Teaching John Steinbecks The Grapes of Wrath and Of Mice and Men Employing Their Film Adaptations

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Mentor: doc. dr. sc. Biljana Oklopčić
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Osijek, 2016.

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Humanističke znanosti, filologija, teorija i povijest književnosti

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Abstract

This paper closely examines two of the most well-known literary works written by the Nobel laureate, John Steinbeck, namely *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Of Mice and Men*; in addition to the novels, the paper also analyzes three film adaptations that could be employed in the classrooms. From the ways working-class people lived during the Great Depression to the destruction of the American Dream, this study reveals why Steinbeck's novels became the challenging pieces of art.

Key words: John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath,* the Great Depression, *Of Mice and Men*, the American Dream

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to immerse the readers into the world of poor working-class people who lived during the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl in the 1930s. John Steinbeck managed to put down on paper stories about the harsh life conditions, hardships and plight of people who desperately tried to earn a decent living while wishing to live the American Dream.

The Grapes of Wrath depicts the experiences of a poor American family travelling across the Great Plains towards the Promised Land, the state of California; forced out from their home, they strive to find a new land with better farming conditions. In *Of Mice and Men*, Steinbeck introduces the reader to two migrant workers seeking jobs while saving up money so that they can one day buy a farm of their own.

Both of these realist novels chronicle the difficulties that landless people had to endure: losing their home to greedy and wealthy landowners, constant travelling, loneliness, corruption, poverty and injustice among many other things. Their dreams never come true no matter how much they strive to find their places in this cruel world.

Upon publication, Steinbeck received immediate acclaim and praise, especially from working-class people who somehow identified themselves with the protagonists appearing in the abovementioned novels (and their three film adaptations) that became timeless masterpieces which to this day are being taught in schoolrooms or college classrooms influencing and inspiring students. The highly approved and celebrated film adaptations have been released from 1939 to 1992; all three feature films stay true to the novels, one of them being an Oscar-winner.

Steinbeck's works have oftentimes been criticized, censored and/or banned from both public and school libraries as well as from school curricula, as it was claimed that the novels contain racial slurs and vulgar language among many other unethical things. *Of Mice and Men* has been challenged no less than 54 times ever since its publication in 1936, while *The Grapes of Wrath*, which is referred to as a Great American novel (such as *The Great Gatsby* or *Gone with the Wind*) was publicly burned in smaller towns across the United States of America. Notwithstanding the fact that Steinbeck's works received strong public outrage, they still remain required readings in school/college curricula along with their film adaptations employed in classrooms in the English-speaking world.

1. John Steinbeck

John Ernst Steinbeck was born on 27 February 1902 in Salinas, California, a hundred miles south of San Francisco. His father, the treasurer of Monterey County, was of German origin and his mother was of Irish origin. "The later dichotomies observed in Steinbeck, between the romantic and the hardheaded naturalist, between the dreamer and the masculine tough guy, may be partly accounted for by inheritance from the Irish and German strains of his parents" (Bergquist 32).

In high school, Steinbeck was the president of the senior class and he was a member of the basketball and track teams; he also frequently wrote stories for the school paper called *El Gabilan*, demonstrating a clear determination to become a professional writer one day. His parents knew of his fondness for words and encouraged him. Steinbeck was "reclusive in full view—John carefully positioned his desk before his bedroom window so that his literary labors could be witnessed by anyone passing the house. When he completed a piece he would rush downstairs in search of someone to whom it could be read" (Ferrell 16).

His favourite works of fiction were Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* and Mallory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*. Although he was born into a well off middle class family, during high school he had to work on ranches and as a newspaper delivery boy to make money; while working, he was able to explore the Mexican neighbourhoods of his hometown which served him as inspirations in his novels and short stories. He grew up to become an excellent storyteller, which was a great advantage when he started to write his stories and send them anonymously to several magazines.

He attended Stanford University for six years, studying marine biology but failed to take a degree; he only showed interest in courses that helped him in his writing. Steinbeck showed desire to work with his hands; it gave him great pleasure to work on a dredging crew, on ranches and in the beet harvest where he used to be among Mexican-American labourers. Later on, he ventured to New York City in 1925 and he took a job as a cub reporter for *The American*, earning 25 dollars weekly until he got fired by his employer who claimed Steinbeck's reporting failed to be objective enough.

When he returned to California in 1926, he started writing short stories again. His first story, "The Gifts of Iban," appeared in a Stanford literary magazine in 1927. He discarded two full-length novels before his very first published novel in 1929:*Cup of Gold: A Life of Sir Henry Morgan, Buccaneer, with Occasional Reference to History*, usually known only as *Cup of Gold*. In that same year, he married his first wife, Carol Henning and met Edward F. Ricketts, who shortly became one of his best friends. A year later, he began an association with a New York

literary agency, a new firm back then, that consisted of Mavis McIntosh, Elizabeth Otis, Annie Laurie Williams, Mary Squire Abbott and Mildred Lyman. He had a great relationship with the members of the agency, who were not only his bookkeepers and protectors from the public but his friends as well. Even though many famous authors often change their agents and publishers, Steinbeck remained with McIntosh and Otis for the rest of his career. His first successful novel was *Tortilla Flat*, published in 1935.

Two years later, Steinbeck reached the status of a respected author when *Of Mice and Men* was published and turned out to be a bestseller. Due to the great success, Steinbeck wrote a play based on the aforementioned novel that earned him the New York Drama Critics Circle Award in 1937. The play version contained around eighty percent of the dialogue from the novel and was shortlisted for the Pulitzer Prize but lost to Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*. On 23 November 1937, the play opened at the Music Box Theatre in New York and after 277 performances, it closed in May 1938. It received mainly positive reviews; it was called "the first completely satisfying American play of the season that tamed testy critics and tired audiences into stunned reverence" (Li and Schultz 159).

He had two failed marriages with Carol Henning, a typist, and Gwyndolyn Conger, a singer; in 1950, he married his third wife, Elaine Scott, who worked in the New York theatre community. Steinbeck left California in the 1940s and moved to Long Island, New York where he lived for the rest of his life. In 1962, he became the sixth American writer who was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature.[1] When Steinbeck accepted the Nobel Prize, he addressed the audience during his banquet speech:

> Such is the prestige of the Nobel award and of this place where I stand that I am impelled, not to squeak like a grateful and apologetic mouse, but to roar like a lion out of pride in my profession and in the great and good men who have practiced it through the ages... Humanity has been passing through a gray and desolate time of confusion. My great predecessor, William Faulkner, speaking here, referred to it as a tragedy of universal fear so long sustained that there were no longer problems of the spirit, so that only the human heart in conflict with itself seemed worth writing about... The ancient commission of the writer has not changed. He is charged with exposing our many grievous faults and failures, with dredging up to the light our dark and dangerous dreams for the purpose of improvement. Furthermore, the writer is delegated to declare and to celebrate

[1] The others were William Faulkner, Pearl Buck, Sinclair Lewis, Ernest Hemingway, and Eugene O'Neill

> man's proven capacity for greatness of heart and spirit, for gallantry in defeat, for courage, compassion, and love. In the endless war against weakness and despair, these are the bright rally-flags of hope and of emulation. I hold that a writer, who does not passionately believe in the perfectibility of man, has no dedication nor any membership in literature... Man himself has become our greatest hazard and our only hope…

Steinbeck firmly declared in his speech that back in those dreary times, the only thing that was worth writing about was people's hardships and struggle, and that every author should believe in people's capability of improvement and perfection.

Other awards that he received during his lifetime were the Pulitzer Prize in 1940 (for *The Grapes of Wrath*) and the United States' Presidential Medal for Freedom in 1964.

It has been suggested by several critics that Steinbeck's strengths include "his sympathy for the disenfranchised, moral urgency, and narrative propulsion, whereas his weaknesses are repetitiveness, simplistic politics, and sentimentality" (Li and Schultz 112).

Steinbeck stopped writing fiction novels after 1962. When he wrote a report for *Newsday* about the ongoing Vietnam War, the public accused him for being a warmonger. On 20 December 1968, John Steinbeck died of a heart attack at the age of 66. His family buried his ashes in his hometown Salinas, California.

2. *The Grapes of Wrath*

2.1. The Context

The stock market crash (also known as the Black Thursday) happened on 24 October 1929 resulting in the ruination of millions of Americans. It was followed by high rates of unemployment and poverty; people were unable to pay their debts. To make things even worse, a severe drought (the dust bowl) occurred in the 1930s hitting many states, from the Dakotas to Texas. Most of the farmers had to sell their farms or the banks simply took them away from their owners. In 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt, the newly elected president started an economic recovery program (labelled as the New Deal), which mainly focused on how to solve the problems of the depression.

During the autumn of 1933, John Steinbeck encountered numerous old cars coming from Oklahoma fully packed with furniture and other personal possessions; after conversing with some of the family members, it turned out that they were bound west toward California, in search of a better fortune. Most people were "migrating along a 'belt' that extended from the Brazos Bottoms in Texas north to Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and from Minnesota west to the state of Washington" (Loftis 159).

Steinbeck's deep interest in and fascination with the migrant workers, whose numbers were estimated to be around four hundred thousand, lasted for more than a decade; in August 1936, it was George West, the editor of the *San Francisco News*, who asked Steinbeck to write about the migrant workers' conditions in California. He used to drive around in an old bakery truck so that he could look inconspicuous while working with official members of the government's Resettlement Administration. Eric H. Thomsen, the regional director in the San Joaquin Valley helped Steinbeck drawing comparisons between the migrant workers' lives in government camps and their lives on their own. Steinbeck also met Tom Collins who was the manager of one of the so called "demonstration camps"; these camps were designed so that they could serve as blueprints for the local government. The writer was so inspired by Collins that he later dedicated *The Grapes of Wrath* to him.

In December 1937, Steinbeck started to write a novel, entitled *The Oklahomans* but he soon abandoned the idea. From February to May of the following year, he started to write another novel, called *L'Affaire Lettuceberg*, which was about the citizens of his hometown, Salinas, who "were responsible for the violence that erupted during a lettuce strike there"

(Burkhead 72). He was not satisfied with this work either, and he eventually burned the whole manuscript.

