbeck, 1970:313)*

The condition of the decreasing amounts of wages while the prices are increasing, benefit the landowners. They spread more handbills, more flyers to bring more people from Oklahoma to California.

*And this was good, for wages went down and prices stay up. The great owners were glad and they sent out more handbills to bring more people in. and wages went down and prices stayed up. And pretty soon now we'll have serfs again. (Steinbeck, 1970:313)*

They think that the idea is great. Soon they improve the scheme. The great owners become greedier, taking over the land of little farmers with slick tricks. The scheme creates more people losing their lands and jobs. Soon, the little farmers whose lands have been taken by great owners, join the numbers of men in the highway, lining for work and food.

*And now the great owners and the companies invented a new method. A great owner bought a cannery. And when the peaches and the pears were ripe he cut the price of fruit below the cost of raising it. And as the cannery owner he paid himself a low price for the fruit and kept the price of canned goods up and took his profit. And the little farmers who owned no canneries lost their farms, and they were taken by the great owners, the banks, and the companies who also owned the canneries. As time went on, there were fewer farms. The little farmers moved into town for a while and exhausted their credit, exhausted their friends, their relatives. And then they too went on the highways. And the roads were crowded with men ravenous for work, murderous for works. (Steinbeck, 1970:313)*

The great land owners, companies and banks do not realize the impact of their slick tricks. It creates such a thinner line between hunger and anger of the Okies. And yet, the impact of will strike them back, as the anger then ferments.

*And the companies, the banks worked at their own doom and they did not know it. The fields were fruitful, and starving men moved on the roads. The granaries were full and the children of the poor grew up rachitic, and the pustules of pellagra swelled on their*

*sides. The great companies did not know that the line between hunger and anger is a thin line. And money that might have gone to wages went for gas, for guns, for agents and spies, for blacklists, for drilling. On the highways the people moved like ants and searched for work, for food. And the anger began to ferment. (Steinbeck, 1970:313)*

Later on, in Chapter Twenty-Five, Steinbeck elaborates that the amounts of fruits produced must be destroyed to keep up the price. In this chapter, Steinbeck extends his metaphor of ripening and decay among the elite business class. The wealthy owners lavished great expense to ensure that the fruits grown on their farms were ripe and healthy, impervious to disease, yet were the engineers of the eventual rot. By accumulating too much and forcing the prices of the fruit too high when others had too little, they ensured that nobody would be able to buy the fruit. They have engineered their own demise.

Loads of orange are dumped on the ground. The Okies may have just come and take the fruits, but this is not possible, as the Californians who own the fruits will get angry if their fruits are taken. And the country, California, is filled with the smell of rotten fruits.

*The works of the roots of the vines of the trees, must be destroyed to keep up the price, and this is the saddest, bitterest thing of all. Carloads of oranges dumped on the ground. The people came for miles to take the fruit, but this could not be. How would they buy oranges at twenty cents a dozen if they could drive out and pick them up? And men with hoses squirt kerosene on the oranges, and they are angry at the crime, angry at the people who have come to take the fruit. A million people hungry, needing the fruit—and kerosene sprayed over the golden mountains. And the smell of rot fills the country. (Steinbeck, 1970:385)*

Not only oranges, but the Californians also shall burn coffees and corns or dumping potatoes in the rivers, because of its overflowing amounts but they

hardly keep it being consumed. But however, even though the products are dumped, they will not let the hungry Okies come taking them.

*Burn coffee for fuel in the ships. Burn corn to keep warm, it makes a hot fire. Dump potatoes in the rivers and place guards along the banks to keep the hungry people from fishing them out. Slaughter the pigs and bury them, and let the putrescence drip down into the earth. (Steinbeck, 1970:385)*

Yet there are more important victims in this tragedy. Children die from disease, for their parents cannot afford the fruit. Steinbeck creates such a successful irony with the metaphors. They are literal victims of the profit margin.

