Objectives

1. Engage students in the plot, characters, themes, setting, and language of John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* so that they are prepared to discuss and write about the excerpt and/or the entire novel.

2. Practice and reinforce the following Grade 9-10 ELA Common Core Standards for reading literature, writing, and speaking and listening:
   - **READING: LITERATURE - RL.9-10.1-5, 10**
   - **WRITING - W.9-10.1-10**
   - **SPEAKING AND LISTENING - SL.9-10.1-5**

Time

120 minutes (with up to an additional 100 minutes of extension possibilities)

Materials

SyncTV Premium Lesson on John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*

Overview

This excerpt, taken from chapter fifteen in *The Grapes of Wrath*, is a simple scene involving complex issues. It is independent of the main events of the book, yet adequately introduces and develops reader interest in the characters, setting, and time period. Close examination of this excerpt will prepare students to read the entire novel, and to write thoughtful, informed, and textually-rooted responses, consistent with the ELA Common Core Standards for the high school grades.

Background (10 minutes)

1. **Watch the Preview (SL.9-10.1-2).** As a group, watch the video preview of the premium lesson. Use the following questions to spur discussion following the preview:
   
   a. What do you already know about the time period in which this story takes place? What historical information do you need to know about the Great Depression in order to understand the story better?
b. What image or images stand out for you and why? What words come to mind after seeing the images in the preview?

c. Based on these images, what do you think the story will be about? What inferences can you make based on these images?

Extension (additional 5 minutes)

d. **Describe (ELL).** Ask English Language Learners to write one word to describe each individual image in the preview or convey a feeling it produces. If possible, show them more images from this time period in America.

**Engaging the Text (110 minutes)**

2. **Read the Text (35 minutes)**

   a. **Read and Annotate** (*RL.9-10.1-5, 10*). Have students read and annotate the excerpt from *The Grapes of Wrath*. If students are completing as a homework assignment, ask them to write any questions they have into the annotation tool—these questions are visible to you after the students submit their writing assignments or beforehand if you use the "Mimic" function to access the students’ accounts.

   Extension (additional 20 minutes)

   b. **Listen and Discuss** (*SL.9-10.1-2*). As a class, listen to the audio reading of the text. Ask students to share how their understanding of the text changed after listening. What additional images came to mind? What words did the author use to develop the setting?

   c. **Comprehend** (*RL.9-10.1-4*). Have students complete the multiple-choice questions (in the lesson extension) individually. Collect papers or discuss answers as a class.

3. **Watch SyncTV (25 minutes)**

   a. **Watch.** Either watch the SyncTV discussion associated with *The Grapes of Wrath* as a class or ask students to watch it on their individual computers.

   b. **Focus** (*RL.9-10.4*). Use the portion of the SyncTV discussion from 2:22-4:20 to demonstrate how homing in on key terms within a text can help unlock its meaning. Have your students follow the SyncTV students as they develop ideas about the meanings of the works "humility" and "dignity" in this passage.

   c. **Focus** (*W.9-10.6*). This Skype episode offers students an excellent model of how to incorporate research into their reading. Use the portion of the episode from 5:20-6:50 to illustrate how data and photographic evidence can be used to both explicate a text, and ground arguments about a text in outside evidence. Ask students to pay particular attention to the ways in which the evidence is utilized. The SyncTV students go well beyond merely Googling "Great Depression" by analyzing their evidence in relation to the text at hand.

   d. **Discuss** (*SL.9-10.1-5*). After watching the model discussion, have a conversation with the class about the ideas discussed in the SyncTV episode that stood out the most. What new thoughts do they have after hearing the students’ discussion? Next, divide students into small groups (3-4 students). Move around the room monitoring the groups as students follow the SyncTV episode as a model to
discuss some of the following questions:

i. How did Mae change in the excerpt? Cite evidence from the text to support your thinking. What caused these changes?

ii. What lasting effects do you think could have come from Mae selling the man the bread; for the restaurant, the man, and the boys?

iii. How did the author use specific language to develop the tone, setting, and characters?

iv. This excerpt is independent of the main events of the story. Discuss why you think the author chose to include it. What effect might this excerpt have on the overall story?

v. The SyncTV students discussed the idea that the characters and certain objects (the man’s hat, the candy) could be symbols or metaphors of something bigger. What are your thoughts about this? Are there other underlying symbols or metaphors in the excerpt?

vi. How does this excerpt apply to life today, regardless of one’s experiences? How can all readers relate to one of the characters or incidents in this excerpt? Cite specific examples from the text to support your ideas.

vii. Why do you think Al responded the way he did?

viii. Why do you think the man was poor? Do you think he will continue to be poor? How can you apply the man’s situation to poverty in today’s society?

Extension (additional 60 minutes)

e. Research (W.9-10.2, 4, 7-8, 10). Have students work individually or in pairs to complete the following assignment:

i. Do you think most people would act like Mae or Al if put in a similar situation? Using local newspapers and personal interviews, find examples in your community of people acting charitable for those less fortunate. Then, find examples of less fortunate people who have been unable to achieve a better life because of some impediment. Summarize your findings in 1-2 pages and be prepared to share your research process, along with your opinions on what you discovered.

