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| **NEH Steinbeck Institute 2016**  **John Steinbeck: Social Critic and Ecologist** |

**Teacher/Participant**: Nikki Tobias (Silver Creek High School, Longmont, CO)

**Materials suitable for**: 9 -12th grade ELA (American Literature)

***The Grapes of Wrath*: Empowered Student Readers and Discussion Leaders**

**Overview**: The following materials are designed to promote students’ self-efficacy as readers and class leaders. One product, ***the student bookmark***, encourages close-reading through annotation work while simultaneously supporting and engaging readers with essential questions for the novel. The second item, ***a discussion leader project****,* provides multiple avenues for students to represent their understanding of a portion of the text which they will teach to the class. These materials put the power of learning, mastering, and appreciating the text in the hands of individual readers with support from their peers. Teachers can use one or both items for formative and/or summative assessments.

**Highlights**

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| **Item** | **Targeted Skills** | **Benefits** |
| Student bookmark | Independent close-reading  Textual evidence use  Active reading  Interpretation and analysis | * Organizational tool for students * Keeps students on pace for completion * Can be used to initiate small or whole group discussions * Ensures that every student has material for discussions * Provides materials for break-out discussion or writing tasks * Helps teacher target reading comprehension deficits * Provides multiple ways for teacher to organize small group discussions * Student ownership of learning |
| Discussion leader project | Collaboration (team)  Organization  Presentation  Technology use  Interpretation and synthesis | * Multiple options for expression of learning (including technological) * Multiple options for different types of learning styles * Peer support through teamwork * Student-led learning environment * Student ownership of learning * Strong visualization elements for scaffolding |

**Rationale**: *The Grapes of Wrath* is a challenging text that can overwhelm to readers. These materials are structured to empower student readers by helping them at the individual level and through group interactions. The scaffolding supports included here encourage students to formulate their own interpretations and questions while exploring the novel.

The student bookmark asks students to be active readers who seek out specific themes (address essential text questions) within each chapter. The process of annotating the text regularly gives a purpose and focus to the reading assignment while forcing students to slow down to pay attention. Teachers can perform formative assessments of student’s reading comprehension by checking annotations on a regular basis.

The discussion leader project challenges student teams to both summarize and synthesize an interchapter and a regular chapter for the whole class. Teams must use a visual interpretation (storyboard, video, etc.) to summarize their reading and then interpret the meaning of the chapter through a graphic organizer and/or infographic, song, interview, or visual design (T-shirt or poster). Although the project offers the opportunity to employ technology (iMovie, Piktochart, Storyboardthat, Go Animate, etc.) as a means of boosting engagement and product quality, technology access is not required to use this item. Teachers can use this project as a summative assessment of student learning and skills acquisition.

**Objectives (CCSS standards):** Students will be able to…

[ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/9-10/1/) Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

[ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.5](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RL/9-10/5/) Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

[ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.4](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/SL/9-10/4/) Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

[ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.5](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/SL/9-10/5/) Make strategic use of digital media (e.g., textual, graphical, audio, visual, and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

**Essential Questions (by theme/topic):**

1. *The Need for Home* How is the need and/or desire for a home (concrete or abstract) revealed in the text? Is it a memory or a dream?
2. *The Need for Human Connection* How are communities or relationships formed? Are they traditional or atypical? Based on need or desire? Is it supportive or detrimental?
3. *Timeless Troubles* How does the modern world echo the text? What connections can be made between the characters and people today, plot points and current events, historic trends and modern concerns?
4. *Nature and Nurture* How does Steinbeck show humans interacting with the natural world? How are *people nurtured by Nature? How do people act as stewards of the land?*
5. *Writer’s Decisions and Purpose* How does Steinbeck structure the interchapters and regular chapters to create unified ideas? How is Steinbeck’s message to the reader revealed through the interplay of these two chapters?

**Suggestions for Classroom Implementation/Adaptation:**

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| **Student Bookmark**   * Check daily while students do SSR as a formative assessment of reading comprehension and pacing. * Organize small group discussions by annotation choices (students work with those who chose the same annotation option -or- work with those who chose a different annotation option). * Start argumentative or literary analysis writing tasks by having students use an annotation (quote and reaction) to answer a prompt. * Lead a whole class discussion using students’ annotation choices. |

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| **Discussion Leader Project**   * Adapt for binder use (project is designed for AVID-style Interactive Student Notebooks) by omitting references to left and right pages. * Perform a summative assessment for skills in: reading comprehension, text evaluation, team collaboration, presentation, organization, technology integration/use, or interpretation. * Create small group or whole class discussion opportunities from the student presentation. Topics might include the success of the presentation itself, the validity of the interpretation, or the quality of the product. * Use student products to celebrate achievement (make class T-shirts from the best design or a wall of publication) or to reach other communities (publish infographics for other classes to use or have interviews broadcast on school tv or website). |

Prepared by Nikki Tobias, 2016 Steinbeck Institute