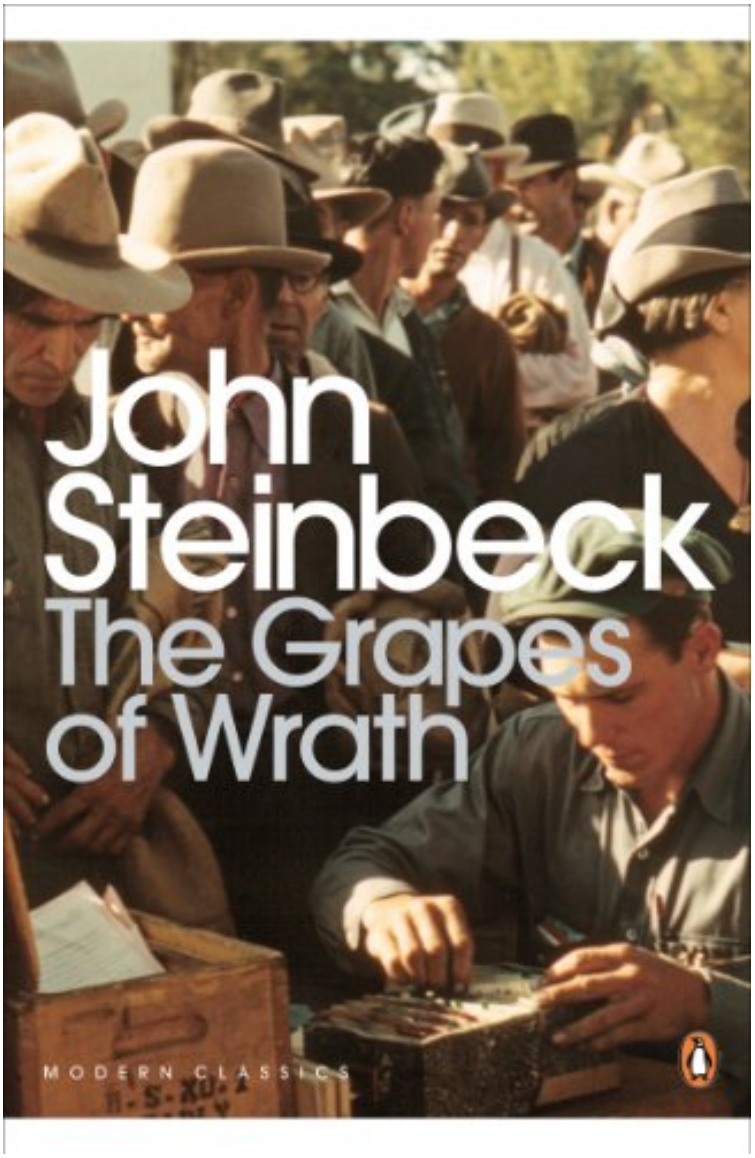
The Grapes of Wrath



Par John Steinbeck
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(Free and download) The Grapes of Wrath

Par John Steinbeck : The Grapes of Wrath before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Grapes of Wrath:

Description : Description du produit Today, nearly forty years after his death, Nobel Prize winner John Steinbeck remains one of Americas greatest writers and cultural figures. Over the next year, his many works published as black-spine Penguin Classics for the first time and will feature eye-catching, newly commissioned art. Of this initial group of six titles, The Grapes of Wrath is in a new edition with a completely revised introduction and, for the first time, detailed notes by leading Steinbeck scholar Robert DeMott. Penguin Classics is proud to present these seminal works to a new generation of readersand to the many who revisit them again and again.

