

Background Preparation to Reading *The Grapes of Wrath*

You will need to acquire a new copy of the Penguin edition of *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck. Barnes and Noble on Stevens Creek Blvd. will have copies, or you may order it online. You must use the following edition:

ISBN: 9780143039433 *Publisher:* Penguin Publishing Group

PART I -- HISTORICAL BACKGROUND to the novel

*A meaningful reading of **The Grapes of Wrath** requires knowledge of the history behind the setting of the novel. In fact, you cannot go to the deeper metaphorical levels of the novel without this knowledge.*

Before you begin reading, go to the following websites, IN THIS ORDER, to research and learn about the era. Please do all three activities below. There will be a quiz.

- A. **Read** the following short article that provides basic background on the Dust Bowl:
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/surviving-the-dust-bowl-mass-exodus-plains>

- B. **Watch** a documentary on the Dust Bowl or watch several video excerpts.

Ken Burns's documentary on the Dust Bowl:

<http://www.pbs.org/kenburns/dustbowl/>

If you have an account with Amazon Prime, you can watch the entire documentary.

It is also available on Kanopy. Links are on the above website.

Alternatively, PBS also has a documentary available through the American Experience Series (it was originally shown in January of 2019). You need a membership with PBS Passport to view the entire documentary.

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/dustbowl/#part01>

If you need free excerpts of the documentaries instead, please explore the Ken Burns website and watch several short video excerpts:

<http://www.pbs.org/kenburns/dustbowl/>

You will also find video excerpts of the PBS documentary for free on youtube.

- C. **Look** at Dorothea Lange's famous photographs of the migrants.

<http://www.historyplace.com/unitedstates/lange/index.html>

Each photograph can be enlarged on this website.

PART 2 -- LITERARY BACKGROUND to the novel

READ the following (and take notes!) **BEFORE** reading the novel

A. The STRUCTURE of *The Grapes of Wrath*

Print, read, and highlight/take notes

There are **TWO types of chapters** in the novel:

1. The **narrative chapters** are the story of the survival of the Joad family during the Dust Bowl and the Depression, from leaving their rural home in Oklahoma to starting new lives as itinerant farmworkers in the Central Valley of California. The narrative tells the story of the struggles of this multi-generational family with descriptive, sensory detail; religious and philosophical allusions; and references to political influences in 1930's America.

The narrative chapters are a **“journey” story of a struggling family, the Joads.**

2. The **intercalary chapters** (also called interchapters), occur every other chapter of the narrative (for most part), and depict the experience of ALL migrants from the Dust Bowl. These chapters are non-fiction and use various stylistic forms. They provide context, history, and universal philosophical themes.

The intercalary chapters complement the narrative experience with **background and history of the Dust Bowl migrants as a whole.**

Chronology of the novel:

1. **Chapters 1-11:** Experiences in **Oklahoma** (the Dust Bowl events in Oklahoma)
2. **Chapters 12-18:** Experiences on **the road from Oklahoma to California** on Route 66
3. **Chapters 19-30:** Experiences in **California** (as migrant workers in the Weedpatch Camp in California's Central Valley)

B. Philosophical/Political Background and Allusions in *The Grapes of Wrath*

Look up the following terms and make notes on the INSIDE BACK cover of your novel:

1. Socialism
2. Communism's basic principles
3. Bolshevik
4. Karl Marx
5. Vladimir Lenin
6. Thomas Paine

C. Literary Background and Allusions in *The Grapes of Wrath*

Look up the following and take notes on the INSIDE BACK cover of your novel:

1. Literary Naturalism
2. Transcendentalism (including the Oversoul)
3. The Battle Hymn of the Republic (song)

D. Religious/Biblical Allusions and Parallels to *The Grapes of Wrath*

Look up the following allusions and take notes on the INSIDE FRONT cover:

1. Exodus of the Israelites
2. Christ's sacrifice
3. Book of Job
4. Christ's disciples
5. Rose of Sharon
6. Moses
7. "Cast your bread upon the water"
8. Prodigal Son
9. The Last Supper
10. Noah and the Flood
11. The Promised Land

READING and ANNOTATING *THE GRAPES OF WRATH*

Now you are prepared to read the novel. Use the questions below to guide your close reading and annotations. Remember, you may annotate OTHER aspects of the novel as well, such as imagery patterns, symbols, metaphor, personification, point of view, tone, and theme.

