

**Joseph Luzzi • *The Grapes of Wrath***  
**Virtual Book Club • Reader's Guide\* • © Joseph Luzzi**

*Please note: the below are only intended to help you “get inside” the book—please do not feel compelled to answer them in full, unless you wish to, and if there are questions or elements in the book that you don't understand, no worries, we will explain all when we meet for our Live Presentation on this new selection!*

1. The Nobel Prize for Literature in 1962 was awarded to John Steinbeck “for his realistic and imaginative writings, combining as they do sympathetic humour and keen social perception.” Why do you think the committee chose these particular words? How do they help illuminate *The Grapes of Wrath*?
2. Why do you think Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* is often considered a candidate for the “Great American Novel”? What might qualify it for this august tag? Do you believe the novel deserves this kind of acclaim? Why or why not?
3. Steinbeck's political views could be quite controversial. What elements of *The Grapes of Wrath* might readers find politically contentious or unsettling?
4. Why do you think that Steinbeck chose to focus on the Joad family in *Grapes of Wrath*? What are the main issues associated with them, and how do these issues drive the novel's narrative?
5. At one point in *The Grapes of Wrath* we read:

*Highway 66 is the main migrant road. 66—the long concrete path across the country, waving gently up and down on the map, from Mississippi to Bakersfield—over the red lands and the gray lands, twisting up into the mountains, crossing the Divide and down into the terrible desert, and across the mountains again, and into the rich California valleys.*

What does this passage reveal about Steinbeck's “voice”? How might it connect with or suggest larger issues and themes of the novel?

6. In what ways is *The Grapes of Wrath* an “historical” novel? What does it reveal about the past that you may not previously have known?
7. What do you believe is Steinbeck's most important skill in developing character? Which of the characters did you find to be the most effective—and affecting—and why?
8. What was the most memorable moment for you in *The Grapes of Wrath*, and why?
9. How do you think *The Grapes of Wrath* will be read twenty-five years from now? One hundred? Do you think it will still be a vital part of the cultural conversation? Why or why not?
10. What element of *The Grapes of Wrath* seems especially relevant to our world today, and why?

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