Prsentation de l'diteurShocking and controversial when it was first published in 1939, Steinbeck's Pulitzer Prize-winning epic remains his undisputed masterpiece.Set against the background of dust bowl Oklahoma

and Californian migrant life, it tells of the Joad family, who, like thousands of others, are forced to travel West in search of the promised land. Their story is one of false hopes, thwarted desires and broken dreams, yet out of their suffering Steinbeck created a drama that is intensely human yet majestic in its scale and moral vision; an eloquent tribute to the endurance and dignity of the human spirit..comWhen The Grapes of Wrath was published in 1939, America, still recovering from the Great Depression, came face to face with itself in a startling, lyrical way. John Steinbeck gathered the country's recent shames and devastations--the Hoovervilles, the desperate, dirty children, the dissolution of kin, the oppressive labor conditions--in the Joad family. Then he set them down on a westward-running road, local dialect and all, for the world to acknowledge. For this marvel of observation and perception, he won the Pulitzer in 1940. The prize must have come, at least in part, because alongside the poverty and dispossession, Steinbeck chronicled the Joads' refusal, even inability, to let go of their faltering but unmistakable hold on human dignity. Witnessing their degeneration from Oklahoma farmers to a diminished band of migrant workers is nothing short of crushing. The Joads lose family members to death and cowardice as they go, and are challenged by everything from weather to the authorities to the California locals themselves. As Tom Joad puts it: "They're a-workin' away at our spirits. They're a tryin' to make us cringe an' crawl like a whipped bitch. They tryin' to break us. Why, Jesus Christ, Ma, they comes a time when the on'y way a fella can keep his decency is by takin' a sock at a cop. They're workin' on our decency." The point, though, is that decency remains intact, if somewhat battle-scarred, and this, as much as the depression and the plight of the "Okies," is a part of American history. When the California of their dreams proves to be less than edenic, Ma tells Tom: "You got to have patience. Why, Tom--us people will go on livin' when all them people is gone. Why, Tom, we're the people that live. They ain't gonna wipe us out. Why, we're the people--we go on." It's almost as if she's talking about the very novel she inhabits, for Steinbeck's characters, more than most literary creations, do go on. They continue, now as much as ever, to illuminate and humanize an era for generations of readers who, thankfully, have no experiential point of reference for understanding the depression. The book's final, haunting image of Rose of Sharon--Rosasharn, as they call her--the eldest Joad daughter, forcing the milk intended for her stillborn baby onto a starving stranger, is a lesson on the grandest scale. "'You got to,'" she says, simply. And so do we all. --Melanie RehakExtraitINTRODUCTIONIThe Grapes of Wrathis one of the most famous novels in America perhaps even in the world. When John Steinbeck wrote this book he had no inkling that it would attain such widespread recognition, though he did have high hopes for its effectiveness. On June 18, 1938, a little more than three weeks after starting his unnamed new manuscript, Steinbeck confided in his daily journal (posthumously published in 1989 asWorking Days):If I could do this book properly it would be one of the really fine books and a truly American book. But I am assailed with my own ignorance and inability. Ill just have to work from a background of these. Honesty. If I can keep an honesty it is all I can expect of my poor brain. . . . If I can do that it will be all my lack of genius can produce. For no one else knows my lack of ability the way I do. I am pushing against it all the time.Despite Steinbecks doubts, which were grave and constant during its composition,The Grapes of Wrathturned out to be not only a fine book, but the most renowned and celebrated of his seventeen novels. Steinbecks liberal mixture of native philosophy, common-sense leftist politics, blue-collar radicalism, working-class characters, homespun folk wisdom, and digressive narrative formall set to a bold, rhythmic style and nervy, raw dialoguequalified the novel as the American book he had set out to write. The novels titlefrom Julia Ward Howes Battle Hymn of the Republicwas clearly in the American grainand Steinbeck, a loyal Rooseveltian New Deal Democrat, liked the song because it is a march and this book is a kind of marchbecause it is in our own revolutionary tradition and because in reference to this book it has a large meaning, he announced on September 10, 1938, to Elizabeth Otis, his New York literary agent.After its arduous composition from late May through late October 1938 (Never worked so hard in my life nor so long before, Steinbeck told Carl Wilhelmson),The Grapes of Wrathpassed from his wifes typescript to published novel (Vikings designers set the novel in Janson type-face) in a scant four months. In March 1939, when Steinbeck received copies from one of three advance printings, he told Pascal Covici, his editor at The Viking Press, that he was immensely pleased with them. The novels impressive physical and aesthetic appearance was the result of its imposing length (619 pages) and Elmer Haders striking dust jacket illustration (which pictured the exiled Joads looking down from Tehachapi Pass to lush San Joaquin Valley). Steinbecks insistence thatThe Grapes of Wrathbe keyed into the American scene from the beginning by reproducing all the verses of Battle Hymn, was only partly met: Viking Press compromised by printing the first page of Howes sheet music on the books endpapers in an attempt (unsuccessfully, it turned out) to deflect accusations of communism against the novel and its

