

Discussion Starters for *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck

- 1 Why does Steinbeck interrupt the Joads' narrative with short chapters of commentary and description?
- 2 Casy says, "I ain't preachin'. Preachin' is tellin' folks stuff. I'm askin' 'em." Do you feel Steinbeck does either in *The Grapes of Wrath*?
- 3 At which points in the book does the power in the family gradually shift from Pa to Ma?
- 4 Who do you think is the strongest character? Why do you think so?
- 5 Do you suppose it is a peaceful or violent revolution Steinbeck has in mind when he describes all the poor people uniting? What gives you this impression?
- 6 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" (end of Chapter 25)?
- 7 Does nature function as a force for either good or evil in this book? If so, how?
- 8 Steinbeck is known for creating some of the most memorable friendships in American literature. How does Casy serve as a role model for Tom Joad? And Ma Joad for Rosasharn?
- 9 Is the ending of the novel hopeful or despairing? What gives you this impression?
- 10 Why do you think this novel continues to have such wide, popular appeal? Is its message still relevant today?