*There is a crime here that goes beyond denunciation. There is a sorrow here that weeping cannot symbolize. There is a failure here that topples all our success. The fertile earth, the straight tree rows, the sturdy trunks, and the ripe fruit. And children dying of pellagra must die because a profit cannot be taken from an orange. And coroners must fill in the certified—died of malnutrition—because the food must rot, must be forced to rot. (Steinbeck, 1970:385)*

This is most possibly what is implied by John Steinbeck in the title of the novel itself, *The Grapes of Wrath*. Both the people of California and Oklahoma are planting hatred and anger, as humps of fruits, grapes to pick as ripen. Steinbeck offers us a portrayal; this is how the matters of economic condition affect and shape the human relation in social frames, the humanity and mankind.

*The people come with nets to fish the potatoes in the river, and the guards hold them back; they come in rattling cars to get the dumped oranges, but the kerosene is sprayed. And they stand still and watch the potatoes float by, listen to the screaming pigs being killed in a ditch and covered with quick-lime, watch the mountains of oranges slop down to a putrefying ooze; and in the eyes of the hungry there is a growing wrath. In the souls of the people the grapes of wrath are filling and growing heavy, growing heavy for the vintage. (Steinbeck, 1970:385)*

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

#### 4.1 CONCLUSION

*The Grapes of Wrath* portrays the story of The Joads family in the late 30's migrating from Oklahoma to California during the Great Depression in America, yet it reflects something deeper and greater in the scenes of humanity and mankind. The events are inspired by the true events in America during that time, The Dust Bowl and The Great Depression in 1930's. *The Grapes of Wrath* is a lesson that the ever changing economic conditions will bring impact to the way society interacts. In other words, the economy affects people or society in their social relation. This is corresponding with the way the people of Oklahoma and California respond to the changing of economic values and their perspective to each other during the situation.

The reactions of people in Oklahoma are different with people in California. In Oklahoma, the events of Dust Bowl and Great Depression turn out to be such a blow for them. The events give them no options but to give up their land to the bank for their loans. Aware of the uncertain prospect in Oklahoma, they decide to migrate to seek for better living in California. The information that in California they can find jobs and foods become the biggest motives for their migration. But in California they have to face bitter facts, as their lives become more uncertain in that state.

People in California, whose land is prosperous and seems unaffected with the economic chaos, do not welcome the coming of people from Oklahoma to their land. They see people from Oklahoma as strangers, and even call them the "Okies" as a label of disgust to them. They are afraid of the streaming numbers of the Okies on their land. For them, the Okies are hungry people, demanding for foods and jobs, and that they may bring danger to them. The Okies turn out to be threatening them. The people in California are afraid that these "Okies" will take over their properties and prosperity upon the land. Thus they take harsh actions to defend themselves and their properties from the Okies. They try to suppress the Okies, resulting in a greater gap and conflict between them. And the impacts of the events are greater to both their sides of humanity and mankind, as the anger and wrath keeps growing and mounting between them.

#### **4.2 SUGGESTION**

Perhaps the best way to ever solve such problems in social relation caused by the changing values of humanity is appropriately shown by the act of Rose of Sharon in breastfeeding a hungry stranger, as described by Steinbeck in the end of the novel. In facing such troubles, people will not see other people as they are different. People will not see each other as "strangers", as or "worse than themselves". This kind of perspective may lead to senses of fear and threat to them. In facing such troubled-times, people shall help each other, with no tendencies to take advantage or benefits of the unfortunate events, to take at the flood. Instead, by the novel, Steinbeck urges people to unite and aid each other.





*The Grapes of Wrath* is an interesting novel with subject of humanity and mankind, with corresponding lesson to the values. Thus, it is expected that another study on the subject will analyze more on the basis of humanity and mankind as elaborated in the novel. Another subject on the historical aspect of the novel, particularly on the events of the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression, would also be a fascinating study of the novel.