Guiding Questions for Annotating *The Grapes of Wrath*

Use the questions below to guide your close reading and annotation of the novel. You are not expected to write answers to the questions. Your written responses will instead take the form of the annotations in the book. Requirements:

- **You must read a new copy of the novel (you may not use someone else's annotations)**
- **You must write your annotations in dark pen and write legibly**
- **You must take notes in the margins, not just circle, underline, and highlight**
- **Your annotated novel is due the first day of school**

*See the sample annotations handout for Ch. 1 at the end of the questions.

*Also see the reading reminder at the end of the questions.

Chapter 1

1. What tragedy is foreshadowed by the suggestion that "the leaves of the young corn became less stiff and erect; they bent in a curve at first, and then, as the central ribs of strength grew weak, each leaf tilted downward"
2. Why does the sky darken?
3. What does Steinbeck suggest about the power of wrath when he writes that as long as the men were "hard and angry and resistant ...no misfortune was too great to bear"?

Chapter 2

1. To what extent does the description of Tom Joad's new clothes serve as a narrative clue about his past
2. What is significant about the way Tom convinces the driver to violate his "No Riders" policy?
3. Why was Tom incarcerated for four years?

Chapter 3

1. What human characteristics does the turtle exemplify?
2. To what extent does the turtle's encounter with the car and the truck parallel the fate of the Joad family as they are driven off their land?

Chapter 4

1. Why does Jim Casy profess he cannot preach anymore?
2. What might Steinbeck be suggesting by making the preacher's name Jim Casy?
3. What does Casy's attitude toward sin contribute to the unfolding theme of the novel?
4. How does Tom's being a paroled convict fit into this theme?
5. Why does Casy profess not to love Jesus?
6. According to Casy, what is the Holy Spirit?

Chapter 5

1. How sincere is Steinbeck in calling the banks "monsters"? How do you know?
2. Why do most landowners send spokesmen or representatives to talk to the tenant farmers?
3. What is the significance of the goggles worn by the tractor drivers?
4. Why would it be pointless for the farmers to shoot the tractor drivers in order to avoid eviction?

Chapter 6

1. What do we learn about the Joad farm when we read that "the cotton grew in the dooryard and up against the house"?
2. What does the turtle's continued journey in a southwestern direction foreshadow?
3. What is the significance of the dry well on the Joad farm?
4. What is the effect of Steinbeck's use of colloquialism and regional dialect?
5. To what extent is Muley Graves' name indicative of the consequences he will face if he stays in Oklahoma?
6. What is significant about this simile: "The gray cat sneaked away toward the open barn shed and passed inside like a shadow"?
7. What is significant about Tom's prediction that Pa Joad will be critical of the writing skills he acquired in jail?

Chapter 7

1. How do the pace and tone change in this chapter? How does Steinbeck achieve this new pace and tone?
2. Why does Steinbeck use the shift in tone and pace?
3. What aspects of the Dust Bowl crisis does Steinbeck suggest in this chapter?

Chapter 8

1. Although Uncle John drinks and has licentious tendencies, the reader still has sympathy, if not admiration, for this character. How does Steinbeck accomplish this?
2. How does Steinbeck use light and darkness to suggest character and developing relationships?
3. Why is the Joad family at first apprehensive when they see Tom is not in jail anymore?
4. What does the following description reveal about Ma's character and her standing in the Joad family: "And since Tom and the children could not know hurt or fear unless she acknowledged hurt and fear, she had practiced denying them in herself"?
5. What is the "strange, silent house" in which Noah lives?
6. Why does Pa feel ashamed that Noah is such an "awkward" child?
7. To what extent does Casy's failure to say "Amen" at the end of his prayer illustrate the difference between his religious convictions and the religious convictions held by families like the Joads?
8. To what extent does Casy's failure to say "Amen" at the end of his prayer foreshadow the need for the Joad family to adjust or abandon their adherence to rules and artificially imposed doctrines as they embark on their journey west?

