



# The Grapes of Wrath (Penguin Great Books of the 20th Century)

*John Steinbeck*

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**First published in 1939**, Steinbeck's Pulitzer Prize-winning epic of the Great Depression chronicles the Dust Bowl migration of the 1930s and tells the story of one Oklahoma farm family, the Joads—driven from their homestead and forced to travel west to the promised land of California. Out of their trials and their repeated collisions against the hard realities of an America divided into Haves and Have-Nots evolves a drama that is intensely human yet majestic in its scale and moral vision, elemental yet plainspoken, tragic but ultimately stirring in its human dignity.

A portrait of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless, of one man's fierce reaction to injustice, and of one woman's stoical strength, the novel captures the horrors of the Great Depression and probes into the very nature of equality and justice in America.

*The Grapes of Wrath* summed up its era in the way that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* summed up the years of slavery before the Civil War. Sensitive to fascist and communist criticism, Steinbeck insisted that "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" be printed in its entirety in the first edition of the book—which takes its title from the first verse: "He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored." At once a naturalistic epic, captivity narrative, road novel, and transcendental gospel, Steinbeck's powerful landmark novel is perhaps the most American of American Classics.

"It is Steinbeck's best novel, i.e., his toughest and tenderest, his roughest written and most mellifluous, his most realistic and, in its ending, his most melodramatic, his angriest and most idyllic. It is great in the way that **Uncle Tom's Cabin** was great. One of the most impassioned and exciting books of the year." —**Time**

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