



# Colorado Book Club Resource

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR THE GRAPES OF WRATH BY JOHN STEINBECK

1. Are we meant to conclude that Tom's killing of the deputy is justified?
2. What makes Casy believe that "maybe all men got one big soul ever'body's a part of"?
3. Why does Steinbeck devote a chapter to the land turtle's progress on the highway?
4. Why does Pa yield his traditional position in the family to Ma?
5. What does Ma mean when she says, "Bearin' an' dyin' is two pieces of the same thing"?
6. As Tom leaves the family, he says, "I'll be ever'where—wherever you look". In what sense does he mean "everywhere"?
7. Why does Steinbeck interrupt the Joads' narrative with short chapters of commentary and description?
8. Why does Rose of Sharon smile as she feeds the starving man with milk intended for her baby?
9. What does Steinbeck mean when he writes, "In the souls of the people *The Grapes of Wrath* are filling and growing heavy, growing heavy for the vintage"?
10. Why do different characters insist at different points in the book, "A fella got to eat"?
11. Why does the book start with drought and end with floods?
12. Is the family intact at the end of the novel?
13. Why does Uncle John set the dead baby adrift rather than bury it?
14. What is the source of Ma's conviction that "we're the people—we go on" (p. 280)?
15. Does nature function as a force for either good or evil in this book?
16. As his land is destroyed, an anonymous tenant says, "We've got a bad thing made by men, and by God that's something we can change". Is Steinbeck suggesting that a just social order is possible?
17. When the narrator says "men ate what they had not raised, had no connection with the bread" (p. 36), the implication is that this break diminishes humanity. Can spirituality be maintained with increasing automation?



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18. Casy tells Tom about a prisoner whose view of history is that "ever' time they's a little step fo'ward, she may slip back a little, but she never slips clear back.... They wasn't no waste". Do you agree with this view?

***Questions issued by publisher.***



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