The Grapes of Wrath was published on 14 March 1939. The novel depicts the calamitous effects of the era that has been called the Great Depression. Shortly upon release, around 2500 copies of the novel had been sold daily; it was a tremendously high number due to the fact that the 1930s were tough economic times. By the end of the year, more than a half million copies were sold. The astounding response to the novel genuinely surprised the author, who immediately became a public sensation.

The Grapes of Wrath is the third novel in his Labour Trilogy (following *In Dubious Battle* and *Of Mice and Men*). Steinbeck dedicates his novel to his first wife, Carol Henning Steinbeck Brown, and to his friend, Tom Collins, who worked as a camp manager in the Arvin Sanitary Camp ("Weedpatch"); this camp and similar other camps were "intended to relieve the misery of agricultural labor in California" (Li and Schultz 102). Steinbeck visited these camps and wrote seven articles, called "The Harvest Gypsies", which dealt with the migrant workers' miserable lives. A year before *The Grapes of Wrath*, Steinbeck wrote a satirical novella, *L'Affaire Lettuceberg*, which had a unique style: the chapters of narrative alternated with explanatory chapters (also called intercalary chapters or interchapters). *L'Affair Lettuceberg* was never published because Steinbeck decided that it was not good enough, and he eventually burned the manuscript.

As for the structure of the novel, Ricardo Astro notes that the novel's overall structure is shaped by Steinbeck's Phalanx theory, "which controls individual men" and "can achieve ends beyond the reach of individual men" (Li and Schultz 112); prior to writing *The Grapes of Wrath*, Steinbeck wrote an essay, "Argument of Phalanx", where he elaborates on the individual-group relationship: he claims that there are certain differences between an individual when he is on his own and when he is a part of a group. In Steinbeck's fiction, a group is a unit with intent, a method and a reaction which does not resemble the exact same things possessed by the persons who establish a group.

In letters addressed to his friends Carlton A. Scheffield and George Albee, Steinbeck further discussed his Phalanx theory, stating that the aforementioned groups are some kind of 'greater beasts,' "controlling their unit-men with an iron discipline... And the phalanx has emotions of which the unit man is incapable. Emotions of destruction, of war, of migration, of hatred, of fear" (Steinbeck, "A Life in Letters" 154).

The title of the novel comes from Julia Ward Howe's lyrics to the song "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," written in 1861: "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord / He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored / He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword / His truth is marching on."

Steinbeck writes at the end of the 25th interchapter: "...and in the eyes of the people there is the failure; and in the eyes of the hungry there is a growing wrath. In the souls of the people the grapes of wrath are filling and growing heavy, growing heavy for the vintage" (Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath* 476). Here, 'grapes of wrath' serves as a lament for those children who died of starvation while fruits rot around them.

2.2. The Setting

In the late 1930s, the protagonists of the novel, the Joads, travel on Highway 66, from Oklahoma to California; most of the plot happens in the San Joaquin Valley that is located east of the Long Valley (which is close to Steinbeck's hometown, Salinas) and the Gabilan Mountains. The setting is ironized because the novel deals with social and economic problems that affected people during the Great Depression in a very rich agricultural area, which to the Joads initially seems like the Garden of Eden. However, it is not the 'Promised Land' they have hoped for: when the family finally arrives in California, setting up the camp in Hooverville, their image of the American Eden is distorted, unrealistic.

The novel opens by describing the vast barrenness of Oklahoma: it is a huge farm country with only a few clouds and low precipitation. In the very first chapter, the "landscape and people are described in sweeping and poetic language, heavy with alliteration and metaphor and mythic in its largeness" (Burkhead 74). It presents "the creation story, or cosmogony, of all those who are displaced by drought, industrial progress, and economic depression" (Burkhead 74).

Most of the novel's plot happens in open spaces; migrant families meet other migrant families and they all travel in their cars and trucks towards California, which represents a promising place of colour and new life. In the very first chapter, we fail to meet any major or even minor characters; the chapter only deals with the Dust Bowl that occurred in the US during the 1930s (the "Dirty Thirties") which gives the novel some historical background: thick dust, also called black blizzards, completely destroyed the farmers' corn crops and made people wear goggles if they dared to go outside. The inhabitants had no prior knowledge or experience of this phenomenon; the storms were caused by drought and wind erosion because the farmers failed to

correctly apply the dryland farming methods that would have prevented the blizzards that plagued the lands in and around Oklahoma. The arrival of the dust storms was only the beginning of the workers' misfortunes; the author created a sense of hopelessness and misery while describing these events and the readers get the impression that things will soon become even worse.

The Grapes of Wrath contains thirty chapters; Steinbeck uses a technique where the odd-numbered chapters (interchapters) address the setting and add historical background in a descriptive way; neither major nor minor characters are present in the sixteen interchapters (which are one-sixth of the novel), although they occasionally consist of brief dialogues. Some scholars say the use of interchapters "is reminiscent of the medieval mystery play which dramatized Bible stories and made them real to common people" (Davis 51) and they have "unified and strengthened the whole in theme by the imagery and recurrent motifs deployed in them" (Davis 111).

2.3. The Point of View

The novel is narrated by an omniscient narrator who sympathizes with the poor working class people as well as with the migrant workers. The points of view dramatically shift between chapters; sometimes the narrator focuses on the Joads, and sometimes the narrator gives historical analyses and chronicles events happening to a larger group of people (migrants).

The narrator occasionally enters the minds of displaced farmers or salesmen, voicing their problems and concerns; their utterances shift from sounding too simple to highly poetic. When the narrator describes the Joads and their adventures, he sounds very objective without giving too much attention to just one family member.

The readers have the feeling that they are right there among the Joads as observers, hearing their conversations and witnessing their actions and all the things that happen to them. On the other hand, the narrator sometimes explains the characters' thought processes, wishes, psychologies, motivations and dreams in a very detailed fashion.

2.4. The Themes

One of the most important themes of *The Grapes of Wrath* is the journey and search for a better life; Steinbeck writes a story about a migrant American family while using lots of biblical allusions. The Joads are travelling towards the 'Promised Land', a biblical Eden, where they can work and live in harmony and peace with other people; an ex-preacher accompanies them on their journey, Jim Casy, who acts as a Christ figure in the novel and even has the same initials like Jesus Christ. The novel's structure closely reflects the three parts of the exodus account found in the Old Testament: the captivity, the journey, and the Promised Land. Lots of events occurring in the novel are similar to those happening in both the Old Testament and the New Testament; the twelve Joads (like the twelve apostles or the twelve tribes of Israel) leave their homes so they can embark on a journey as they mount their truck the way the animals mount Noah's bark, two by two: "the rest swarmed up on top of the load, Connie and Rose of Sharon, Pa and Uncle John, Ruthie and Winfield, Tom and the preacher. Noah stood on the ground looking up at the great load of them sitting on top of the truck" (Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath* 27).

In the Old Testament, Lot[2] has a wife who cannot handle the idea of a new life and eventually dies just like Tom's grandfather who gets buried while Tom quotes Lot from the Bible. Uncle John acts like the biblical Ananias[3], who selfishly keeps his money and does not share it with the others so that he can satisfy his own wishes. There are many other biblical allusions that do not follow patterns although their frequency tells us that the Joads' plight is very similar to the Hebrew people's plight; they are led by Tom who shares similarities with Moses; he killed a man and he was away from his family for some time until he finally rejoined them and became their leader. His younger brother Al (like Moses' brother Aaron) serves as a 'vehicle' to him (Al drives the truck while Aaron is Moses' spokesman).

The parallel eventually shifts from the Old Testament to the New Testament when Tom changes his role and becomes a disciple of Casy's gospel. There are many parallels between Jim Casy and Jesus Christ: when Tom encounters him for the first time, Casy meditates in the wilderness; he seeks justice, and at the end of the novel, he sacrifices himself while telling his persecutors: "You don' know what you're a-doin'" (Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath* 478). Casy's last words remind us of Jesus Christ's last words on the cross.

[2] A righteous man of God who appears in chapters 11, 14, and 19 in the biblical Book of Genesis
[3] Ananias was a member of the Christian church, mentioned in the fifth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles; he died suddenly after lying to the apostles because he did not share his money with them

After Casy's demise, Tom is willing to continue Casy's work, saying that he will be "ever'where – wherever you look. Wherever they's a fight so hungry people can eat, I'll be there. Wherever they's a cop beatin' up a guy, I'll be there ... God, I'm talkin' like Casy" (Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath* 497). Tom's reassuring words resemble those found in the Bible, spoken by Jesus Christ: "... and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). Harold Bloom claims that "Tom's speech to Ma reflects that he has finally picked up the yoke that Casy has left for him, suggesting that for Tom, this new world of struggle requires attention to community more than attention to family" (42).

The Grapes of Wrath ends by combining three major biblical symbols during the flood when the Joads seek shelter in a dry barn: the Old Testament deluge (Noah's ark), the New Testament stable (the barn), and the ritual of Communion (when Rose of Sharon feeds the man). The very end of the novel also follows the biblical allusions present throughout the novel as Rose of Sharon and the man imitate the Madonna and child. Yet, this "imitation of the Madonna and child is a grotesque one for it reflects a grotesque world without painless answers, a world where men are hit by axe handles and children suffer from skitters. Steinbeck does not promise Paradise for the Joads" (Davis 47). The Joads' journey and search for better life is, too, characterized by "education" and "transformation."For example, Rose of Sharon, who is the most selfish character in the novel "transforms ... energy to a love of family and then, at the end, transcends even that of love" (Bloom 45). The Joads do not enjoy their new life but they have certainly learned their lesson by the end of their journey. Davis suggests that "their education is complete; they have transcended familial prejudices. What happens to them now depends on the ability of the rest of society to learn the lesson that the Joads have learned" (31).

The second most important theme is the power of the family and its eventual breakup, which can be regarded as one of the biggest tragedies in *The Grapes of Wrath*. The novel tells us a story about a big family consisting of twelve people, their friend and their dog. The story focuses on the Joads; however, it also depicts the lives of other migrant families. The Joads' true kinship is established through their loyalty, caring and love for one another. When they lose and leave their home, the Joads also lose their sense of identity which they strive to rediscover during their adventures. They also want to establish new connections and help other migrant people who are like them. They are inclined to help the Wilsons by fixing their car and travelling together, eventually emerging as one large family. Ma is of the strong belief that "if you're in trouble or hurt or in need – go to poor people. They're the only ones that'll help – the only ones" (Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath* 483). Fredric I. Carpenter notes that "the new moral of the

novel is that the love of all people – if it be unselfish – may even supersede the love of family" (321).

