

American Literature and Composition 121 Summer Reading Assignment

Please buy a copy of *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck.

Steinbeck won the Pulitzer Prize and the Nobel Prize on the strength of this novel about an Oklahoma family, the Joads, that flees the Dust Bowl. The 500 page, 30 chapter epic has been cited as one of the most important novels in American history.

While this novel is frequently summarized and annotated on the internet, using the internet (or using printed "Reading Aides" like Cliff's Notes, etc.) instead of or as a supplement to reading, on this assignment, is willful cheating in addition to laziness and chicanery. Don't do it. If something you read in the novel doesn't make sense, email me and ask for help.

Break the novel into manageable sections before you begin, and portion your progress through the summer so that you don't have to read too much of the book in too short a time. Not planning makes the book harder to understand and less meaningful, and your writing about the book will suffer measurably (you'll lose points). While reading, remember that you're preparing to write two good essays, and you're preparing for a test.

Take notes as you read, stopping to jot things down after each paragraph, page, or chapter, as you prefer. If you don't usually take notes while you read, this is a great opportunity to develop a new life skill. Seriously.

When you finish each chapter or two, consider the questions below and decide which will be best to address given what you noticed and understood about the pages you've read.

- A. Steinbeck's Nobel Prize Citation refers to his dark humor as a compelling element in his work. Find several examples from the text where Steinbeck uses humor to alleviate the severity of his message, and explain why he put the humor in at that particular point in the novel.
- B. Great Literature earns that title by creating connections between the reader and the characters. Citing several examples from throughout the novel, explain which character you most identify with.
- C. The pursuit of happiness is an important aspect of the ideal America. How does this novel change your understanding of what it means to pursue happiness?
- D. Any topic that catches your eye, not included above, can be a suitable topic. Email me **before you begin** and we'll make it work.

ESSAY REQUIREMENTS – (how to keep or lose 75 points per essay)

You'll answer two of these prompts in 2+ pages per essay.

Type each response in **MLA format**.

Title your essay after the **Chapters and topic** you've chosen. (Ex – **Chapters 6-15, Topic B**)

Cite the quotes you use for each essay (put the page number of your quote in parentheses).

On your first response, at the top of the page, please include the **MLA citation** of your version of the novel, so that we can confirm page numbers if necessary.

Once you've completed your first response, send it in (**see instructions on reverse**). I'll grade it, **or let you know if you need to rework it**. Each essay will be graded for accuracy, insight, style, and perceived effort, equal in value to one test grade.

This isn't a book report. Minimize plot summary (**one-two sentences per response**) but use quotes liberally (**at least three quotes from your selected passage(s), with page numbers**) to support your claims about the novel and what you've noticed about it or learned from it. (**see rubric**)

All rules of appropriate writing apply, so expect to earn vehement criticism (and lose points) for inappropriate comments, imprecise diction (*stuff, things, etc.*), run-ons, fragments, etc.

Each submission must be emailed to **yochunk@saintxfac.com**. The first submission should arrive on July 7 and the final essay should arrive on August 11. You will lose points for missed deadlines. Use this as an opportunity to display to yourself and to your future teacher that you can handle setting your own schedule and reading pace. Everyone will enjoy the work more.

EMAILING INSTRUCTIONS

1. Write a great essay (see reverse).
2. Save your essay as a .doc file. (**NO .docx!**)
3. Email your attached essay file to yochumk@saintxfac.com
4. **PUT YOUR FIRST AND LAST NAME IN THE SUBJECT LINE.**
5. Copy and paste the text of your essay into the email.
(this does not negate the need for an attached file)

You should receive emailed confirmation of reception of the email.
If you don't receive this confirmation within 48 hours, resend from a parent's address or an alternate email address.

Your teacher's reception of this assignment is your responsibility.

The Grapes of Wrath Rubric

Name _____ (SAMPLE) _____

Essay 1 Option _____ Ch. _____ _____ of 75
Late -15

CITATION?

Grammar				Brevity (-5)	_____	of 20
Quotes	1 ___	2 ___	3 ___	CITE	_____	of 25
Focused Idea	1	2	3	4	5	_____ of 15
Use of Text	1	2	3	4	5	_____ of 15

Essay 2 Option _____ Ch. _____ _____ of 75
Late -15

Grammar				Brevity (-5)	_____	of 20
Quotes	1 ___	2 ___	3 ___	CITE	_____	of 25
Focused Idea	1	2	3	4	5	_____ of 15
Use of Text	1	2	3	4	5	_____ of 15