**TOPIC: DIGNITY**

**Discipline**

Language Arts, History, Economics

**Grade Level**

9-12

**Type of Activity**

Small Group, Entire Class, Research, Pre-Reading, Discussion, Cumulative

**Objectives**

* Students will understand the connection between dignity, work, and the New Deal.
* Students will examine what dignity is to Steinbeck, what happens when it is taken from people, and what happens when people are allowed to regain it.

**Overview**

“In this series the word ‘dignity’ has been used several times. It has been used not as some attitude of self-importance, but simply as a register of a man’s responsibility to the community. A man herded about, surrounded by armed guards, starved and forced to live in filth loses his dignity; that is, he loses his valid position in regard to society, and consequently his whole ethics toward society” (*The Harvest Gypsies*, 39).

Apart from the Keynesian economic theory behind the New Deal, President Roosevelt’s aim was to put people into motion, to put them to work and restore their dignity and hope. Steinbeck’s concept of dignity is similar – something that can be lost or gained, and an essential element to society.

**Relevant Sections**

* The Joad family in Weedpatch and Tom working: Chapter 22 (289-324)

**Materials Needed/Preparation**

* *The Grapes of Wrath*
* Students have read to the end of chapter 22
* Copies of the quote above from *The Harvest Gypsies* (optional)
* Dignity notes chart (optional)

**Estimated Time**

* 1 class period

**Procedures**

Warm up:

* Distribute the quote from *The Harvest Gypsies* or project it onto a screen for the class.
* Journal:
  + What does dignity mean to you?
  + Do you agree with Steinbeck’s definition?
  + Pair-share your thoughts
* Discussion
  + What is dignity?
  + How does Steinbeck’s definition of dignity apply to the novel? How does it connect to the New Deal and ideas about “the dole” and relief?
  + Do you think this definition of dignity applies today?

Activity

* Consider assigning students to small groups or a partner.
* Students are to review chapter 22, taking notes on (or using the Dignity notes chart)
  + How is the Joad family treated in Weedpatch?
  + How are other people treated in Weedpatch?
  + How do characters react to having work?
  + How do characters react to not having work?
* Options:
  + As homework, write a short essay on dignity as seen in chapter 22.
  + Research articles on the New Deal, welfare, and attitudes towards relief.
    - This can be combined with the above essay on dignity, but students will need more time to complete.
  + Research modern day assistance programs (welfare, Disability, Social Security, etc.). What are the goals of those programs? What are the different attitudes people have towards these programs?
    - This can be combined with the above essay on dignity, but students will need more time to complete.

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

* Takeaways
  + Students will gain a stronger understanding of one of the most important themes of the novel: dignity.
  + This activity lends itself to discussions about “entitlements,” the social safety net, and immigration.
* Post Activity
  + Repeat this activity when the Joad family arrives in Hooper Ranch and when they are living in the boxcar.

**Extensions**

* Read chapter 4 of *The Harvest Gypsies*. Use this reading to augment this activity.

**Assessment**

* Assess students on the strength of their textual evidence. Examples from the text should clearly connect to the theme of dignity.

**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
  + 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, 5