Then the misfortunes start to happen. A car runs over the Joads' dog and it perishes on the road; Grampa and Grandma die later on as well. Noah decides to leave the family because he does not wish to be a burden anymore and wants to live by the river. Connie selfishly leaves his pregnant wife, Rose of Sharon; Pa loses his spirit to be the head of the family and cedes authority to his wife; Uncle John starts to drink heavily, thinking he brings misfortune on the family. Jim Casy, who becomes a very good friend to the Joads, is murdered by the mob leader. Al frequently goes away to be with a girl; Tom must hide because he murdered a man, and near the end, Rose of Sharon gives birth to a dead baby. The breakage of the family circle can be regarded as the ultimate defeat; Davis notes that "some of these losses are inevitable and unavoidable, others are the result of too great an individual weakness, but each tends to lessen the fierce family loyalty and will that carry the Joads through their trials and loneliness" (18).

Unlike the rest of the family, Ma is the character who will do anything to keep the family together because she knows that they are weak if they are on their own. She is the one who notes that the family gradually falls apart and she expresses her concerns to Tom after he murders a deputy: "there was a time when we was on the lan'. They was a boundary to us then... An' no we ain't clear no more... We're crackin' up, Tom. There ain't no family now" (Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath* 503).

2.5. The Symbols

Steinbeck frequently uses animal imagery in his novels; in *The Grapes of Wrath*, he mentions a mule, a cat, a dog and a turtle. Muley Graves, the Joads neighbour in Oklahoma, is an old man who refuses to abandon his home so his family leaves without him; he stubbornly says that the bank cannot take away what is his, and because of his stubbornness, he reminds us of a mule. The second animal, the Joads' cat, goes berserk and like Muley Graves, it stays in Oklahoma. The third animal is the Joads' dog that they bring along while travelling west; unfortunately the dog perishes when a speeding car hits him; this is the start (a foreshadowing) of all the problems the Joads will encounter during their adventure towards the 'Promised Land.' The fourth animal, the turtle appears in the third chapter. It parallels and foreshadows the events happening to the Joad family: the turtle slowly trudges southwest, seeking a better environment like the Joads; the highway presents an obstacle for either party (the Joads' overloaded Hudson

truck moves as fast as a turtle). The turtle is also a very good metaphor for migrants in general, who are barely surviving while moving towards west, out of the dry areas. On the other hand, there are also differences between them: we cannot tell where the turtle is going or what it is going to do when it finally arrives to its destination; the Joads know their destination however, they leave their home reluctantly and they feel nostalgic about it.

Steinbeck gives a physical description of Casy that resembles that of the turtle's: "long head, bony, tight of skin, and set on a neck as stringy and muscular as a celery stalk ... heavy protruding eyeballs with lids stretched to cover them" (Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath* 25). The turtle is able to withdraw its head when the truck swerves to hit it but Casy unfortunately does not have a protective shell when the mob leader hits him on the head with a pick; according to Stuart L. Burns, the "turtle survives because it expands its energies totally in its self-interest; Casy dies because he devotes his energies to helping others" (70).

Another major symbol in *The Grapes of Wrath* is water; both its absence and its abundance cause troubles for the Joads. A passage from the Old Testament describes the Garden of Eden as a place where the water flows freely and bounty of all kinds lay ready to come out of the ground; this is the kind of place the Joads are looking for. The ecological disaster that happened in the south caused lands to be dry (drought) which prevented the men living there to work on their fields and provide for their families.

David N. Cassuto argues that *The Grapes of Wrath* "represents an indictment of the American myth of the garden and its accompanying myth of the frontier" (141); even though the Joads are very reluctant to leave their land, they are eagerly looking forward to live in a much better place where they could pick and eat peaches and oranges that grow in abundance. While travelling, the Joads do not enjoy refreshing treatments granted by something as simple as water, which dehumanizes the entire family. Water becomes an absent signifier of commodity and wealth; the tragic absence of it in the first part of the novel makes it very powerful. However, as the Joads come closer to 'the promised land', they can finally bathe in the river in Arizona, and later on use the restroom found in the government camp in California. They will not enjoy the presence of water for very long; a flooding occurs (the climax of the novel) which is a counterpoint to the drought that made the family leave their home; "disenfranchised and dehumanized, the Joads can only curse the rising floodwaters even as they once prayed for a deluge to feed their parched crops" (Cassuto 142). During the flood, Rose of Sharon gives birth to a dead baby who later floats on the flooding river like Moses in the Bible.

2.6. The Motifs

Among a few recurring motifs in *The Grapes of Wrath*, the motif of leadership is the most complex one. The Joads follow the traditional family structure where the men make decisions and the women obey them; before the migration, Grampa acts as the head of the family even though he is clearly not fit for that role due to his old age. When the family packs and leaves, Grampa suffers a major stroke and dies; Pa succeeds him as the head of the family but only for a short while. Pa gets discouraged because of his many failures and refuses to be the leader of the family thus the dynamic of the family changes when Ma assumes that role. She is the one who decides what is good for her family either by threatening them or pleading them. When Pa shockingly realizes he has lost his authority, he makes idle threats to his wife although nobody takes them seriously. The family structure gradually undergoes a revolution by the end of the novel; Ma takes full control over family matters while her husband eventually retreats and spends his days thinking. This change of roles parallels with the one occurring in the government camp, Weedpatch, where instead of being under the watchful eyes of the law enforcement, the residents create their own rules, share the camp duties among them, meanwhile demanding that everyone is to be treated fairly and equally.

3. *Of Mice and Men*

3.1. The Context

In the second half of the 19th century, agriculture became the leading industry in California; unfortunately, it was plagued by labour problems. Lots of territories were taken over by commercial growers, and family farmers eventually began to lose their lands. When Steinbeck started working on farms (he worked on the Spreckels Sugar Ranches), he was able to observe the labourers' difficulties; he was so influenced by the Japanese, Filipino and Mexican labourers that one of his short stories ("Fingers of Cloud") takes place in a Filipino work gang's bunkhouse; *Tortilla Flat* deals with the *paisanos*, Spanish-Mexican people and the main protagonist in *The Wayward Bus* (1947) is a Mexican Indian named Juan Chicoy. While living in Mexico City with his wife Carol, Steinbeck noted that the poor, landless people were struggling in their lives (the itinerant workers' wages ranged from $2.50 to $3 a day) while trying to have their own lands: this notion of owning a ranch is the recurring dream in *Of Mice and Men*, which also "portrays the marginalized existence of California farmworkers" (Li and Schultz 156-157). Starting from the very first page, the author "creates an atmosphere of presentiment and of foreordained outcomes" (Li and Schultz 157).

Steinbeck initially entitled his sixth novel as *Something That Happened* but he was later convinced either by his first wife, Carol or by his best friend Edward Ricketts to change the title. The novel has a play in a novella form (Steinbeck invented the term called 'play-novelette'): it is straightforward with extensive dialogue written in a sequential style. One of the main reasons Steinbeck chose to write this way was because he wanted the working poor to read it.

Steinbeck wrote three successful novels during the 1930s that deal with farm workers (*In Dubious Battle, Of Mice and Men,* and *The Grapes of Wrath*); all three differ in conception and tone. While in *In Dubious Battle,* the action of the crowds during a farm strike is the major plot element, in *Of Mice and Men*, Steinbeck focuses on a narrow framework: he tells a story that involves only a few people. *Of Mice and Men* served Steinbeck as an experiment: at that time, he wanted to write for theatres. The subject of *Of Mice and Men* is not that controversial as in his previous novel; it depicts the isolation from society of men, who once "belonged to a group that was fast disappearing from the American scene" (Loftis 159).

The title of the novel was taken from Robert Burns' poem, "To a Mouse", written in 1785. 'Of mice and men' is mentioned in the seventh stanza of the poem: "But Mousie, thou art no thy-lane / In proving foresight may be vain / The best laid schemes o' Mice an' Men / Gang

aft agley / An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain / For promis'd joy." The third and fourth line in modern English are often translated as "The best-laid plans of mice and men / Often go awry". The poem itself "gives emphasis to the idea of the futility of human endeavour or the vanity of human wishes" (Goldhurst 68). In the poem, Burns "extends the mouse's experience to include that of mankind: in *Of Mice and Men*, Steinbeck extends the experience of two migrant workers to the human condition" (Lisca 58).

The three things that make *Of Mice and Men* so great are its simple characters, simple language and simple techniques. Steinbeck enjoys juxtaposing the natural world 'of mice' and the human world 'of men.' The protagonists seek independence so that they do not have to work for anyone; they are striving to buy their own ranch and tend to their own animals. Since the characters are quite poor, they are almost reduced to animals; Lennie is described as an imbecilic bear while George is described as a scheming rodent. Since the two are nothing alike, they create some kind of a balance: while one sees innocence, the other sees suspicion. George often states his wish to be alone but deep inside he knows that while having Lennie around him, he is not as lonely as the other ranch hands he encounters.

The majority of the characters can be considered stereotypes: Crooks embodies the stereotypes of Uncle Tom and Jim Crow; George is a cynical, scheming man while Lennie is a clumsy innocent. Steinbeck is also able to quickly build tension; while at the campsite, the atmosphere is relatively calm and peaceful; at the ranch the two protagonists immediately get scrutinized and suspected of a foul play by their boss and violently threatened by their boss's son. Ironically, Lennie is the one who first notices and remarks that "this ain't no good place" (Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men* 14). The tone of the novel also changes regularly; it tends to be sentimental (George's friendship with Lennie), doomed (Lennie frequently but accidentally killing living creatures which foreshadows Curley's wife's fate), fatalistic (Curley's wife demise), and tragic (when George reluctantly murders his best friend).