author.Given the drastic plight of the migrant labor situation in California during the Depression, Steinbeck refused intentionally to write a popular book or to court commercial success. It was ironic, then, that shortly after its official publication date on April 14, 1939 (the fourth anniversary of Black Sunday, the most devastating of all Dust Bowl storms), fueled by the nearly 150 reviewsmostly positivethat appeared in newspapers, magazines, and literary journals during the remainder of the year,The Grapes of Wrathclimbed to the top of the bestseller lists for most of the year, selling 428,900 copies in hardcover at $2.75 each. (In 1941, when Sun Dial Press issued a cloth reprint for a dollar, the publisher announced that more than 543,000 copies ofGrapeshad already been sold.)The Grapes of Wrathwon the 1940 Pulitzer Prize (Steinbeck gave the $1,000 prize to friend Ritch Lovejoy to encourage his writing career), eventually became a cornerstone of his 1962 Nobel Prize, and proved itself to be among the most enduringand controversialworks of fiction by any American author, past or present. In spite of flaws, gaffes, and infelicities its critics have enumeratedor perhaps because of them (general readers tend to embrace the books mythic soul and are less troubled by its imperfect body)The Grapes of Wrathhas resolutely entered both the American consciousness and its conscience. Few novels can make that claim.If a literary classic can be defined as a book that speaks directly to readers concerns in successive historical and cultural eras, no matter what their critical approaches, methods, or preoccupations are, then surelyThe Grapes of Wrathis such a work. Each generation of readers has found something new and relevant about it that speaks to its times. You might love it, you might hate it, but you probably wont be indifferent. Although Steinbeck could not have predicted its success (and was nearly ruined by its roller-coaster notoriety), the fact is that, in the past six-plus decades,The Grapes of Wrathhas sold more than fifteen million copies and currently sells annually 150,000 copies. A graph inBook(July/August 2003) indicates that of the fifty bestselling classic British and American novels in 2002,Grapesranks eleventhfive spots behind FitzgeraldsThe Great Gatsby, but seven ahead of HemingwaysThe Old Man and the Sea(Steinbeck and Hemingway are the only writers with three titles each on the list). In that same issue ofBook, Jerome Kramer includesGrapesas one of the twenty books that changed America. Moreover, a recent spate of turn-of-the-century polls, all employing differing, even opposed methodologies, agendas, and criteria, arrived at similar conclusions: surveys by Radcliffe Publishing Course, Modern Library Board,Hungry Mind (nowRuminator),San Francisco Chronicle,Heath Anthology of American Literature Newsletter,Library Journal, and British booksellers Waterstons all placeThe Grapes of Wrathamong the premier works in English of the twentieth century.Moreover, an elaborateWriters Digest(November 1999) survey of readers, writers, editors, and academics ranked John Steinbeck as the number one writer among the centurys 100 Best (a list whittled down from more than seven hundred nominees). The criteriaadmittedly slipperyused to judge each author included influence, quality, and originality. Even with a healthy dose of critical skepticism thrown into the mix, and a strong awareness of our turn-of-the-century obsession with compiling best lists, there is still something more significant at work in these dovetailing independent assessments ofGrapes achievement than the mere operation of special pleading, narrow partisanship, demographic distribution, or simpleminded puffery. Something more than the vagaries of cultural correctness and identity politics is at work in these polls that keeps Steinbecks novel relevant to the kind of large-scale public conversation that took place in California in 2002, the year of Steinbecks one hundredth birthday, when the states Humanities Council, in an unprecedented and ambitious project, invited everyone in the state to read and discuss the novel at 140 public library venues. Californias effort was itself part of a nationwide Steinbeck centennial honoring the Bard of the People, which, according to Anne Keisman, became the largest single author tribute in American history.Grapeshas also had a charmed life on screen and stage. Steinbeck sold the novels film rights for $75,000 to producer Darryl F. Zanuck at 20th Century Fox. Then