**TOPIC: WHAT’S A RED?**

**Discipline**

Language Arts, History, Economics

**Grade Level**

9-12

**Type of Activity**

Small Group, Entire Class, Research, Ongoing, Cumulative, Discussion

**Objectives**

* Students will understand what it meant to be called a “red” and what Steinbeck was saying about this through *The Grapes of Wrath*.

**Overview**

“We’re all reds” (298)

Steinbeck was accused of being a communist and a socialist, particularly after the publication of *The Grapes of Wrath*. Throughout the novel he hints at revolution and decries the greed of a capitalist system that would force its own people into destitution and starvation.

**Relevant Sections**

* Ma talks of revolt: Chapter 8 (77)
* Casy talks of revolt: Chapter 13 (129)
* Steinbeck on social structures: Chapter 17
* Steinbeck and revolution: Chapter 19
* Tom on “decency”: Chapter 20 (278-279)
* Federal camps treat people like humans: Chapter 22 (296)
* Timothy says “…we’re all reds”: Chapter 22 (298)
* Arming and organizing the people: Chapter 23 (345)
* “In the souls of the people…”: Chapter 25 (349)

**Materials Needed/Preparation**

* *The Grapes of Wrath*
* Notes on Reds organizer (optional)
* An understanding of the Red Scare
  + Read “[The Cold War: The American Homefront](http://sits.sjsu.edu/context/historical/hist_context_cold_war_homefront/index.html)”
* As an ongoing assignment, teachers should be prepared for which class sessions this activity will be used.
  + See Themes by Chapter for help planning

**Estimated Time**

* As an ongoing assignment: 10-15 minutes
* As a cumulative assignment: 1-2 class periods

**Procedures**

Warm up:

* Cite a passage from the reading that involves the idea of “Reds,” communists, socialists, threats of revolt, or any passage that discusses the greed of banks, large land owners, or the growers associations.
  + Journal: What is the message Steinbeck is sending? What is he saying the problem is?
    - Do you agree?
    - How does this relate to current times? Are there similar feelings now? Why or why not?
    - Pair-share

Ongoing:

* Discussion/Activity
  + This can be a discussion or a writing prompt.
  + What is Steinbeck trying to say in this passage?
  + What is controversial about this passage?
    - How do you think different people reacted to this in the 1930s. Consider:
      * Migrants
      * Small farmers
      * Growers associations
      * Californians (in contrast to the “Oakies”)
      * Government officials

Cumulative:

* Students use their notes and go back through the novel to find passages that involve the idea of “Reds,” communists, socialists, threats of revolt, or any passage that discusses the greed of banks, large land owners, or the growers associations.
  + What is Steinbeck trying to say in this passage?
  + What is controversial about this passage?
    - How do you think different people reacted to this in the 1930s. Consider:
      * Migrants
      * Small farmers
      * Growers associations
      * Californians (in contrast to the “Oakies”)
      * Government officials
* Short essay prompts
  + *The Grapes of Wrath* warns that change is coming – revolution perhaps. Did change come? Was it revolutionary (even if it was not a revolution)?
  + *The Grapes of Wrath* was banned in Kern County, California (where the Joad family spend their time once reaching California).
    - Why was the novel banned?
    - What particular themes, scenes, or ideas may have prompted the banning?  
      Who wanted the book banned?

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

* Takeaways
  + This activity helps put the novel into the social and historical context of its time.
* Follow-up
  + Continue to use this activity as the class reads through the novel.

**Assessment**

* Assess student work based on the strength of the contextual evidence they provide in their analysis.

**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