From the feminist standpoint, *Of Mice and Men* features sexist elements because it sheds negative light on women. Curley's wife's name is never revealed in the novella even though she plays an important role; she is the major female troublemaker who got married too soon to a man who neglects her. Her loneliness and her need for affection indirectly end Lennie's life. She is described by Candy as a desperate and lonely 'tramp.' Every worker stays away from her because she is meddlesome and nobody wants to lose his job. Her name is never mentioned because she is Curley's 'possession'; he always refers to her as 'my wife' in front of his employees because he wants to remind them of the fact that she is his wife and he 'owns' her

thus the workers only refer to her as ‘Curley’s wife.’ She represents those women who live with abusive, possessive men.

The girl in the red dress is mentioned briefly in the first chapter: she ran away from Lennie in terror because she thought he tried to rape her although he just wanted to touch her dress and pet it like a mouse; notwithstanding the fact that the girl obviously either mistakenly or deliberately exaggerated her side of the story, George and Lennie had to hide in an irrigation ditch while men were looking for them. Their forced escape from the ranch and Lennie’s demise at the end *Of Mice and Men* can be considered as partially the girl’s fault.

Apart from the negative portrayal of Curley’s wife and the girl in the red dress, prostitutes are also mentioned in the novel; women ‘working’ in a so called ‘whorehouse’ which the men visit occasionally. When Candy admits to Crooks that George, Lennie and he have enough money to buy their own farm, Crooks shockingly says that he “never seen a guy really do it ... I seen guys nearly crazy with loneliness for land, but ever’time a whore house or a blackjack game took what it takes” (Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men* 78). If we are to believe Crooks, then this statement means that women are partially the reason why hard-working, desperate farm workers cannot buy their own farms: they spend their hard-earned money on women in brothels.

Even though *Of Mice and Men* is a literary classic, it was challenged and banned for more than twenty years in the United States of America; lots of people found Steinbeck’s writing to be offensive. There are several reasons why the novella was banned and this section will name all of them.

The first reason for the banning was its language; vulgar words are often used, mainly in dialogues throughout the whole novel. The inappropriate language tries to mirror the way people spoke in the 1930s. It is questionable whether Steinbeck was really able to truly reflect the vernacular of the working-class people.

The second reason is the vivid descriptions of racism and racial segregation; Crooks, the only African-American character in the novella is quite often verbally abused and segregated from the Caucasian workers. His rights are limited, he is often spoken down to and he is treated far worse than the rest of them; he is also forbidden to express his thoughts and prohibited from playing any games. Adding Crooks to the story was necessary because with him Steinbeck truly helped the readers imagine how people behaved towards African-American people: it is a part of the American history that Steinbeck is trying to teach us in his novella.

The third reason is probably the way the female character, Curley’s wife is portrayed (whose name is never mentioned in the novella because she represents all women of the era in

general) and the way she is treated by other male characters, who choose not to interact with her because they believe she will only get them into trouble. She is an immoral woman who is frequently called a "tart" throughout the novella. Curley's wife is treated similarly to the way Crooks is treated; by having a mistreated and ignored female character in the story, Steinbeck reveals to the reader the way most women were treated in the past and the way they felt: lonely, neglected and disrespected.

The fourth and last reason is the presence of euthanasia: the first form of euthanasia occurs when Carlson shoots Candy's dog due to the fact that it was very old and suffered every day; the second form of euthanasia happens at the end of the story, when George decides to shoots Lennie so that he would not undergo unimaginable torture and pain inflicted by vengeance-seeking Curley. Many readers consider this as an act of crime and this is frequently debated in classrooms.

Overall, Steinbeck successfully employed symbolic settings (Soledad=solitude), designed a creative and unique figurative language and used animal imagery (e.g. mice, rabbits, Candy's dog). *Of Mice and Men* is an almost dismissed piece of art that has become one of the most widely read and acclaimed American novels ever created. It is a required reading in many high school literature courses; it is an American classic that is still debated and analyzed in classrooms to this day.

3.2. The Setting

Of Mice and Men is a simple story that takes place in exactly three days: from Thursday evening to Sunday evening in the 1930s. "Each chapter begins as an act in a play would, with narration functioning to set the scene, describe the characters, establish the tone, and then letting the characters enter to act and react" (Bloom 19).

The author begins the very first chapter by establishing the setting which is almost like a vision of Eden: sycamores and willows near the Salinas River in California; this scene attempts to "evoke the sense of freedom in nature which, for a moment only, the protagonists will enjoy" (Spilka 80). Soledad (solitude in English) is mentioned in the very first sentence; the second chapter's action happens in a bunkhouse on a ranch; migrant workers are working on a barley field. Every scene happens at the ranch (boss's house, bunkhouse, Crook's room) with the exception of the first and the last scene that happens at the clearing by the river which suggests the 'circle of life' phenomenon: the story ends where it started.

3.3. The Point of View

The novella is narrated by a third-person omniscient narrator who chronicles events that happened in three days, from Thursday to Saturday somewhere south of Soledad in California, during the 1930s. The narrator accurately describes places, objects and characters (these descriptions are similar to stage directions) and can shift points of view of all the characters depicted in the novella.

3.4. The Themes

Three thematic patterns occur regularly in Steinbeck's works and these are: group life, religiosity and the non-teleological thinking. There are no lone wolves in Steinbeck's novels; every character belongs to or lives in a certain group of people. George and Lenny always travel and work together; later they share the same bunkhouse with other itinerant workers and most of the actions occurring in the novel are performed by a group of individuals.

As for religiosity, Steinbeck himself was not a religious person even though he frequently used biblical references; in *Of Mice and Men*, the author draws a parallel between George and Lennie and Cain and Abel meanwhile posing a question to the readers just like Cain poses a question to God in the Old Testament: "am I my brother's keeper?" (Genesis 4:9)

The non-teleological thinking is explained by Burkhead in her book, *Student Companion to John Steinbeck*:

> Nonteleological thinking restricts all answers to questions about the world to what can be demonstrated through natural explanations. It is scientific thinking that does not allow unverifiable possibilities, such as God, to answer questions of cause or effect. In *Of Mice and Men*, the reasons for the tragedies of Lennie's life and his death are not offered as mysteries to be solved. The narrative focus is restricted to the events occurring in the story. (15)

In addition to the three dominant themes, *Of Mice and Men* also addresses the themes of loneliness, the relationship between men and nature, and the American Dream. The theme of loneliness is depicted in both an outspoken and a subtle fashion; in the very first sentence, Steinbeck mentions Soledad, which is a city that is in Monterey County, California and is around forty kilometres southeast of Steinbeck's hometown, Salinas. The interesting thing is that Soledad translates to 'solitude' in English. The majority of the novella's characters are itinerant

farm workers; during the Great Depression in America, these workers were constantly looking for work, travelling from one ranch to the other which did not allow them to have a fixed home: they only carried a few personal possessions in their bags, they shared bunk houses with total strangers, they worked for demanding bosses and their employments were only for a short time.

George exclaims that "guys like us, that work on ranches, are the loneliest guys in the world. They got no family. They don't belong no place" (Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men* 15). George and Lennie are not as lonely as the other people they encounter because they have each other; they have established a strong bond during their travelling. Although the two have different personalities (George, the suspicious and Lennie, the innocent), they complete each other in a way that makes them different from the rest of the workers, who are solitary, miserable men.

George has paternal feelings toward Lennie, and he feels that it is his duty to protect Lennie from harm. George tends to believe that he and Lennie are different from the other workers because they have a future: the two share a dream of having their own farm one day; they are not like the others, who seek joy in drinking, in gambling and in prostitutes and who barely even know each other's names. While staying at the ranch, George tends to play a game of solitaire which foreshadows his decision at the end of the novel to become a 'lone wolf.'

Another theme occurring in *Of Mice and Men* is the relationship between men and nature. To George and Lennie, nature offers relative safety and it is like an earthly paradise to them; George instructs Lennie that if something bad happens to him, he should come to campsite in the thickets so that he can be safe: "coming to a cave or thicket by the river symbolizes a retreat from the world to a primeval innocence" (Lisca 54). Every time the two leave this imaginary Eden, they are bound to get into trouble. The snake that is mentioned in the first chapter foreshadows the evil which the protagonists will run into later on while being in human society.

The author juxtaposes the human (social) world and the natural world (of mice) suggested by the title itself; he often draws comparisons and shows the reader that the two can be very similar: Lennie acts like a dull bear, dragging his feet "the way a bear drags his paws" (Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men* 2) and makes insincere plans to run off and live in a cave, while George is a quiet, calculating rodent-like man.

Most of the characters in the novel dream of the American Dream; Curley's wife wishes to be a famous actress; George and Lennie want to own their own farm, where Lennie could tend to his rabbits; Candy shares the dream of owning a farm one day while Crooks would like to garden. The main reason why George keeps telling Lennie about having their own farm is to make Lennie less insecure; by telling a story about the ranch and the rabbits, Lennie becomes

more determined and joyous thus creating less trouble for either himself or George. The readers sense even at the beginning of the novel that George's story is nothing more than a fable, a children's story; this notion changes when George actually has a farm in mind, saying that "the ol' people that owns it is flat bust an' the ol' lady needs an operation" and that the land costs "six hundred dollars" (Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men* 59). By mentioning an actual farm, the reader becomes less doubtful of George and Lennie's dream; the protagonists' enthusiasm and determination create a sympathetic feeling towards them. At the end we arrive to the conclusion that even though everybody desires certain things in their lives, their wishes unfortunately do not always come true thus showing the death of their American Dream.

3.5. The Symbols

There are many symbols present in the novella. The primary symbol is the campsite by the river where the novella begins and ends. The narrator describes the place: groves, willow thickets, high grass and caves. This very spot by the river evokes in George and Lennie a sense of brief but complete freedom in nature and serves as a safe retreat from society. This is the place where we first hear George telling his wish of owning a "little house an' a couple of acres" (Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men* 14). Out of this story emerges the second symbol, the rabbits; through synecdoche, the rabbits also stand for the 'safe place', especially to Lennie, who while thinking of the rabbits, also thinks about a safe environment where people cannot hurt him. The mice, the puppy and Curley's hand are also symbols that foreshadow tragic happenings; due to Lennie's extraordinary strength, he crushes the rabbits, which makes the readers guess that the same thing will happen to the symbolic rabbits as well. However, Lennie never physically crushes the rabbits but he crushes the idea that the rabbits represent: the American Dream. Ironically and tragically, the 'safe place' by the river becomes a murder site.