Nunnally Johnson scripted a truncated film version, which was nonetheless memorably paced, photographed (by ace cinematographer Greg Tolland), and acted (Henry Fonda as Tom Joad, Jane Darwell as Ma Joad, and John Carradine as Jim Casy) under the direction of John Ford in 1940. The film was nominated for seven Academy Awards, and took home two OscarsFord as Best Director; Darwell as Best Supporting Actress. (A restored DVD version with added historical features, Movietone documentary newsreel footage of Dust Bowl conditions, and extended interpretive commentary by Susan Shillinglaw and Joseph McBride was released in 2004.) It proved to be a hard, straight picture . . . that looks and feels like a documentary film and . . . has a hard, truthful ring, Steinbeck reported on December 15, 1939, after seeing its Hollywood preview. (Folksinger/songwriter Woody Guthrie said it was the best cussed pitcher I ever seen, and urged readers of his column inPeoples World, go to see it and dont miss. You was the star in that picture.) Frank Galati faithfully adapted the novel for his Chicago-based

Steppenwolf Company, whose Broadway production, featuring Gary Sinise as Tom Joad and Lois Smith as Ma Joad, won a Tony Award for Best Play in 1990.Steinbecks novel has created legacies in other ways, too. Cesar Chavez, Jim Harrison, Edward R. Murrow, John Sayles, and Bruce Springsteen have all acknowledged Steinbeck as a valued predecessor. Ike Sallas, the hero of Ken KeseysSailor Song(1992), prizes the novel and places it among his collection of classic American booksthe essential heavies, he calls them. Steinbecks literary legacy goes on and on, show-cased recently by ShillinglawsJohn Steinbeck: Centennial Reflections by American Writers, a gathering of statements, homages, commentaries, reminiscences, and affections by nearly four dozen contemporary men and women writers of every genre and identity, from Edward Albee to Ursula K. Le Guin to Al Young. John Steinbeck was the writer who taught me that literature could be about real people in real places, California writer Gerald Haslam summed up in recalling Steinbecks impact. There are hilarious send-ups, too:MADmagazines The Wrath of Grapes, by John Steinfull, and Will Jacobs and Gerard Joness The Beaver of Wrath in theirThe Beaver Papers: The Story of the Lost Seasonof the television seriesLeave It to Beaver.The Grapes of Wrathhas also been translated into nearly thirty languages. One way or another, it seems that Steinbecks words continue in Warren Frenchs apt phrase the education of the heart. Even Harold Bloom, among Steinbecks most inflexible critics and Olympian detractors, confessed in 1988 that there are no canonical standards worthy of human respect that could excludeThe Grapes of Wrathfrom a serious readers esteem.Every strong novel redefines our conception of fictions dimensions and reorders our awareness of its possibilities.The Grapes of Wrathhas a populist, homegrown quality: part naturalistic epic, part labor testament, part family chronicle, part partisan journalism, part environmental jeremiad, part captivity narrative, part road novel, part transcendental gospel. Many American authors, upon finding that established fictional models dont fully suit their sensibilities, forge their own genealogy by synthesizing personal vision and experience with a disparate variety of popular motifs, cultural forms, and literary styles.Steinbeck was no exception; he was susceptible to many texts, ideas, currents, impulses, and models. To executeThe Grapes of Wrathhe drew directly and indirectly on the jump-cut technique of John Dos PassossU.S.A.trilogy (1938), the narrative tempo of Pare Lorentzs radio dramaEcce Homo!and the sequential, rapid-fire quality of Lorentzs documentary filmsThe Plow That Broke the Plains(1936) andThe River(1937), the stark visual effects of Dorothea Langes photographs of Dust Bowl Oklahoma and California migrant life, the timbre of the Greek epics, the rhythms of the King James Bible, the refrains of American folk music, the philosophical implications of Darwinism, the view of cooperative matriarchal society defined in Robert Briffaults anthropological treatiseThe Mothers(1931), as well as Edward F. Rickettss all-important theories of natural ecology and phalanx (group man) organization (aided and abetted by interdisciplinary readings in ethnography, marine biology, political philosophy, and contemporary science). Steinbeck transformed these ancient, classical, and modern resources (especially biblical themes, parallels, analogies, and allusions) into his own kind of combinatory textual structure. As David Minter says, it is a mistake to read Steinbeck solely as a realist, a naturalist, or a proletarian novelist.The Grapes of Wrathis large; it contains multitudes. Malcolm Cowleys claim that a whole literature is summarized in this book and much of it is carried to a new level of excellence is still pertinent. Thus, Steinbeck pushed back the boundaries of traditional mimetic fiction and redefined proletarian form.And yetThe Grapes of Wrathis in some ways an old-fashioned book, with roots in two major American fictional traditions: the masculine escape /adventure myth and the feminine sentimental/domestic