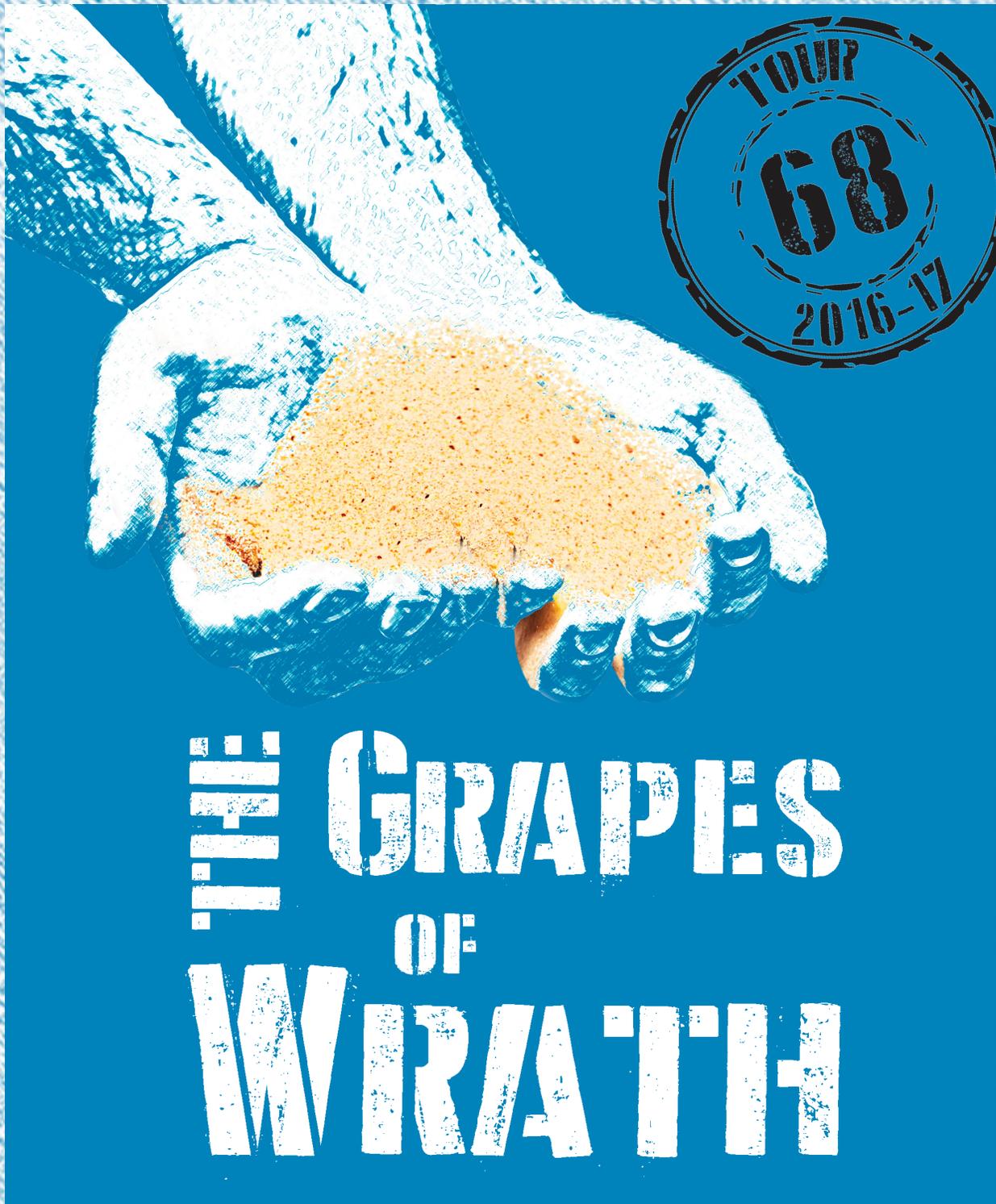




# National Players

*America's Longest-Running Touring Company*



TEACHER TOOL KIT

# List of TOOLS

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## Section 1: Introduction

How to use this guide.....	3
Who are National Players?.....	4
Life on the Road.....	5

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## Section 2: About the Author

John Steinbeck.....	7
Frank Galati.....	10

---

## Section 3: The World of the Play

The Great Depression.....	11
Dust Bowl.....	12
Migration.....	13
The American Dream.....	16
Climate.....	19
Community.....	21

---

## Section 4: Before the Show

Adaptations of Literature.....	22
Character Map.....	23
An Actor's Perspective.....	24
A Brief Synopsis.....	25
A Designer's Perspective.....	26
Before You Watch.....	27
Observe.....	28

---

## Section 5: After the Show

Create Your Own Adaptation.....	29
The Music of Tom Joad.....	30
Great Depression Museum.....	31
Advertising the American Dream.....	31
The Things We Carry: Understanding Migration.....	32
Headlines of the Times.....	32
Debating the Human Impact on Climate Change.....	33
Write a Review/Take Action/Draw Parallels.....	34

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# HOW to use this guide

What you have in front of you may seem like the largest study guide of all time. In fact, it's not a traditional study guide at all! We wanted to blow up any notion of what a study guide should be and instead give you the power to choose what you want to teach—we've merely assembled the tools you need to teach the subjects you find most relevant.

This Teacher Tool Kit includes six unique sections. Each section includes context information, activities, and further reading—all arranged by specific areas of focus. If you want your students to learn about the Dust Bowl, go to Section 3: The World of the Play; if you want a simple guide to theater etiquette, you'll find it in Section 5: During the Show. Utilize any or all of these tools as you see fit for your students.

**Facebook:** View archival photos and share your own work.

**Twitter @NationalPlayers:** Follow the Players across the country and use #NPTour08 to engage with other audiences.

**Tumblr:** For behind-the-scenes photos and videos of life on the road.

**YouTube:** Find trailers and video clips of shows.

**Instagram:** For fun photos of life on the road and the venues we visit.

**Email:** Contact the Players using their individual email addresses, found at [www.NationalPlayers.org](http://www.NationalPlayers.org). Send general educational questions to [NationalPlayers@olneytheatre.org](mailto:NationalPlayers@olneytheatre.org).

Whether your school employs Common Core standards or other standards specific to your state, within these pages you'll find a wealth of resources, sample lessons, and substantial historical and literary support material.

With this National Players Teacher Tool Kit, we invite you to build the lessons you choose. Please contact me at [jkj@nationalplayers.org](mailto:jkj@nationalplayers.org) with any feedback, questions, or ideas for other tools we can include in future Tool Kits. Enjoy!

—Jason King Jones, Artistic Director of National Players

This Tool Kit includes:

- Historical context, with insight into the political, social, and cultural atmosphere of the world of the play. This section prepares students to thematically engage with the play and make connections between Steinbeck's world and their own.
- Post-show questions and activities used in conjunction with or separate from National Player workshops.
- Additional resources referencing production of the show and the creation of this guide.
- Photos, illustrations, and other images providing nuanced, visual insight into different interpretations of the play.

## ENGAGE WITH THE PLAYERS

National Players has a 68-year legacy of making the classics relevant and exciting for new audiences; we are always looking for the latest ways to engage with students and audiences. We make our educational and artistic work as accessible and relevant as possible, from the thematic underpinnings of our texts to the creation of each year's national tour. We invite you to engage with us in any way.

Your students are welcome to contact the Players before or after their visits: **track** the Players' travels, **share** classroom materials, **post** questions and comments. Also, chat with the Players about their performances and life on the road! To engage with the Players via Facebook, Twitter, video and more, contact Education Coordinators, Alex Turner ([Alex@NationalPlayers.org](mailto:Alex@NationalPlayers.org)) and Claire Allegra Taylor ([Claire@NationalPlayers.org](mailto:Claire@NationalPlayers.org)).

# WHO are National Players?

**HISTORY** Celebrating its 68th season, National Players is a unique ensemble bringing innovative theatre to communities large and small across the United States. Founded in 1949, National Players stimulates youthful imagination and critical thinking by presenting classic plays in contemporary and accessible ways.

"The supreme reward is in the powerful storytelling. Attention to clarity of word and action, as well as passionate characterizations, reaps the benefit of capturing the audience's imagination and uniting them in story."

—Carole Lehan  
Glenelg Country School  
Ellicott City, MD

National Players is the hallmark outreach program of Olney Theatre Center in Olney, Maryland. A model for artistic collaboration and national education outreach, National Players embodies the Olney Theatre Center educational pedagogy: to unleash the creative potential in our audiences and artists, and to stimulate individual empowerment. National Players exemplifies these goals by presenting self-sustained productions of Shakespeare and other classics to learners of all ages and in all environments. Through performances and integrated educational programs, National Players empowers these learners to build stronger communities through artistic collaboration.

National Players has performed in 41 states; in the White House; and for American military in Europe, Asia, and the Arctic Circle. Committed to artistic excellence and community engagement, National Players has brought literature to life for more than 2.9 million people.



Credit: C. Stanley Photography

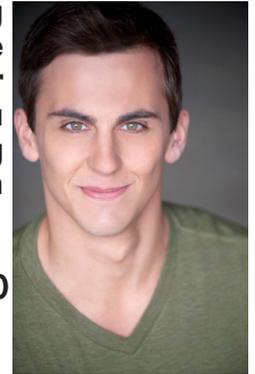
National Players offers an exemplary lesson in **collaboration** and **teamwork-in-action**: the actors not only play multiple roles onstage, they also serve as stage managers, teaching artists, and technicians. This year, the Players consist of 10 actors, traveling across the country and visiting schools and art centers.

A self-contained company, National Players carries its own sets, lights, costumes, and sound, meaning that the actors rebuild the set and hang lights for more than 100 performances a year.

They also memorize lines for three different plays—this year, *Hamlet*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, and *The Giver*—often performing more than one each day. It is a lot of work, but the Players are dedicated to celebrating and teaching literature and performance to as many audiences as possible.

# Life on the ROAD

**Adam Turck** is returning to National Players for Tour 68 after going on the road with Tour 65 and 66. In *Hamlet*, he plays Laertes, and is the Production Manager, Technical Director, and Strike Coordinator for Tour 68. In this interview, Adam reflects on the entire experience of life as a Player—from rehearsals and meeting fellow company members to taking each show on the road. Along with a general timeline of the production



## AUDITIONS

Auditions for National Players were held January through March. More than 1,000 young actors vied for a place in the company, auditioning in Maryland, Washington DC, Los Angeles, Boston, Georgia, Chicago, Memphis, and New York City.

"Working as an actor for a year and the travel opportunities are great, but what really sold me on National Players was the feel of the audition room. Auditions can be really scary, they can be this terrifying thing where everybody has to prove something to everybody else—but the General Manager and Artistic Director were so friendly, so inviting, so playful and so positive, that all the anxiety just went away the minute they opened their mouths."