## SYNOPSIS

RELEASED FROM AN OKLAHOMA STATE PRISON. After serving four years for a manslaughter conviction, Tom Joad makes his way back to his family's farm in Oklahoma. He meets Jim Casy, a former preacher who has given up his calling out of a belief that all life is holy—even the parts that are typically thought to be sinful—and that sacredness consists simply in endeavoring to be an equal among the people. Jim accompanies Tom to his home, only to find it—and all the surrounding farms—deserted. Muley Graves, an old neighbor, wanders by and tells the men that everyone has been “tractored” off the land. Most families, he says, including his own, have headed to California to look for work. The next morning, Tom and Jim set out for Tom's Uncle John's, where Muley assures them they will find the Joad clan. Upon arrival, Tom finds Ma and Pa Joad packing up the family's few possessions. Having seen handbills advertising fruit-picking jobs in California, they envision the trip to California as their only hope of getting their lives back on track.

The journey to California in a rickety used truck is long and arduous. Grampa Joad, a feisty old man who complains bitterly that he does not want to leave his land, dies on the road shortly after the family's departure. Dilapidated cars and trucks, loaded down with scrappy possessions, clog Highway 66: it seems the entire country is in flight to the Promised Land of California. The Joads meet Ivy and Sairy Wilson, a couple plagued with car trouble, and invite them to travel with the family. Sairy Wilson is sick and, near the California border, becomes unable to continue the journey.

As the Joads near California, they hear ominous rumors of a depleted job market. One migrant tells Pa that 20,000 people show up for every 800 jobs and that his own children have starved to death. Although the Joads press on, their first days in California prove tragic, as Granma Joad dies. The remaining family members move from one squalid camp to the next, looking in vain for work, struggling to find food, and trying desperately to hold their family together. Noah,

the oldest of the Joad children, soon abandons the family, as does Connie, a young dreamer who is married to Tom's pregnant sister, Rose of Sharon.

The Joads meet with much hostility in California. The camps are overcrowded and full of starving migrants, who are often nasty to each other. The locals are fearful and angry at the flood of newcomers, whom they derisively label "Okies." Work is almost impossible to find or pays such a meager wage that a family's full day's work cannot buy a decent meal. Fearing an uprising, the large landowners do everything in their power to keep the migrants poor and dependent. While staying in a ramshackle camp known as a "Hooverville," Tom and several men get into a heated argument with a deputy sheriff over whether workers should organize into a union. When the argument turns violent, Jim Casy knocks the sheriff unconscious and is arrested. Police officers arrive and announce their intention to burn the Hooverville to the ground.

A government-run camp proves much more hospitable to the Joads, and the family soon finds many friends and a bit of work. However, one day, while working at a pipe-laying job, Tom learns that the police are planning to stage a riot in the camp, which will allow them to shut down the facilities. By alerting and organizing the men in the camp, Tom helps to defuse the danger. Still, as pleasant as life in the government camp is, the Joads cannot survive without steady work, and they have to move on. They find employment picking fruit, but soon learn that they are earning a decent wage only because they have been hired to break a workers' strike. Tom runs into Jim Casy who, after being released from jail, has begun organizing workers; in the process, Casy has made many enemies among the landowners. When the police hunt him down and kill him in Tom's presence, Tom retaliates and kills a police officer.

Tom goes into hiding, while the family moves into a boxcar on a cotton farm. One day, Ruthie, the youngest Joad daughter, reveals to a girl in the camp that her brother has killed two men and is hiding nearby. Fearing for his safety, Ma Joad finds Tom and sends him away. Tom heads off to fulfill Jim's task of organizing the migrant workers. The end of the cotton season means the end of work, and word sweeps across the land that there are no jobs to be had for three

months. Rains set in and flood the land. Rose of Sharon gives birth to a stillborn child, and Ma, desperate to get her family to safety from the floods, leads them to a dry barn not far away. Here, they find a young boy kneeling over his father, who is slowly starving to death. He has not eaten for days, giving whatever food he had to his son. Realizing that Rose of Sharon is now producing milk, Ma sends the others outside, so that her daughter can nurse the dying man.

