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A Study of Steinbeck

Shanda Herrera

Grade 9: English/Language Arts; History/Social Science

Business Partner: Lockheed Martin Space Systems



HOW IT WORKS

In *A Study of Steinbeck*, students use news articles, films, novels and photography to braid together key themes and demonstrate their knowledge and perspective of John Steinbeck and America's Great Depression into book format.

Step 1— Students read two works by Steinbeck: *The Harvest Gypsies*, and five chapters from *The Grapes of Wrath*. Students note similarities between them while building reading logs that focus on a student's interests, such as hunger, transportation problems, or effects on children. Reading logs, which include direct quotes and personal responses, focus on the daily struggle of all poverty-stricken, traveling migrant families.

Step 2— Students research Steinbeck using four colors of ink and document Steinbeck's written work, his biographical information, photography notes, and build a theme list. They study Dorothea Lange's photography that is featured in *The Harvest Gypsies*, and this sparks interest and leads us to Step 4. Students are shown a different depression era photograph each day and their responses provide a critical fusion between history, art, and literature.

Step 3— Students watch the *The Grapes of Wrath* and complete a Directed Viewing

Guide, identifying characters, internal and external conflicts, theme, motivation, tone and setting for two scenes of their choice.

Step 4— Photograph Search— Students re-examine their reading log entries and narrow their focus by theme. Using the Internet, students find eight photos that correspond with their collection of reading logs.

Step 5— Book Creation— Simple materials create a book that includes: 1) Steinbeck photo; 2) Steinbeck biography; 3) a map of Steinbeck country; 4) Steinbeck accomplishment list; and 5) eight depression-era photographs with narratives that include their direct quotes and responses.

WHY IT WORKS

This synthesis of the two works and connections to film and photography allows students to describe and respond to the printed word and picture while giving an original analysis. Students express universal themes and choose direct quotes as evidence to support their ideas. Rubrics explain that students must have a clear perspective on a subject with consistent tone and focus and present photography as a secondary source. Students integrate reading log quotations into their written text while maintaining the flow of their ideas and make references to both written works. Students seem to genuinely enjoy the photography portion and book making part of the process.

THE STUDENTS

In 2004-2005: sixty ninth grade English 1 students, including 10 resource students, participated in this project.

ADAPTATION TIPS

This project adapts itself best for English or History courses. History could forgo the novel reading, and simply watch the film, examine depression era photographs and do written responses. Students could focus on the Depression's effects on different populations—work force, farmers, incoming immigrants—and conduct photograph searches for that area. In English, teachers could present any short stories and poetry from the Depression era. I have also taken students to the National Steinbeck Center in Salinas as the final culminating activity.

WHAT YOU NEED

Class sets of the Steinbeck material, book-making supplies, research materials on Steinbeck and Dorothea Lange, Internet access and computer are needed to complete this project.

THE STAFF

Shanda has taught high school for 10 years. She has received several SIMPACT grants, and is an active member of the Teachers Network.

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John Steinbeck Unit Outline - You are responsible for the following...

Daily

- 1) Build your Fact File on John Steinbeck
 - GREEN – Steinbeck's written work
 - BLACK – Biographical information
 - BLUE – Photography information
 - RED – Theme list
- 2) For each photo viewed in class, respond to the following four prompts
 - a. Title, year, and any identifying information
 - b. Detailed description of photo
 - c. How does this connect to the literature I am reading?
 - d. What emotions do I feel as I view this photograph?

During reading of *The Harvest Gypsies* and *The Grapes of Wrath*

- 1) Two reading log entries with personal responses for each chapter read
 - a. *The Harvest Gypsies* – 7 chapters = 14 entries
 - b. *The Grapes of Wrath* – 5 chapters = 10 entriesPlease review the grading rubric before you turn them in.
- 2) Two movie scenes (one for each day) in which you identify the following
 - a. Movie scene chosen (No more than 5 sentences)
 - b. Plot events thus far (No more than 5 sentences)
 - c. Main Character(s)
 - d. Internal Conflict
 - e. External Conflict
 - f. Protagonist
 - g. Antagonist
 - h. Setting
 - i. Mood
 - j. Explanation of why you chose this scene (No more than 5 sentences)

Items to retrieve during computer lab time

- a. Eight photographs that fit your theme(s)
- b. Photograph of John Steinbeck
- c. Map identifying six Steinbeck ideas (book locations, birthplace, etc.)
- d. Information to assist you with your biography.