Chapter 9

1. How do the descriptions of people sorting out their belongings prior to leaving for California affect the reader?
2. What does the line, "But I warn you, you're buying what will plow your own children under," indicate about the relationship between the people leaving Oklahoma and the people staying behind?

Chapter 10

1. How does Ma's vision of California resemble the biblical Eden and the Promised Land? What promises are conveyed by means of the biblical imagery?
2. What did Tom learn in prison that he is able to convey to Ma when she enquires about the length of the journey ahead of them?
3. How does Ma respond to Tom's fear that there are too many people looking for work in California?
4. How has pregnancy affected Rose of Sharon?
5. How can we evaluate Uncle John's attitude toward women—and toward Rose of Sharon in particular—when we learn that he "would have liked Rose of Sharon to sit [in the honor seat]. This was impossible, because she was young and a woman."?
6. Before the Joads leave for California, "The family met next to the most important place, near the truck." What made the truck so central to the Joad family?
7. What new role emerges for Al?
8. Who makes the final decision about taking along Casy, and what does this decision reveal about the power hierarchy in the Joad family?
9. Why does Ma decide to burn the personal belongings she is unable to take to California?
10. What mood is created in the last paragraph of this chapter, and what word choices and images does Steinbeck employ in order to establish the mood?

Chapter 11

1. What idea does Steinbeck convey with the simile, "The heat goes out of it like the living heat that leaves a corpse"?
2. What does Steinbeck suggest when he claims that "the land is so much more than its analysis"?
3. How does Steinbeck emphasize the desolation left behind after the migration of the tenants?

Chapter 12

1. What road is the main route for migrants traveling west?
2. What is the purpose of listing all of the towns passed by the migrants on the way to California?
3. What do the specific car problems mentioned in this short chapter refer to?
4. What do the travelers learn about the California border patrol, and to what extent does this warning foreshadow events that will occur later in the novel?
5. Why does Steinbeck end the chapter with the anecdote about the stranded family and the sedan?

Chapter 13

1. What does Steinbeck suggest when he writes that Al "had become the soul of the car"?
2. In what way are the yellow gas stations that are putting the fat man out of business reminiscent of the tractors that destroy the farmhouses in Oklahoma?
3. What is the significance of the death of the Joads' dog at this early stage in the family's travels?
4. Why does Oklahoma City embarrass Ruthie and Winfield "with its bigness and its strangeness"?
5. How does Tom appease Ma's fears that he will be arrested for violating the terms of his parole?
6. How does Grampa's death affect the relationship between the Joads and the Wilsons?
7. Why is the Joad family at first apprehensive about burying Grampa without informing the authorities?
8. What is significant about the Joads' decision to bury Grampa without informing the proper authorities, even though they are apprehensive at first?
9. How are the Joads beginning to act more like members of a larger community than they did at the beginning of their journey to California?
10. What makes Sairy Wilson a heroic character even though she is physically weak?
11. What does Casy imply when he says that "Grampa didn' die tonight. He died the minute you took 'im off the place"?

Chapter 14

1. What does Steinbeck mean by “Manself”?
2. What, then, is the significance of the paragraph that ends, “fear the time when Manself will not suffer and die for a concept”?
3. Why is the change, as Steinbeck puts it, “from ‘I’ to ‘we,’” such a momentous development for the disenfranchised migrant families?
4. What is the social significance of this change? When does Steinbeck make it most clear?
5. What does Steinbeck achieve by shifting to the second person at the end of the chapter?
6. Why are the Western States “nervous”?