4. Think (10 minutes)

a. Respond (W.9-10.1, 4, 9). Ask students to read the "Think" questions, watch the corresponding video clips, and respond to the questions, either in class or for homework.

5. Write (50 minutes)

a. Discuss (SL.9-10.1). Read the prompt you have chosen for students, and then solicit questions regarding the prompt or the assignment expectations. Whichever prompt you have chosen, make sure students are clear about the assignment’s expectations and the rubric by which they will be evaluated.

b. Organize (RL.9-10.1-5, 10 and W.9-10.1-2, 5). Ask students to go back and annotate the text with the prompt in mind. They should be organizing their thoughts and the
points they'll address in their writing as they make annotations. If you've worked on outlining or other organizational tools for writing, this is a good place to apply them.

c. **Write** (*W.9-10.1-2, 4-6, 9-10*). Have students follow the writing process by planning, revising, editing, and publishing their written responses.

d. **Review** (*W.9-10.4-6*). Use the StudySync "Review" feature to have students complete one to two evaluations of their peers' work based on your chosen review rubric. Have the students look at and reflect upon the peer evaluations of their own writing. What might you do differently in a revision? How might you strengthen the writing and the ideas?
SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

Key Vocabulary

1. humility (n.) - the quality or condition of being humble; modest opinion or estimate of one's own importance, rank, etc.

2. insistent (adj.) - earnest or emphatic in dwelling upon, maintaining or demanding something; persistent; pertinacious.

3. inflexible (adj.) - of a rigid or unyielding temper, purpose, will, etc.; immovable.

4. resignedly (adj.) - submissive or acquiescent.

Reading Comprehension Questions

1. Why does Mae shrug her shoulders and look at the truck drivers?
   a. She thinks they will back her up.
   b. She is hoping they will pay for the man's bread.
   c. She feels helpless.
   d. She is annoyed with Al.

2. Why doesn't Mae want to sell the man the bread?
   a. She's worried the restaurant will run out.
   b. The man doesn't have enough money to pay for it.
   c. She saw that the man has enough money and thinks he is being stingy.
   d. She thinks he should go to the grocery store nearby.

3. Where are the man and boys going?
   a. back home
   b. a thousand miles away
   c. California
   d. both b and c

4. Why doesn't the man put the penny back into his pouch?
   a. He wants to leave Mae a tip.
   b. He is thinking about buying the candy.
   c. He needs it to pay for the bread.
   d. There is a hole in the pouch.

5. What does the author mean in this sentence: "The little boys raised their eyes to her face and they stopped breathing; their mouths were partly opened, their half-naked bodies were rigid."
   a. The boys love peppermint sticks.
   b. The boys are expecting her to get angry.
   c. The boys are hungry.
   d. The boys are hopeful.

6. Which of the following could be considered themes of the excerpt?
   a. human kindness
   b. charity
   c. poverty
   d. all of the above
7. What does the man want Mae to do?
   a. Give him the bread for free.
   b. Sell him the bread for ten cents.
   c. Cut off ten cents worth of the bread.
   d. Sell him the peppermints for a penny.

8. Who is Al in the excerpt?
   a. The cook at the diner.
   b. One of the truck drivers.
   c. Mae's husband.
   d. The man's brother.

9. What do the peppermint sticks represent to the boys?
   a. Something unattainable.
   b. Their favorite candy.
   c. Charity.
   d. None of the above.

10. Why doesn't the man pay the full price for the bread?
    a. He wanted to buy candy too.
    b. He didn't have enough money to pay the full price.
    c. He had budgeted just enough money for his trip.
    d. Both b and c.

Answer Key

1. C
2. A
3. D
4. B
5. D
6. D
7. C
8. A
9. A
10. C
Further Assignments

1. After reading the book, have students look back at the excerpt and discuss the role it plays in the story. How does it add to the overall tone of the book? Is it necessary? Ask students to write a persuasive essay arguing either for or against the inclusion of this excerpt in the novel. *(RL.9-10.5)*

2. After reading the book, have students write an alternate scene that would contribute to the book as equally as the excerpt. This alternate scene should deepen the themes and characters in the same manner as this excerpt, but should, at the very least, be wholly different in setting. *(W.9-10.3-5)*

3. Ask students to compare the events in the excerpt to another time period or place. Have them rewrite the scene to match the time and place they are comparing. *(W.9-10.3)*

4. After reading *The Grapes of Wrath*, have students discuss author John Steinbeck's probable political views. What would his views be today? In pairs, have students write and perform a mock interview of John Steinbeck by a political journalist. *(W.9-10.1-5)*

5. Ask students to use the elements of research and presentation modeled in the SyncTV episode to develop their own PowerPoint presentations about the Great Depression. Presentations should provide key historical facts and data, along with visual and audio components that provide classmates with context about the time period. Each student should be prepared to make a 3-5 presentation to the class. *(SL.9-10.5)*

6. Ask students to write the conversation that Mae and Al have after the man and boys leave. Have students focus on the grammar and punctuation used in dialogue. After students have written their dialogues, pair them up and have them read their dialogues together, focusing on the ways in which punctuation and verbiage outside the quotation marks inform speech. *(ELL)*