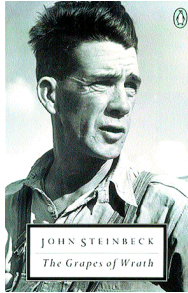


“The Ghost of Tom Joad” inspired by John Steinbeck’s novel,
“The Grapes of Wrath”



LYRICS

SONG BY BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN

Men walkin' 'long the railroad tracks
Goin' someplace there's no goin' back
Highway patrol choppers comin' up over the ridge
Hot soup on a campfire under the bridge
Shelter line stretchin' 'round the corner
Welcome to the new world order
Families sleepin' in their cards in the Southwest
No home no job no peace no rest

The highway is alive tonight
But nobody's kiddin' nobody about where it goes
I'm sittin' down here in the campfire light
Searchin' for the ghost of Tom Joad

He pulls a prayer book out of his sleeping bag
Preacher lights up a butt and takes a drag
Waitin' for when the last shall be first and the first shall be last
In a cardboard box 'neath the underpass
Got a one-way ticket to the promised land
You got a hole in your belly and gun in your hand
Sleeping on a pillow of solid rock
Bathin' in the city aqueduct

The highway is alive tonight
Where it's headed everybody knows
I'm sittin' down here in the campfire light
Waitin' on the ghost of Tom Joad

So Tom said, "Mom, wherever there's a cop beatin' a guy
Wherever a hungry newborn baby cries
Where there's a light 'gainst the blood and hatred in the air
Look for me Mom I'll be there
Wherever there's somebody fightin' for a place to stand
Or decent job or a helpin' hand
Wherever somebody's strugglin' to be free
Look in their eyes Mom you'll see me."

Well the highway is alive tonight
But nobody's kiddin' nobody about where it goes
I'm sittin' down here in the campfire light
With the ghost of old Tom Joad

SOURCE

A portrait of the bitter conflict between the powerful and the powerless, of one man's fierce reaction to injustice, and of a woman's quiet, stoical strength, *The Grapes of Wrath* is a landmark of American literature, one that captures the horrors of the Great Depression as it probes into the very nature of equality and justice in America.

In stark and moving detail, John Steinbeck depicts the lives of ordinary people striving to preserve their humanity in the face of social and economic desperation. When the Joads lose their tenant farm in Oklahoma, they join thousands of others, traveling the narrow concrete highways toward California and the dream of a piece of land to call their own. Each night on the road, they and their fellow migrants recreate society: leaders are chosen, unspoken codes of privacy and generosity evolve, and lust, violence, and murderous rage erupt.

MUSIC

The song begins with a single harmonica blast followed by Springsteen's lyrics about walking along a railroad track. It brings the train image alive. Harmonica lends its familiar and melancholy tone throughout the whole song. It's like a character whose presence on stage brings in a whole history of emotions. By the second verse, Bruce adds a haunting guitar pad in the background, to suggest the memory not only of the ghost of Tom Joad, but of a nation of downtrodden folks. The slide guitar comes in to accent his voice, like it's a spark that flies out from the campfire we imagine Springsteen to be sitting around while singing. The drumbeat is simple and hypnotic, and travels us down the steady storyline of the song. Harmonica takes us out of the song, suggesting the full cycle of Springsteen's song.

(Notes by Deborah Pardes)

SUITABILITY

This accessible novel has been read and loved by readers of all ages and abilities, including the state of California which adopted it in 2003. The paperback edition is 455 pages in length, which might discourage some readers. However, themes such as poverty, economic depression, and migration provoke lively discussion. Even reluctant readers can engage with the story through audio tapes and the film version, combined with reading portions where possible.

**LESSON
SUGGESTIONS**

ART INSPIRED BY ART

The Grapes of Wrath has inspired other works of art, including a famous song by Woody Guthrie, as detailed on:

<http://www.geocities.com/Nashville/3448/tomjoad.html>

From the wide range of responses to Steinbeck's book, learners can draw the lesson that there are no correct answers or interpretations. Each one of us is the authority on our own response to a book or any other work of art.

CONTEXT

The Great Depression offers wonderful opportunities both for internet and other research, and for comparison with current affairs. The Library of Congress web site includes rich resources of songs and photographs to enrich learners' experience of this story. Note that early editions of Steinbeck's novel included the lyrics of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic."

FOOD

As a related project, learners might want to track the theme of food and hunger through the novel. This might also make up part of a project about food from different historical periods or geographic regions.

Lesson Plan “The Ghost of Tom Joad”

INTERTEXTUALITY & ART INSPIRED BY ART

• BY KERRY DUFF • ADAPTED BY JOHN DARTER

LEVEL

This module is designed for adult literacy learners performing at the intermediate to advanced Adult Basic Education level. It may also be adapted to high school age learners.

PARTICIPANTS

Volunteer tutor with a single, pair, or small group of learners. May also be adapted for book clubs.

LENGTH

6 to 8 weeks

MATERIALS

The Grapes of Wrath, by John Steinbeck
 Also recommended as supplements to the text:
 Old Time Radio Novels: Maltese Falcon/Grapes of Wrath/Scarlett Pimpernel/Rebecca [ABRIDGED] by Minds Eye @ amazon.com for \$18.95
 CD player and SIBL Chapter 1 CD
 TV and VCR
 Photocopies of Bruce Springsteen’s “The Ghost Of Tom Joad”
 “The Grapes of Wrath,” directed by John Ford and produced by 20th Century Fox, 1940
 Pen and paper
 Cameras (disposable cameras work great for this activity)
 Internet Access

OBJECTIVES

Learners will:

- understand what intertextuality is as it relates to literature
- create a piece of art (song, poem, photograph) that expresses their feelings about any of the themes within *The Grapes of Wrath*
- be able to discuss and write about the similarities and differences between song, film, and literature

VOCABULARY

Have learners study the vocabulary words from the following chapters list prior to reading. They should be familiar enough to create a correct sentence with each word. Utilize phonics practice where necessary. Provide examples for each word and have learners copy them into their notebooks.