Chapter 15

1. What was Steinbeck’s purpose for including the license plates and car types of the vehicles driving west on Highway 66?
2. What attitude toward the migrant farmers is exemplified by Mae and Al at the hamburger stand?
3. Explain the ambiguity of truck drivers’ response to Mae’s kindness.
4. What is the significance of Al’s taking the nickels from the cash register to win the jackpot in the slot machine?
5. Why does Steinbeck have this incident occur to an anonymous family and not the Joads?

Chapter 16

1. What is the “new technique of living” the families are settling into? What does it suggest about the way life on the road changes the migrant families?
2. How does Steinbeck demonstrate Rose of Sharon’s naiveté and immaturity in this chapter?
3. What course of action does Tom suggest when the Wilson’s touring car breaks down?
4. What is significant about Ma’s refusal to comply with Tom’s proposal?
5. How does Tom and Al’s exchange with the one-eyed man support Steinbeck’s Socialist theme?
6. What do the Joads learn about the handbills when they talk to the ragged man at the campsite?

Chapter 17

1. Why is it easy for the families in the camps to form communities?
2. To what extent does the community that forms in the camps on the road resemble a traditional, non-transient society?
3. In these communities, it is a “right” of hungry people to be fed. To what extent does this right differentiate the roadside communities from the world existing outside of these communities and illustrate Steinbeck’s Socialist ideals?
4. Explain the threat to the migrant farmers that is foreshadowed by the simile in the following line: “But along the highway the cars of the migrant people crawled out like bugs, and the narrow concrete miles stretched ahead.”

Chapter 18

1. Some adjectives used to describe the landscape seen by the Joads when they are crossing over from Arizona into California are “jagged,” “pale,” “broken,” and “terrible.” What impact do descriptions like these have on the tone of the chapter?
2. Why does the man bathing in the river insist that the people in California are “scairt”?
3. How did the word “Okie” devolve into a derogatory term?
4. Why does Steinbeck include the story of the journalist with the million acres?
5. Why does the bathing man regret telling the others about the hardships in California?
6. What does Ma mean when she tells Rose of Sharon, “bearin’ and dyin’ is two pieces of the same thing”?
7. Why is Ma afraid that the policeman will talk to Tom?
8. How does Steinbeck foreshadow the unraveling of the Joads’ California dream?
9. What does Steinbeck suggest about the nature of prejudice in the following lines uttered by the young boy working at the service station: “Okies got no sense and no feeling. They ain’t human. A human being wouldn’t live like they do”?
10. When the Joads stop at the inspection station, Ma’s face is “swollen and her eyes [are] hard.” What does this description suggest about Ma?

11. What biblical allusion is embedded in the passage that describes the Joads traveling across the desert before they reach a land filled with orchards and rich, fertile soil?

Chapter 19

1. Why does Steinbeck begin the chapter with the fact that California once belonged to the Mexicans who were pushed off it by Americans hungry for land?
2. Why does Steinbeck compare the farming industry in California to the Roman Empire? What are the three "facts" that forebode an ominous future for the landowners? Why do the landowners hate the Okies?
3. Why is Steinbeck devoting so much of this chapter to discussion of land ownership, squatting, and how one comes to "own" land?
4. What does the following mean: "For every manload to lift, five pairs of arms extended to lift it; for every stomachful of food available, five mouths to open"?
5. On what kind of note does this chapter end?

Chapter 20

1. How does the concept of survival by community effort begin to evolve in this chapter? What inspires this idea for Tom?
2. Why, according to Knowles, have the landowners over-advertised for labor?
3. What happens to workers who try to organize a labor union?
4. How do law enforcement officials deal with disorderly, demanding, or inquisitive migrant workers?
5. Which statements by Connie foreshadow his later disappearance?
6. What does Connie's consideration to "study tractors" reveal about his loyalty to the Joad family and to other farmers in Oklahoma?
7. To what extent does Ma's decision to share dinner with the hungry children at the camp reflect the moral dilemma faced by the poor and disenfranchised with regard to their responsibilities toward their own families and toward the larger migrant community?
8. Why does Floyd share his knowledge of work in the North with the Joads, but not with other families, and to what extent does his decision reflect challenges faced by the migrant communities?
9. Why does Jim Casy accept the blame for Tom when he attacks the police officer?
10. Why do the Joads plan to move to the government camp?