Another important symbol in the novella is women who always cause some kind of harm to men. At the beginning of the story, George twice mentions the girl with the red dress whom Lennie 'touched'; the girl panicked and her family and friends chased George and Lennie off their lands. The only female character who actually speaks during the course of the novel is Curley's wife (her name is never revealed), an immoral yet very lonesome young woman who married too early to an aggressive man who neglects her (Curley uses her to fulfil his sexual appetite, hence the glove full of Vaseline). When the men's dream almost come true (even the cynical Crooks becomes optimistic), it is Curley's wife who shatters their dream by "bringing

with her the harsh realities of the outside world and by arousing Lennie's interests" (Lisca 56). Lennie accidentally kills Curley's wife and escapes from Curley's wrath although he eventually gets shot by his best friend at the end of the novella.

Lastly, there is certain symbolism in the parallel between George and Lennie, and Candy and his dog. The dog is described as "a dragfooted sheepdog ... with pale, blind old eyes ... got no teeth, he's all stiff with rheumatism" (Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men* 49). George and Candy see their companions as gentle beings and they watch out for and protect them even though they sometimes cause nuisance. Interestingly, only George and Candy see some kind of a value and purpose in their companions. Eventually Carlson, with Candy's permission, takes out the dog and shoots him; this event is also a foreshadowing of an event that will happen at the end of the novella. Later on, Candy's remark on the subject was: "I ought to of shot that dog myself, George. I shouldn't have let no stranger shoot my dog" (Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men* 61). To George, this statement resurfaces around the end of the novella when he considers his options regarding Lennie's future. Candy regretfully states that he should not have allowed a stranger to kill his old, decrepit dog; this exact remark worries George while sitting at the riverside: he cannot let strangers murder his friend.

3.6. The Motifs

Steinbeck employs a number of different motifs in *Of Mice and Men*. To begin with, there is the motif of strength, which in the novel takes many different forms. Lennie possesses extraordinary physical strength (he crushes mice and a puppy in the story). George describes Lennie to their boss as "ain't [much of a talker], but he's sure a hell of a good worker. Strong as a bull" (Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men* 11). Curley, who is a foil to Lennie, is a brutish, violent tempered lightweight boxing champion yet his true strength comes from the inside: he is an authoritative, controlling person who is very determined to bring down Lennie at the first chance he gets. George and Candy also possess inner strengths: they are scheming individuals whose desires are to live the American Dream. The characters' lives change drastically, especially Lennie's and George's, whose strengths are diminished by one woman's desperate cry for human companionship; Lennie's great physical strength turns out to be useless and he becomes defenceless when his best friend reluctantly ends his life at the end of the novella.

Loneliness is not only a theme but a recurring motif in the story; many characters state that they suffer from utter loneliness; the migrant workers do not have families or loved ones.

They live among strangers for a brief period of time, and then they pack their few possessions and start looking for work again. The characters in the novel do not have true companions; Crooks admits that "a guy needs somebody – to be near him ... a guy goes nuts if he ain't got nobody ... a guy gets too lonely an' he gets sick" (Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men* 64). When Lennie tells Curley's wife that he is not supposed to talk to her, she states that "I never get to talk to nobody. I get awful lonely" (Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men* 85). Due to the fact that she secretly despises and hates her husband, she often searches for companionship but the workers refuse to talk to her because they are afraid to get into trouble with Curley. She occasionally complains about her husband and feels neglected; she seeks for attention whenever she is in a company of other men. She feels trapped in her marriage. The aforementioned two confessions sound extremely desperate due to the fact that they were uttered to strangers. While staying in the bunk house, George often plays a game of solitaire (which means 'alone'), a card game that can be played by one person; he knows that Lennie is incapable of playing therefore he never asks him to play. The game itself is a good metaphor for George's wish to be alone and not to be burdened by Lennie; his frequent playing of solitaire foreshadows his fate at the end of the novel when he truly becomes a solitary man just like the rest of the migrant workers.

Steinbeck explores the motif of interdependence throughout *Of Mice and Men* as well. George and Lennie have a symbiotic relationship, a brotherhood that gives purpose and meaning to their lives; while the other characters face loneliness every day, George and Lenny are interdependent: they trust and rely on each other in every situation. Sometimes it is hard to judge whether George truly means that his life would be a lot better without Lennie. During the course of the novella, George often says to Lennie that "God, you're a lot of trouble. I could get along so easy and so nice if I didn't have you on my tail" (Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men* 7). He also exclaims that he could just take his fifty dollars, get a gallon of whiskey, play cards or billiards. And yet, we can sense that these exclamations are mere threats or angry outbursts (George usually says these things after scolding Lennie); George is not obligated to take care of Lennie, and yet he does due to his paternal feelings towards him and because they grew up together. The readers can perceive after a while that Lennie is necessary to George as George is necessary to Lennie. George feels a responsibility for Lennie because of his unfailing loyalty; according to Lisca, "to some extent George needs Lennie as a rationalization for his failure" (59).

4. The Film Adaptations

4.1. *The Grapes of Wrath (1940)*

Documents contained in the Twentieth Century-Fox Records of the Legal Department at the UCLA Theater Arts Library stated that producer Darryl F. Zanuck bought the rights for the movie for $75,000 (app. $1,298,000 in 2016 currency), which was later directed by John Ford (1894-1973) and distributed by Twentieth Century-Fox (today written as 20th Century Fox). Steinbeck sold the film rights when an additional clause was added which stated that the producers promise that any film adaptation based on Steinbeck's novel will retain the plot and social intent of it.

In 1989, the Library of Congress selected the film for preservation in the National Film Registry. The screenplay was written by Nunnally Johnson. It stars famous American actor Henry Fonda. The runtime is 2 hours and 9 minutes. It won two Oscars for Best Director (John Ford) and Best Actress in a Supporting Role (Jane Darwell). It received five other Oscar nominations (Best Film Editing, Best Sound, Best Writing, Best Actor in a Leading Role, and Best Picture – losing to Hitchcock's *Rebecca*). Interestingly, the director John Ford banned perfume and make-up from the set to create an authentic surrounding. Steinbeck loved the movie and he especially praised actor Henry Fonda who made the author believe his own words.

The Associated Farmers of California had a contrary opinion: they were not keen on the novel and hated the movie so much that they decided to call for a boycott of all movies made by the 20th Century-Fox Film Corporation; allegedly Steinbeck even received death threats. Before filming began, producer Darryl F. Zanuck employed undercover investigators to observe the migrant camps; although many people believed that Steinbeck exaggerated about the squalor and maltreatment occurring in the camps, it was reported that the author actually downplayed the horrific events happening in there while writing his novel. Upon release, Joseph Stalin banned the movie in the Soviet Union since it showed that even the poorest people in America could own an automobile.

The standards of censorship back in the 1940s did not permit the filmmakers to make a truly authentic adaptation of Steinbeck's novel (animal imagery is not that apparent, the brutality and the offensive, aggressive dialogue is toned down and even the ending is a lot more optimistic than in the novel). When asked why the movie ended in a way it did, screenwriter Nunally Johnson said that "there had to be some ray of hope – something that would keep the people who saw it from going out and getting so drunk in utter despondency that they couldn't tell other

people that it was a good picture to see. Steinbeck agreed on the necessity for a more hopeful ending" (Wartzman 214).Regardless of the omissions of certain parts from the novel, the movie can still be considered a generally faithful adaptation; it is a valuable movie and a primary source that teaches us about the 1930s (the events that inspired the story). The film is a wonderful illustration of the technical art of the 1940s: tight camera frames depict confinement; the use of silhouettes and the chiaroscuro lighting[4] reveal the intensity and the bleakness occurring in certain scenes.

Minor flaws occur in the movie, for example Noah's sudden vanishing; in the novel, Noah tells Tom by the riverbank that he does not want to be a burden to the family and he decides to run away and live alone by the river, catching and eating fish. However, in the movie he suddenly disappears without any explanation; another flaw occurs in the early scenes, when reverberations that are caused by the film stage are audible while the characters are speaking. The omission of the Wilsons can also be considered as a flaw. While the presence of drought is suggested by Grampa, who says while clutching dirt in his hands, "it's my dirt ... it's no good but it's mine" (*The Grapes of Wrath* 34 min), the flooding of the river is not depicted, therefore an important symbol is missing (along with the dog and the turtle that foreshadow the Joads fate). Wide camera shots show the viewers the vast bareness of Oklahoma and then the scenic beauty of California. Since *The Grapes of Wrath* is longer than an average novel, most of the omissions from the movie were made due to timing purposes; if it were to show each and every scene from the novel, it would have been much longer than 2 hours and 15 minutes.

The filmmakers tried to be faithful to the novel as much as they could: most of the actions happen in open spaces, showing the viewers the desolate places and the desperate behaviours of the migrant families. A scene was inserted into the movie (that was not in the novel) where Pa and his two kids enter a roadside diner to buy bread for Grandma. The emphasis was put on Tom, Ma and Casy; the viewers fail to find out more information on other characters like Uncle John (his alcoholism and selfishness) or Rose of Sharon (her obsession and constant worry about her baby).

All the characters are portrayed accurately: Grampa is comical and vigorous yet he loses his vigour when he leaves his farm; Grandma is very religious; Pa is nostalgic; Al is fond of cars, trucks and girls. The screenwriter changed the order of certain scenes: at the end of the movie, the Joads are still on the road but there is a sense of hope in them. The Production Code Administration approved the script but they demanded some changes: not to portray Muley

[4] In cinematography, chiaroscuro (Italian for light-dark) indicates high-contrast and low-key lighting which creates areas of darkness and light in movies (notably in black and white films)

Graves as an insane person; not to show Tom Joad murdering a deputy in self-defence; to reword particular lines that mention Rose of Sharon's pregnancy; to eliminate mentioning any county in California and not to identify a town called Pixley. Overall, the movie is very absorbing and realistic.

