

Summer Reading Take-Home Exam on *The Grapes of Wrath*

As one of your Summer Reading requirements for English III Advanced Placement next year, buy or check out from the library or from the English Department (see Mr. Sullivan in B105) a copy of *The Grapes of Wrath*, by John Steinbeck. Read the novel closely: you will have a short-answer reading exam on the entire book during the first week that you return to school. This exam will count for one major grade. **DO NOT** read discussions of the novel in *Cliff's Notes* or Wikipedia or Sparknotes.com or any other source; do not talk with anyone else about the book, including your siblings, your parents, any students also doing this assignment, or any of my former students. **You will receive a zero on this assignment if you use any source other than the book itself (except, of course, for question #6).** You will receive a zero if you give one of your classmates "help" on this assignment. *Plan on reading the book at least twice: once to get the basic plot, and a second time to examine the book's style and meaning.*

In addition to reading *The Grapes of Wrath*, I want you to complete the following take-home examination after you have read the book twice. I will take up this examination on the third day of class next fall: it will count for one major grade. **This take-home exam must be typed.** All answers should be thorough discussions of the questions I am asking, typed in complete sentences on your own paper. Please use specific examples and evidence from the novel to support your answers to these questions. Identify specific quotes with page numbers from the edition that you are using, like this: (Steinbeck 43).

1. *The Grapes of Wrath* is a literary work in which the setting is very important. What is the setting of this novel? (time period; geographical locations; political/historical context *as revealed in the book*. Remember—you're not supposed to read anything outside of the novel itself.)

2. What, according to Steinbeck in this novel, is the *proper* relationship between people and the land? How have the banks and the new owners of the land violated this relationship?

3. TRACE the evolution throughout the novel of Jim Casy's values and beliefs—his philosophy of life. (*Trace* means to use specific quotations and interpretations of those quotations from early in the book to explain what Casy's values are at the beginning of the novel, and then to give specific quotations and interpretations of those quotes from *throughout* the rest of the book that show different stages of Casy's spiritual development, as his values change or evolve in some way.) Be sure that you define clearly what Casy comes to understand about life's meaning: What does he value in life? How does he define "good"? How does he define "evil"? For Casy, how would a *good person* act in this world?

4. Using the same definition as in question #3, TRACE Tom Joad's evolving philosophy in the book. What sort of person is Tom at the beginning of the book? What is the learning process that he undergoes that eventually allows him to see himself as Casy's spiritual heir? What actions does Tom take that show him growing closer to Casy's beliefs?

5. You now have a good idea of how Jim Casy and Tom Joad change in the course of the novel. Now I want you to explain how two other important members of the Joad family—Ma and Rose of Sharon—change in the course of their experiences as migrants. Begin by showing with what concept of “family” the Joads begin their journey, and then discuss what concept of *family* they arrive at by the end of the book.

6. Read the following passages from the *King James* version of the Bible:

Exodus 2: 1-10
Matthew 21: 33-41
Deuteronomy 32: 32-35
Jeremiah 31: 29-30
Jeremiah 25: 15-16
Revelation 14: 18-20
Song of Solomon 2: 1 and 7: 7-8

(Please note: I am asking you to consult the Bible in order to help you understand the allusions Steinbeck has built into the very heart of his novel. Thus in our discussions of these passages we will use the Bible as a literary reference tool, not as a religious text. Any public library has a Bible you can use.)

Now find and read a copy of Julia Ward Howe's song “The Battle Hymn of the Republic.”

Now answer this question: What is Steinbeck's point in referring to the phrase “the grapes of wrath” throughout the novel and in using it for the title of his book? In your response, be sure to use specific quotes from

- (a) *The Grapes of Wrath*
- (b) the Bible
- (c) “The Battle Hymn of the Republic.”

7. Does the concluding scene of the book (with Rose of Sharon and the old man) seem to you to give effective closure to the novel? To answer this question, begin by explaining what, in general, an “effective” ending to any given novel would consist of: what sorts of things would have to happen at the end of a novel to give the reader a sense of completeness, of closure? Then go on to discuss the specific merits or problems of *this* particular book and *its* ending.

AS YOU ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS, PLEASE REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE TAKING AN EXAM. You will receive a zero on this assignment if you use any source other than the book itself (except, of course, for question #6). You will receive a zero if you give one of your classmates “help” on this assignment.