Chapter 21

1. How does the simile in the closing paragraph of this chapter underline the correlation between hunger and anger?

Chapter 22

1. How does the description of the white buildings in the Weedpatch camp affect the tone of this chapter?
2. What aspects of the Weedpatch camp are reminiscent of a Socialist system?
3. How does Timothy Wallace's failure to introduce himself by name illustrate the theme of moving from concern for the individual to concern for the community?
4. What differentiates Mr. Thomas from many of the other landowners and employers?
5. What does Thomas mean when he says that the Bank of the West has "paper on everything it don't own"?
6. What is ironic about the existence of a "Farmers' Association"?
7. Why is the Farmer's Association not able to enter the camp unless there is a riot?
8. How does Steinbeck create comic relief in this chapter?
9. What is the issue of "reds" and "red agitators"?
10. What does Ma's reaction to hearing that the Ladies' Committee will be coming to her tent reveal about her sense of personal pride?
11. Why is the Farmer's Association not able to enter the camp unless there is a riot?
12. Why is Ma reassured when the camp manager accepts a cup of coffee at her tent?
13. Why does Ma suddenly begin to reminisce about the sad times when she finally reaches a place where she can relax and be happy?
14. Why is Rose of Sharon frightened of the religious woman?

Chapter 23

1. What activities provide entertainment for the migrant families?
2. What is ironic about the “religious life” of the commune?

Chapter 24

1. How does the discovery and expulsion of the would-be agitators illustrate the power of community?
2. How does Pa’s discussion with the man in the black hat exemplify the growing labor problem?

Chapter 25

1. How does Steinbeck create a change of tone and mood between the beginning of the chapter and the end? Why does Steinbeck employ this change in tone and mood?
2. Why do the landowners destroy the food even though thousands of people are starving to death?
3. What significance does this chapter have for the title of the novel?

Chapter 26

1. What is significant about the fact that it is Ma who decides when the family should move on?
2. How does this shift in power exemplify Steinbeck’s Socialist theme?
3. What reason does Ma give Tom for making Pa angry? How does this support Steinbeck’s theme of wrath?
4. How does the men’s recognition of the benefits and strengths of the Weedpatch camp help establish the theme of Socialism?
5. How is Steinbeck able to convey the idea that—despite all the hardships they have already endured—the Joad family is clinging to a sense of hope to keep them going forward as they leave the Weedpatch camp to move a new farm in search of work and lodging?
6. Jim Casy tells Tom that he believes the men he met in jail “was nice fellas” and that it was “need that makes all the trouble.” What has Casy realized?
7. How has Casy’s experience in prison enabled him to realize the necessity to build a Socialist society?
8. Why do the policemen murder Casy?
9. How does Casy’s death establish him as a Christ figure?

Chapter 27

1. How is the cotton industry corrupt on the part of the landowners as well as the pickers? What is ironic about this corruption?
2. How does this chapter emphasize the theme of human endurance?

Chapter 28

1. What does the fact that the Joads buy new clothes for themselves reveal about their financial situation?
2. How does Tom’s new philosophy/theology—which he learned from Casy—reflect Steinbeck’s Socialist views?
3. In this chapter, Uncle John says that he “don’t need no safety razor, neither. Stuff settin’ out there, you jus’ feel like buyin’ it whether you need it or not.” How does his statement function as a criticism of the nature of capitalism?
4. How does Tom’s conversation with Ma establish him as a disciple of the Christ-like figure, Casy? How does Tom adopt Casy’s religious convictions?
5. What is significant about Al and Aggie’s announcement?

Chapter 29

1. What is ironic about the fact that the torrential rains and the floods they bring cause so much sickness and death among the migrants in this chapter?
2. How does the chapter correlate the rainfalls with the theme of wrath?

