

Shine Brighter Première

File 9 The arty Thirties

Document 2, Extrait p.81 – Roman, *The Grapes of Wrath*, John STEINBECK, 1939

In the mid-30s poor migrant families leave their homes because of the Dust Bowl and travel to California to find work. Each night, they stop by the road and build small camps together.

The cars of the migrant people crawled out of the side roads onto the great cross-country highway, and they took the migrant way to the West. In the daylight they scuttled¹ like bugs to the westward; and as the dark caught them, they clustered like bugs near to shelter and to water. And because they were lonely and perplexed, because they had all come from a place of sadness and worry and defeat, and because they were all going to a new mysterious place, they huddled² together; they talked together; they shared their lives, their food, and the things they hoped for in the new country. Thus it might be that one family camped near a spring³, and another camped for the spring and for company, and a third because two families had

¹ *détalaient*

² *étaient blottis*

³ a source of water

pioneered the place and found it good. And when the sun went down, perhaps twenty families and twenty cars were there.

In the evening a strange thing happened: the twenty families became one family, the children were the children of all. The loss of home became one loss, and the golden time in the West was one dream. And it might be that a sick child threw despair into the hearts of twenty families, of a hundred people; that a birth there in a tent kept a hundred people quiet and awestruck⁴ through the night and filled a hundred people with the birth-joy in the morning. A family which the night before had been lost and fearful might search its goods to find a present for a new baby. In the evening, sitting about the fires, the twenty were one. They grew to be units of the camps, units of the evenings and the nights. A guitar unwrapped from a blanket and tuned – and the songs, which were all of the people, were sung in the nights. Men sang the words, and women hummed the tunes.

John STEINBECK, *The Grapes of Wrath*, 1939

⁴ very impressed

Document 2, Extrait p.82 – Article de *gonewiththetwins.com*

An average factory worker (Charles Chaplin) at the Electro Steel Corporation toils¹ tirelessly and monotonously over his conveyor belt assembly line, as the boss reclines in his comfortable chair, smokes a cigar, and watches over the work floor with “Big Brother” computer screens. It proves too much for the diminutive fellow’s fragile figure, sending him into a nervous breakdown², which involves squirting³ oil into the faces of his coworkers, employer, and the cops as they drag him away to jail. [...]

The story is simple, sweet, and incomparably beautiful. It’s a condemnation of newfangled⁴ machinery, demonstrating hilarious contraptions to eliminate the use of human workers, and an advocate for the necessity of employment, showcasing the anxieties of job action, manager intolerance, and the horrors of vagrancy⁵. [...] With pantomime and plenty of slapstick, the mood is always lighthearted – never quite realizing the dreary realities – and careful to entertain with sparse heartbreak and ample laughs.

gonewiththetwins.com

¹ works hard

² mental health crisis

³ throwing

⁴ modern

⁵ homelessness

Document 3, Extrait p.83 – Roman, *One-Third of a Nation*, Arthur ARENT,
1938

A Federal Theatre Project play

LOUDSPEAKER This is New York City in 1938, considered by many to be the wealthiest city in the world. Skyscrapers, Wall Street, the Empire State. In some part of this area seven million people have a place they call “home”.

(PARK AVENUE – and sign “NO DOGS ALLOWED”)

Park Avenue where some of America’s millionaires have their homes.

The same Park Avenue – further along. The rent is much cheaper here. Dogs run all over the place and nobody minds.

(TENEMENTS)

Slums¹. The lower East Side.

(AIRSHAFT)²

Air and sunshine, primary requirements for growing children.

To avoid being hit by automobiles children are advised to play in their backyards.

(MAN EMERGES FROM CELLAR³ DOOR)

Yes, he lives down there.

See those vertical ladders on the fire escapes? How would you like to climb down one of those in the middle of the night when a fire breaks out?

Or try to get through these barred windows.

¹ *taudis, bidonville*

² ventilation chimney

³ cave

(FIRE SCENE)

And there are fires. How many lives were lost in this one? How many people were trapped in the halls? How many old men and women missed their footing on those vertical ladders? How many firemen were killed when the wall caved in⁴?

