

The **essays you write for Novels** must be formal, probing and insightful. You must also follow a few basic steps.

First, you must **start with the prompt**:

- In a well-developed and organized essay, analyze what human rights violations Steinbeck raises with the Joads' story and the contrast of the camps, as well as what these points suggest about the novel's meaning as a whole.
- Consider the author's use of literary techniques such as character, syntax, setting, and tone.

From the prompt you must identify the novel's MOPAW

From the MOPAW you must develop 5-6 perspectives on that MOPAW

For each perspective you must have

- Analysis
- Quotations
- Literary techniques
- Follow-up analysis

Then you must **develop a thesis**:

- In *The Grapes of Wrath*, Steinbeck explores through setting, tone and character the social injustice that structures of power will perpetrate when threatened.

The thesis must be structured as it is above in three parts:

1. Title and author.
2. Literary techniques.
3. MOPAW that addresses prompt that shows unique writer insight.

From the Thesis Statement you must **develop your six perspectives**. To complete this, please use the Essay Prep Form.

Some things to keep in mind when developing content for **body paragraphs**:

- You are arguing the novel's meaning as a whole
- You must show unique insight
- You should place quotations midway through paragraph, not at beginning or end.
- You must chose the most fitting quote to support your perspective from which you can analyze how literary techniques are used in the quote. This is how you validate that the meaning you assert in your thesis is valid.
- Literary techniques are not to be used as topic sentence perspectives; they are to be used as support.

You MUST be probing and insightful into the complex nature of the issue you are discussing

- Don't be general in any way and always remember to be textually specific to the idea you are analyzing
- In other words, choose a supporting passage that allows you to support your idea and then analyze the quotation for its literary techniques, thereby allowing yourself to use the text to validate what you are arguing.

For Example:

Throughout the novel, Steinbeck continually depicts the okies as a unit that moves together and remains hopeful. At the outset of the novel, Grandpa anticipates reaching California and eating grapes (p.141). When the Joads finally reach California, they focus their hopes on places such as the government camp in chapter twenty-two. The hopefulness that all of the migrants express in the novel provides an emotion that binds an entire demographic, which suggests that all of the okies share one spirit. This spirit is the same spirit that Tom and Casy refer to when they describe a greater community of mankind in chapters eight and twenty-eight. The okies also reflect a single community in their massive movement to escape the capitalists. When the Joads sell their unnecessary belongings, they experience a feeling of indignation that is shared among all okies who are exploited by capitalism (p.133). Although Steinbeck creates a great rift between okies and the Capitalists, the many shared emotions of the okies that he depicts support Tom Joads' idea of a greater community of humankind. This idea is also present in the efforts of the okies to rebel against the evils of capitalism.

Steinbeck continually illustrates the rebellious tendencies of humankind as the novel progresses. The okies are characterized as the results of capitalism rather than the cause of destitution (p.204). The disjointed syntax of chapter fourteen reflects the great difficulty that the okies must face to combat the capitalists. These depictions of the okies and their struggles against injustice describe the essence of what makes man unique. Steinbeck warns that one must "fear the time when Manself will not suffer and die for a concept," because this quality of man is what makes the human race one community, "distinctive in the universe" (p.205). The abilities of man to act as a unit against injustice clearly support Tom's assertion that all humans "'jus' got a little piece of a great big soul" (p.570). This idea is proven again when Tom's friend Timothy relates in an anecdote that "'we're all reds'" because of humankind's universal struggle to survive. The okies are united by the hopeless world that they must face.

While grading the *Grapes of Wrath* essays, I identified various issues in those essays that you must individually remediate—or at least the issues that pertain to you.

1. You must **always discuss specific scenes** that depict the characters experiencing what you are analyzing. For example, you are merely generalizing if you refer broadly to the camps. Instead you must quote a very specific line or two with which you can prove your perspective with which you are proving your MOPAW.
2. Remember that the **MOPAW analysis is your argument in the essay regarding the novel's meaning**. You may not simply mention various examples of hardship, as doing so will not make any argument, or MOPAW, clear. You will simply be mentioning examples of hardship.
3. **MOPAW must be a thread that links your perspectives** to avoid the appearance of random paragraphs. In other words, your perspectives and topic sentence need to build clearly on the MOPAW.
4. For this essay, you had to **link your paragraphs with MOPAW discussion** that human right violations suggest inevitable survival—which you can develop through the Casy influence on Tom Joad through which you analyze that the inarguable social injustice prompted the Joads—Tom specifically—to stand up against the evils of blind prejudice.
5. You must **remain character specific**. When you refer to the okies you are being too broad and general to be textually analytical, and you must analyze the specifics of the text to be successful practitioners of New Criticism. Remember that the historical element of okies is secondary to the novel's focus and unfolding of the Joads' experiences, and through their experiences we the readers can glean the nature of their experiences. Also when you focus on the specific characters, you can explicate the novel's meaning based on its literary techniques. When you generalize, you will only make unsupported or barely supported assumptions.
6. **Don't be general with textual references**; be specific. Instead of writing that the Joads were forced from their home and they are deprived of means of survival and that Casy inspires Tom to rise up, explore this through a couple of paragraphs. Start by choosing specific quotes from chapter five where you can establish the cruel, indifferent nature of the social setting. Then move on to the issues that are plaguing Casy, establish that they are distresses born of social injustice. Finally establish that Tom's realization of Casy's thought establishes survival in the face of hardship as the nature of the dynamic is one that continues through another character. Again this should take two or three paragraphs because you will be establishing this instead of generalizing

through quotations that you will follow with textual analysis of characterization, role of setting as influence, or imagery, etc.

7. **DON'T write that the author "uses syntax" or that he "uses diction."** This is illogical because of its obviousness as authors write with words—diction—and they order those words—syntax. Instead, with diction, you must look at specific words that play a particular role in establishing your point. For instance in our next essay you can examine how the repeated use of "red hot" contributes to Wright's characterization of Bigger's frame of mind. With syntax, you must look at what the nature of the sentence structure can suggest. For instance, in *Grapes* you can look at the sentence structure in chapter five and conclude that this establishes an indifferent tone and that the absence of specific characters establishes a faceless attitude that Great Depression and the Dust Bowl has had on many okies. You will then link this to the specific experience of the Joads so that you don't generalize.
8. Also don't write that the author uses characterization. Instead write that the author characterizes Tom Joad as....
9. Finally, **don't refer to "chapter 22" or "chapter 8"**. You may in some sparing instances, but it is best to refer directly to the scene or lines that you will analyze to establish your MOPAW.

For the next essay, remember that you will be writing about Bigger Thomas, not black people or blacks. You may, though refer to the whites or the white world as the social experiences that Bigger has are much, well, bigger than feeling uncomfortable with the Daltons. You will, though, likely strengthen your analysis by referring to Mr. Dalton, Mary, or Jan.

Your Strengths: All told, you had good maiden essays. This is a complex kind of essay because it involves several elements that are abstract in nature. However if you adhere to the above pieces of advice, you will likely achieve the standards of this format. Remember, after doing this two or three times, the process will become second nature and easy.