

## **Why you should read The Grapes of Wrath:**

1. The Joad family is unforgettable; once readers get to know the Joads, we are compelled to finish their journey with them.
2. Steinbeck vividly, painfully, and powerfully captures an era of American history and brings it to life -- one will never forget the refugee experience of the Dust Bowl.
3. Steinbeck's description of the land and how the depression affected Americans is an excellent example of how "setting" can inhabit a novel as forcefully and substantially as a character.
4. Once the Joads reach California, the pace of the narrative picks up and the novel becomes hard to put down.

## **Why you may struggle with The Grapes of Wrath:**

1. The length!
2. It is difficult to read about the hardships of the Depression and a sense of doom pervades much of the novel.
3. Steinbeck's shifting point of view can feel preachy at times.

## **Still interested? A few suggestions before you begin...**

- **If your edition has an introduction, save it for the end. Allow yourself to experience unadulterated first impressions – as the author intended! When you finish the novel, then enjoy the introduction and experience what an “expert” believes about the novel.**
- **The novel starts out a little slow – it may help to think of the novel in three parts:**
  1. **Tom finding his parents**
  2. **The Joad's journey to California**
  3. **The Joads surviving in California**

- The Joads are originally sharecroppers. Here is a site to explain this:  
<http://mshistory.k12.ms.us/features/feature50/farmers.htm>
- The Joads are referred to as “Okies” since they are originally from Oklahoma. Here is a definition and historical context:  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Okie>
- Stunning pictures of the Dust Bowl:  
[http://www.weru.ksu.edu/new\\_weru/multimedia/dustbowl/dustbowlpics.html](http://www.weru.ksu.edu/new_weru/multimedia/dustbowl/dustbowlpics.html)