

*The Grapes of Wrath*

1. For the majority of the play, I believed that the play wasn't representational because the actors ignored the audience. However, since there were moments where the audience was engaged, the production of the play is presentational. For example, the cast appeared to be making eye contacts with the audience despite never addressing the audience. Furthermore, the audience was constantly being addressed by the narrator. The narrator acknowledged the presence of those watching the play and also talked to them. Therefore, I believe there is enough evidence to describe the play as representational.
2. The central conflict in *The Grapes of Wrath* revolves around the Joad family during their way back to California. During their journey back, they go through adversities in attempt to find jobs and get their lives back together. During the journey, the Joad family realizes that their largest obstacle is the cruel nature of other humans rather than poverty. The examples of the conflict are seen multiple times throughout the play: the migrant workers treat each other poorly and see each other as competition instead of as co-workers, the police officers kill Jim in front of Tom, and the California business owners purposefully attract countless migrants in order to lower the wages. Joad family struggles to comprehend and cope with this culture throughout the entire play, suffering numerous setbacks. The conflict is symbolized via Rose of Sharon's baby, who represents the hope of the Joad family as they attempt to survive. When Rose delivered the baby, however, it is revealed to be stillborn. Despite the baby being the symbol of hope, the Joad family's hope does not break with the baby's death. The family resolve to become a stronger family and overcome the adversities instead, demonstrating their growth and maturity.
3. The final moments of the play revolve around the delivery of Rose of Sharon's baby. In this scene, a storm is imminent at the exact moment that Rose of Sharon has to give birth. As Ma Joad delivers Rose of Sharon's baby the baby is revealed to be dead. After a moment of grieving, the baby was sent down the river and the family moves on to find a shelter from the storm. There, they find a man who is near death from hunger. However, he was able to be saved by Rose of Sharon because she was able to breastfeed the man. In the end, we do not find out if the family find jobs. We do not find out whether or not they are able to improve the quality of their lives in California because the family's situation was open ended at the end of the play. In this regard, the central conflict was never resolved. However, I do not believe that is was necessary for Steinbeck to detail the Joad family's future. Instead, he leaves it open ended in order to make the audience focus on how the family perseveres and matures through their struggles. Throughout the play, we see a constant shift in leadership and the characters are constantly forced to mature and redefine themselves in order to survive. By the end of the play, we see that the characters have transformed. Jim Casy has died, Tom is in danger, the family is still struggling to find jobs, and Rose of Sharon has a failed birth. And yet, despite all of this, the Joad

family refuse to give up. The final scene is a proof that the Joad family see people that are struggling, and instead of treating these people with the same rudeness that they experienced, Ma Joad escorts the family outside and Rose of Sharon feeds the starving man. The Joad family, despite of all they have faced, have still managed to retain their humanity. Steinbeck chooses to not resolve the central conflict because by the time we reach the end of the play, the resolution is not nearly as important as the growth we see in the characters.

4. I believe that Department of Theatre chose *Grapes of Wrath* for several reasons. The play's central conflict is the struggles the Joad family experiences in the new environment. As a school with countless international students, many students would be able to relate to family's struggle of adapting to the new environment. Not only can international students relate, but college students in general can relate to the difficulty of adjusting to a new life as well since college was new to everyone at some point in their lives. Furthermore, the play allows the students to hone their skills in many areas. The riots and fight scenes allow students to practice acting out action scenes, the musical scenes allows students to explore musical theatre, and scenes with nudity allows students the opportunity to become more comfortable with being nude in front of an audience. Such reasons are why I believe *Grapes of Wrath* was chosen for production.
5. As I was watching *Grapes of Wrath*, I realizes that the central conflict is relatable to many students on campus. The play was realistic and seemed like it was talking about Murphy's Law. The realism behind the Joad family's struggles and how they cope to them, reveals to the audience the persevering nature of the human spirit. The Joad family goes through countless adversities such as not having a cozy home to live in and lacking bonds between family members. Grandpa and Grandma Joad pass away, Connie runs away, and Noah Joad leaves the family. By the end of the play, this family is unrecognizable from the beginning of the play. And yet, the family continues to inspire the audience by refusing to give in. I believe that the play communicates the persevering nature of the human spirit to the audience.
6. The way the stage was designed was what appealed to me the most. The main stage was large enough for the characters to roam about, but there were also small ramps on both sides of the stage that allowed for the actors to walk along a lower level. The lower level added sense of depth to the play in scenes such as when Tom and Jim Casy walk across the lower level after their initial conversation in the beginning of the play to signify travelling a long distance. The small rectangular pool of water, located just below and in front of the main stage allowed for a big body of water to be represented, which was necessary for scenes such as when Uncle John sends the stillborn baby down the river. I also amazed by the special effects such as the fake rain that fell down and the sound effects for the lightning. As the sounds of the thunder were in sync with the flashing of the lights, the quality of the effects made me appreciate the works of not only the acting cast, but also the staffs who work behind the scenes.