## MEETING THE GROUP

For the first half of their contract, all ten players live in residency at the Olney Theatre Center, where they rehearse, learn about each other, and prepare for life on the road.

"It's really strange, because on day one when you meet everybody, you look at these people and you think, 'We are going to spend the next year of our lives together.' And there's a great weight in that, and there's a great expectation of having to get along, so everyone is typically very friendly."

## REHEARSALS

Players spend approximately three to four weeks with each director, analyzing the text, staging scenes, and incorporating design elements on the Olney stage.

"I like to have a working, functional knowledge of all three plays before we start. I walk in with just a functional artistic knowledge of the world of the play, and I read everything I can about it—I read essays, I read different versions of it, I watch adaptations, I just kind of fill my head with this play—and then just kind of see what happens."

## OFFSTAGE ROLES

In addition to acting roles, each Player takes on at least one offstage job in support of the company, based on his or her skill sets and interests.

"Work hard. And if you think you're working hard enough, you're not; there's always more work to do."

## TRAVELING

The Players take turns driving the company's three vehicles: a truck for their stage equipment, a van, and a car. Last year, they visited 19 states and 44 cities. Once, they performed five shows in four days in three different states.

"I do audiobooks while driving, specifically radio plays."

## COMPANY MANAGER

Schedules regular company meetings, handles emergencies on the road, serves as the point of contact for venues, and relays information to the company's General Manager.

**Tour 68:** Alex Turner

## STAGE MANAGER

Runs read-throughs and rehearsals, maintains the script and blocking notes, and calls many of the lighting and sound cues during performance.

**Tour 68 for *The Grapes of Wrath*:** Kenn Hopkins Jr.

## TECHNICAL DIRECTOR

Supervises load-in of scenery at each venue and performs upkeep of the set while on the road.

**Tour 68:** Adam Turck

**Assistant:** Allyson Boate

## WARDROBE

Builds and maintains the costume inventory, creates a laundry and maintenance schedule, oversees repairs.

**Tour 68:** Lupe Campos

## MASTER ELECTRICIAN

Installs and maintains all lighting equipment, determines position for lighting equipment and cables, executes focusing.

**Tour 68:** Moira Todd

**Assistants:** Kenn Hopkins Jr. and Audrey Tchoukova

## SOUND ENGINEER

Ensures proper placement, upkeep, and maintenance of sound equipment, sets and checks sound levels and microphone cues.

**Tour 68:** Jered Hobbs

# LIVING ON THE ROAD

**Each Player is allowed to bring one large bag and one small bag for their personal belongings. Without regular access to a refrigerator or gym, taking care of themselves on the road is especially challenging.**

"Working out isn't always easy, but if you have 20 minutes you can spend them doing calisthenics or jumping rope or doing push-ups. It's the diet, not being able to cook for yourself, that's really hard. The only way to really be healthy is to buy pretty expensive stuff, so you can't always be both frugal and healthy."

# BEING A TEAM

**Working together for an entire year means that, despite long hours and challenging load-ins, all ten Players need to work as a cohesive team.**

"A Player from Tour 65 once said that 'Expectations are a really bad thing to have with this job because everything is a curve ball, we're thrown them every day, so you have to approach everything with a spirit of adventure at all times.'"

# WORKSHOPS

**Along with performing, the Players host educational workshops for many audiences. Workshops include improvisation, text analysis, stage combat, and more.**

"They are a great way for us to get to know the community for whom we are performing. It is also incredibly rewarding to get feedback from these community members. It helps remind us that what we do can make an impact."

# KEEPING IT "FRESH"

**After presenting three plays dozens of times for dozens of audiences, the Players work hard to keep their performances exciting and authentic.**

I find it hard not to keep each show fresh, because every space is different and every audience is different. As a company, we have rehearsals on the road, and sometimes when we do read-throughs of the script we'll put a little bit of a spin on it."



Credit: Players' Archive, The Players' truck needs to be reloaded after each production. It contains all of their sets, wardrobe pieces, and lighting and sound equipment.

# About the Author

## John Steinbeck

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### EARLY LIFE

John Ernst Steinbeck, Jr. was born on February 27, 1902 in Salinas, California to Olive, a former schoolteacher, and John, a store owner who worked multiple jobs to keep his family afloat. Salinas was a prosperous farming community with a diverse group of residents and workers. The town and its people had a distinct character that influenced Steinbeck's later writings. Steinbeck began developing his talent for writing at a young age and eventually attended Stanford University, but he dropped out in 1925 without having received a degree. During this time, he became interested in marine biology and the ideas of Edward F. Ricketts, which would later serve his writing career well. Ricketts's concept of the "super-organism"—a social unit of organisms that act in concert—informed Steinbeck's interests on group behavior, which became a major theme in his novels: for example, the characters in *The Grapes of Wrath* are forced by political, environmental, and social forces to move their home in the same direction as many other people in the Dust Bowl area. He believed that humans needed to respect the wilderness and the land in a way that many did not, sharing the riches of the world with nature instead of dominating them. As a young adult, Steinbeck worked as a laborer and crew boss at Spreckels Sugar Company in Salinas, California; his agricultural experiences contributed to many of his novels.

### STEINBECK THE AUTHOR

Steinbeck tried to jump-start a freelance writing career in New York but eventually became a caretaker on Lake Tahoe in California. He published his first novel *Cup of Gold* in 1929 and married Carol Henning around the same time. Carol became the principal breadwinner while Steinbeck worked feverishly at writing novels. Steinbeck's next few novels were not critical successes but his 1935 book *Tortilla Flat* was a success, fueling the publication of *Dubious Battle* in 1936, *Of Mice and Men* in 1937, and *The Long Valley* in 1938. *The Grapes of Wrath* was published in 1939 and praised for capturing the mood and anxieties of those living in the Dust Bowl during the Great Depression. It sold as many as 10,000 copies per week during its most popular period, and Steinbeck received the 1940 Pulitzer Prize in Fiction.



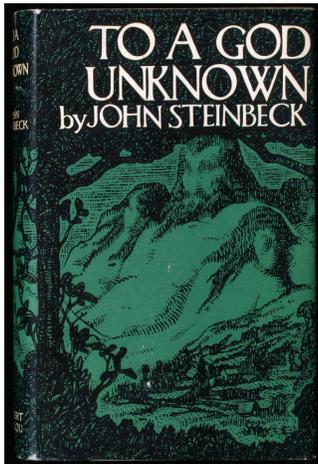
John Steinbeck. Photo from Associated Press.

Steinbeck served as a war correspondent for *The New York Herald Tribune* during World War II and explored marine life in Mexico with Ricketts, an experience that resulted in the publication of *Sea of Cortez* in 1941. He identified as a Democrat through and through, and worked writing and drafting speeches for Adlai Stevenson and Lyndon B. Johnson; Jackie Kennedy even approached him about writing a biography of her husband.

He remarried in 1950 after meeting theatre artist Elaine Anderson through Ava Gardner. Until his death, Steinbeck would offer a toast to Ava Gardner at parties for bringing him to his wife. Steinbeck continued to publish novels till 1962, when he received the Nobel Prize for Literature. The story behind the award has become something of a Nobel Prize legend; according to documents released to the public, the Swedish Academy was unable to come to a clear consensus on who should win the prize that year. Some of the contenders passed away, making them ineligible to receive the prize, and members of the Swedish Academy fostered political and cultural prejudices against other candidates. The default was Steinbeck, who was honored to receive the award. He died of heart disease on December 20, 1968 in

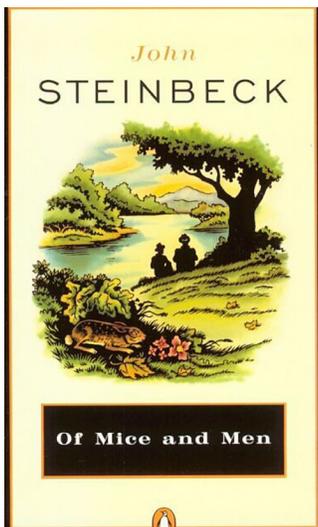
## WORKS

Steinbeck's works are known for their depiction of the Great Depression, the American landscape, friendship, and an ethnically diverse California. *The Grapes of Wrath* stands out on his shelf because of the wealth of themes that it covers. Steinbeck is seen as a master of the American realist literary style in how he captured the lives and struggles of the rural poor. He based the character of Tom Joad on the story of Tom Collins, a migrant camp manager Steinbeck met on a research trip.



*To A God Unknown* (1933) is an early novel intertwining family loyalty and dreams with Greek and Biblical mythology.

*In Dubious Battle* (1936) is lauded as one of the best strike novels ever written. It describes the journey of an organizer named Jim whose growing success in a labor strike leads him down an unexpected path.

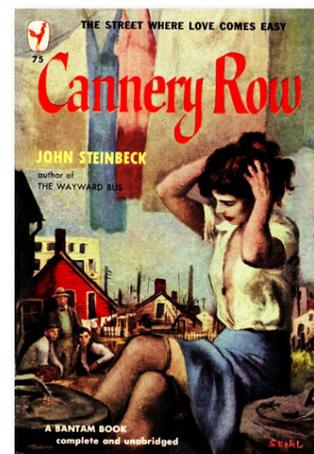
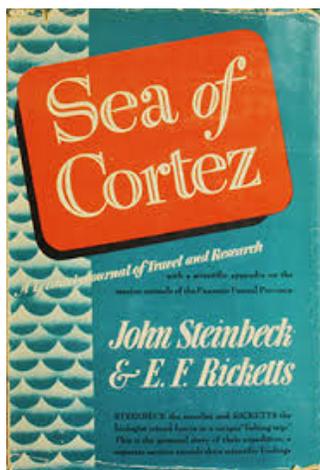


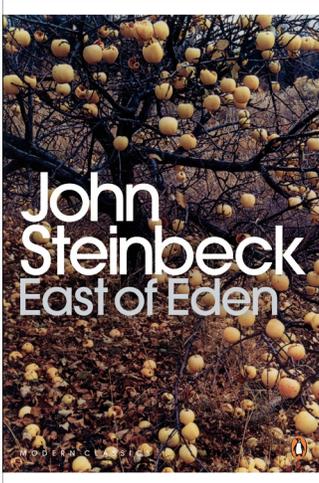
*Of Mice and Men* (1937) is, aside from *The Grapes of Wrath*, Steinbeck's most popular novel. It was published in 1937, just seven months before the premiere of the dramatic adaptation on Broadway. Two brothers who make a bit of an odd couple travel California as migrant workers.

*The Long Valley* (1938) is a collection of short stories centered around traveling with unlikely companions and experiencing the hardships of life and death.

*Sea of Cortez* (1941) is said to be Steinbeck's favorite book that he wrote. It is fairly autobiographical, recounting his friendship and travels with Edward F. Ricketts around the Gulf of California.