Mr. Sullivan
English III AP

Summer Reading: Non-Fiction

As one of your Summer Reading requirements for English III Advanced Placement next year, choose a book-length, non-fiction work from the following list of suggestions or another non-fiction work by an author on this list, or choose a college-level non-fiction work of comparable literary merit. **YOU MUST HAVE MY APPROVAL TO READ A BOOK OR AUTHOR NOT ON THIS LIST. YOU MAY CONTACT ME DURING THE SUMMER AT ARTHURSULLIVAN@nisd.net.** Please remember that I am not endorsing any of the views contained in these books.

Read the book you have chosen closely, at least twice—once to get the basic idea the author is trying to get across, and a second time to examine the author’s prose style. **DO NOT** read discussions of the book in *Cliff’s Notes* or Wikipedia or Sparknotes.com or any other source; do not talk with anyone else about the book, including your siblings, your parents, any students also doing this assignment, or any of my former students. **You will receive a zero on this assignment if you use any source other than the book itself.**

On August 30, 2007 (the fourth day of school), you will turn in to me the following:

1) *A set of 20 dialectical notebook entries, typed or handwritten on loose leaf paper, NOT in a notebook.* Your entries should consist of interpretive commentary on the book you have chosen, focusing on your author’s use of the elements of language (prose style) to convey his or her arguments. (See the handout I have included on how to do DN entries that focus on how the author uses the elements of prose style.) **Please make sure that the passages you choose to comment on are evenly distributed so that your DN entries will cover the entire work, beginning to end. (SEE THE ATTACHED SAMPLE DN ENTRIES.)** (1 major grade)

2) *A passage of at least 300 words, typed and single-spaced, from the work you have read which is a good example of the author’s use of prose style, plus an AP-type question about the passage.* As with all passages used on the AP English Language Exam, the meaning and purpose of the passage you select should be clear to someone who has not read the entire book. Xerox the passage and mount it on a piece of typing paper or scan it in to a computer or type it out yourself so that it fits on one page, as AP passages typically do. Then at the top of the page, above this passage, write a question for the passage similar to the ones on the AP exam asking a student to discuss how the author uses prose style to convey the message in the passage. **(SEE THE FOLLOWING SAMPLE QUESTIONS AND STUDENT SAMPLE.)** (2 daily grades)

There will also be an oral evaluation of your reading of your chosen book (one daily grade). When school begins I will give you a list of general-topic questions. You will choose several that apply to your book and that you feel you can talk about intelligently for several minutes. On the day we do the evaluations, I will pick a specific question for you to answer from the ones you have indicated you are prepared to talk about.

Memoir

Ayaan Hirsi Ali, *Infidel*
Russell Baker, *Growing Up*
William F. Buckley, *God and Man at Yale*
Jill Ker Conway, *The Road from Coorain*
Annie Dillard, *An American Childhood*
Isak Dinesen (Karen Blixen), *Out of Africa*
Paul Fussell, *Doing Battle*
Henry Louis Gates, *Colored People*
Maxine Hong Kingston, *The Woman Warrior*
T. E. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*
William Manchester, *Goodbye, Darkness: A Memoir of the Pacific War*
Beryl Markham, *West with the Night*
John McCain, *Faith of My Fathers*
N. Scott Momaday, *The Way to Rainy Mountain*
Azar Nafisi, *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books*
Barak Obama, *Dreams from My Father*
Richard Rodriguez, *Hunger for Memory*
Siegfried Sassoon, *Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man*
Memoirs of an Infantry Officer
Eugene Sledge, *With the Old Breed at Peleliu and Okinawa*
Tavis Smiley, *What I Know for Sure: My Story of Growing Up in America*
Gary Soto, *A Summer Life*
Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*
Booker T. Washington, *Up from Slavery*
Eudora Welty, *One Writer's Beginnings*
Tobias Wolff, *This Boy's Life*
In Pharaoh's Army
Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*
Richard Wright, *Black Boy*

Encounters with Nature

Richard E. Byrd, *Alone*
Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*
Annie Dillard, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek*
Alfred Lansing, *Endurance*
William Least Heat-Moon, *Blue Highways*
Barry Lopez, *Arctic Dreams*
John McPhee, *Annals of the Former World*
Coming into the Country
John Muir, *My First Summer in the Sierra*
James Watson, *The Double Helix*

History/Military

W.E.B. Dubois, *The Souls of Black Folk*
James M. McPherson, *Crossroads of Freedom: Antietam*
Jay Winik, *April 1865*
Garry Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*
James Bradley, *Flags of Our Fathers*
Paul Fussell, *The Boys' Crusade*
Ernie Pyle, *Brave Men*
Michael Herr, *Dispatches*
Frank Schaeffer, *Keeping Faith*
Truman Capote, *In Cold Blood*

Questions Involving Prose Style Analysis Adapted from Actual AP Exams (I have omitted the passages that follow these questions.)

