

## **The Grapes of Wrath**

John Steinbeck was a world famous American author. During the Great Depression, he wrote the novel *The Grapes of Wrath* about a family traveling to California from Oklahoma. Read the excerpt from the book and complete the exercise that follows:-

Highway 66 is the main migrant road. 66 – the long concrete path across the country, waving gently up and down on the map, from the Mississippi to Bakersfield – over the Redlands and the gray lands, twisting up into the mountains, crossing the Divide and down into the bright and terrible desert and across the desert to the mountains again, and into the rich California valleys.

66 is the path of people in flight, refugees from dust and shrinking land, from the thunder of tractors and shrinking ownership, from the desert's slow northward invasion from the twisting winds that howl up out of Texas, from the floods that bring no richness to the land and steal what little richness is there. From all of these the people are in flight, and they come into 66 from the tributary side roads, from the wagon tracks and the rutted country roads. 66 is the mother road, the road of flight....

...Where you all come from? Where all of you goin'?

Well, California's a big State.

It ain't that big. The whole United States ain't that big. It ain't that big. It ain't big enough. There ain't room enough for you an' me, for your kind an' my kind, for rich and poor together all in one country, for thieves and honest men. For hunger and fat. Whyn't you go back where you came from?

This is a free country. Fella can go where he wants.

That's what you think! Ever hear of the border patrol on the California line?...

Says, if you can't buy no real estate we don't want you. Says, got a driver's license? Let's see it. Tore it up. Says, you can't come in without no driver's license.

It's a free country.

Well, try to get some freedom to do. Fella says you're jus' as free as you got jack to pay for it.

In California they got high wages. I got a han'bill here tells about it...

...Two hundred and fifty thousand people over the road. Fifty thousand old cars – wounded, steaming. Wrecks all along the road, abandoned. Well, what happened to them? What happened to the folks in that car? Did they walk? Where are they? Where does the courage come from? Where does the terrible faith come from?

And here's a story you can hardly believe, but it's true, and it's funny and it's beautiful. There was a family of twelve and they were forced off the land. They had no car. They built a trailer out of junk and loaded it with their possessions. They pulled it to the side of 66 and waited. And pretty soon a sedan picked them up. Five of them rode in the sedan and seven on the trailer, and a dog on the trailer. They got to California in two jumps. The man who pulled them fed them. And that's true. But how can such courage be, and such faith in their own species? Very few things would teach such faith. The people in flight from the terror behind-strange things happen to them, some bitterly cruel and some so beautiful that the faith is refired forever.

From *The Grapes of Wrath*, John Steinbeck. New York: Viking Press, 1939, pp. 68-70.

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Answers must be in complete sentences.....

The last paragraph from the excerpt contains the following statements or phrases:

1. "The people in flight from the terror behind." Give one example from what you read of the "terror" behind.

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2. "Strange thing happened to them, some bitterly cruel." Give one example from what you read of a bitterly cruel thing that the people in the story experienced.

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3. "Some so beautiful that the faith is refired forever." Give one example from what you read of such an experience.

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