*Cannery Row* (1945) depicts a fictional version of Ricketts analyzing an impoverished community with the same logic and diligence as the non-fictional scientist's marine biology expeditions.





*A Russian Journal* (1948) is Steinbeck's frank and introspective look at Russia at the very beginning of the Cold War. His text is combined with the photographs of his traveling partner Robert Capa.

*East of Eden* (1952) is another largely autobiographical tale, partially drawn from Steinbeck's mother's family stories and partially drawn from the Biblical story of Cain and Abel.

*The Winter of Our Discontent* (1961) voices Steinbeck's concerns with America's growing greed, selfishness, and immorality.

*Travels with Charley* (1962) is Steinbeck's funny and slightly satirized account of "searching for America" in his truck.

*His prose is supple-muscular and melodic. Early on, he fixed his gaze on the marginalized and dispossessed, conveying a palpable empathy for ordinary folk who speak a robust and earthy American idiom.*

*- Susan Shillinglaw, Steinbeck biographer and former director of the San Jose State University Steinbeck Center*

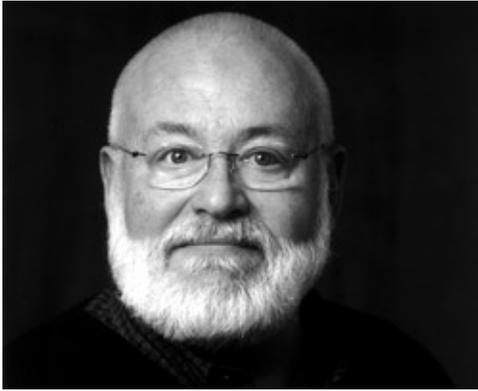
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## LEGACY

Steinbeck's books are often viewed as the foundation of modern literature about California, and his literature is part of the American canon; he is the primary fiction writer of the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl. A large part of Steinbeck's artistry is his diverse range of interests and crossover into other media. His political and scientific interests are made accessible by his prose, as well as by the film adaptations of his books that he supervised, and the dramatic adaptations that he wrote.

# Frank Galati

## THE ADAPTOR



Frank Galati is a theatre artist currently based in Florida with a long history of work in Chicago, Illinois. Mr. Galati's Chicago directing credits include *Oedipus Complex* at the Goodman Theatre, the Kander and Ebb/Terrence McNally musical *The Visit*; *She Always Said*, *Pablo*, which he adapted from the works of *Gertrude Stein*; *Each One As She May*; *Cry*, *The Beloved Country*; *Passion*; *The Winter's Tale*; *The Good Person of Setzuan*; *The Government Inspector*; and *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*.

Mr. Galati won two Tony Awards for his adaptation and direction of Steppenwolf's production of *The Grapes of Wrath* on Broadway, and was nominated for a Tony for directing the musical *Ragtime*. Also on Broadway, he directed *Seussical*, and Julie Harris and Calista Flockhart in *The Glass Menagerie*. Opera directing credits include *La Traviata*, *Tosca*, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, and *Voyage of Edgar Allen Poe* at Lyric Opera and Bolcom's *A View from the Bridge* at Lyric and The Metropolitan Opera. His New York credits include Tony Kushner's *Homebody/Kabul* at New York Theatre Workshop and *The Pirate Queen* on Broadway.

Over the years he has received nine Joseph Jefferson Awards for his work in Chicago theatre—one for acting, five for directing and three for writing. Mr. Galati is a member of the Steppenwolf Ensemble, where he most recently directed his own adaptation of Haruki Murakami's *After the Quake*. In 1989, he was nominated for an Academy Award for his screenplay with Lawrence Kasdan, of *The Accidental Tourist*. In 2001 Mr. Galati was inducted into the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He was a distinguished professor of Department of Performance Studies at Northwestern University until 2006.

In 2015, Galati collaborated with Steppenwolf on another Steinbeck adaptation, this time of *East of Eden*, at the request of the Steinbeck estate. He is currently working on a project about Florida poets with gifted teenage writers from Sarasota and a dramatic adaptation of Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth*.

## SELECTIONS FROM "A CONVERSATION WITH FRANK GALATI"

Read the  
full inter-  
view [here!](#)

### From the Spring 2014 edition of *Stay Thirsty* magazine:

*THIRSTY: You have chosen to direct works written by such literary luminaries as E.L. Doctorow, Gertrude Stein, John Steinbeck, Tennessee Williams, Tony Kushner and Haruki Murakami. What drew you to projects by these writers?*

GALATI: ...Family and the trauma of family life has long been a factor in the choices I have made for projects. That was true of *The Grapes of Wrath*, a work about the sacred bond of the family, one that concludes with the enactment of a taboo, a pietà in which a young mother gives the milk from her swollen breast to a starving stranger. By enacting that sacramental moment (which was cut from the John Ford film) we join Steinbeck in recognizing that acts of mercy affirm the bond of our human family. We are all brothers and sisters. We are the parents of all children and we have an obligation as members of that human family to take care of each other.

*THIRSTY: Your body of work spans the spectrum of topics from contemporary to political to historical. Given such a broad palette, what are the essential elements that you look for in a story?*

GALATI: What I look for in a story (short or long) is the play hiding inside. At Northwestern, where I taught for forty years, my students and I did stage adaptations of Twain, Hawthorne, Nabokov, Wilder, Joyce, Pynchon, DeLillo, Beckett, Faulkner, Welty, O'Connor and scores of other writers. Almost every novel conceals a drama. Some of those dramas are very hard to coax out, some jump out of the book and run up onto the stage. Of course if the novelist creates scenes that play through brilliant dialogue, that's half the battle. That's very true of Steinbeck. The scenes in his books are completely stage-worthy. Other writers, like Henry James, are much harder to adapt.

# The World of the Play

## The Great Depression

### ORIGINS

*On Wall Street, the people walked around like zombies. It was like Death Takes A Holiday. It was very dark. You saw people who yesterday rode around in Cadillacs lucky now to have carfare.*

*- William Benton, New York City advertising*

Although the U.S. stock market crash of October 1929 is often seen as the beginning of the Great Depression, in Oklahoma and elsewhere, the crash exacerbated an already existing decline in agriculture that had begun much earlier. The Depression's impact on Oklahoma lasted throughout the 1930s and, in some cases, into the early 1940s, longer and more negatively than the impact on the nation as a whole.

American agriculture had been struggling as early as 1921, when commodity prices fell steadily from post-World War I highs. By 1929, industries, the backbone of prosperity in the "Roaring Twenties," experienced a decline in consumption as farmers could no longer afford to buy consumer goods and the overall market for goods had become fairly saturated. As industries scaled back production, they fired workers, leading to increased unemployment. Many farm families lived on the brink of starvation and bankruptcy during good years, so the Depression forced those on the land to focus on long-term survival. Farmers ate less meat and more filling and inexpensive starches, like beans and corn, and wore clothes made out of burlap feed and fertilizer sacks. Tenants and sharecroppers moved to find better contracts and traveled farther and more often as the Depression worsened. Banks and governmental authorities began seizing properties and forcing or threatening eviction; in some places, mass action and protests were the only reason families were able to stay put.

### SPREADING THE BLAME

At first, state leaders struggled to address the rapidly declining economy. Many people in the federal government had difficulty understanding how the crash had occurred with such severity, and those in the top five percent of the nation's economy (who received about one third of the country's personal income) blamed the lower classes for the crisis. In 1931, Henry Ford insisted that "the average man won't really do a day's work unless he is caught and cannot get out of it" shortly before firing 75,000 workers. Many war veterans were furious at the government for seemingly abandoning them after their years of service, and in the summer of 1932, more than twenty thousand of them marched in Washington, demanding that the federal government pay off their bonds. The endeavor ended in thousands of injuries and three deaths after the government used tear gas and fire to draw the veterans, families and allies apart.

### AID

Government relief payments were more prevalent among urban families, who were more likely to live in proximity to privately run or church-affiliated aid centers and less likely to be as self-sufficient in terms of food or clothing as rural inhabitants. Throughout the state, cities and counties often paid teachers and other government workers in IOUs and "warrants," slips of paper that were supposed to be redeemable for cash once the economy improved. Many doctors, lawyers, and other professionals were paid with food, goods, and labor instead of money.

Following Herbert Hoover's largely unpopular resolution policies, President Franklin D. Roosevelt started his 1933 presidential term with a series of direct relief efforts, collectively known as the New Deal. This initiative encompassed a variety of different efforts to alleviate citizens' financial struggles, restore and stabilize capitalism, and stave off the murmurs of rebellion. These efforts included the Works Progress Administration, which employed millions of people to carry out public works projects, such as the construction of public buildings and roads. Despite these efforts, the benefits of state relief were limited in the early 1930s; government officials often favored non-union, skilled laborers and regarded working-class and poor white and black workers as undeserving of funds. These people, in turn, sought relief among their families and communities and, increasingly, from the federal government, particularly the provisions of New Deal agencies.

# The Dust Bowl

## A MIDWESTERN NIGHTMARE

### FURTHER READING

- Franklin Delano Roosevelt's [Fireside Chat on drought](#) (1936)
- "I'd Rather Not Be On Relief," a [poem](#) by Lester Hunter (1938)
- [A letter](#) to President Herbert Hoover from Wallace F. Judd, and his response (1930)

The "Dust Bowl" refers to the time and circumstances of the 1930s in which an intense period of drought dehydrated and seriously eroded the soil in about 150,000 square miles of the American midwest. Most inhabitants of Oklahoma, Texas, Kansas, Colorado, and New Mexico survived by living on the land, often in structures on properties that their families had owned for a number of years. The drought coincided with the drastic economic downturn of the Great Depression, causing many people to lose a good deal of their regular income fairly quickly. An exceptionally high demand for wheat during the years of the Great War (now known as World War I) had convinced many farmers to turn over the grass on the property to grow wheat; now, that rich soil was useless. The high winds common in the Great Plains became especially dangerous during this period because of the amount of dust that they could raise. Dust storms, also called "black blizzards," became extremely common by 1934, when after multiple years of drought, most plants lacked strong roots to keep them from being picked up in the wind. Families began to vacate their homes for better conditions in hopes of staying together and safe.

The term "Okies" came to refer to anyone, not just Oklahomans, traveling westward to escape the Dust Bowl conditions. It also became an indication of lack of intelligence, intense poverty, and uselessness. As migrants began to realize that California was not the land of plenty they had been led to believe that it was, they voiced their discontent and angered many of the native landowners and laborers whose regular work and way of life were disrupted by the influx of Dust Bowl refugees. These midwestern migrants were generally white, Christian and native-born. The America that they sought to recover or recreate through moving to a more prosperous agricultural part of the country came from collective memories of the nineteenth century, when farming was still a dominant part of the economy and very few people attended institutions of higher education. The disparity of wealth was on display for the entire nation as their struggles became increasingly documented in photos, music, and writing.