Chapter 30

1. How do the sense of community and cooperation between the migrant workers in the cotton camp disintegrate in this closing chapter?

2. What is the significance of the fate of Rose of Sharon's baby for the cycle of life theme?
3. How does Steinbeck use religious imagery connected with the burial of Rose of Sharon's dead baby in order to further the novel's political agenda?
4. How does the final scene of this novel, which is both poignant and controversial, illustrate Casy's notion of the human soul?
5. How does the final scene draw a correlation between the theme of the cycle of life and the theme of change?

Reading Reminder:

Try to READ METAPHORICALLY

As you are reading, try to see the concurrent levels of metaphor and allegory in the novel. Our discussions in August will cover all metaphorical levels.

1. The literal, plot level – ***the Joad family's struggle for survival***
2. The symbolic/metaphorical level of a larger group – ***the intercalary chapters that describe an entire group's (the migrants') struggle for survival***
3. The symbolic/metaphorical level of a yet larger group – ***the story of a nation, America, as it struggles to define its identity in a capitalist system***
4. The moral/philosophical level – ***how humans struggle to define how right vs. wrong and good vs. evil are determined***
5. The level of ontological questions – ***What duty do I owe my fellow man? What is our relationship with the earth? Why are we here? What is the purpose and meaning of life?***

SAMPLE ANNOTATION OF CHAPTER 1:

(Note that the extent of your annotations will vary from chapter to chapter. You may have more annotations in the early and late chapters and you may have more annotations for some of the non-fiction chapters than the narrative chapters.)

See next page

3
"last rains" give in to fierce sun
weeds: destroy healthy plants
Chapter One
green → brown

TO THE red country and part of the gray country of Oklahoma, the last rains came gently, and they did not cut the scarred earth. The plows crossed and recrossed the rivulet marks. The last rains lifted the corn quickly and scattered weed colonies and grass along the sides of the roads so that the gray country and the dark red country began to disappear under a green cover. In the last part of May the sky grew pale and the clouds that had hung in high puffs for so long in the spring were dissipated. The sun flared down on the growing corn day after day until a line of brown spread along the edge of each green bayonet. The clouds appeared, and went away, and in a while they did not try any more. The weeds grew darker green to protect themselves, and they did not spread any more. The surface of the earth crusted, a thin hard crust, and as the sky became pale, so the earth became pale, pink in the red country and white in the gray country.

In the water-cut gullies the earth dusted down in dry little streams. Gophers and ant lions started small avalanches. And as the sharp sun struck day after day, the leaves of the young corn became less stiff and erect; they bent in a curve at first, and then, as the central ribs of strength grew weak, each leaf tilted downward. Then it was June, and the sun shone more fiercely. The brown lines on the corn leaves widened and moved in on the central ribs. The weeds frayed

Sun parching fields

Tragedy foreshadowed
- nature dying
nature personified

weak nature; dry; brown

growing paler dirt → dust
The Grapes of Wrath

and edged back toward their roots. The air was thin and the sky more pale; and every day the earth paled.

In the roads where the teams moved, where the wheels milled the ground and the hooves of the horses beat the ground, the dirt crust broke and the dust formed. Every moving thing lifted the dust into the air: a walking man lifted a thin layer as high as his waist, and a wagon lifted the dust as high as the fence tops, and an automobile boiled a cloud behind it. The dust was long in settling back again.

