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## The Religion Symbols And Allusions In Grapes Of Wrath

The phrase "grapes of wrath" is a Biblical reference, to the Book of Revelation. Passage 14:19-20, which states: " So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great winepress of the wrath of God". John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* symbolizes various religious events which Steinbeck shows through the characters and storyline.

The *Grapes of Wrath* is a story about the Joad family and their travel from Oklahoma to California. Their travel mirrors the Book of Exodus which is the second book of the Torah and the Hebrew Bible. Exodus is the story of the god Yahweh and how he chose Moses to lead the Israelites to biblical Mount Sinai, where Yahweh promises them the Promised Land in return for their faithfulness. The Dust Bowl has affected Oklahoma, so the family leaves for California. The Dust Bowl could symbolize the desert in the Bible that Moses takes the Israelites to escape slavery. The Israelites experienced the challenges of no food or water with extreme heat. While the Joad family was experiencing extreme poverty and suffering from the hands of the Dust bowl and banks. California would then represent the Promised Land because life was shown to be better there. In both stories each group has to cross a body of water to get to their destination. In the *Grapes of Wrath* it was the Colorado river and in the Book of Exodus it was the Red sea. The Book of Exodus is also shown when the family gets to Route 66. On Route 66 it's shown that many families have the same idea about leaving for California. Which again depicts the Israelites fleeing for freedom from slavery. The route represents the path they followed. The character Tom Joad also depicts Moses from the Book of Exodus. Both are shown as the leaders to their people. An example could be when Tom kills a man for speaking bad about Casy. His actions closely mirror when Moses kills an Egyptian for beating a Hebrew slave. However many argue that there is a misreading of the text. Many believe that it's a reversal of Exodus because the Joad family never ends in the Promised Land. That would mean that Oklahoma would be the Promised Land and California would represent Egypt where slavery and oppression is. In the story it's shown that many citizens of California are against the idea of migrants. Many of the people there treat the Joads and others as less. All the migrants from the midwest were even called Okies as a label. It was seen as a negative thing to be a migrant but in the Book of Exodus it was the same result. Both groups suffered from cruelty by the hands of others and the Promised Land was still seen as a symbol of hope.

The Joad family could also represent the Book of Job from the Old Testament. The Book of Job is about a man named Job. Job is a wealthy man living in a land called Uz with his large family and enormous flocks. In the story Job is always careful to avoid evil. One day, Satan appears before God. God boasts to Satan about Job's goodness, but Satan argues that Job is only good because God had blessed him through life. Satan then challenges God and says that if he was given permission to punish Job, Job would turn and curse God. God allows Satan to test his claim, but forbids Satan from taking Job's life. Job is then put through many trials. Job experiences losing his children, land, and even gets bad skin sores. Throughout this his friends pressure him to seek forgiveness from God and believe he needs more punishment for whatever evil he had done. Job then starts to question God and the creation of life. He continues his search for knowledge afraid of God. God eventually steps in and asks Job rhetorical questions and Job acknowledges God's unlimited power and admits his limitations of

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human knowledge. This response pleases God and he blesses Job with health, more land than before, children, and a long life. The Joad family is also placed throughout many trials on their journey to California. The family experiences the death of family members and land just like Job. The family members also questioned their faith. In the book Casy is a preacher who leaves preaching and wanders around the country, trying to come to terms with his own ideas about God, holiness, and sin. In the book the Joads still look to him for prayer and reassurance in their faith. In the movie *The Grapes of Wrath* the ending is quite positive. It ends with the family moving on to their next destination with their faith restored. In the book it ends with Rose of Sharon giving birth to a stillborn baby and breastfeeding a man. The book ending has a tone of sadness and desperation. Unlike the movie which had a happier ending like the Book of Job the book has a more mysterious ending.

The characters of Preacher Casy, Tom Joad, and Rose of Sharon are powerful symbolisms of figures in the Bible. In the book *The Grapes of Wrath* Casy is referred to as a sacrificial lamb at his death. Which is an animal or person sacrificed for the common good. A sacrificial lamb also goes in hand with the Lamb of God. The Lamb of God is a title for Jesus that appears in the Gospel of John. It appears at John 1:29, where he sees Jesus and exclaims, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." Jesus chose to suffer crucifixion at Calvary as a sign of obedience to the will of God. Much like Jesus, Casy willingly and bravely takes the punishment that awaited him. Casy is pretty much a modern Christ-like figure. It's also ironic that both Casy and Jesus share the same initials of J.C. Tom Joad again represents Moses through his actions. They are both leaders and have killed people to protect others. They both also leave and come back. For example Tom leaves the family because he was put in jail for killing a man and Moses left for killing the man in Egypt. Both then returned to a leadership role. They are each determined to get to their destination and ignore the warnings from others as they go. For example Tom and his family were told to go back to Oklahoma because they were told the advertisement was false and there wasn't enough jobs in California. Moses was also told warnings throughout his travels to the Promised Land. Rose of Sharon is depicted as a representation of Mary. Mary was chosen by God to give birth to Jesus. Mary was seen as a mother to all and her strongest traits were her love and compassion. Rose of Sharon was also carrying a child that unfortunately wouldn't survive birth. Rose of Sharon did show compassion in the book when she breastfed a half-starved man. The death of her child helped her compassion to provide nurture to the man. This makes Rose of Sharon a good representation of Mary because she helped the man through compassion and kindness.

Finally in the Bible it's depicted that everyone is equal which fits into everyone is one big soul. Galatians 3:28, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." This quote from the Bible states that everyone is one being in Jesus. Which is very similar to when Casy talks about being "One big soul." Casy theorizes about how every man's soul is connected to a possible larger one. He openly discussed these thoughts with Tom shortly before his death. Tom then also took on the same ideal that everyone is one, after witnessing everything he has seen. By the end of the book Tom has almost modeled his whole view on life about what Casy theorized to him. In the song "Tom Joad" by Woody Guthrie Tom tells his mom, "Ever'body might be just one big soul, Well it looks that a-way to me. Everywhere that you look, in the day or night, That's where I'm a-gonna be, Ma, That's where I'm a-gonna be. Wherever little children are hungry and cry, Wherever people ain't free. Wherever men are fightin' for their rights, That's where I'm a-gonna be, Ma. That's where I'm a-gonna be." Tom talks about how he'll be everywhere whether it be where people are rioting or where children go hungry. He has taken it upon himself to be the voice that

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stands up to others for the weak. He has chosen to now become a marauder like Casy and to spread Casy's message about everyone being one big soul. Tom then leaves his family and goes off on his own. It's assumed he won't be seen again by any of his family members after he left.

John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* symbolizes various religious events which he shows throughout the storyline and characters. For example the Book of Exodus and how Moses led his people to the Promised Land and the Book of Job and how he went through many trials that made him question his faith.

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