Okies began to develop their own subculture out in California, both as a coping mechanism for their circumstances and to defy the widespread stereotype that they were victims of the Depression; characterizing people or families as "Okies" tended to suggest low intelligence and no agency in the national crisis. Historian James Gregory labeled this subculture "plain-folk Americanism" in 1989 and identified the following tenants of it: a neopopulist political culture that combined fairly conservative values with radical agrarianism, evangelical Protestantism, and country music. This subculture became more mainstream and the negative connotations began to melt away as migration to California increased in the 1940s due to a large number of industry jobs.

## OKLAHOMA

**CLICK to listen to Art King talk about his family's journey from Oklahoma to California during the Great Depression.**

Oklahoma's agricultural economy had been declining for decades, but the drought of 1930 brought on a period of intense uncertainty and financial depression. Some farmers left to find work in cities, while others fell deeper into debt; Tulsa and Oklahoma City formed unemployment committees in attempts to alleviate day-to-day concerns. The winter of 1932 was the hardest period of the Depression for urban Oklahomans, three hundred thousand of whom were out of work (out of a population of eight hundred thousand). Meanwhile, 1.5 million rural Oklahomans saw farm income fall 64 percent throughout the Depression. With less food, fewer clothes, and little money in their possession, many rural Oklahomans ceased going to school, church, and other social functions. "Hooverville" communities, makeshift tent and shack communities, began popping up around Oklahoma cities.

Reactions to the economic situation were largely negative and resulted in a widely publicized food riot in Oklahoma City and peaceful protests around other cities. Eventually, government programs began contributing to Oklahoma's economy. By 1935, more than 116,000 Oklahomans were employed by WPA initiatives, and the oil industry was able to stabilize under a series of federal agreements. Despite these improvements, Oklahoma's economy felt the aftershocks of the Depression until World War II pushed employment rates upwards again.

# Migration

## MIGRATION IN AMERICA

Migration has been an essential part of America's history since its colonial days. Early settlers from Europe built communities around bodies of water, but expanded their horizons and moved as their needs for survival changed. After the Revolutionary War, many people ventured westward to explore agricultural opportunities on cheaper land. They met resistance from the French, who owned much of the land surrounding the Mississippi River, and Native Americans who lived on the land already. Many of these migrants struggled with the unfamiliar terrain, wildlife, and climate in unfamiliar territory. In 1803, President Thomas Jefferson purchased French land for \$15 million and doubled the size of the country in what we now call The Louisiana Purchase. He also commissioned Meriwether Lewis and William Clark to explore the western United States in order to understand what awaited people there.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the country industrialized and became a common destination for immigrants, and large groups of people began to move their lives out to the midwest and eventually the western coast of the country. The Gold Rush in California during the 1840s encouraged many families to move out west, and mid-century

transcontinental railroad construction required many laborers, many of whom were Asian immigrants, to spread the transportation system as far west as possible. This coincided with a period of widespread Christian evangelism and Manifest Destiny, the socio-religious concept that westward expansion and settlement would result in the betterment of the American people; it was their proper service of God for gifting them with such prosperous land and generous opportunity. This concept was fueled by government support and federal initiatives to drive people further west: the Homestead Act of 1862 allowed settlers to claim 160 acres of land for free if they could travel out and claim it, and government funds were used to purchase territory from Mexico and Great Britain, which now make up states.



Exterior of the Apollo Theater, a theater in Harlem that presented many notable musical acts during the Harlem Renaissance. Image from *The Long Wharf Theater*.

Many migrations in America have been motivated by economic pursuits, but occasionally cultural affiliations contribute to these movements as well. The Great Migration is the term used to describe the mass migration of over six million African Americans from the rural South to other regions of the country from the 1920s until the 1980s. World wars had created greater need for industrial workers in the major cities in the west, midwest, and northeastern regions, which did not have the harsh segregation laws of the south in the earlier part of the century. In addition to the positive opportunities for their families, many African-Americans took pride in the communities

they created for themselves in the various cities, such as New York City, Philadelphia, Detroit, and Chicago. The pockets of these cities that were restricted to African-Americans were often referred to as "ghettos," and the large population resulting from the Great Migration contributed to the squalid conditions of urbanization. However, they also enabled African American communities in each city to develop their own cultural voices and movements. The Great Migration into the neighborhood of Harlem in New York City created the environment that brought about the Harlem Renaissance. The Harlem Renaissance spawned many of the most prolific American musicians and artists of the twentieth century



Jacob Lawrence's panel *The Migrants* from his Migration Series panels. Image from the Modern Museum of Art.

## ESCAPING THE DUST BOWL

The area referred to as the "Great Plains" was the last to be settled during the period of westward expansion; when it was, it was primarily the land of cowboys and cattle ranches. As the cattle industry declined in the late 1880s, the Great Plains became home to numerous families as agriculturally minded pioneers rushed to take the fertile



A family of seven sleep in a single tent en route to California from Texas. Photo from *The History Place*.

The following generation of Great Plains inhabitants faced a new set of problems as the country headed into the 1930s. As drought and dust storms plagued their farms, many families were not able to harvest their crops for sale or food. Animals began to inhale so much dust that they were unable to process their food. Driving became a dangerous way of transportation—dust clouds came by without warning, causing constant collisions. Without any new vegetation or respite from the dust blowing all over, spirits fell, and for many people, leaving the land was the only option left to being suffocated by dust.

On April 14, 1935, a major dust storm hit the High Plains, turning a sunny afternoon into a dark night of terror. Like a tsunami, a wall of sand hit eastern Oklahoma around 4 p.m. and made its way across the state and into Texas, accompanied by lowering temperatures. Many people were killed during the storm, others went blind, and those who were left behind felt that it was nearly impossible to recover from the tragedy. The

Great Plains region was called "The Dust Bowl" for the first time during national media coverage of the storm. Today, that event is immortalized by Woody Guthrie's song on the tragedy; "Dusty Old Dust" is rumored to be based on what is now called "Black Sunday" and Guthrie's personal experiences growing up in Oklahoma and Texas during the Great Depression.

California was idealized in the minds of the Dust Bowl residents as the crisis grew worse. The climate in California was said to be much more mild; not only would there be strong agricultural conditions, but lack of snow would allow farmers to work year round instead of breaking for the winter. The government reforms being placed on the midwestern families impeded their independence, despite the government's positive intentions. For agrarian communities, owning and controlling land was the only way of life, and it seemed like the only available land was far out west. Families crammed all the belongings and people that they could into their horse-drawn wagons and Model-As and turned westward to escape the storms. Even if conditions on the road were not much better than back in the Great Plains, at least they could carry hope for the future.



Dust storms like these became common occurrences during the 1930s. Photo from PBS.

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## MIGRATION TODAY

Today, moving around the country or around the world is not as uncommon as it used to be. Improved technology make it much easier to plan to move, travel to new places, and communicate with people who have different views. Whereas for a long time people saw California has a dream destination, increasing numbers of people are moving East, and younger generations are, on the whole, moving to urban areas instead of rural towns. The increasing demand for city homes pushed many people into historically underdeveloped and impoverished areas. In many cases, this tug-of-war over space has created conflict between white populations and populations of color. This is the beginning of 'gentrification,' a long process that typically involves an area adjusting to the needs of higher-paying residents.

One of the most politically volatile topics regarding migration today is that of refugees. America has been a popular destination for displaced people and people seeking to escape persecution since World War II. The United States is currently the country that resettles more refugees than any other country: over one third of the refugees to America come from the Near East/South Asia, another third come from Africa, and over a quarter come from East Asia. The federal government facilitates who is given priority on coming to the United States and receiving aid.

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## RESISTANCE TO MIGRANTS

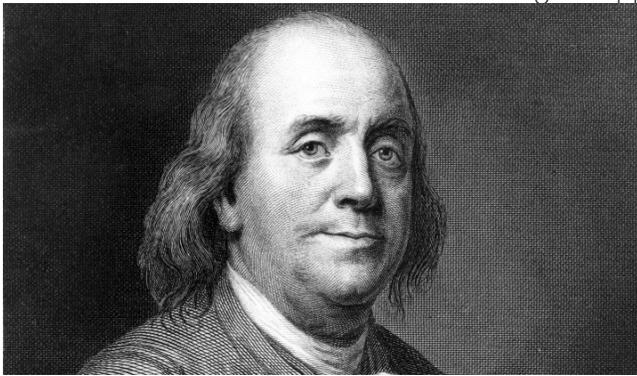
Early American history is riddled with the slaughter of Native Americans residing on the land that appealed to settlers and the federal government, and conflict over the ownership of regions is constant through the country's history. At first these conflicts arose over natural resources in a country that relied very heavily on agriculture; more land meant more money and security. As the United States grew and expanded, stark regional differences and cultures began to develop between people from different states and areas of the country. These kinds of cultures could often perpetuate prejudices and biases against "the others" trying to stake a claim in a new space. Dust Bowl migrants encountered this kind of prejudice once they had successfully left the Great Plains; no matter where they were from, they were all labelled "Okies" as shorthand for uncultured and lazy white people who had nothing to contribute to society. Local authorities were taught to be vigilant with that particular population; a rising national fear of Communism also instilled fear and trepidation in anyone encountering someone from 'elsewhere.'

Today's world and contemporary America have improved immigration practices, but differences in language and culture still make many people suspicious and uncomfortable. Immigrants often face difficulties after arriving in the United States.

# The American Dream

The American Dream—how we see it, how we achieve it, what we lose in the process of realizing it—has been a common theme in literature and art for over a century. America was, and for many still is, infused with the idea of its being a "land of opportunity." The sense that America held a key to a brilliant future for all is what motivated both transatlantic immigration and westward expansion beginning in the nineteenth century. In 1913, James Truslow Adams coined the phrase "American dream" in his book *The Epic of America*, emphasizing how the achievement of certain goals or ideals would be beneficial for the nation as a whole.

## IN LITERATURE



Benjamin Franklin. Image from *Philanthropy Round Table*.

An essential theme of stories centered around the American Dream is that of the self-made man. This image began with the Founding Fathers, particularly Benjamin Franklin, who rose from being an apprentice to one of the world's most well-respected intellectuals. His message of self-sufficiency, communicated in his famous autobiography, was particularly resonant in agrarian communities, where families owned and worked on the land themselves to survive. Since the eighteenth century, wealth was essential to the achievement of the American Dream, and America was seen as the country where anybody could achieve financial success and rise in society.

In a country built upon principles of a Declaration of Independence, freedom is an assumed part of the American dream. Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* describes the journey of a young boy who acts without consequence and learns how to listen to his conscience, and not necessarily the people around him; Huck eventually helps Jim escape from slavery.