- (1) In the following passage from her autobiography, Eudora Welty recalls early experiences of reading and books that had later impact on her craft as a writer of fiction. In a well-organized essay, analyze how Welty's use of language conveys the intensity and value of these experiences.
- (2) Read the following passage about Florida's Okefenokee Swamp carefully. Then write an essay in which you analyze how the distinctive style of the passage reveals the purpose of its author.
- (3) Carefully read the following passage from "Owls" by Mary Oliver. Then write an essay in which you analyze how Oliver's style conveys the complexity of her response to nature.
- (4) The following passage concludes an essay by Edward Abbey about Aravaipa Canyon in New Mexico. Read the passage carefully. Then write an essay in which you characterize Abbey's attitudes toward nature and analyze how Abbey uses the elements of language to convey those views.
- (5) Read carefully the following letter from Charles Lamb to the English romantic poet William Wordsworth. Then, paying particular attention to the tone of Lamb's letter, write an essay in which you analyze the techniques Lamb uses to decline Wordsworth's invitation.
- (6) The letter below was written in 1866 by the English novelist Marian Evans Lewes (who used the pen name George Eliot) in response to a letter from an American woman, Melusana Fay Peirce. Read the letter carefully. Then write an essay in which you analyze the elements of language Lewes uses to establish her position about the development of a writer.
- (7) Alfred M. Green delivered the following speech in Philadelphia in April 1861, the first month of the Civil War. African Americans were not yet permitted to join the Union Army, but Green felt that they should strive to be admitted to the ranks and prepare to enlist. Read the speech carefully. Then write an essay in which you analyze the methods that Green uses to persuade his fellow African Americans to join the Union forces.
- (8) The passage below is an excerpt from a letter written by the 18th century author Lord Chesterfield to his young son, who was traveling far from home. Read the passage carefully. Then, in a well-written essay, analyze how the strategies of language that Chesterfield uses to give advice to his son reveal his own values.
- (9) The passage below is from the opening of an essay, "On Seeing England for the First Time," by Jamaica Kincaid. Kincaid grew up on the Caribbean island of Antigua before it became independent from England in 1981. Read the entire passage carefully. Then write an essay analyzing the strategies Kincaid employs to convey her attitude toward England.
- (10) In 1962 the noted biologist Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring*, a book that helped to transform American attitudes toward the environment. Carefully read the following passage from *Silent Spring*. Then write an essay in which you define the main idea of the passage and analyze the elements of language that Carson uses to construct her argument.

DIALECTICAL NOTEBOOK ENTRIES ON SUMMER NON-FICTION READING

A *dialectic* is, among other things, a back-and-forth exchange of ideas that produces new knowledge. A *dialectical notebook* is a record of such an exchange—the back-and-forth conversation between you as an active, engaged reader and a given author.

As part of your summer reading assignment, write a set of 20 dialectical notebook entries, typed or handwritten on loose leaf paper, NOT in a notebook. Your entries should consist of interpretive commentary on the book you have chosen, focusing on your author’s use of the elements of language (prose style) to convey his or her argument or theme or main point. **Please make sure that the passages you choose to comment on are evenly distributed so that your DN entries will cover the entire work, beginning to end. MAKE SURE THAT YOU HAVE SEVERAL ENTRIES THAT RESPOND TO THE ENDING OF THE WORK.**

I will grade your entries by checking to see that you have done the required number of responses and that you have located the crucial elements of style and meaning in the work you are reading, and by evaluating the thoughtfulness and intelligence of your responses to those crucial elements. I will generally not deduct points for spelling or grammatical errors, but I will deduct points if your responses are overly messy and disorganized.

As you make your comments, concentrate on using the vocabulary of prose style analysis with which you are familiar: **DICTION, TONE, DETAILS, METAPHOR/SIMILE, SYMBOLISM, CONNOTATION, IMAGERY, ALLUSION, SYNTAX, SHIFT, POINT OF VIEW, PACING, REPETITION, THEME, CONTRAST, IRONY.** You will *NOT* receive credit for **ANY** questions (“Why does the author stay in Boston?”) or for making connections between the book and your own life (“The author reminds me of my dentist.”) You *will* get credit for making analytical and interpretive comments about how the author uses the elements of prose language to convey her major idea.

Also, practice using the correct way to show how specific evidence relates to a general idea:

State the general observation or assertion you want to prove.

Cite several specific examples as evidence.

Write TWO OR THREE sentences of commentary on this evidence.