Materials Needed to Make your Book

Posterboard (optional for book cover)

10 – 15 sheets Construction paper

(*Posterboard and construction paper should be color coordinated to best represent your black and white photographs and accompanying typed narratives)

Heavy duty sewing needle – see in class samples

String – see in class samples

Steinbeck Unit Point Chart

Item	Due Date	Point Value	My Score
1. Green ink notes – Steinbeck’s written work		20	
2. Black ink notes – Steinbeck’s biographical info		20	
3. Blue ink notes – Photography information (5 photos, 4 points each) Choose your best.		20	
4. Red ink notes – Theme list (students create 10, 2 points each)		20	
5. Harvest Gypsies reading log entries (7 chapters, 14 entries)		28	
6. The Grapes of Wrath reading log entries (5 chapters, 10 entries)		20	
7. Movie scene # 1 with A – J answers		20	
8. Movie scene # 2 with A – J answers		20	
9. Eight photos with theme identification		16	
10. Photo of John Steinbeck		2	
11. Map identifying any 6 ideas about Steinbeck		12	
12. Two or more pages of information to assist with Steinbeck biography (These will be turned in with the biography to check for plagiarism.)		5	
13. Directed Viewing Guide: The Grapes of Wrath		28	

Film As Literature
A Critical Analysis Unit
The Grapes of Wrath (1940)
A Directed Viewing Guide

Directions: The following guide will direct your viewing of the film. Look over the question's before the day's viewing and then consider each of them again after you've watched the day's segment. You will need to answer questions on another sheet of paper, but you may take brief notes on this sheet. As a class, we will be discussing each of these points, as well as other discussion questions, prior to our culminating writing assignment.

1. What city name is on the truck in the opening scene?
2. The first character we meet is Tom Joad. From where is he returning? Where is he heading?
3. The second character we meet is a former preacher, Casey. Describe him.
4. As Tom Joad and Casey arrive to Tom's father's house, they find it deserted. Muley Graves, hiding in the corner explains what happened. Briefly explain what information you can.
5. Describe the emotional aspect of how difficult this must have been for Muley Graves' family and the other families that were affected.
6. The next scene shows the family at Uncle John's house. What is the family planning to do?
7. Describe the reaction of the family when they see Tom.
8. How did the family prepare financially to go to California?
9. Describe the internal conflict Ma Joad was experiencing as she sat by the fire preparing to leave for California.
10. Grandpa experiences an extremely difficult time before they leave. Explain in your opinion, why you think it would be more difficult for the older generation to leave.
11. On the road, what happened to Grandpa?
12. As the Joad family travels, they camp overnight with many other families. One man reveals some frightening information about what he experienced. What did he say happened?

13. Describe how Pa Joad was treated when he asked to buy some bread at a truck stop. Do you think that the candies were really two for a penny?
14. How did the gas station attendants talk about the Joad family and "Okies?"
15. When did Grandma Joad die, and why didn't Ma tell anyone?
16. Once in California, at the transient camp, what does the Joad family learn about the availability of food and work?
17. A well dressed man asks the men in the camp if they want to work picking fruit but he won't tell the men how much he'll pay. What do we learn from this?
18. Connie has left his pregnant wife, Rose of Sharon. Why would it be easier for a man if he was alone facing these circumstances than if he had a family?
19. As the Joads leave the camp late at night, a group of townsmen block the road. Why don't they want any more "Okies" in their town?
20. The Joads finally get work at the Keene Ranch. Describe how they are treated, their house, the work, and the pay.
21. At dinner, what did we learn about the price of food at the store?
22. Tom sneaks away from the camp and finds Casey and some other men. They are discussing a labor strike. One man tells Tom, "Soon as the harvest is in, you're a migrant worker, afterwards, just a bum." Explain this comment.
23. Casey is killed and Tom gets hit in the face. What does the family do to protect him?
24. The Joads arrive at the Farmworkers' Wheat Patch Camp. What is different about this camp and the man who meets them at the gate?
25. Tom notices that someone left the water running at the camp. What does that say about some of the people who are staying there?
26. While working, Tom and some others learn that some people want to cause trouble during the dance. Why?
27. During the night, Tom awakens to police reading his license plate and decides to leave. Tom realizes that Casey was correct about the labor strikes. Explain.
28. During the final scene, the Joad's are on their way to a much hoped for job. Briefly summarize the Ma Joad's perspective on the way things have worked out.

Theme: Trying To Survive

As I read these The Harvest Gypsies and The Grapes of Wrath, I realize how fortunate I am. I have never experienced the difficulties that were experienced by these people, and I do not know how they found the strength to survive. I found this photograph, and decided to use it for two reasons. First, it mentions nearby Nipomo, which has appeared several times in our readings, and secondly, because the dirty baby makes me feel very sad. This mother sits outside a tent, so I wanted to include the following quote.