4.2. *Of Mice and Men (1939)*

Of Mice and Men is the very first film adaptation of a John Steinbeck novel. The production began in mid-August, 1939. It was directed and produced by Lewis Milestone. The movie was released on 30 December 1939. Burgess Meredith and Lon Chaney, Jr. played the roles of George and Lennie, respectively. It was distributed by United Artists. The screenplay was written by Eugene Solow. The movie was partially shot on location at the Agoura Ranch in Agoura, California. It was one of the first films that had an opening sequence before the credits. In 1940, the movie was nominated for four Oscars, including Best Sound Recording, Best Original Score, Best Musical Score (by Aaron Copland, a famous symphonic composer) and Best Picture (lost to David O. Selznick's *Gone with the Wind*). The movie was released on DVD on 13 March 2001. Its runtime is 1 hour and 47 minutes. The production cost less than $300,000.

The first film version of *Of Mice and Men* is one of the best and most successful film adaptations of a Steinbeck novel. The film opens with Norbert Brodine's lyric photography, showing the Californian fields and hills and men actually working at the farm. Aaron Copland wrote a ground-breaking score for the movie, mostly because he managed to avoid the symphonic orchestration which was usual for films at that time; his score depicted a subdued realism, tunes that workers could whistle while working and he scored these tunes for one or two musical instruments. Most of the dialogue from the novel was preserved, "making only small concessions to the public sensibilities of the time by softening the language" (Li and Schultz). The ending was slightly altered due to the Hays code of decency[5], suggesting that George was later on arrested for murdering Lennie. The character of Curley's wife (called Mae) was expanded and implied that she was as lonely as the rest of the characters.

Many symbols and motifs from the novella were mentioned and accurately shown: when George talks about the dream of owning a ranch, when he instructs Lennie to come back to the thickets if he ever gets in trouble. The screenwriter took liberties to change/add a couple of

[5] The Motion Picture Production Code, also known as Hays Code, after Will H. Hays (1879-1954) who created moral guidelines for American motion pictures that were produced from 1930 to 1968

things: the ranch where the protagonists find work is called 'Jackson' meaning that the screenwriter added a surname to the character of Curley, and his wife is called Mae (instead of just Curley's wife as in the novella); Curley pummels Lennie in a jealous rage before Lennie crushes his hand; later Mae confronts and taunts Curley and he orders her to packs her things and leave.

For some reason in the movie, Lennie carries a dead bird and not a dead mouse; one would think that Lennie found a dead bird somewhere and picked it up (otherwise it would be quite hard for a man like Lennie to catch a live bird), so it was not him who killed it; in the novel, Lennie was given mice by his aunt Clara but he just kept killing them because he petted them too hard. Including mice would have been better because they refer to the title (from Burns' poem). The language is toned down (in the novel George usually calls Lennie "a crazy son of a bitch" during his angry outbursts). Curley's glove that is full of Vaseline is never mentioned even though he is constantly wearing a pair of gloves in every scene. When Lennie crushes Curley's hand, blood is not visible.

Additional scenes were added to emphasize Curley's bitter, jealous behaviour and his wife's frustration and loneliness; Curley confronts and punches a man in a barn because he thought Mae was cheating on him. Mae also has a pup that Slim gave to her which again makes Curley angry and jealous. Curley even refuses to take Mae to the cinema which makes him look careless and insensitive in the viewers' eyes. In most of the scenes that include Mae, she appears to be bored out of her mind; it is a positive thing that the filmmakers decided to create scenes like that because her utter boredom is only suggested in the novel. The scene where Carlson shoots Candy's dog is accurately shown: Carlson takes the dog out, and then a distant shot is heard before Candy turns around on his bunk bed, facing the wall and silently mourning his old friend. Interestingly, Candy later on exclaims that he should have shot his dog himself while looking straight at the camera which zooms in on Candy's face: characters who wanted to share some kind of a moral lesson with the audience used to do that in certain, old movies.

4.3. *Of Mice and Men (1992)*

The more modern version of *Of Mice and Men* was produced and directed by Gary Sinise. The screenplay was written by Horton Foote. It came to theatres on 2 October 1992. It was released on DVD on 6 November 2001. Its runtime is 1 hour and 50 minutes. It was distributed by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and has a PG-13 rating (some scenes of violence).

Actor and director Gary Sinise has been personally very fond of Steinbeck's fiction; he played Tom Joad on the stage and produced a different film about *Of Mice and Men*. The most modern version of the novella depicts the story very accurately; only slight changes were made to "meet the sensibilities and expectations of contemporary audiences who have become increasingly desensitized to violence and brutality" (Li and Schultz 162). The scene where Lennie kills Curley's wife amplified the violence and the sexual tension of the characters' interaction.

Director Gary Sinise provided "vivid period detail and location photography so beautiful as to undercut the bleak loneliness of Steinbeck's story" (Meyer and Railsback 48). Even though the screenplay follows Steinbeck, it has its flaws: Crooks' taunting of Lennie is exaggerated and the fact that he omits Lennie from the group that wants to buy a farm is to be considered a flaw. The ending of the movie is somewhat spoiled because the dialogue is shortened; Lennie's demise ends with him saying "and I get to tend the rabbits" without George mentioning to Lennie their peaceful dream place again right before Lennie says "I can see it" as the gun explodes. It is suggested by many movie critics that the movie itself is promising but not very compelling: Sinise is too young and relatively emotionless in his role as George while Malkovich's portrayal tends to be a bigger problem because he is sometimes off-putting and less sympathetic than in the novel. Overall, Malkovich's performance is consistent and intelligent but at times it is too contrived and the actor becomes overly self-conscious. Other actors' performance, like that of Ray Walston as Candy, is very fine and realistic.

5. Employing the Film Adaptations in the Classroom

5.1. Literary Study as a Form of Learning

When Classics and Literature separated into two disciplinary ways, the students were encouraged to create their own interpretive opinions however, they were still taught to "get it right" (the interpretations and/or the meanings) in literature classes. The eachers want their students to establish existential connection between literature and the basic conditions and terms of human existence; although their intentions are positive, they oftentimes seem myopic: the things that are interesting to the teachers might not necessarily be interesting to the students.

The teachers ought to "provide a pedagogical frame for literary instruction drawn from conditions that affect all students because they affect all human beings" (Chambers and Gregory 25). The aforementioned conditions could be: the need for families, friends, and companions, the frailty of the human flesh, and fears and doubts regarding success.

Modern students raised on TV tend to value materialism and monetary gain; however, every-day problems like sickness, grief or disappointment cannot be solved with money and neither can they be solved with novels or poems. It is important to emphasize that literary study is not a kind of therapy but a form of learning; literary works address certain issues like death, misery, and loneliness and they offer literature students "stances, attitudes, concepts, insights, subtleties, ethical deliberations and both practical and intellectual remedies that they may adopt or store up for future consideration and possible use" (Chambers and Gregory 26).

The teachers of literature set many cognitive and disciplinary goals to be accomplished but their most foundational and most general goals are developmental. The teachers wish their students to mature both intellectually and personally so that one day they become socially developed and sophisticated individuals. Literature helps students to explicitly work on their basic human capacities like imagination, reason, sociability, and introspection; it also invites students to explore their own culture and to increase their interest in the history of their countries. The best teachers are highly reflective and they tend to learn from their students; they frequently solicit feedback from the students and allow them to design their own projects which would demonstrate and support their understanding of new strategies and concepts.

They are taught by their teachers how to analyze, interpret and appraise literary works and they are also encouraged to persuasively express their opinions and ideas supported by textual evidence; the abovementioned process is dynamic, overlapping and interlinked; students must "circle around" the text by reading, questioning, considering, making notes, re-reading,

shifting the focus of their attention and revise their judgements and interpretations; according to Snyder, "analyzing a literary text, and other kinds of texts, expands the mind and one's understanding of the world" (46).

5.2. Examples of Daily Lesson Plans

The following six independent daily lesson plans are meant to be applied after the students read *Of Mice and Men* and *The Grapes of Wrath*. These timeless novels have been intriguing and inspiring elementary and high school students for decades because of their depiction of everyday situations and problems. Due to its short length, simple, interesting story, dialogues, and realistic characters, *Of Mice and Men* is taught to 7th and 8th graders while *The Grapes of Wrath* is taught in high schools (grades 1-4) because it is a more complex story that requires advanced knowledge of English.

Students might face problems with the style of *The Grapes of Wrath*: since the main characters are from Oklahoma, Steinbeck realistically portrays the way southern, working-class people spoke in the 1930s; the words or sentences are misspelled or abbreviated. The novel also consists of interchapters: the narrator speaks in the second person, addressing the readers without focusing on any characters in the novel hence the interchapters might be confusing to a young student.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned minor difficulties that might challenge students' reading experiences, it is ensured that students will thoroughly immerse themselves in the world of the poor, struggling migrants facing all kinds of daily obstacles, desperately finding the right cure to end their miseries.

Table 1: An example of a daily lesson plan about the major themes in Of Mice and Men

Teacher: u/k **Subject:** *Of Mice and Men* **Topic:** Major themes in *Of Mice and Men* **Class:** 8th grade **Level:** intermediate **Lesson type:** practice
Lesson objective: By the end of the lesson, the students will have learned about the major

themes depicted in *Of Mice and Men*. The students will be able to explain the meaning of more complex themes such as the American Dream.		
TIME	**INSTRUCTIONAL SEQUENCE**	**AIMS**
5 min	**Lead in**: the teacher tells the students that today's class is about the major themes of *Of Mice and Men*; the students watch an excerpt from the movie *Of Mice and Men* (1992); they watch the scene in the barn when Crooks says "a guy goes nuts if he ain't got nobody... don't make no difference who the guy is, long's he's with you." After watching the movie clip, the students write a one-minute review about the scene, guessing its theme (the theme of loneliness). The teacher asks a couple of students to read out loud their answers.	brainstorming, logical reasoning, guessing, global listening, summarizing
10 min	**Engage/Motivation:** the students discuss in pairs the behaviour and characteristics of the characters after watching a movie clip (when Curley taunts Lennie while George and Candy watch them). The students have to explain Curley's taunting and Lennie's reaction to it as well as guessing the theme (the theme of meanness). After 3-4 minutes, the teacher asks each pair of students to explain their reasoning in front of the class; the students may correct each other if they disagree with the answers.	cooperating in pairs, global listening, discussing the topic, guessing, speaking for practice
20 min	**Whole group instruction:** the teacher writes "the American Dream" on the blackboard and instructs the students to write five words (nouns, verbs and/or adjectives) on a piece of paper that explains the meaning of the American Dream to the characters appearing in the movie. When they are finished, the students will randomly exchange their papers with each other and encircle the right answers while crossing out the wrong ones. The teacher asks a couple of students to read out loud the correct answers and explain why they are correct; then the teacher asks a couple of other students to read out loud the incorrect answers and explain why they are incorrect.	cognitive reasoning, brainstorming, expressing opinions, speaking, correcting mistakes, feedback
	Independent practice: the teacher asks the students to write an	

