

The Grapes of Wrath

AP Language and Composition

INSTRUCTIONS:

First, read carefully through the passage below. Then, write a well organized rhetorical analysis in which you show how the author's effective use of language serves to convey the central idea of the passage.

The western land, nervous under the beginning change. The Western States, nervous as horses before a thunderstorm. The great owners, nervous, sensing a change, knowing nothing of the nature of the change. The great owners, striking at the immediate thing, the widening government, the growing labor unity; striking at new taxes, at plans; not knowing these things are results, not causes. Results, not causes; results, not causes. The causes lie deep and simple--the causes are a hunger in the stomach, multiplied a million times; a hunger in a single soul, hunger for joy and some security, multiplied a million times. The last clear, definite function of man--muscles aching to work, minds aching to create beyond a single need--this is man . . .

For man, unlike any other thing organic or inorganic in the universe, grows beyond his work, walks up the stairs of his concepts, emerges ahead of his accomplishments. This you may say of man--narrow dark alleys of thought, national, religious, economic, grow and disintegrate, man reaches, stumbles forward, painfully, mistakenly sometimes. Having stepped forward, he may slip back, but only half a step, never the full step back. . .

If the step were not being taken, if the stumbling-forward ache were not alive, bombs would not fall, throats would not be cut. Fear the time when the bombs stop falling while the bombers live--for every bomb is proof that the spirit has not died. And fear the time when the strikes stop while the great owner--live--for every little beaten strike is proof that the step is being taken. And this you can know--fear the time when Manself will not suffer and die for a concept, for this one quality is the foundation of Manself, and this one quality is man, distinctive in the universe. . . .

If you who own the things people must have could understand this, you might preserve yourself. If you could separate the causes from results; if you could know that Paine, Marx, Jefferson, Lenin, were results, not causes, you might survive. But that you cannot know for the quality of owning freezes you forever into "I," and cuts you off forever from the "we."

The Western States are nervous under the beginning change. Need it the stimulus to concept, concept to action. A half-million people moving over the country; a million more restive, ready to move; ten million more feeling the first nervousness.

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Although John Steinbeck wrote *The Grapes of Wrath* about a particular family named the Joads and what happened to them. He interspersed chapters containing passages such as the following one. Read it carefully and then write a well-developed essay examining what such general chapters added to his portrayal of what was happening the Joad family. Be sure to refer to specific examples of tone, diction, choice of detail, and especially syntax.

And the worlds were built in the evening. The people, moving in from the highways, made them with their tents and their hearts and their brains.

In the morning the tents came down, the canvas was folded, the tent poles tied along the running board, the beds put in place on the cars, the pots in their places. And as the families moved westward, the technique of building up a home in the evening and tearing it down with the morning light became fixed; so that the folded tent was packed in one place, the cooking pots counted in their box. And as the cars moved westward, each member of the family grew into his proper place, grew into his duties; so that each member, old and young, had his place in the car; so that in the weary, hot evenings, when the cars pulled into the camping places, each member had his duty and went to it without instruction; children to gather wood, to carry water; men to pitch the tents and bring down the beds; women to cook the supper and to watch while the family fed. And this was done without command. The families, which had been units of which the boundaries were a house at night, a farm by day, changed their boundaries. In the long hot light, they were silent in the cars moving slowly westward; but at night they integrated with any group they found.

Thus they changed their social life-- changed as in the whole universe only man can change. They were not farm men any more, but migrant men. And the thought, the planning, the long staring silence that had gone out to the fields, went now to the roads, to the distance, to the West. That man whose mind had been bound with acres lived with narrow concrete miles. And his thought and his worry were not anymore with rainfall, with wind and dust, with the thrust of the crops. Eyes watched the tires, ears listened to the clattering motors, and minds struggled with oil, with gasoline, with the thinning rubber between air and road. Then water in the evening was the yearning, and food over the fire. Then health to go on was the need and the strength to go on, and the spirit to go on. The wills thrust westward ahead of them, and fears that had once apprehended drought or flood now lingered with anything that might stop the westward crawling.

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First, read carefully through the passage below. Then, write an essay in which you show how the paradoxes presented in the passage play a part in emphasizing the central idea. What is this idea? What is his purpose? Explain how these paradoxes enhance Steinbeck's style and achieve his purpose.

The moving, questing people were migrants now. Those families who had lived on a little piece of land, who had lived and died on forty acres, had eaten or starved on the produce of forty acres, had now the whole West to rove in. And they scampered about, looking for work; and the highways were streams of people, and the ditch banks were lines of people. Behind them more were coming. The great highways streamed with moving people. There in the Middle--and Southwest had lived a simple agrarian folk who had not changed with industry, who had not farmed with machines or know the power and danger of machines in private hands. They had not grown up in the paradoxes of industry. Their senses were still, sharp to the ridiculousness of the industrial life.

And then suddenly the machines pushed them out and they swarmed on the highways. The movement changed them; the highways, the camps along the road, the fear of hunger and the hunger itself, changed them. The children without dinner changed them, the endless moving changed them. They were migrants. And the hostility changed them, welded them, united them--hostility that made the little towns group and arm as though to repel an invader, squads with pack handles, clerks and storekeepers with shotguns, guarding the world against their own people.

In the West there was panic when the migrants multiplied on the highways. Men of property were terrified for their property. Men who had never been hungry saw the eyes of the hungry. Men who had never wanted anything much saw the flare of want in the eyes of these migrants. And the men of the towns gathered to defend themselves; they reassured themselves that they were good and these invaders bad, as a man must do before he fights. They said, "The g--damned Okies are dirty and ignorant. They're degenerate, sexual maniacs and thieves. They'll steal anything. They've got no sense of property rights. . ."