(GARBAGE CANS)

A million and three quarter people look at these every day of their lives. Garbage... filth... disease... crime... slums!

Arthur ARENT, *One-Third of a Nation*, 1938

⁴ *s'effondra*

Document 2, Extrait p.85 – Chanson de *The Genius Of Louis Armstrong*,
Louis ARMSTRONG & His Orchestra, 1936

Swing That Music

My heart gives a chill¹

I feel such a thrill²

My feet won't keep still

When they swing that music

Rhythm like that puts me in a trance

Oh you can't blame me for wanting

to dance

From what I understand

It must be just grand

To play in a band

When they swing that music

Oh I'm as happy as can be

When they swing that music for me

Louis ARMSTRONG & His Orchestra,

The Genius Of Louis Armstrong, 1936

¹ *frisson*

² *excitation*

Extrait p.92 – Roman *Waiting for Nothing*, Tom KROMER, 1935

The scene takes place in the USA in the thirties. Tom is a vagrant who was arrested for trespassing. He is in court waiting for his trial.

Let me see. I will plead guilty with mitigating circumstances¹. That sounds all right.

This judge will see that I am no ordinary stiff.

“Your honor,” I will say very polite, “I am guilty, with mitigating circumstances.” [...]

“Your honor, as you know very well, the nation is faced with a world-wide crisis in unemployment. There are three things which are prime requisites of every civilized man, and even savage. These things are food, clothing, and shelter. We are confronted with the necessity of crime or beggary². It is inevitable, your honor, one choice or the other must be made. Rather than degrade ourselves with stealing, we are compelled to beg for the mite we eat. But we must sleep. Somewhere, your honor, we must sleep. In good weather we sleep in the parks. But yesterday it rained. The parks were soaked.

This building was empty. We did not break in³. It was empty. We had no alternative. We must sleep. We cannot sleep in the rain.”

This will give this judge a rough idea. The trouble with these stiff is they haven't got the guts to speak up. They are scared to death of this judge.

Hell, this judge is no better than any other stiff to me. I will stand up for my rights. I will plead guilty with mitigating circumstances. I bet his ears will perk up when he hears a stiff pleading guilty with mitigating circumstances.

¹ circonstances atténuantes

² mendicité

³ entrer par effraction

He comes on down the line. I go over my spiel in my head. I will be polite, but I will show this guy I am just as good as the next one. He gets to me.

“What have you got to say for yourself?” he says.

“Your honor,’ I say, ‘I am guilty with—”

“That’s all I want to know. Next.”

Tom KROMER, *Waiting for Nothing*, 1935

Évaluation de la compréhension de l'écrit – Guide pédagogique

The owners of the land came onto the land, or more often a spokesman for the owners came. They came in closed cars, and they felt the dry earth with their fingers, and sometimes they drove big earth augers into the ground for soil tests. The tenants, from their sun-beaten dooryards, watched uneasily when the closed cars drove along the fields. And at last the owner men drove into the dooryards and sat in their cars to talk out of the windows. The tenant men stood beside the cars for a while, and then squatted on their hams¹ and found sticks with which to mark the dust.

In the open doors the women stood looking out, and behind them the children— corn-headed² children, with wide eyes, one bare foot on top of the other bare foot, and the toes working. The women and the children watched their men talking to the owner men.

They were silent.

Some of the owner men were kind because they hated what they had to do, and some of them were angry because they hated to be cruel, and some of them were cold because they had long ago found that one could not be an owner unless one were cold.

And all of them were caught in something larger than themselves. Some of them hated the mathematics that drove them, and some were afraid, and some worshiped the mathematics because it provided a refuge from thought and from

¹ *s'accroupirent*

² *très maigres*

feeling. If a bank or a finance company owned the land, the owner man said, The Bank— or the Company— needs— wants— insists— must have— as though the Bank or the Company were a monster, with thought and feeling, which had ensnared³ them.

These last would take no responsibility for the banks or the companies because they were men and slaves, while the banks were machines and masters all at the same time.

John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*, 1938

³ *piégés*