

## Steinbeck's Use of Nonfiction Sources

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### LABOR CONDITIONS

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

*...[I]n California we find a curious attitude toward a group that makes our agriculture successful. The migrants are needed, and they are hated. Arriving in a district they find the dislike always meted out by the resident to the foreigner, the outlander. ...The migrants are hated for the following reasons, that they are ignorant and dirty people, that they are carriers of disease, that they increase the necessity for police and the tax bill for schooling in a community, and that if they are allowed to organize they can, simply by refusing to work, wipe out the season's crops. They are never received into a community... Wanderers..., they are never allowed to feel at home in the communities that demand their services... One has only to go into the squatters' camps where the families live on the ground and have no homes, no beds and no equipment; and one has only to look at the strong purposeful faces, often filled with pain and more often, when they see the corporation-held idle lands, filled with anger, to know that this new race is here to stay and that heed must be taken of it.*

The excerpt above, [Article I](#) from Steinbeck's *The Harvest Gypsies*, [can be found on the New Deal Network website](#).

#### CUTTINGS FROM THE COLLINS REPORT

From Collins's report of January 18, 1936

This week we learned that the average farm labor wage in the state of Oklahoma is fifty cents during peak harvests, with a wage of thirty cents for off season labor. [Here] boll picking [pays] sixty cents per hundred pounds. Men engaged in this work have earned an average of sixty-five cents per day.

From Collins's report of February 8, 1936, p. 15

[Note: Mr. Palomaris was a speaker at a Chamber of Commerce meeting to which Collins was invited. Collins hastily took notes during the meeting.]

(Mr.) Palomaris said, "...Government camps are a source of danger. Communistic activities will be common. Farmers must awake to the danger before too late. ...growers... are busy arranging for ...12 big camps ...supervised and conducted by the growers themselves under strict supervision. Sheriffs will be able to go to the camps any time."

From Collins's report of May 2, 1936

Several families have checked out for other points rather than remain at camp unemployed... Some of them believe it will be necessary to get as far north as Sacramento ...to obtain employment for four months.

From Collins's report of May 23, 1936, p. 5

Tucker ...refused to pay [as agreed per row] and the group walked off to accept work on another farm where the scale was \$0.25 per hour. 3 of our women were involved in this incident. (Tucker is the proprietor of the notorious slum district of Arvin known as "Tuckertown".)

From Collins's report of July 18, 1936, p. 4

He...reminded his hearers that an advertising campaign in the Oklahoma and Arkansas press would bring out, on short notice, hundreds and probably thousands of workers from those states and that those workers would be very willing and quite happy to work for the 25 cents per hour scale now in effect at that corporation ranch. This seems to have broken the threat of an immediate strike for higher wages...

#### GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR THESE CUTTINGS

1. Find one or two brief passages in *The Grapes of Wrath* that relate to at one or two of the labor anecdotes from Collins's reports.
2. In what ways is each passage from *The Grapes of Wrath* similar to its matching passage in the Collins report?
3. In what ways is each passage from *The Grapes of Wrath* different from its matching passage in the Collins report?
4. What label describing how Steinbeck is using each Collins cutting would you apply to each matching passage from *The Grapes of Wrath*?
5. On balance, does Steinbeck accurately portray the difficulties laborers faced?