Many twentieth-century novels lauded for providing strong commentary on the American Dream do not praise the American Dream—they discredit it. As the world became increasingly global and America was embroiled in conflicts with other countries, many people started to see the fallacies of believing in the country and the opportunities it presented, even to the privileged white men.

F. Scott Fitzgerald's Jazz Age-era novels take a more cynical view of the American Dream in the early twentieth century. Fitzgerald was fond of depicting wealthy characters, often-times people with family money who, through a series of difficulties, learned about how to function when money could not be a sole source of comfort. In *The Great Gatsby*, Daisy is caught between two men: her husband Tom, whose life was made comfortable and easier to navigate because of his family's money, and Jay Gatsby, her old flame who has amassed money and a large estate through hard work.



Daisy with the three men of *The Great Gatsby*—Jay Gatsby, her old flame; Nick Carraway, a storyteller; and Tom Buchanan, her husband. Image of the 2014 film adaptation from WNYC.

Along with *The Grapes of Wrath*, the most blatant criticism of the American Dream may be J.D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*. Sarcastic Holden Caulfield embarks on a Huck Finn-like journey without any authorities to answer to; he continuously points out how the future that his teachers and parents are thrusting upon him is inauthentic ("phony" to him). He does not see much stock in the American Dream that they believe they are achieving and instead wanders through the streets of New York for something more real and authentic than what they can give him.

## IN DRAMA

American plays often tackle the theme of legacy and what achieving the American Dream can leave behind for the next generation, using family dynamics to show how the notion of the dream can change through the years.



2016 Broadway revival of *Long Day's Journey Into Night*. Image from Roundabout Theater Company..

Eugene O'Neill's autobiographical *Long Day's Journey Into Night* shows a family stuck in the ways of the past. Parents James and Mary Tyrone have tried to create a happy home for their sons, but they were unable to hold on to the happiness of their young marriage through the years. The family is pulled down by their own individual vices, which the land of opportunity had presented them with in their past.

The famed American dramatist Arthur Miller was particularly interested in the failure of the American Dream and how husbands and fathers coped in those specific times of uncertainty. In Miller's 1949 play *Death of a Salesman*, father Willy Loman finds that the salesman job he has excelled at for his entire adult life is being labelled "out of date," and he begins to contemplate suicide. Without providing for his family by working hard at his trade, Willy does not know what to do.



2012 Broadway revival of *Death of a Salesman*. Image from the New York Times.



2014 Broadway revival of *A Raisin in the Sun*. Image from Broadway.com.

Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* takes its title from Langston Hughes's poem "Dream Deferred," referring to the consequences of dreams going ignored or forgotten. Three generations of an African-American family believe that their late family patriarch's insurance check is going to be the solution to their obstacle and allow them to achieve their dreams: Walter wants to open a liquor store so that he can stop working as a driver; Beneatha wants to study to be a doctor; and their mother Lena wants to purchase a house for the family to live in instead of renting an apartment. Their difficulties in realizing the American Dream are compounded by their African-American heritage, as each character begins to realize what it means to each of them to be black, and how much further away the American Dream can be

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What does the "American Dream" mean to you today?
- How much do your parents tell you what to do, and how much are you free to choose?
- What obstacles do you face in achieving your dreams?

## IN FINE ART

Twentieth-century painters and photographers were also interested in analyzing the American Dream and what American identity was or could be; their work ran the



*Kindred Spirits* by Asher Brown Durand. Image from the Brooklyn Museum.

gamut from depicting America as a plentiful land of beauty and opportunity to exposing the hardships of the lower classes. American artists have a long tradition of either emulating European artists or consciously rejecting European traditions. The Hudson River School of the late nineteenth century glorified the American land in European Romantic-style paintings focused on realistic portrayals of America's natural features. Artists such as Thomas Cole, the founder of the school, and his friend Asher Brown Durand wanted to glorify the possibilities of greatness that lay in an America that man had not yet set foot upon.

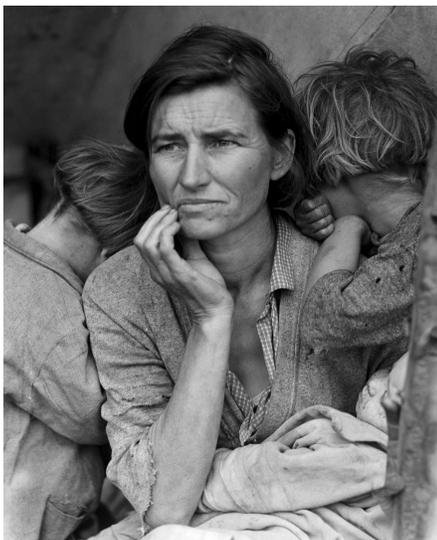


*View From Mount Holyoke, Northampton, Massachusetts after a Thunderstorm* by Thomas Cole.



*American Gothic* by Grant Wood.

The classical view of nature and land—that they represent democracy and greatness with stability for its inhabitants—was subverted by the Great Depression and the trials of Dust Bowl inhabitants. Today, Grant Wood's 1930 painting *American Gothic* is an iconic American painting that captures an idealistic view of America: it depicts a couple on a pioneer, suggesting America's history and Puritan origins. The man solemnly holds a pitchfork, indicating that he owns his means of production and has conquered the land through hard work. The man and woman look out at the viewer without apology or shame; they are straightforward and honest with their emotions.



*Migrant Mother* by Dorothea Lange

Much of the art that emerged during the following years of the 1930s depicts a different America, one ravaged by poverty, hunger, and loss. Photography emerged during this period as a way to show everyday realities of real people; the experiences of Dust Bowl migrants were exposed through photojournalism. The most famous photo of this era, Dorothea Lange's *Migrant Mother*, is similar to *American Gothic* in that it is also a view of a typical family unit, but the glory of the American Dream appears to have been lost in the dust. *Migrant Mother* turns the European artistic image of the Madonna and Jesus Christ on its head while furthering a political agenda; Lange was hired by the Farm Security Administration to capture images that would rally support for New Deal initiatives. The woman in this photo was part-Cherokee, but depicting her as white helped other Dust Bowl migrants and Americans identify with her plight to care for her child and weather the Great Depression. America was a country in crisis seeking to define its identity, and cultural images such as this one were effective creating a cohesive American self-image, if not a patriotic one.

# Climate

## CLIMATE IN AMERICAN HISTORY

The Dust Bowl is the strongest example of unpredictable climate and weather affecting the course of American history. During the industrialization of the American agricultural industry, an excess of fertile soil was seen as a positive asset to the country's economy. Some cowboys in the Oklahoma panhandle predicted that plowing the soil underneath the dry surface would lead to disaster, but homesteaders refused to listen to their aphorism from the High Plains: "Miles to water, miles to wood, and only six inches to hell." Banks were initially wary about granting loans to people who needed to purchase land, tractors, and farming equipment, but relented by 1920; the collapse would later make it impossible for the banks to exist without seizing the properties that they had lent money toward. The dust, combined with the strong wind gusts and intense heat, made life unbearable in the Great Plains during the 1930s. The first 'black duster' was observed on September 14, 1930, and people called up their respective governments in fear and anxiety of what was happening around them; it was not quite a dust storm or a tornado, and definitely not a hailstorm, all of which were frequent events in the area.

Other historical events involving weather trends:

In March 1888, **a severe winter storm** hit the East Coast of America, destroying telephone and railroad services for the entire region. Communication and transportation services drastically improved as a result of this tragedy; telephone companies began installing their cables underground and away from the elements, and Boston and New York began planning the construction of their respective underground subway systems.

The **Atlantic ocean was uncharacteristically warm** in the early twentieth century, causing an increasing number of glaciers to break apart and drift through the ocean. There was an increased number of icebergs in the water, including the one that the 'unsinkable' Titanic struck in 1912, creating one of America's most famous tragedies. The following year, the International Ice Patrol was established to monitor and issue warnings regarding the icebergs in the North Atlantic.

Scientists have concluded that more recent abnormal weather patterns and natural disasters are symptoms of a period of contemporary climate change, **primarily caused by human activities that increase the amount of greenhouse gases** in the Earth's atmosphere. Scientists, government officials, and civilians worry about the continued effects of humans on the environment.

## NATURAL DISASTERS

Increased meteorological knowledge and technology mean that the American government is much better prepared to predict and handle the aftereffects of major disasters. Still, Mother Nature takes different parts of the country by surprise every year, requiring millions of dollars in damage and relief, as well as unspeakable tragedy.



*A truck tries to make it through the postJonas coastal flooding in New Jersey. Photo from the Press of Atlantic City.*

*Blizzard Jonas:* In January 2016, one of the biggest winter storms in American history wreaked havoc in the northeast and mid-Atlantic regions of the country. New York City; Baltimore, Maryland; and Harrisburg, Pennsylvania saw record amounts of snow, and many people were prevented from going to school or work for a week due to snowfall and coastal flooding. Eleven states declared states of emergency and 55 people died over the course of the storm. The storm caused almost a billion dollars worth of damage.

## NATURAL DISASTERS (Cont.)

*2014 Oso Mudslide in Washington:* On the morning of March 22, 2014, one of the deadliest landslides in American history hit the Oso, Washington neighborhood of Steelhead Haven. Forty-nine homes were destroyed in about sixty seconds, covered with 10 million cubic yards of debris from a slope above the North Fork Stillaguamish River. Forty-four people in all were killed. Over two years later, there are still debates about whether homes should have been built in that location at all. Construction started in the 1960s and continued into the twenty-first century, despite smaller



*tury, despite smaller landslides in the area. Geologic research suggests that landslides of this magnitude are fairly common in that particular area, occurring approximately every 140 years (a blip in geologic time), prompting many to argue that the area should never have been zoned for residences or a major highway. Others say that it was simply a freak incident that could not have been prevented.*

*The aftermath of the massive mudslide in Oso, WA. Photo from the United States Geological Survey.*

*Hurricane Katrina & Hurricane Sandy:* In recent years, typical tropical storms and hurricanes have been traveling farther north and farther west than usual, hitting communities unprepared for those kinds of storms.

In late August 2005, Hurricane Katrina hit Florida as a Category 1 hurricane, then passed over the Gulf of Mexico and gained strength once more. It hit Louisiana and Mississippi as a Category 3 storm, creating a storm surge that devastated hundreds of communities. It was the most destructive and costliest storm in American history, causing \$108 billion in damage. An estimated 1,833 people died and millions were left homeless in the wake of the storm



*Flooding following Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans. Photo from PBS.*

Hurricane Sandy hit the East Coast in October 2012 and centered on New York City, an area ill-equipped to deal with a storm of this magnitude. The extremely high winds and storm surges were deemed dangerous for coastal areas, and several beaches and beach towns were destroyed. More than 7.5 million people lived without power at some point because of the storm, and 285 people died in the United States and Caribbean. The hurricane caused \$128 billion in damage, and parts of the East Coast are still rebuilding.