“There is more filth here. The tent is full of flies clinging to the apple box that is the dinner table, buzzing about the foul clothes of the children, particularly the baby, who has not been bathed nor cleaned for several days...There is no toilet here, but there is a clump of willows nearby where human feces lies exposed to the flies - the same flies that are in the tent...The father of this family once had a little grocery store...When the drought set in there was no trade for the store any more. This is the middle class of the squatter’s camps.”

The Harvest Gypsies p. 28 and 29

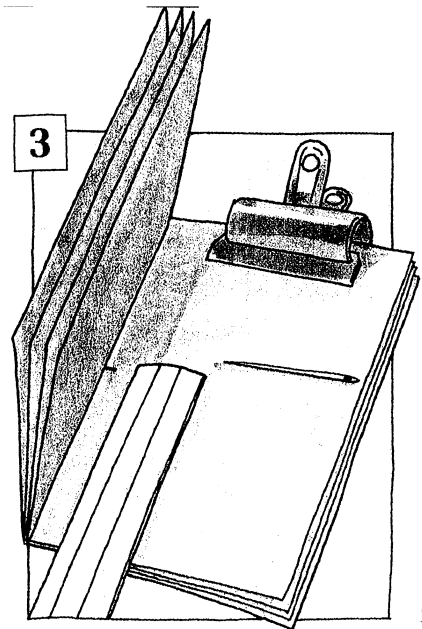
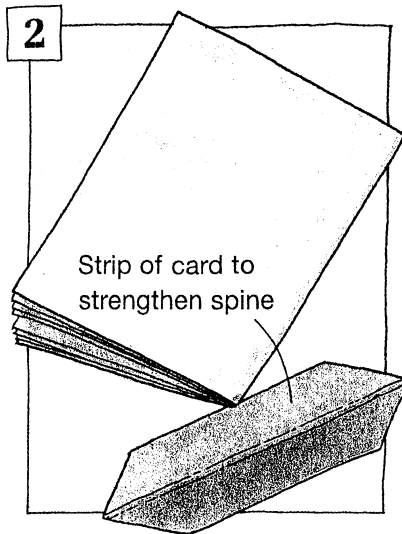
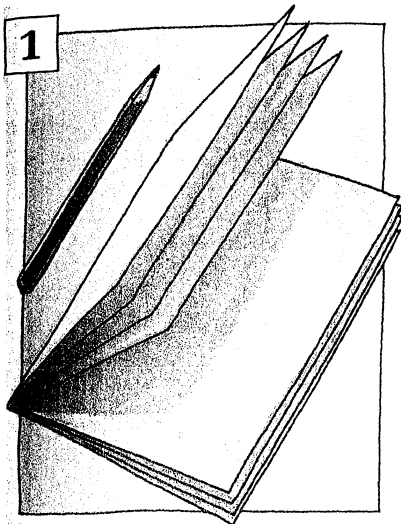
Even though this photo is not the family described in the passage, I’m sure that they had many similarities. I am glad that the depression did end, and I am sad that so many people lost their lives and families during this difficult time. I believe that our presidents and government learned from this tragedy so that our nation will never have good hard-working people who suffer like this again.

Student
Sample

John Steinbeck's Accomplishment List

1. John Steinbeck was born in Salinas, California in 1902
2. This region of the country was later used for the setting of most of his stories.
3. Steinbeck attended the local high school and worked on farms and ranches.
4. His mother was a teacher and Steinbeck learned to love books.
5. Between 1920 and 1926, Steinbeck studied Marine Biology at Stanford University.
6. In the 1930's Steinbeck met his good friend Edward Ricketts.
7. John Steinbeck had two sons, Thom and John.
8. He was married three times, his third wife was Elaine Scott.
9. In the story, On The Other Side of Eden, he wrote about his gifted parents.
10. In the story, East of Eden, he wrote about his relationship with his ex-wife and children.