10 min	interview with one of these characters: Lennie, George, Curley, Curley's wife, Candy, Crooks. The interview must be related to all the themes mentioned before in class: loneliness, meanness and the (destruction of the) American Dream. The students pose five questions and give five plausible answers. When they are finished, the teacher asks them to read out loud their answers.	creative writing, speaking, brainstorming
	Homework: the students will write a short essay about the major themes discussed in class.	
Resources/instructional materials needed: computer/laptop, overhead projector, the feature film *Of Mice and Men* (1992), blackboard, chalk, and notebooks		

Table 2: An example of a daily lesson plan about the motifs and symbols occurring in Of Mice and Men

Teacher: u/k **Subject:** *Of Mice and Men* **Topic:** Motifs and symbols in *Of Mice and Men* **Class:** 8th grade **Level:** advanced **Lesson type:** presentation and practice		
Lesson objective: By the end of the lesson, the students will have learned about the meanings of the motifs and the symbols occurring in Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*; they will have gained experience in reading and gain new vocabulary such as "interdependence."		
TIME	**INSTRUCTIONAL SEQUENCE**	**AIMS**
5 min	**Lead in**: the teacher starts a power point presentation; ten words appear on the first slide: priest, strength, war, campsite, lost love, dog, motherhood, interdependence, religion, and wife. The students' task is to copy the words to their notebooks and encircle the ones that play a significant role in the novella (strength, campsite, dog, interdependence, and wife). When they are finished, the teacher asks a student for the correct answers and explanations.	to arouse curiosity, cognitive reasoning
	Engage/Motivation: the teacher writes "interdependence" on the blackboard and asks the students whether they know what it means; the teacher explains the meaning of the word (mutual reliance). The	

10 min	teacher tells the students to open *Of Mice and Men* on page 75 and asks a student to silently read a passage: "You got George. You know he's goin' to come back. S'pose you didn't have nobody. S'pose you had to sit out here an' read books. Books ain't no good. A guy needs somebody – to be near him. A guy goes nuts if he ain't got nobody. Don't make no difference who the guy is, long's he's with you. I tell ya," he cried, "I tell ya a guy gets too lonely an' he gets sick." After the reading, the teacher asks everybody what they think the passage is about (interdependence and loneliness). The teacher also asks whether interdependence is necessary or not in real life and tells them to express their opinions on it.	silent reading, global listening, thinking, expressing opinions, oral practice, pronouncing
25 min	**Small group instruction:** the students watch two video clips from the movie *Of Mice and Men* (1992): the first excerpt is about Carlson complaining about Candy's old dog, then taking him away and ending his suffering; the second excerpt is about the very ending of the movie when George murders Lennie with Carlson's handgun. After watching the excerpts, the teacher forms small groups of four and tells them to draw parallel between the two excerpts (the relationship between George and Lennie and Candy and his dog); the teacher also instructs them to note down all the symbols and motifs appearing in the video clips. After ten minutes, the teacher asks the groups to share the things they noted. The next task is a "reflection-in-action": the students demonstrate the reasoning of the second excerpt, then start a debate: two groups state that George had to kill Lennie, while two other groups state that George should not have killed Lennie.	cognitive reasoning, listening for detail, expressing opinions, debating, discussing the topic in groups
	Closing activity: the last activity is called "Who said that?." There are five sentences on a power point slide: 1. "The ranch is about a quarter mile up that way. Just follow the river . . . if you jus' happen to get in trouble . . . I want you to come right here an' hide in the brush." 2. "Strong as a bull." 3. "I seen the guys that go around on the races alone. That ain't no	reading in silence, activating pre-knowledge regarding the major symbols and motifs

5 min	good. They don't have no fun. After a long time they get mean." 4. "If you want me to, I'll put the old devil out of his misery right now and get it over with." 5. "Take Curley. His hair is jus' like wire. But mine is soft and fine. 'Course I brush it a lot. That makes it fine. Here – feel right here." All five sentence are connected to the symbols and motifs mentioned in class. The students have to decide which characters uttered these statements and think about the symbols and motifs connected/found in these sentences. After a couple of minutes, the teacher asks several students to read out loud the sentences and the solutions (1. George, 2. Lennie, 3. Slim, 4. Carlson, 5. Curley's wife); they also explain the symbols and motifs connected/found in the sentences. If an answer is incorrect, the students correct each other.	occurring in the novella, logical reasoning, oral practice
	Homework: the students will write a short story about two people who are mutually reliant on each other; the story must contain at least two symbols and one motif.	students will practice creative writing
Resources/instructional materials needed: computer/laptop, power-point presentation, overhead projector, Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, the feature film *Of Mice and Men* (1992), and notebooks		

Table 3: An example of a daily lesson plan about one of the major themes in Of Mice and Men

Teacher: u/k **Subject:** *Of Mice and Men* **Topic:** The relationship between George and Lennie and Candy and his dog **Class:** 7th grade **Level:** intermediate **Lesson type:** practice		
Lesson objective: By the end of the lesson, the students will have gained experience in associating objects and places to literary characters, cooperating with their peers, quick thinking, extracting information from a text and debating.		
TIME	**INSTRUCTIONAL SEQUENCE**	**AIMS**
	Lead in: the teacher distributes flashcards to the students who work	quick thinking,

5 min	in pairs; each pair of students receives one flashcard that depicts an object or a place. Their task is to associate the flashcards to one or two characters from *Of Mice and Men*. The flashcards show: rabbits, a farm, a puppy, a dog, a handgun, a campsite, books, a horse, a movie logo, and a deck of cards. After a couple of minutes of thinking, the teacher asks each pair of students to show their card to others and to name the character(s) associated to the object or place the card depicts. If a student gives the wrong answer, others will correct him/her.	students activate their pre-knowledge, logical reasoning, associating things to characters
10 min	**Engage/Motivation:** the teacher shows an excerpt from *Of Mice and Men* (1939); it is the last scene when George and Lennie are at the campsite by the river, talking about having a farm of their own and George reluctantly shooting Lennie in the head. After watching the excerpt, the teacher forms six groups of four. The students' task is to write an alternate ending that contains five sentences. After writing the story, they present it to others. Finally, the students express their opinions and decide whose story was the best.	cooperating with each other, creative writing, detailed reading, expressing opinions
25 min	**Small group instruction:** the teacher asks students to open *Of Mice and Men* on page 49. Each student reads one sentence out loud: "The silence fell on the room again. A minute passed, and another minute. Candy lay still, staring at the ceiling. Slim gazed at him for a moment and then looked down at his hands; he subdued one hand with the other, and held it down. A shot sounded in the distance. The men looked quickly at the old man. For a moment he continued to stare at the ceiling. Then he rolled slowly over and faced the wall and lay silent." After reading the passage, the teacher shows the same scene from the movie. After watching the scene, the teacher reads out loud two more sentences from the novella: "I ought to of shot that dog myself, George. I shouldn't to of let no stranger shoot my dog." Their task is to explain the significance of the scene, describe Candy's feeling, compare this scene with the last scene in the movie	working in groups, cognitive reasoning, scanning, reading for detail, detailed writing, global listening, expressing opinions,

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<tr><td></td><td>(George killing Lennie), and decide why the quote read by the teacher is significant to the two scenes. The teacher forms three groups and the students start doing the task. When they are done, the teacher asks one member of each group to read out loud their summaries. Finally, the groups have a discussion on the subject.</td><td>debating</td></tr>
<tr><td>5 min</td><td>Closing activity: the teacher places question cards on his desk and asks one student to come to the desk, pick one card, and pose the question to a student of his/her own choosing; if the person answers correctly, he/she goes to the desk and repeats the same process like the previous student. If one student does not know the correct answer, then the student who picked the card answers. One student can only answer once to a question. The questions are the following:
1. What is George and Lennie’s biggest wish?
2. Why did Candy say that he should have shot his own dog?
3. Why did Carlson shoot Candy’s dog?
4. How did Candy react after hearing the shot?
5. What did Slim offer to Candy?
6. Did George shoot Lennie because Candy said that he should’ve shot his own dog and not let a stranger do it?</td><td>oral practice, quick thinking, logical reasoning</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Homework: the students receive a handout with a crossword puzzle on it; their task is to find 12 words (George, Lennie, wife, Curley, Carlson, Slim, Crooks, dog, farm, lonely, Candy, and rabbits) connected to Of Mice and Men.

