**TOPIC: LETTERS HOME**

**Discipline**

Language Arts, History, Creative Writing

**Grade Level**

9-12

**Type of Activity**

Writing, Creative Writing, Small Group, Entire Class

**Objectives**

* Students will understand the reasons families migrated west during the Great Depression.
* Students will understand the difference between push and pull factors in terms of migration.

**Overview**

Not all families stuck together to migrate west like the Joads. Muley Graves stayed behind while his wife and children headed to California for work. Not knowing that Tom was being paroled early, the Joad family nearly left without him and headed to California.

In this exercise, students examine the push and pull factors families faced during the Great Depression and express those understandings in the form of letters home.

**Relevant Sections**

* Chapter 5 (31-39)
* Chapter 6 (45-48)
* Chapter 10 (90-94, 110)

**Materials Needed/Preparation**

* *The Grapes of Wrath*
* Notebook
* Optional: Push and Pull Factors Organizer

**Estimated Time**

* 15-30 minutes

**Procedures**

Warm up:

* Discuss the difference between push and pull factors.
* Re-read/review pages 3-39, 45, 90-94, and page 110.
  + In notes or using the Push and Pull Factors Organizer:
    - What factors are pushing people like the Joad family out of Oklahoma and the Dust Bowl region?
      * Be specific, site examples from the text.
    - What factors are pulling people west to California?
      * Be specific, site examples from the text.
  + Imagine/predict
    - What did Muley’s family find in California?
    - What happens to Muley after the Joad family leaves?
    - What do you think the Joads will find when they reach California?

Activity

* Consider assigning students to a partner or to a small group
* Based on your notes, write “letters home” from families who went out west to California. For example, write to Muley as if you were his wife.
  + Be sure to address both the expectations (pull factors) and the reality of what they found (your predictions).
  + Consider writing more than one letter from more than one period of time.
    - A letter upon arriving in California
    - A letter after six months in California
    - A letter after one year in California
  + Consider writing replies from people still “back home.”
    - Write as Muley to his family
    - Write as someone who managed to find work (such as a tractor driver)

**Post Activity/Takeaways/Follow-up**

* Takeaways
  + Students will come away from this activity with more of an understanding of the factors which drove people west and the realities those people faced. This is a warm up for reading what the Joad family is about to endure.
* Follow-up
  + Return to these letters after completing the novel. Consider writing new letters.
* Post Activity
  + Pair this exercise with “Migrant Workers and the Great Depression – Why California” or “Migrant Workers and the Great Depression – Leaving Home”

**Assessment**

* Assess student work on the accuracy of the push and pull factors they reference in their letters.
* Students should also take into account that some people, like Muley, will be embarrassed to tell the exact truth.

**Standards Met**

* Reading Standards for Literature 6-12
  + Key Ideas and Details: 1, 2, 3
  + Craft and Structure: 4, 5, 6
  + Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: 7, 9
  + Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity: 10
* Reading Standards for Informational Text 6-12
* Key Ideas and Details: 1,2,3
* Craft and Structure: 4,5,6
* Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: 7,8
* Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity: 10
* Writing Standards 6-12
  + Text Types and Purposes: 2, 3
  + Range of Writing: 10
* Speaking and Listening Standards 6-12
  + Comprehension and Collaboration: 1, 2, 3, 4
  + Presentation and Knowledge of Ideas: 4
* Language Standards 6-12
  + Conventions of Standard English: 1, 2, 3
  + Knowledge of Language: 3
  + Vocabulary Acquisition and Use: 6
* Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies 6-12
  + Key Ideas and Details: 1, 2, 3
  + Craft and Structure: 4, 6
  + Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: 8, 9
  + Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity: 10
* Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects 6-12
  + Text Types and Purposes: 2
  + Production and Distribution of Writing: 4