...VOCABULARY

Chapters 1-5: rivulet, dissipate, bayonet, gully, stout, bemused, perplexity, padlock, hasp, chambray, hob-nailed, proboscis, fetlock, disperse, armadillo, embankment, furrow, drought, protrude, quid, shebang, prodigal, beseech, harrow, rafter

Chapters 6-10: truculent, noose, sheaf, jalopy, amend, animosity, divert, matt, cantankerous, nuisance, brood, implement, scrounge, voluptuous, assail, globule, squidge, restively, relinquish, tarpaulin

Chapters 11-15: corrugated, apprehensively, gnaw, corduroy, wizened, shudder, modulate, sulky, gulch, dwindle, flaxen, vivacious, spatula, accouterment

Chapters 16-20: partial, sullen, lanky, chump, vagrant, concession, plateau, listless, pucker, exhortation, parched, hoist, heliograph, swagger, penitent, saunter, mongrel, sneer, disconsolate, tourniquet

Chapters 21-25: quest, paradox, deft, dungarees, infuriate, scrounge, gingham, requisition, rakish, shrill, quarantine

Chapters 26-30: insignia, trudge, vigilante, ravenous, placard, dote, nimble

PRE-READING ACTIVITIES

1. Brainstorm: What do learner/s already know about the "Great Depression?" What do they already know about poverty and about moving to a new place? Write learners' answers on a piece of paper and save for posting around the room.
2. Play Bruce Springsteen's song "The Ghost of Tom Joad."
3. Play the song again and have learners jot down notes. To guide them, write the following questions on the board or a piece of paper (single words, pictures, or phrases are fine):
 - How does the song make you feel?
 - What do you think the story is about?
 - What does the song remind you of?
4. Hand out lyrics and play the song for the third time, so learners can read the lyrics while following along with the song.
5. Initiate a discussion: What type of story is being told? When does the story take place? Who is Tom Joad? Who is the song's narrator? How does the music accentuate the mood and help tell the story? How is a story told differently when it is sung as opposed to written in a book?

ACTIVITIES

SCREEN AND READ

View John Ford's movie "The Grapes of Wrath" and read the text in tandem. This procedure is ideal for learners with reading difficulties. It provides a vision of the story and audio cues to help them with the reading of the text. When a portion of the story is read directly after seeing the movie, it increases the readability of the text. If further supplemented with the abridged tape, the reader should be able read the story without difficulty. If they are still not able to read the story, an abridged version may be necessary.

1. Review the following questions before showing the first clip of the movie. Learner/s should take notes as they watch, not worrying about grammar or punctuation.
 - What are the reasons that Tom's family had to leave their land?
 - Can you compare this situation to your own life?
 - What does the clip tell you about being a farmer as opposed to a banker or car salesman?
 - Describe what you think the rest of the Joad family will be like.
2. Insert "The Grapes of Wrath" into the VCR. If time is short, fast forward to when Tom and the Preacher reach the Joads' house. Stop when the characters are hiding in the field and the scene fades to black.
3. Work with learners to answer one of the questions.
4. Begin partner reading Chapters 1 and 2.
5. Assign homework for the week: Have learners go to the following website:
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/fsowhome.html>.
This is the site for the Library of Congress. Have learners choose one picture to write a paragraph, poem, or song about. If learners do not have access to the internet, they can try their local public library.
6. Continue this technique throughout the book. Depending on how much reading is done outside of the tutoring session, this unit should take six to eight weeks.
7. A breakdown of seen selections and corresponding focus questions can be found on the KQED Educational Network website at:
<http://www.kqed.org/topics/education/educators/lessons/plans/grapes-of-wrath.pdf>

EXTENSION

1. Play “The Ghost of Tom Joad” again. Point out how Springsteen is responding to Steinbeck and then have the learners respond to Springsteen’s response through a song or a poem of their own, or a photograph with a caption.
2. Pass out lyrics to “The Ghost of Tom Joad” and play the song again. Draw a “T” graph on chart paper. On one side, write similarities and on the other, differences. Tutor and learner/s can also create a “T” graph for the story and the movie. Have learners discuss the similarities and differences.
3. Referring back to the “T” graph/s, model for the learners how to write two paragraphs using the notes from the “T” graphs. They can choose to write about the song or the movie. Learners then write individual paragraphs comparing and contrasting the song and story, or the movie and story.

POST-READING

(Notes in parentheses are tips for tutors.)

1. What did we learn from the story? Write down learners’ responses and compare this list with what they already knew about the topic.
2. Ask the learners if they notice anything about the cadence of the story. (Steinbeck rolls back and forth between chapters. One chapter is short and almost poetic in its description, while the next is longer and develops the flow of plot and characters.) Why do you think Steinbeck wrote the story this way? (Steinbeck himself described the novel as “a kind of march” and as “symphonic” in its contrapuntal style.)

ASSESSMENT

1. Give oral examples of intertextuality. (The theory that all text comprises the interweaving of previous meanings and texts. More simply, the term is used to show the relationship between different forms, genres, and versions.)
2. Successfully write two paragraphs that demonstrate the understanding of similarities and differences among modes of art.
3. Create a song, poem, or photograph (with caption) that expresses their feelings about the story.