Student
sample

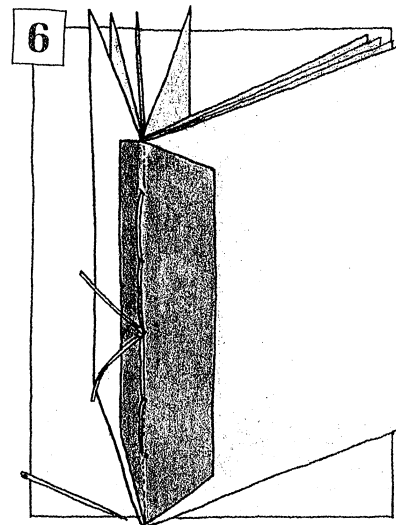
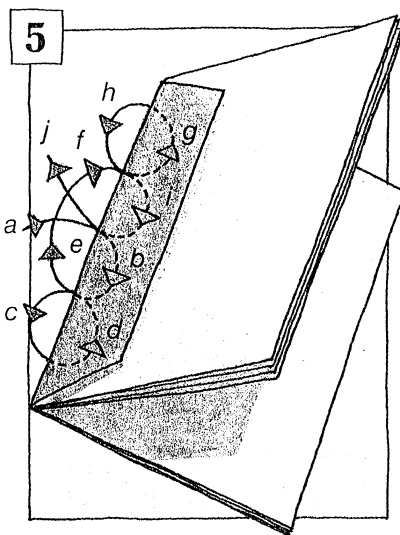
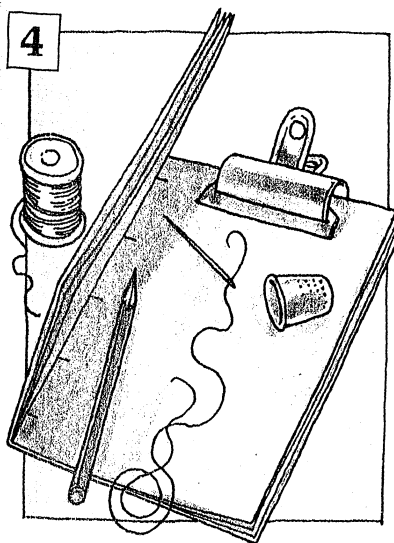


Method A

Take up to six pieces of heavy paper or thin cardboard. Fold them in the middle, and stack them inside each other to make a book.

Cut a strip of cardboard the same length as your book. Trim the top and bottom diagonally, as shown, and fold around the spine of your book.

Hold the pages of your book tightly in place with a spring clip. Then mark the middle point along the gutter with a ruler and pencil.



Add two more marks on each side of the middle mark, making them the same distance apart. Make a hole through the pencil marks with a darning needle.

Push the needle and thread through the middle mark, starting from the outside. Keep sewing in and out, following the direction shown above.

You should end up with two loose ends of thread outside the spine, as here. Tie them together with a double knot in the middle, and trim the ends with scissors.

Stowell, Charlotte. *Step by Step Making Books*.

New York: Kingfisher, 1994.

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The Steinbeck Book Point Chart

Item	Your score	Notes
Presentation/Neatness of book: color choice, title, identifying information, neatness of binding and sewing craftsmanship	/15	
Steinbeck photo	/3	
Steinbeck Biography – Original notes should be turned in with book. Biography should be in your own words incorporating additional class note information	/20	
Map – This is a map of California focusing specifically on the Salinas and surrounding areas. Six locations should be identified and explained.	/18	
Steinbeck Accomplishment List A list of 10. Bonus point option: This list can be done in a narrative style showing your knowledge of Steinbeck. (worth 6 extra points)	/10	
Eight depression era photographs with narratives. These average ½ to ¾ page. (4 points each)	/24	
Student should choose 2 narratives that will be graded in depth with the rubric included.		
Student choice # 1 pg. _____	/25	
Theme is: _____		
Student choice # 2 pg. _____	/25	
Theme is: _____		

Your Score _____ /140

Criteria	Rating Scale				
	Not	Very			Very
Is the content clearly and consistently maintained, focusing on a particular theme?	1	2	3	4	5
How well does the direct quotation(s) blend with the theme to create a unified idea?	1	2	3	4	5
Does the narrative include a valid opinion about the chosen quotes, photographs, and theme?	1	2	3	4	5
Are the photographs and direct quotes used as evidence to support the writer's opinion?	1	2	3	4	5
Are the ideas successfully communicated through clever use of language with few errors?	1	2	3	4	5

Teacher Comments:

Your score /25

Additional Helpful Information

Prescott, Jerome. *America At The Crossroads Great Photographs From The Thirties*. New York: Brompton Books Corp.

Rosenblum, Walter. *America & Lewis Hine*. New York, Aperture Foundation, 1977.

Rothstein, Arthur. *The Depression Years*. New York, Dover Publications, 1978

Steinbeck, John. *The Grapes of Wrath*. Penguin Books: The Viking Press, 1939.

Steinbeck, John. *The Harvest Gypsies*. Berkeley: Heydey Books, 1936.

Stowell, Charlotte. *Step by Step making Books*. New York: Kingfisher, 1994.

All Internet Searches – Using google as the search engine, key words “depression era photographs” and “dorothea lange” yield websites that have great photographs and title and descriptive information.