2011 Tornado Super Outbreak: From April 25th to 28th 2011, around 350 tornados scarred the landscape of the United States. The outbreak reached its peak on April 27th, when 316 people died in 15 violent tornadoes throughout Mississippi, Alabama, Tennessee, and Georgia, including the two most destructive tornadoes in modern history. The outbreak hit fifteen states in all, impacting Alabama the most. The devastation could have been much worse, had the National Weather Service not ordered evacuations and issued warnings about where they would be in the most danger.

# Community

## FAMILY LIFE

In the Midwest, daily life was centered around the farm and how the family farm fit into the larger system of the town. The agrarian way of life was one based upon methods of survival, and community dynamics were a major part of these methods. Farmers looking to strike it rich did not always stick around the same area—they would come through and rent a tractor for a few months, then reap the benefits during the following harvest. Sticking around one place and being part of the community was essential and valued, especially when social structure deteriorated beyond recognition. Schools were unable to provide their teachers with salaries, and tradesmen were unable to give their goods in exchange for low amounts of money, but neighbors shared what they had in terms of food and firewood, and families found ways to entertain themselves for free.

Before the droughts, farms were fairly diversified, which meant that a single family could grow a large variety of crops and vegetables. They generally kept chickens, hogs, cattle, horses, and mules for their work, transportation, and feeding needs. Chores serving the farm started early in the morning and continued until dark. Daily life was heavily influenced by the season and the weather patterns, which is why the rapidly changing environment of the Depression era caused families so much grief.



Children wear masks over their faces in case of a sudden dust storm. Photo from The Boston Globe.

Once families started to feel the powerful effects of the Dust Bowl's environment, parents began to send their children away. They were faced with the terrifying prospect of never seeing their children again, but a desperate need to stay with the land that they had worked so hard to cultivate held them back; abandoning their source of income was not a risk that they could take. Whereas children were used to foregoing school or quitting entirely to stay home and help on the farm, many young men had to leave home to take government jobs in more urban areas. Many people who stayed succumbed to "dust pneumonia," the buildup of dust in their respiratory systems to the point where it prevented their breathing, much like in cases of pneumonia. The Great Plains had transformed from a land of rich opportunity into an earthbound hell.

## CHRISTIANITY

Midwestern towns never existed for long before a church of some kind was erected; after all, the largely Protestant philosophy of Manifest Destiny fueled many of the homesteaders' journeys out west. Spirituality and the Christian faith were often the sole constant

aspect of life in the Great Plains—the weather was erratic, family could not always stick together, and it was never clear how money was going to come in, but the church and the presence of God were great comforts through hard times. During the Great Depression, church potlucks became a popular way to feed a lot of people at one event and come together for some fun after a long week of work. Small churches of different denominations (generally corresponding to different countries of origin for the town's residents) often collaborated to put on joint events for young people, even if they did not agree theologically. Preachers were paid very little, and often nothing, surviving on the kindness of the congregation to share what little they could with them. Without a federal directive to provide assistance, and rapidly declining government funds, state and local governments relied largely on relief administered by religious and charity organizations. Across the state, church groups established food pantries, clothing distribution programs, and job-

referral services, though the latter failed when officials were unable to find work for applicants.



Church potluck. Photo from LIFE Magazine archives.

# Before the Show

## Adaptations of Literature

### STORYTELLING

Stories have been told and retold in many different ways, but sometimes, especially if a story is very long, a story will be heavily adapted when it is retold. Sometimes in the process of retelling a story, characters will be cut, or events may not happen in the same order. People love taking stories that they enjoy or that mean a lot to other people and retelling them with their own unique touch. Other people enjoy adaptations because they are able to see their favorite stories in new lights, but often adaptations are criticized for being "too different" from the original source. The most common twentieth-century adaptation is when a movie is based on a book, but sometimes television shows, plays, or musicals are adaptations as well.



Advertising for Frozen.

Many Disney movies are based on fairytales from around the world. *Frozen* is based on the Dutch story "The Snow Queen," in which two children grow and change through their experiences fighting with The Snow Queen, a magical witch who emerges when the snow falls.



Advertising for Wicked. Photo from the Broadway Artist Alliance.

The musical *Wicked* is based on the book *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West* by Gregory Maguire, a retelling of the story of *The Wizard of Oz* through its antagonist The Wicked Witch of the West. Maguire gave her the name "Elphaba," which he made up from the initials L.F.B. after L. Frank Baum, the author of the original *Wizard of Oz* books.

*The Grapes of Wrath* was adapted into a film in 1940, and although John Steinbeck did not write the screenplay, he supervised the production of the film.

The 2006 film *Little Miss Sunshine*, a story about a dysfunctional family en route to a California beauty pageant, was very loosely based on *The Grapes of Wrath*.



### DRAMATIC ADAPTATIONS

Theatre could be considered the first form of story adaptation. Many old and famous plays, including *Romeo and Juliet* and *Antigone*, are based on poems and stories that were told orally for a long time. The National Players perform both new and established adaptations of well-known books alongside the entirety of Shakespeare's works.

Watch Galati talking about his adaptation of *The Grapes of Wrath* [here](#).

The version of *The Grapes of Wrath* that you are going to see was adapted by Frank Galati specifically for a small ensemble of performers to play multiple characters and perform as musicians. Sometimes the actors switch characters in the middle of a scene by pulling on different costumes and affecting their voices and physical stances. For example, in the National Players production, Jered Hobbs plays Noah Joad and Connie. When the family is welcoming Tom Joad back home, he is introduced as a shy and goodnatured Noah. A few minutes later, Jered has changed costumes, and he is introduced as the stalwart and protective Connie.

# Meet the CHARACTERS



Grampa Joad



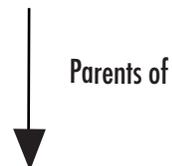
Granma Joad



Uncle John



Pa Joad



Ma Joad



Noah Joad



Tom Joad  
Friends



Rose of Sharon  
Married



Al Joad



Jim Casy



Connie Rivers

# An Actor's PERSPECTIVE

**For Tour 68, Ma Joad is played by Lupe Campos. Lupe is from El Paso, TX and received her MFA in Theatre from the University of Arkansas and her BFA in Theatre from University of Texas at El Paso. Her other onstage roles for Tour 68 include Rosencrantz in Hamlet and Rosemary in The Giver. Offstage, she serves as Wardrobe and Properties Manager for Tour 68.**

I care about Ma because in her I find resilience and hope. I think she is a woman of action while still being incredibly compassionate and loving. I also think she is flawed like any other human being, although she is incredibly loving, she too loses her temper and says hurtful things. I always find it hard to relate to perfection, but I can always relate to struggles and imperfect relationships so I hope others will too.

—Lupe Campos



Credit: C. Stanley Photography

**Did you do any specific research before you jumped into the role?**

I read the novel, and did research on the Dust Bowl and Great Depression particularly focusing on how it affected the family dynamic and day-to-day life.

**How did you physically and vocally discover Ma Joad?**

I always allow for freedom as opposed to putting or forcing any mannerisms, vocal habits or physicality. While working on *The Grapes of Wrath* I allowed myself to

physically comfort and show affection to other family members. Similarly I try to relax my body and focus on my partner so that vocal freedom exists without me thinking about it, so if there are any vocal choices made they are most likely a byproduct.

**How do you relate to Ma Joad?**

Ma Joad is a person who is practical and thinks ahead to solve problems. She is also someone who loves her family and will do what it takes to keep them safe. I think those are values that we share and help me personalize the story.

**What is the nature of Ma's relationship to her family?**

I think every relationship is specific with each family member. In our lives our relationships function and change based on our needs. The texts suggests Rose of Sharon needs comfort and hope, Al needs security in the future, and Noah needs his freedom. Ma makes constant efforts through out the play to satisfy her children's needs. Her relationship with Pa is balanced since they share a common goal, to keep the family safe. However Ma's position changes with Tom because she needs him more than he needs her, as evidenced by him leaving.

**What have you discovered about her character that most surprised you?**

A person who is strong doesn't have to act strong, they just are. Also there is strength in love and compassion.

**What is your favorite part of playing Ma?**

Learning to be strong even in times of sorrow and pain. The love she has towards her family is both her strength and downfall.

**If Ma existed in contemporary times, what do you think she would be doing?**

I know she exists in contemporary times. There are numerous migrant families all over the world, who have a head of household, be it a father, the oldest daughter or the mother. I think her spirit lives in many women and men who work to provide a better future for their families.



Credit: C. Stanley Photography

# A Brief SYNOPSIS

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## Act 1

Tom Joad is paroled after four years in jail. He meets Jim Casy, a former reverend familiar with the Joads, and together they learn the rest of the Joad family is planning to move west for work. Tom reunites with his family as they're departing, despite Tom's parole restrictions.

Shortly into the journey, Granpa dies from a stroke and Rose of Sharon frets over her unborn child while Ma tries to remain optimistic. Later, at a roadside camp, a worker returning from California tells the Joads that livable wages don't exist there, and that he's going back to the Dust Bowl. Ma worries about keeping the family together.

Once they reach Colorado, Noah leaves the family to make his own life, which devastates Ma and Pa. As the Joads cross the desert, agricultural officers try to inspect their truck, but Ma panics and persuades them away. The next morning, the family arrives in California, and Ma reveals that Granma died before the inspection. The Joads continue on to bury Granma.

## Act 2

The family arrives at a temporary "Hooverville" camp full of laborers looking for scarce and underpaid work. Tom suggests protesting, but another laborer, Floyd, warns him that the police jail labor organizers. Meanwhile, Connie and Rose of Sharon fight about the poor living conditions. A contractor arrives looking for laborers, and when Floyd argues, a sheriff arrives. They fight, and Tom punches the police, but Casy accepts blame so Tom won't return to jail. The police threaten to burn down the camp, so the Joads leave without Casy or Connie, who has run away.

Some time passes, and the Joads arrive at Hooper Ranch for work. Tom sees a picket line where he reunites with Casy, who went to jail and learned the power of organizing for positive change. Casy tells Tom that the Hooper Ranch wages won't last. The picket line gets busted and Casy is killed in the fight. Tom, enraged, fights Casy's killer, and returns to his family with a broken nose. Ma tells Tom to run away. Tom is inspired to continue organizing, and leaves.

More time passes, and the Joads live in a boxcar by the river. Al announces his pending wedding to the girl next door, and Ma fears losing another family member. A storm begins, and Rose of Sharon goes into labor while the river rises and the men try to build a dam. Rose of Sharon's baby is stillborn and sent down the river. The family walks to an abandoned barn on higher ground where they meet a child and her sick father. The father needs nutrition to survive, Rose of Sharon nurses him from her own milk.