## BIOGRAPHY OF JOHN STEINBECK

John Steinbeck was born in Salinas, California in 1902, and spent most of his life in Monterey County, the setting of much of his fiction. He attended Stanford University intermittently between 1920 and 1926. Steinbeck did not graduate from Stanford, but instead chose to support himself through manual labor while writing. His experiences among the working classes in California lent authenticity to his depiction of the lives of the workers, who remain the central characters of his most important novels.

Steinbeck's first novel, *Cup of Gold*, was published in 1929, and was followed by *The Pastures of Heaven* and, in 1933, *To a God Unknown*. However, his first three novels were unsuccessful both critically and commercially. Steinbeck had his first success with *Tortilla Flat* (1935), an affectionate and gently humorous story about Mexican-Americans. Nevertheless, his subsequent novel, *In Dubious Battle* (1936) was notable for its markedly grim outlook. This novel is a classic account of a strike by agricultural laborers and the pair of Marxist labor organizers who engineer it, and is the first Steinbeck novel to encompass the striking social commentary that characterizes his most notable works. Steinbeck received even greater acclaim for the novella *Of Mice and Men* (1937), a tragic story about the strange, complex bond between two migrant laborers. His crowning achievement, *The Grapes of Wrath*, won Steinbeck a Pulitzer Prize and a National Book Award. It was also adapted into a classic film directed by John Ford that was named one of the American Film Institute's one hundred greatest films. The novel describes the migration of a dispossessed family from the Oklahoma Dust Bowl to California and critiques their subsequent exploitation by a ruthless system of agricultural economics.

After the best-selling success of *The Grapes of Wrath*, Steinbeck went to Mexico to collect marine life with the freelance biologist Edward F. Ricketts, and the two men collaborated on *Sea of Cortez* (1941), a study of the fauna of the Gulf of California. During World War II, Steinbeck wrote some effective pieces of government propaganda, among them *The Moon Is Down* (1942), a novel about

Norwegians under the Nazis. He also served as a war correspondent. With the end of World War II and the move from the Great Depression to economic prosperity Steinbeck's work softened somewhat. While still containing the elements of social criticism that marked his earlier work, the three novels Steinbeck published immediately following the war, *Cannery Row* (1945), *The Pearl*, and *The Bus* (both 1947) were more sentimental and relaxed. Steinbeck also contributed to several screenplays. He wrote the original stories for several films, including *Lifeboat* (1944), directed by Alfred Hitchcock, and *A Medal for Benny*, and wrote the screenplay for Elia Kazan's *Viva Zapata!*, a biographical film about Emiliano Zapata, the Mexican peasant who rose to the presidency.

Steinbeck married Carol Henning in 1930 and lived with her in Pacific Grove, California. He spent much of his time in Monterey with his friend, Ricketts, at his Cannery Row laboratory, an experience which inspired his popular 1945 novel, *Cannery Row*. In 1943, Steinbeck married his second wife, Gwyndolyn Conger, with whom he had two children. 1948 was a particularly bad year for Steinbeck: Ricketts died, and Gwyndolyn left him. However, he found happiness in his 1950 marriage to Elaine Scott, with whom he lived in New York City. Two years later, he published the highly controversial *East of Eden*, the novel he called "the big one," set in the California Salinas Valley.

Steinbeck's later writings were comparatively slight works, but he did make several notable attempts to reassert his stature as a major novelist: *Burning Bright* (1950), *East of Eden* (1952), and *The Winter of Our Discontent* (1961). However, none of these works equaled the critical reputation of his earlier novels. Steinbeck's reputation is dependent primarily on the naturalistic, proletarian-themed novels that he wrote during the Depression. It is in these works that Steinbeck is most effective at building rich, symbolic structures and conveying the archetypal qualities of his characters. Steinbeck received the Nobel Prize for literature in 1962, and died in New York City in 1968.

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