

Name _____



Real Voices

John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* tells the story of the Joad family, a group of migrant workers searching for a better life. To make their journey feel real, Steinbeck uses dialogue and dialect to show how the characters actually spoke. By capturing the way people talked, he makes the story more authentic and helps readers understand the struggles of migrant families during the Great Depression.

One way Steinbeck does this is by using the dialect of poor farmers from Oklahoma. Instead of writing in perfect English, he shows how the Joads and others actually spoke. For example, Tom Joad might say, "A fella got to eat, even if he's workin' for nothin'." The way the words are spelled and spoken makes it clear that Tom is not highly educated, but he is wise about life. By writing like this, Steinbeck helps readers hear the voices of the characters in their heads, making them seem more real.

Dialogue is also important in showing the hardships of migrant workers. When the Joads meet other travelers, their conversations often reveal how tough life is. One man warns them, "They's too many folks lookin' for work. They cut the pay right down to nothin'." Through dialogue like this, Steinbeck teaches readers about the struggles workers faced. Rather than just describing unfair wages, he lets characters speak for themselves.

Steinbeck also uses dialogue to show kindness and strength. Ma Joad, for example, encourages her family by saying, "We keep a-goin'. We don't let nothin' stop us." Her words show her determination and love for her family. Even when times are hard, her way of speaking is filled with hope.

By using dialect and dialogue, Steinbeck brings the world of *The Grapes of Wrath* to life. Readers feel as if they are traveling with the Joads, listening to real people instead of just reading words on a page. This storytelling choice makes the novel more powerful and helps readers connect with the struggles and strength of migrant workers.