

2011 Summer Reading: Junior English

The Grapes of Wrath
by John Steinbeck

**As you read, watch for the following,
among other elements...**

- What is the effect of the chapters that come between the narrative about the Joads? How does the inclusion of these chapters affect the meaning and impact of the novel?
- In the beginning, each character has personal reasons for wanting to go to California. How does each individual's goal change and why?
- The heroes of this novel are on the bottom of the social ladder, and their language is often coarse. What is Steinbeck's purpose in portraying such unrefined people?
- Critics of this novel have attacked its political implications. In what ways is the novel a criticism of capitalism? Does the novel advocate communism? Defend your opinions with evidence from the novel.
- Why do we begin our study of "American Classics" with Steinbeck's novel? What themes or concepts emerge from this book that seem central to the American Idea?
- Pay attention to the many Biblical references and parallels within the novel. Consider why Steinbeck used them and how they contribute to the novel's themes.
- **Optional:** You might want to watch the 1940 Darryl Zanuck film version of *The Grapes of Wrath*, considered a classic. While the movie is different from the novel in significant ways, critics praise the film for presenting the spirit of the text.* What is your reaction to the film? Compare the filmmaker's choices to Steinbeck's text.

(Note: Don't watch the film instead of reading the book!)