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Resources/instructional materials needed: computer/laptop, overhead projector, Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, the feature film *Of Mice and Men* (1939), flashcards, notebooks, question cards, handouts, and notebooks

Table 4: An example of a daily lesson plan about the setting in The Grapes of Wrath

Teacher: u/k **Subject:** *The Grapes of Wrath* **Topic:** The setting in *The Grapes of Wrath* **Class:** 9th grade **Level:** advanced **Lesson type:** presentation and practice		
Lesson objective: By the end of the lesson, the students will be able to have knowledge of events occurring in the 1930's in America; they will learn about the setting in *The Grapes of Wrath*, gain practice in working in groups, extracting information and debating.		
TIME	**INSTRUCTIONAL SEQUENCE**	**AIMS**
5 min	**Lead in**: the teacher shows the students a power point presentation about the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression occurring in the 1930s and the migrant workers travelling towards the state of California; the presentation also mentions that people were evicted from their lands and the high unemployment rate in the country that resulted in people living in poverty. The students are asked to note down these important events because they are the subject in *The Grapes of Wrath*; the presentation also describes the setting in the novel. The teacher answers any question asked by the students.	reading for detail, listening for detail, asking questions, feedback
10 min	**Engage/Motivation:** On the following slide, short sentences appear. The students' task is to create the right questions to these sentences. The questions must be related to the novel's plot and setting. The questions must contain at least 6 words. The students work in pairs. 1. On Highway 66. 2. In the San Joaquin Valley.	cooperating in pairs, global listening,

	3. In camp Hooverville. 4. They were evicted from their home. 5. The farmers' crops. When the students are finished, the teacher randomly asks ten students to read out loud the questions. There are many plausible solutions to this task. For example: 1. On which highway do the Joads travel? 2. Where does most of the plot happen? 3. Where do the Joads set camp when they arrive in California? 4. Why do the Joads travel to California? 5. What did the black blizzards destroy?	practicing asking questions
25 min	**Small group instruction:** the teacher shows a few scenes from *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940) that depicts Oklahoma and California. After watching the scenes, the students' task is to write twenty sentences describing Oklahoma and California; they have to compare the two locations: their similarities and their differences. The teacher forms two groups: one group writes about Oklahoma and compares it to California, while the other group writes about California and compares it to Oklahoma. After ten minutes, the two groups start a panel discussion: both groups give presentations on the same topic (setting) but from different points of view (Oklahoma vs. California).	creative writing, cognitive reasoning, brainstorming, expressing opinions, oral practice, debating, discussing the topic
5 min	**Independent practice:** the teacher shows a short text in the power point presentation; the specific words are missing. The students' task is to write the sentences in their notebooks and fill in the blanks: The Joads live in _____, Oklahoma. After Tom is paroled from _____, he meets Jim Casy, who is a former _____. The _____ Bowl destroyed their _____ and they decided to leave Oklahoma. While travelling west, the road is crowded with _____. When they arrive in California, they stay at the _____ Camp. When their dwelling is flooded, they find shelter in a _____. After the students finish the task, the teacher asks a student to read	logical reasoning, thinking about specific things related to the novel, silent reading, oral practice

	out loud the text with the correct words (Sallisaw, prison, preacher, Dust, crops, migrants, Weedpatch, and barn).	
	Homework: the teacher distributes handouts; if the students insert the correct words in the table, they will get two words vertically in the first row (the solution is a term that refers to a severe dust storm in the 1930s in America). 1. What happened to Grampa, Granma and Casy? 2. When Tom came home, the Joads were _____. 3. Ma used to feel _____ when the Joads were evicted. 4. A symbol, appearing in the first chapter. 5. The last place the Joads appeared in. 6. The Okies are from _____. 7. Another symbol in the novel; a symbol of life. 8. The state of being a leader. D U S T B O W L The correct answers are: 1. died, 2. united, 3. shame, 4. turtle, 5. barn, 6. Oklahoma, 7. water, 8. leadership	
Resources/instructional materials needed: computer/laptop, power point presentation, overhead projector, the feature film *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940), and notebooks		

Table 5: An example of a daily lesson plan about the theme of family in The Grapes of Wrath

Teacher: u/k **Subject:** *The Grapes of Wrath* **Topic:** The theme of family in *The Grapes of Wrath* **Class:** 9th grade

Level: advanced **Lesson type:** practice		
Lesson objective: By the end of the lesson, the students will have learned the value and importance of family, gained new vocabulary, practiced silent reading, and gained experience in role-playing.		
TIME	**INSTRUCTIONAL SEQUENCE**	**AIMS**
10 min	**Lead in:** the teacher tells the students to open *The Grapes of Wrath* on page 167 and read in silence the following passage: "They eyes of the family shifted back to Ma. She was the power. She had taken control. "The money we'd make wouldn't do no good," she said. "All we got is the family unbroken. I ain't scared while we're all here, all that's alive, but I ain't gonna see us bust up. The Wilsons here is with us, an' the preacher is with us. I can't say nothin' if they want to go, but I'm a-goin' cat-wild with this here piece a bar-arn if my own folks busts up." Later, the teacher shows this scene from the movie *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940). After that, the teacher asks everyone to guess one of the novel's themes from this scene, which is "family." The teacher questions the students about why Ma wants her family to stick together; the teacher also asks the students about the importance and value of a family in general.	silent reading, reading for detail, listening for detail, discussing the topic, feedback
10 min	**Engage/Motivation:** the teacher writes eight names on the blackboard: Tom, Pa, Ma, Uncle John, Al, Noah, Rose of Sharon, and Connie. The students' task is to write the names of the characters in their handbooks and describe each of them with five different adjectives regarding the characters' behaviours and personalities. When they are done, the teacher randomly calls out the students to the blackboard to read out loud their answers, write only one adjective on the blackboard under the name of a character of his/her own choosing and give an explanation. After that, the students will rank the characters from the most loved to the most disliked ones.	brainstorm vocabulary - adjectives, expressing opinions, feedback
	Whole group instruction: the teacher instructs the students to do a	

20 min	role-playing game where they take the roles of the following characters: Ma, Pa, Tom, Rose of Sharon, and Jim Casy. The teacher forms four groups of five. The groups have five minutes to come up with the dialogues; they are instructed to talk about family (the Joads). After the five minutes have passed, one group after each other begins with their scene.	expressing opinions, oral practice, role-playing
10 min	**Independent practice:** the teacher distributes handouts to the students. There are ten half-sentences that the students have to correctly assemble: 1. "Wherever they's a fight so hungry people can eat, ..." 2. "An' now I ain't ashamed. These folks is our folks, ..." 3. "Our people are good people, our people are kind people." 4. A family which the night before had been lost and fearful" 5. "Family's fallin' apart," she said," a) I'll be there." b) why, I feel like people again." c) Pray God some day kind people won't all be poor." d) might search its goods to find a present for a new baby." e) seems like I can't think no more." When the students finish their task, the teacher asks five students to read out loud their answers. Finally, the teacher asks the students about their opinions on these statements and explains the meaning of them; the teacher then shows the entire scene when Tom says his "I'll be there" monologue.	reading for details, logical reasoning, speaking, discussing the topic, expressing opinions, feedback
	Homework: the teacher distributes handouts; the students have to decide whether the following statements are true or false; if a statement is false, the students have to give the correct answer: 1. *The Grapes of Wrath* was published in 1941 (false, 1939) 2. The novel is set during the Great Depression (true) 3. The Joads are from Arkansas (false, Oklahoma) 4. Uncle Joad dies first in the novel (false, Grampa dies first) 5. The Dust Bowl happened in the 1940's (false, 1930's) 6. Migrant workers killed Jim Casy (false, a deputy sheriff)	

	7. The Joads died during the flood (false, they sought shelter in a barn)	
Resources/instructional materials needed: computer/laptop, overhead projector, Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, the feature film *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940), blackboard, and handouts		

Table 6: An example of a daily lesson plan about the symbols appearing in the Grapes of Wrath

Teacher: u/k **Subject:** *The Grapes of Wrath* **Topic:** The symbols in *The Grapes of Wrath* **Class:** 9th grade **Level:** advanced **Lesson type:** practice		
Lesson objective: By the end of the lesson, the students will be able to demonstrate their understanding of symbols in literature; they will gain experience in creative writing, extracting information from a given text, making sensible arguments, and debating.		
TIME	**INSTRUCTIONAL SEQUENCE**	**AIMS**
5 min	**Lead in**: the teacher writes the following words (the symbols in *The Grapes of Wrath*) on the blackboard: mule, cat, dog, turtle. The teacher tells them to brainstorm about these four animals mentioned in the novel and write down in their notebooks everything that is connected to them. After a couple of minutes, the teacher asks everybody to read the things they wrote and to give explanations.	brainstorming objects/people connected to the symbols in the novel, logical reasoning
10 min	**Engage/Motivation:** the teacher asks the students to write a story comprised of at least ten sentences; the story must contain a few characters from *The Grapes of Wrath* and they have to use water as a symbol throughout the story. When the students are done writing, the teacher asks a few students to read out loud their stories.	creative writing, brainstorming about water as a symbol, global listening
	Small group instruction: the teacher shows the very ending of the movie to the students when Ma says: "Well, Pa, a woman can change better than a man. A man lives sort of, well, in jerks. Babies are born or somebody dies, and that's a jerk. He gets a farm or loses	cognitive reasoning,

20 min	it, and that's a jerk. With a woman, it's all in one flow like a stream. Little eddies and waterfalls, but the river, it goes right on." The teacher tells the students to compare the ending of the movie with the ending of the novel; in the novel, both the absence and abundance of water cause troubles. The flood ruins the Joads' dwelling and they have to seek shelter in a barn. On the other hand, there is no flood in the movie. Ma's utterance, calling obstacles as eddies and waterfalls, is seemingly relaxed and untroubled; the river goes right on just like the water that flows freely in the Garden of Eden. The students have to explain these differences while working in groups of five. When they are finished writing, they present their arguments to the whole class and start a debate.	expressing opinions, detailed writing, creating arguments, oral practice, debate
10 min	**Independent practice:** the teacher tells the students to open *The Grapes of Wrath* on page 45 and silently read the last paragraph in chapter three: "And now a light truck approached, and as it came near, the driver saw the turtle and swerved to hit it. His front wheel struck the edge of the shell, flipped the turtle like a tiddly-wink, spun it like a coin, and rolled it off the highway. Its front foot caught a piece of quartz and little by little the shell pulled over and flopped upright." The students' task is to draw similarities or highlight the differences between Jim Casy and the turtle: how does the turtle foreshadow Casy's demise? What does the turtle do in the novel? When the students are done writing, the teacher asks a few students to read out loud their answers.	silent reading, extracting information from the novel, detailed writing, reading for detail, speaking, making arguments
	Homework: the students will write a short essay, including all the symbols appearing in the novel.	creative writing
Resources/instructional materials needed: computer/laptop, overhead projector, Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, the feature film *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940), blackboard, chalk, and notebooks		

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper was to examine and analyze John Steinbeck's timeless masterpieces, *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Of Mice and Men*. These two realist novels have been the required readings for many decades and hopefully they will remain in the school curricula for a very long time. Both novels have been culturally significant, educative, and inspiring for students in many English-speaking countries.

Steinbeck's works are gems of literature: they deal with the hard times of the Dirty Thirties, nonetheless they soften the hearts of the readers who empathize with the struggling characters; the novels are quintessentially jewels of literature that withstood blazing fires: people burned these novels yet they could not burn the words away.

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