tradition. The former features a sensitive young loner who retreats from civilization by lighting out for unknown frontier territory, while the latter highlights home-based values by creating, nurturing, and sustaining family and community relations through the performance of sentiment and affect. Historically, in nearly every regard, these two spheres appear to be separate and antagonistic, as aesthetically and thematically oppositional as MelvillesMoby-Dickand StowesUncle Toms Cabin, or TwainsAdventures of Huckleberry Finnand AlcottsLittle Women, but Steinbeck, borrowing from both spheres and adding grimly realistic contemporary twists of his own, has woven them together inThe Grapes of Wrath.Tom Joad, an archetypal bad guy, a paroled, unrepentant killer, lights out for the West not alone, or even in the company of a select male comrade, as might be expected according to the delineations of what Nina Baym has famously dubbed melodramas of beset manhood. Far from being an isolate, Tom goes on the lam with his mother and his extended family; for the most part, their presence requires social propriety, not outlaw conduct. The Joad family vehicle, a Hudson Super-Six modified from passenger car to truck, becomes their new hearth and home, and acts as the site of matriarchal wisdom and the center of domestic relations during the migrant diaspora. Tom is indebted to ex-preacher Casy for guiding him toward social awareness and

political action, but he is equally indebted to his own flesh and blood, especially Ma Joad, citadel of the family, who schools his sympathy for and affection toward common humanity.Even though Ma is unable to move much beyond the limits of her nurturing wife/mother role (Mimi Gladstein notes that womens roles are mostly functionary and enabling in this novel), in the larger picture, her efforts to keep her family intact, her loving relationship to Tom (a topic rarely discussed by scholars, and her mentoring of Rose of Sharon allow Steinbeck to interrogate one aspect of the American myth of entrenched power. Steinbeck critiques authoritarian (and often violent) masculinity by refusing to exclude the domain of private sensibility, feeling, and cooperation. Steinbecks sensitivities to the values of female sensibilities demonstrate a . . . view that supports the idea of humanitarian, large-scale changes that would make America, as a nation, more responsive to larger social needs, Nellie McKay asserts in David WyattsNew Essays onThe Grapes of Wrath. Indeed, Toms ultimate spiritual lesson, realized in chapter 28, is not solely about brooding solipsistic individuality or the tragic nobility of a separate superior consciousness, as is often the case in Adamic adventure tradition works (think Natty Bumppo, Ishmael, Huck Finn, Nick Adams, Ike McCaslin), but about profoundly affective fellow-feeling for alienated others, the abiding motions of the heart. As Michael Szalay says,The Grapes of Wrathis detached from anything like a coherent critique of capitalism, and does not solve problems but makes compassion, empathy, and commitment not only possible but desirable in a class-stratified society.Nothing less than the full spectrum of emotional coloration, from outright rage and inarticulate anger to honest sentiment and unabashed tenderness, is adequate to portray lives under pressure. Steinbeck, whose characters symbolize the over-essence of people, according to a July 6, 1938, entry inWorking Days, was borrowing from and signifying onand, in a sense, reinventingboth precursor cultural traditions. In renegotiating binaries of public/private, action/feeling, male/female, isolation/community, etc.,The Grapes of Wrathis Steinbecks updated hybridized conjoining of nineteenth-century literary and national narratives characterized by Jonathan Arac in the second volume of Sacvan BercovitchsThe Cambridge History of American Literature(1995).In early July 1938, Steinbeck told literary critic Harry T. Moore that he was improvising his own new method of fictional technique: one that combined a suitably elastic form and elevated style to express the far-reaching tragedy of the migrant drama. InThe Grapes of Wrathhe devised a contrapuntal structure with short lyrical chapters of exposition and background pertinent to the migrants as a groupchapters 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 11, 12, 14, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25, 27, 29alternating with the long narrative chapters of the Joad familys exodus to Californiachapters 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 13, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 26, 30. (Chapter 15 is a swing chapter that participates in both editorial and narrative modes.) Steinbeck structured his novel by juxtaposition. His particular chapters are the slow-paced and lengthy narrative episodes that embody traditional characterization and advance the dramatic plot, while his jazzy, rapid-fire interchapters work at another level of cognition by expressing an atemporal, universal, synoptic view of the migrant condition. In one way or another, Steinbecks combinatory method has allegiances to the stereopticon, mentioned explicitly in chapter 10. The novel