

Some Easy Study Tasks for *The Grapes of Wrath*.

Hello. I hope you are well and staying safe.

Special Note

If you have time, try to do most, if not all, I ask of you. If not, try to do a little of each. This goes for the Google Classroom Questions as well. Touch on everything you can, but don't get stuck on one, and fall too far behind.

Here are a few things I would like you to do to get a better feel for this novel.

By all means, when doing these things, get lost on the internet and going deeper, looking up more about this period, its songs, and the novel (avoid spoilers), BUT DO TRY to stay on topic. Beware click bait!

Cut and paste the links, if necessary, or search them.

1. Here is a good *History Channel* website. It is relatively short with links for deeper examination, if you wish. I recommend reading the whole site:

<https://www.history.com/topics/great-depression/dust-bowl>

Near the bottom of this website there is an excellent gallery of 10 remarkable photographs. Make sure to see all of these.

2. Look up history and images from the Dust Bow. Find a good, historical website. **Watch out** for websites that mix images from the DB period with images that are modern, earlier, other regions. Check the source and purpose of the website. Share with me, good websites by email so I can screen and share them.
3. Dorothea Lange was one of the most famous DB photographers of the time. Look up her work.

4. Songs from this time. Two of my favorites by Woody Guthrie:

- a. “This Land is Your Land.” Look up and study “This Land is Your Land.” It is late DB, 1940, but speaks to the sentiment the Great American Displacement fueled. Remember that the DB overlapped with the Depression. Two hits on American farmers. Guthrie also was associated with the labor movement. Displaced farmers became “plain old” laborers, losing their sense of self-determination, ownership, profession, dignity, freedom, and so on.

Lyrics for “This Land...”: https://woodyguthrie.org/Lyrics/This_Land.htm

Song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wxIMrvDbq3s>

- b. And “Pretty Boy Floyd.”

Lyrics:

<https://www.google.com/search?q=pretty+boy+floyd+lyrics&oq=Pretty+Boy+floyd+ly&aqs=chrome.o.69j57j0l6.9421j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>

Song:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JdeTr3lWPnY&list=RDjQYKJaWujoY&index=4>

The gangster Pretty Boy Floyd is mentioned in Chapter 20. There is also a character named Floyd. They are different, but I wonder if JS is using the name twice for a deliberate meaning. What do you think? Compare what Wikipedia says about Pretty Boy Floyd and what the lyrics say.

5. Listen to a few other songs from this period, but more specifically, find at least one other you are curious about, or like, and if it is fitting to our novel, or the period, find and study the lyrics. It’s all about the lyrics.

I found one, I think also by Guthrie, that made this interesting observation. The other side of the NO TRESPASSING sign is blank. That is “our side,” the singer says. What if the poor, the laborers, the displaced citizens wrote on that side, “NO TRESPASSING.” The people who selfishly guarded their land, would not be able to leave and step onto public land. I just thought that was interesting.

I not a communist, but it reminds me of public duty and responsibility, compassion. What did the founders say? Enlightened self-interest. We get the self-interest part, alright. What does it mean to be enlightened?

6. Then finally, Steinbeck loves to use, parallel, critique Biblical stories. Read these lines from the book of Genesis, and think about them in context of our novel:

Genesis Chapter 3

16 Unto the woman God said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow at thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire *shall be* to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

17 And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed *is* the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat *of* it all the days of thy life;

18 Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;

19 In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou *art*, and unto dust shalt thou return.