# A Designer's PERSPECTIVE

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*Andrew Cohen is the set designer for The Grapes of Wrath in Tour 68. He received his BFA in Theatre Design from University of South Florida and MFA in Scenic Design from University of Maryland. He has designed for theaters across Washington, DC and around the country.*

## **What are a set designer's main responsibilities?**

A set designer's main responsibility is to create an environment that fits the language and style of the play. We are story tellers and artists. To be a set designer you must have something to say, create a world for the play to be told. We are also responsible for communicating to others what the set will look like (a sketch, photoshop rendering, color model), and in turn responsible for provided detailed drafting and color paint elevations for the shops to build and paint it the way we, the set designer, envision it.

## **How would you describe the National Players' aesthetic? How is the collaborative nature of the National Players unique?**

The aesthetic for National Players is a blend of playful, minimal, and practical. These sets can be used in creative ways to enhance the way the story is told. The collaborative process isn't too dissimilar to regular theatrical processes, however what makes it different is the logistical constraints, like time and storage space (to name a few). In those moments, we have to work together and be flexible to quite literally get the show on the road.

## **What was the most challenging space to try to create for the play?**

The challenging aspect of *The Grapes of Wrath* is the amount of locations we follow the Joad family through: an abandoned barn, the old Joad house, the truck traveling on the road, a couple of different camps, a river, a box car, just to name a few. Figuring out how to create all these spaces in a economic and interesting fashion was challenging.

## **What sort of research did you do to prepare for your design process?**

I did a lot of research on the Dust Bowl (pictures of the country side, families migrating, packed trucks, and Dust Bowl camps). Also, since *The Grapes of Wrath* is a story that has many contemporary issues that we are dealing with today, I looked at a lot of images of current refugees, and some of the materials people use to build inexpensive shelters

## **If I want to be a set designer, what skills should I work to cultivate?**

If someone wants to be a set designer, I encourage them to visit a lot of art museums, watch the news, listen to music, have thoughts and opinions on things, be inspired by anything and everything. Be able to collaborate, and be open to taking in other peoples ideas. And having some way to communicate your idea's artistically helps too.

# BEFORE you watch

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## THEATRE ETIQUETTE

Coming to the theatre involves a more active form of participation than other types of entertainment, such as film or television. Theatre is a two-way art form: the performers and audience feed off each other, so the more energy coming from the spectators, the greater the experience will be for everyone. That said, a certain degree of respect and decorum is necessary for the actors to perform their very best. This etiquette guide is designed to help you enjoy this artistic experience as much as possible, whether this is your first or fiftieth time watching a live performance:

**DO** respond to the onstage action with applause and laughter. Performers feed off your energy, so feel free to engage with them as much as possible.

**DON'T** speak aloud or whisper to your neighbor during the show; there will be plenty of time for discussion after the performance, and you run the risk of distracting the actors from their work.

**DO** turn off your cell phone and similar devices **before** the performance begins.

**DON'T** check your phone during the performance. Even if you have your device on silent, the bright light can be a distraction for the performers.

**DO** use the restroom **before** the performance. If you must leave the theatre in the middle of the show, be as quiet and respectful as possible.



Credit: C. Stanley Photography

# OBSERVE

National Players tours all of the country, performing its three productions on a variety of stages. How does this photograph of Tour 68's first venue compare with your performance space?



Why are some set pieces covered up? What do you think that means? Do you think they will get uncovered?



Why are various pieces of furniture upside down or on their side? What do you think that means? How do you think these set pieces will be used during the show?



How do you think music will be used in the show?

# ACTIVITIES

## CREATE YOUR OWN ADAPTATION

**OBJECTIVE:** Students will be able to partake in the process of adaptation. Students will be able to compare and contrast artistic work. Students will be able to identify important aspects of *The Grapes of Wrath*.

**SUGGESTED GRADE LEVEL:** 6 - 12

**SUPPLIES NEEDED:** Material to adapt, writing utensils, paper

1. Discuss the idea of adaptation with students. What do they know about it? What sorts of things have they seen adapted from one form to another? What tends to happen to things when they are adapted? Refer to the "Adaptations of Literature" section of the Toolkit for information and examples.
2. Share information about John Steinbeck's sources and inspiration, as well as the adaptations of the novel (movie and play). Talk about the differences required in content, length, and structure. Discuss why these differences are necessary and how a director or playwright might make those decisions.
3. Choose a scene from the novel version of *The Grapes of Wrath* to analyze and adapt as a class. Work with students to understand and analyze the essence of the work: Who is present? What happens? What is the sequence of events? Where does the scene take place, and what does that environment look like? What is the tone or mood of the scene?
4. Once students answer these questions, tell them they are going to form their own adaptation of this work. To do this, they must select what elements of the work are essential and what can be altered or removed.
5. Divide students into groups or work as a class. They can rewrite the original work in a totally different format, make it into a performance piece or represent artistically. Encourage students to be creative and loose with their adaptations, adding characters or changing the time period or setting.
6. If students are working in groups, they can share their concepts with each other and exchange feedback. Ask students to identify commonalities among their adaptations and observe which elements have been adjusted and which tend to stay the same.
7. Follow through on the concepts and create a first draft of the adaptation, in part or in full, and revisit the issue of commonalities and changes.

### VARIATIONS:

- **THE MUSIC OF TOM JOAD**, page 31
- **WHAT ELSE HAPPENS?** Think about where the show (or the novel) leaves all of the characters at the end. What do you think would happen to them in the future? Write a speculative scene featuring some of the characters at some point down the road. What are they doing? How do they feel about it? How have they changed? What other characters do they still interact with? How have those relationships changed? You don't have to write it in dramatic format, it can be a short story or even a comic book style telling. Alternatively, can you think of any scenes within the play that are referenced or described that you didn't get to see? Create a "fill in the gaps" scene in the same way, filling in things before or during that play that are not depicted in the script.
- **GET INSPIRED** Oftentimes, when directors are preparing for a show, they look for outside inspiration to guide them. Find another work of art (painting, picture, song, poem, novel, TV show/episode, movie) or person, place, or theme that you think represents this play well. Write about the connections you see between your inspiration piece and the play. If you were directing your own production, how would you use this inspiration piece to guide your team toward your own vision of the final product?
- **STAGE YOUR OWN** One of the best things about theatre is the enormous number of valid and interesting interpretations of great plays. Have students pick a scene from *The Grapes of Wrath* and have them create their own interpretation of the scene. What is happening at this moment? How do you want to present it in a theatrical way? What resources are available to you? Assign different roles to students and work together to make a version that is your own. Take a video of your work and share it with National Players online; we'd love to see what you do.

# ACTIVITIES

## THE MUSIC OF TOM JOAD

**OBJECTIVE:** Students will analyze how musicians have revived *The Grapes of Wrath*, the character of Tom Joad in particular, considering what he has come to represent, and how artists may alter a figure to reflect different points in time. Students will use what they have learned to create their own adaptations.

**SUGGESTED GRADE LEVEL:** 9 – 12

**SUPPLIES NEEDED:** Song videos and lyrics (hyperlinked below)

1. As a class, listen to the music, watch the videos for, and read the lyrics to Woody Guthrie’s “Tom Joad,” Bruce Springsteen’s “The Ghost of Tom Joad,” and Rage Against the Machine’s remake of the Bruce Springsteen song.
2. Discuss how the songs have interpreted the novel and the character of Tom Joad. Some questions to consider.
  - Woody Guthrie’s song was released in 1960, Bruce Springsteen’s in 1995, and Rage Against the Machine’s cover in 2000 – how does the time period influence the genre, style, and nature of the adaptation?
  - How does each song tell the story of Tom Joad?
  - What does Tom Joad represent in each song? How has his representation changed? Has his character been changed to fit present-day?
  - What social problems are mentioned in each song? What has persisted since Steinbeck’s novel?
  - What images and themes are explored in each song? How do they echo the themes of the novel? How do they adapt the themes of the novel to fit the current time period?
  - Are these songs making a statement or protest? In what way? What are they saying?
3. Have students invent their own modern reinterpretation of Tom Joad. Students can create a song or short play, make a video, write a poem or short story – whatever they choose. What would this modern-day Tom Joad say if he were around today? Encourage students to think outside the box for the character: perhaps Tom Joad is instead a female Tammy? Or Latino Tomas? How does this new character reinvent the themes of *The Grapes of Wrath*?
4. Have students present their works and have them answer the following questions:
  - Why did you choose to portray Tom Joad this way?
  - What themes/aspects of *The Grapes of Wrath* did you explore?
  - What did you change?

**Songs:** Woody Guthrie, Bruce Springsteen, Rage Against the Machine

**Lyrics:** Woody Guthrie, Bruce Springsteen

## GREAT DEPRESSION MUSEUM

**OBJECTIVE:** Students will be able to understand several aspects of the Great Depression. Students will be able to understand the setting of *The Grapes of Wrath*. Students will be able to work collaboratively to learn from each other's observations of primary and secondary source documents.

**SUGGESTED GRADE LEVEL:** 9 - 12

**SUPPLIES NEEDED:** Access to research material, writing supplies for responses

1. Ask students what they know about the Great Depression. What images do they think of? Where do they think it hit the hardest? How do they think it manifested in the American Midwest, in particular?
2. Divide students into groups and assign each group a topic to research about the Great Depression (see below for ideas, or come up with your own). Have each group find a primary source for their topic – this can be an article, a headline, a letter, a photograph, etc.
  - POSSIBLE TOPICS: Causes and Effects, Relief Efforts, Statistics, Political Cartoons/Propaganda, Dust Bowl, Migration, Unions and Strikes, John Steinbeck/*The Grapes of Wrath*
3. When all groups have acquired their primary source, spread the documents around the space. Have each group start at one of the sections. Have them respond to the questions below, and have discussions within their groups prompted by the document. If you would like, you can provide poster paper for each group to record their responses to the source.
  - What does this primary source suggest about life in the Great Depression? What questions does this primary source provoke for you?
4. After a few minutes, have them rotate to the next document and continue the conversation there, answering the prompts based on the new document. If it is being done with posters, they should also be encouraged to respond to what the previous group has written.
5. Repeat this until all groups have visited every document. After this has finished, have every student look at what other students have written, and then ask students what they notice trending across the responses and what is the “big picture” they get of the Great Depression. What was it like to live in the rural Midwest under these conditions? What did they learn that they didn't know before?