demonstrates how form itself is a kind of magic lantern, a shifting lens for magnifying and viewing multiple perspectives of reality.No matter what aural or visual analogy we apply, the fact remains thatThe Grapes of Wrathis not a closed system of historical periodicity, but a relational field, a web of connections between text and context, nature and culture, physical earth and human inhabitants. His general or intercalary chapters (pace changers, Steinbeck called them) were expressly designed to hit the reader below the belt. With the rhythms and symbols of poetry one can get into a readeropen him up and while he is open introduce things on a [sic] intellectual level which he would not or could not receive unless he were opened up, Steinbeck revealed to Columbia University undergraduate Herbert Sturz in 1953. Throughout his career, Steinbeck was always a relational thinker, and inGrapes, the intercalary chapters provide a kind of anthropological thick description of the American migrant plight. Moreover, Steinbeck historicizes the Joad narrative by embedding his fiction in its contemporary milieu; conversely, he demonstrates the fluidity of history by re-creating it in fiction. History surrounds fiction; fiction embeds history. Text and context are integrally related to each other in a kind of necessary complementarity, a unique ecological rhetoric, according to Peter Valenti, whose totality cannot be separated, subdivided, or segregated without risking distortion of its many layers of meaning.The Grapes of Wrathis an unapologetically engaged novel with a partisan posture, many complex voices, and passionate prose styles. Except for its unflinching treatment of the Depressions climatic, social, and economic conditions, there is nothing cynically distanced about it, nothing coolly modernist in the way we have come to understand the elite literary implications of that term in the past ninety years. It is not narrated from the first person point of view, yet the language has a salty, catchy eyewitness quality about it, and its vivid

biblical, empirical, poetical, cinematic, and folk styles demonstrate the tonal and visual acuity of Steinbecks ear and eye, the melding of experience and rhetoric, oral and literary forms.Steinbeck told Merle Armitage on February 17, 1939, that in composition, in movement, in tone and in scope,The Grapes of Wrathwas symphonic. His fusion of intimate narrative and panoramic editorial chapters enforces this dialogic concert. Chapters, styles, voices all speak to each other, set up resonances, send echoes back and forthpoint and counterpoint, strophe and antistropheas in a symphony whose total impression surpasses the sum of its discrete and sometimes dissonant parts. Steinbecks novel belongs to that class of fictions whose shape issues not from an ideal blueprint of aesthetic propriety but from the generative urgency of its subject matter and its authors experience. (Ithadto be written, Stanley Kunitz said in 1939.) Steinbecks direct involvement with the plight of Americas Dust Bowl migrants in the latter half of the 1930s created his obsessive urge to tell their story honestly but also movingly. This must be a good book, he wrote inWorking Dayson June 10, 1938. It simply must. I havent any choice. It must be far and away the best thing I have ever attemptedslow but sure, piling detail on detail until a picture and an experience emerge. Until the whole throbbing thing emerges. Like Stowe inUncle Toms Cabin, making the audience see and feel that living picture was paramount. I am not writing a satisfying story, he claimed to Pascal Covici on January 16, 1939:Ive done my damndest to rip a readers nerves to rags, I dont want him satisfied. . . . I tried to write this book the way lives are being lived not the way books are written. . . . Throughout Ive tried to make the readerparticipatein the actuality, what he takes from it will be scaled entirely on his own depth or hollowness. There are five layers in this book, a reader will find as many as he can and he wont find more than he has in himself. [Emphasis added.]Steinbecks participatory aestheticit was the closest he came to conceptualizing a personal theory of the novellinked the trinity of writer, text, and reader to ensure maximum affective impact on the audience. In representing the migrant experience, Steinbeck worked out a concept of reader-response theory generally well ahead of its time. (It coincided with the publication of Louise RosenblattsLiterature as Explorationin 1938, where she first proposed her pioneering transactional reader-response model.) In chapter 23 Steinbeck writes: And it came about in the camps along the roads, on the ditch banks beside the streams, under the sycamores, that the story teller grew into being, so that the people gathered in the low firelight to hear the gifted ones. And they listened while the tales were told, andtheir participation made the stories great (emphasis added). This seemingly innocuous moment has enormous performative consequences for writer and readers because it invites us to enter the text, and serves to make us active agents in the construction of meaning, which itself is always changing, depending on our critical