heat

When June was half gone, the big clouds moved up out of Texas and the Gulf, high heavy clouds, rain-heads. The men in the fields looked up at the clouds and sniffed at them and held wet fingers up to sense the wind. And the horses were nervous while the clouds were up. The rain-heads dropped a little spattering and hurried on to some other country. Behind them the sky was pale again and the sun flared. In the dust there were drop craters where the rain had fallen, and there were clean splashes on the corn, and that was all. just a little rain drought

hope

DUST darkens the sky

A gentle wind followed the rain clouds, driving them on northward, a wind that softly clashed the drying corn. A day went by and the wind increased, steady, unbroken by gusts. The dust from the roads fluffed up and spread out and fell on the weeds beside the fields, and fell into the fields a little way. Now the wind grew strong and hard and it worked at the rain crust in the corn fields. Little by little the sky was darkened by the mixing dust, and the wind felt over the earth, loosened the dust, and carried it away. The wind grew stronger. The rain crust broke and the dust lifted up out of the fields and drove gray plumes into the air like sluggish smoke. The corn threshed the wind and made a dry,

dust = smoke

The Grapes of Wrath

crops destroyed by drought + wind
rushing sound. The finest dust did not settle back to earth now, but disappeared into the darkening sky.

The wind grew stronger, whisked under stones, carried up straws and old leaves, and even little clods, marking its course as it sailed across the fields. The air and the sky darkened and through them the sun shone redly, and there was a raw sting in the air. During a night the wind raced faster over the land, dug cunningly among the rootlets of the corn, and the corn fought the wind with its weakened leaves until the roots were freed by the prying wind and then each stalk settled wearily sideways toward the earth and pointed the direction of the wind.

HUMANS try to protect
The dawn came, but no day. In the gray sky a red sun appeared, a dim red circle that gave a little light, like dusk; and as that day advanced, the dusk slipped back toward darkness, and the wind cried and whimpered over the fallen corn. like grieving over dead nature

Men and women huddled in their houses, and they tied handkerchiefs over their noses when they went out, and wore goggles to protect their eyes.

When the night came again it was black night, for the stars could not pierce the dust to get down, and the window lights could not even spread beyond their own yards. Now the dust was evenly mixed with the air, an emulsion of dust and air. Houses were shut tight, and cloth wedged around doors and windows, but the dust came in so thinly that it could not be seen in the air, and it settled like pollen on the chairs and tables, on the dishes. The people brushed it from their shoulders. Little lines of dust lay at the door sills.

In the middle of that night the wind passed on and left the land quiet. The dust-filled air muffled sound more com-

Dust infiltrates the houses

All senses - sensory images of dust/
The Grapes of Wrath Fog/dirt

pletely than fog does. The people, lying in their beds, heard the wind stop. They awakened when the rushing wind was gone. They lay quietly and listened deep into the stillness. Then the roosters crowed, and their voices were muffled, and the people stirred restlessly in their beds and wanted the morning. They knew it would take a long time for the dust to settle out of the air. In the morning the dust hung like 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.

The people came out of their houses and smelled the hot stinging air and covered their noses from it. And the children came out of the houses, but they did not run or shout as they would have done after a rain. Men stood by their fences and looked at the ruined corn, drying fast now, only a little green showing through the film of dust. The men were silent and they did not move often. And the women came out of the houses to stand beside their men--to feel whether this time the men would break. The women studied the men's faces secretly, for the corn could go, as long as something else remained. The children stood near by, drawing figures in the dust with bare toes, and the children sent exploring senses out to see whether men and women would break. The children peeked at the faces of the men and women, and then drew careful lines in the dust with their toes. Horses came to the watering troughs and nuzzled the water to clear the surface dust. After a while the faces of the watching men lost their bemused perplexity and became hard and angry and resistant. Then the women knew that they were safe and that there was no break. Then they asked, What'll we do?

Nature "broke" - will the people break?
Will fight back

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And the men replied, I don't know. But it was all right. The women knew it was all right, and the watching children knew it was all right. Women and children knew deep in themselves that no misfortune was too great to bear if their men were whole. The women went into the houses to their work, and the children began to play, but cautiously at first. As the day went forward the sun became less red. It flared down on the dust-blanketed land. The men sat in the doorways of their houses; their hands were busy with sticks and little rocks. The men sat still-thinking-figuring.

They will survive

Wrath: anger

The power of wrath
to survive, to be "all
right"

Tragedy foreshadowed:
Crops are destroyed
Life of all sorts at risk