## ADVERTISING THE AMERICAN DREAM

**SUGGESTED GRADE LEVEL:** 9 - 12

**SUPPLIES NEEDED:** “The American Dream” section of the toolkit, advertisement videos (linked below)

1. Using “The American Dream” section of the toolkit as a reference, discuss the American Dream as a class (or in small groups). What is the American Dream? How does one achieve it? Is there one overarching dream, or is it different for everyone? How is the concept of the American Dream used in *The Grapes of Wrath*? Do the Joads achieve the American Dream?
2. Have the students, individually, write down what the American Dream means to them. What would they need to do or obtain to accomplish the American Dream? Is there anything they would need to sacrifice in order to achieve the American Dream?
3. Have some (or all, if time) members of the class share their American Dream. Notice and write down any similar themes or criteria, and use those similarities to segue into the use of American Dream in advertising. If it has not already been discussed, talk about the handbills in *The Grapes of Wrath* that entice the Joad family to travel to California.
4. Watch the advertisements hyperlinked below. How do they use the American Dream to sell their products? What are some common themes, images, or words used? How do you feel after watching the advertisements? Do you want to buy/use the product?
5. Individually or in small groups, instruct students to create an advertisement for their version of the American Dream. It can be a written ad, a piece of artwork, video, live performance, etc. Encourage use of themes and key words. What ideas are they trying to convey? What do they need to highlight or exclude to get the point across and to make people want to follow that American Dream?
6. Have students present their advertisements to the class. Point out key words, images, and themes. How did the advertisement get the message across? Did it make you want to be a part of that American dream? Why?
- 7.

**ADVERTISEMENTS:** [American Family Insurance](#); [Cadillac ELR Coupe 2014](#); [Red Bull](#); [Southwest Airlines](#); [WeatherTech](#)

## THE THINGS WE CARRY: UNDERSTANDING MIGRATION

**OBJECTIVE:** Students will begin to understand migration on a personal level by connecting their personal possessions to the idea of migration.

**SUGGESTED GRADE LEVEL:** 6-12

**SUPPLIES NEEDED:** Writing supplies

1. Individually, visualize your home. What memories do you have there? What means the most to you? What is your favorite thing about your home? What makes it "home?"
2. Imagine that, like the Joads, your family would have to leave your home forever, and you could only take with you what would fit in the car. As an individual, you can only take three items with you. What would those three things be?
3. Write down each item, and explain why you chose it. Was it a gift? Is it a family heirloom? Is it worth a lot of money? Does it have an important memory attached to it? Does it have practical use? Is it important to another family member? There is no right or wrong answer.
4. In small groups, share your three items and the reasons you have for taking them with you. Are there any similarities
5. in the items your group chose, or the reasons they had for choosing them? After hearing what your group members would take with them, would you change any of the items you chose? Why or why not?
6. As a class, discuss common items or reasons that came up. How does that clarify or change your understanding and feelings about home? Discuss how it felt to have to limit everything you own down to three items. How did that feel? What was that decision like? How do you think the Joad family felt in having to select what to take with them to California?

## HEADLINES OF THE TIME

**OBJECTIVE:** Students will be able to explain some of the events of the Great Depression and Dust Bowl. Students will be able to articulate some of the methods of sharing news events throughout history. Students will be able to understand the backdrop of the release of *The Grapes of Wrath*.

**SUGGESTED GRADE LEVEL:** 6 - 12

**SUPPLIES NEEDED:** Access to research materials for Great Depression and Dust Bowl news events, writing center to create mock newspaper articles

1. Discuss the Great Depression and Dust Bowl and the newsworthiness of such a widespread economic decline. How do students think such events are reported? What stories are being told (or not being told)?
2. Have students work in groups or individually. Select one event or element of the Great Depression/Dust Bowl (for example: finance/economy, climate, politics, strikes, etc.) and research headlines and news reports from the time. Some articles are linked below to get you started.
  - Things to consider: How did people talk and write about it? What was known and what was unknown? How were the people portrayed? Do we think differently about them now? Do the reporters have an explicit bias or point of view? How can you tell?
3. After finishing research, have students write their own news article about that event, from the perspective of the time. What do the people need to know? What is known and what is unknown about the event? What does this seem to indicate will happen next. Make sure the headline is attention-grabbing.
4. When all students have finished their articles, combine them to create a group of press clippings, and arrange them in chronological order or by topic, depending on the range of articles.
5. Talk about any parallels they see to today. What is changing in our country now? How do we talk about it? What gets reported and what does not? Does that seem fair? Why or why not? What are some ways to make change, if necessary?
6. Ask about the fact that *The Grapes of Wrath* was being released when much of these news events were happening (or soon after). What does that say about the world that was reading the book? What does it say about the audience John Steinbeck was trying to reach?
- 7.

**Example Great Depression/Dust Bowl Articles**

**Arizona Republic, 1935: [Oklahoma Families Flee Dust](#); Christian Science Monitor, 1937: [A Dust Bowl Revives](#); <sup>32</sup>  
Ken Magazine, 1938: [The Bitter Okies](#); Pathfinder Magazine, 1934: [In Lieu of Cash](#)**

## DEBATING THE HUMAN IMPACT ON CLIMATE CHANGE

**OBJECTIVE:** Students will be able to analyze critical writing. Students will be able to form arguments and rebuttals based on existing writing.

**SUGGESTED GRADE LEVEL:** 6 - 12

**SUPPLIES NEEDED:** Climate change articles (linked below), writing utensils, separate paper for notes, other resources of your choosing

1. Distribute the articles hyperlinked below, the "Climate" section of this toolkit, and/or other resources of your choosing.
2. Tell students that we will be using a debate format to discuss these articles. They will be arguing before their teacher whether human activity is the main cause for climate change. Divide them into two groups, and assign one to be Pro and one to be Con.
3. Have each group read and break down their primary sources, looking to formulate three or four basic points they will rely on to defend their position in debate. They should look for the thrust of their arguments and try to summarize them in ways that make sense to them. Encourage use of famous environmental events as examples; refer to the "Climate" section for ideas. They can also look at the opposing side's source materials to find what they think their arguments might be and how they might counter those arguments. If desired, they can search for further resources available to them.
4. Have groups determine in which order they want to present their arguments, and who will be primary speaker for each of those arguments. As many students as possible should have a chance to speak, but some may work as scribes to try to write things down for those arguing, or as researchers to pull things from the Primary Sources (or other sources, if they have been allowed to do further research) as the arguments develop.
5. Flip a coin or determine who goes first through some other method. The opening group has two minutes to frame their first opinion. The next group has one minute to respond, then the initial group can respond to the rebuttal for one minute. The next group will then make their first argument, and the debate carries on until the time allotted has run out or the groups feel they have exhausted their arguments.
6. The teacher can then decide, or the class then vote if one of the groups argued more persuasively, or if there isn't a clear decision to be made.
7. Dissolve groups and have discussion about what the process was like. What did it feel like to argue from a predetermined perspective? Did students feel they had adequate material to fully make their point? Do they think the decision that the teacher made was fair? Regardless of the position assigned to them in the debate, what do the students really think about climate change and how we are involved in it?

**ARTICLES:** [NASA](#); [National Center for Science Education](#); [National Ocean Service](#); [ProCon.org](#); [Union of Concerned Scientists](#)

### WRITE A REVIEW

Critical analysis is an important part of theatre, giving artists insight into how well their work comes across to patrons, and allowing audiences to respond to their experiences in a professional manner. Most shows are reviewed in some form, whether by professional journalists or amateurs posting on Facebook. We encourage students to write their own reviews of their experience seeing our show. You can even share these reviews by emailing them to [nationalplayers@olneytheatre.org](mailto:nationalplayers@olneytheatre.org) or posting them online and sharing them with us on Facebook ([Facebook.com/NationalPlayers](https://www.facebook.com/NationalPlayers)) or Twitter ([@NationalPlayers](https://twitter.com/NationalPlayers)).

Some guidelines on how to approach writing a review:

- The best reviews first identify what the production was attempting to achieve. Consider what you think the director, actors, and designers wanted to create through the show as a whole, as well as the intended effect of individual elements. From there, base your review on how well the show achieved those goals.
- “I didn’t like it” or “It was cool” is not a useful critique. Go into specifics, identifying why things did or did not work for you.
- Remember your intended reader: other prospective audience members. Think about who the ideal audience member for this show might be, and think about what that person would or would not like.
- Don’t forget that there are many separate elements within the show, and many different people contributed to the final product. Try to attribute elements to the different people who worked on the show whenever possible (reference the program for a full list of the artists who contributed to the production, from acting and directing to lighting and sound design).
- Some plot summary is useful for providing context, but a review is not meant to merely describe what happens. If there are things in the performance that work best as a surprise, avoid revealing them in your review.

### DRAW PARALLELS

The characters in *The Grapes of Wrath* face problems on both a personal level and a societal level, and they take many approaches to face those problems, with varying degrees of success. Think about some of the problems faced in the play that still exist in some form today, and think about how you might respond to those problems in the modern world. Would political action, such as protesting, gathering signatures on a petition, or writing to politicians help solve these problems? What about finding and supporting organizations dedicated to facing them? Or raising general awareness of the problems through contacts and social media? Are there problems at your school you could solve? Take some action and share your plan with us at the methods listed above, we’d love to see how you are taking on problems like Tom or Jim Casy.

### TAKE ACTION

In many ways, *The Grapes of Wrath* is reflective of the way we operate today in American society. Much of what is depicted in the book and the play is not too far from what we see in the news and in real life. It is a work that demands to be talked about and acted upon. National Players wants to make sure that the conversation does not end when the Players take their bow, and that our audiences can respond to the work and take action. The use of any of these activities or prompts can be the first step of responding and taking action, and we hope you will share any and all work created with us to help us create a yearlong dialogue responding to the play. Please visit our [Facebook](#) page, use #Tour68 and with @NationalPlayers on [Twitter](#), submit on our [Tumblr](#), or email us at [NationalPlayers@OlneyTheatre.org](mailto:NationalPlayers@OlneyTheatre.org), and help us make the most of this powerful story.



Located just north of Washington, D.C. in arts-rich Montgomery County, Maryland, Olney Theatre Center offers a diverse array of professional productions year-round that enrich, nurture and challenge a broad range of artists, audiences and students. One of two state theaters of Maryland, Olney Theatre Center is situated on 14 acres in the heart of the beautiful Washington-Baltimore-Frederick "triangle," within easy access of all three cities.

A professional, award-winning regional theater, Olney Theatre Center operates under an Actors' Equity Association Council of Stock Theaters (COST) contract, one of only two theaters in the country to operate under such a contract.

#### MISSION

Olney Theatre produces and presents extraordinary theater and performance on its four-theater campus for an ever-more diverse set of audiences in our community, and educates the next generation of theatermakers to follow in our footsteps.

#### VISION

We strive every day to unleash the creative potential of our artists and audiences, and in so doing, become Maryland's premier center for theater performance and education.

#### VALUES

We demand artistic rigor and professionalism in each work we produce and present.

We believe a strong institution enables artistic risk.

We believe Olney's future is made stronger by building creatively on its past.

We believe arts education plays an essential role in our nation's cultural health.

We believe Olney Theatre Center plays a vital role in the cultural fabric of our community.

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