preoccupations. Invested in the process of interpretation, readers must actively cross boundaries between differing realms of discourse, and must remain open to variant, flexible ways of experiencing the story, including being moved by the recuperative power of a narrative, which, according to Louis Owens, is structured on at least four simultaneous levels of existence, ranging from socioeconomic determinism to transcendent spirituality:On one level it is the story of a familys struggle for survival in the Promised Land. On another level it is the story of a peoples struggle, the migrants. On a third level it is the story of a nation, America. On still another level, through the allusions to Christ and those to the Israelites and Exodus, it becomes the story of mankinds quest for profound comprehension of his commitment to his fellow man and to the earth he inhabits.The last point opens the door to viewingThe Grapes of Wrathas one of the most significant environmental novels of the century. From the dust storms that open the novel to the floods that close it,The Grapes of Wrathcan be read as a novel that foregrounds profound ecological awareness, according to Donna Seaman.Grapesis a sustained indictment about a natural world despoiled by a grievous range of causesnatural disaster, poor land-use practices, rapacious acquisitiveness, and technological arrogance. Failure of genetic engineering and industrialized nature hangs over the State like a great sorrow, Steinbeck laments in chapter 25, and the failure . . . that topples all our successes stems from misconceived values manipulating nature and misunderstanding mans delicate place as a species in the biotic community. (Steinbecks ideas, indebted to Ed Rickettss ecological training, paralleled those of pioneering conservationist Aldo Leopold who proposed a viable land ethic inA Sand County Almanac.)For more than sixty years Jim Casys errand into the wilderness has been interpreted in a strictly Christian framework, despite his insistence in chapter 8, I aint sayin Im like Jesus. Whatever other considerable ends it achieves, Casys sojourn brings him to an understanding of deep ecology, an egalitarian, biocentric, nonsectarian view in which all living things are related and equally valued: There was the hills, an there was me, an we wasnt separate no more.We was one thing. An that one thing was holy, he tells Tom Joad (emphasis added). In our age of increased environmental awareness, perhapsThe Grapes of Wraths most resonant and radical lesson is that saving a

bioregion or ecosystem requires the kind of gesture symbolized in eco-hero Casys sacrifice and Rose of Sharons gift of breast milk to a starving manthat is, gestures (affective or otherwise) that dramatize a way of giving that requires full commitment to a realm larger than the self. In its polemical register and evangelical tone, in its trajectory from I to We, in its indictment of a crime . . . that goes beyond denunciation,The Grapes of Wrathis at once an elegy for and a challenge to live in harmony with the earth.Like many American novels,The Grapes of Wrathdoes not offer codified or institutional solutions to cataclysmic social, economic, political, and environmental problems. Rather, it leads us deeper into complexities those issues raise by historicizing beneficence, sympathy, compassion, and relatedness. For instance,Grapesprivileges the white American migrant labor scene. Steinbeck elidesbut was not ignorant ofthe problems of nonwhite migrant workersFilipinos, Chinese, Japanese, and Mexicanswho made up a significant percentage of Californias agricultural labor force, according to Carey McWilliams and other informed observers. (William Conlogue notes that part ofGrapes bestseller status came from Steinbeck portraying whites being treated as if they were nonwhite.) And yet, in any event, his book still speaks to the experience of human disenfranchisement, still holds out hope for an ecology of dignified human advancement. At every levelThe Grapes of Wrathenacts the process of its authors belief and embodies the shape of his faith, as in this ringing synthesis from chapter 14.The last clear definite function of manmuscles aching to work, minds aching to create beyond the single needthis is man. To build a wall, to build a house, a dam, and in the wall and house and dam to put something of Manself, and to Manself take back something of the wall, the house, the dam; to take hard muscles from the lifting, to take the clear lines and form from conceiving. For man, unlike any other thing organic or inorganic in the universe, grows beyond his work, walks up the stairs of his concepts, emerges ahead of his accomplishments. This you may say of manwhen theories change and crash, when schools, philosophies, when narrow dark alleys of thought, national, religious, economic, grow and disintegrate, man reaches, stumbles forward, painfully, mistakenly sometimes. Having stepped forward, he may slip back, but only half a step, never the full step back. This you may say and know it and know it.As Charles Shindo explains, in Steinbecks desire to instill a sense of justice in his audience,The Grapes of Wrathprovokes not only individual thought but collective action.