**TOPIC: What is America? Who Are Americans?**

**Discipline**

Language Arts, History

**Grade Level**

6 – 12

**Type of Activity**

Cumulative, Individual or Small Group, Group Discussion

**Objectives**

* Students will interpret Steinbeck’s view of America and Americans.

**Overview**

Steinbeck set out on his journey with Charley in order to “…try to rediscover this monster land” (5). A continuing theme throughout the book is Steinbeck’s attempt to answer the questions “what is America?” and “what does it mean to be an American?”

In this activity, students will analyze Steinbeck’s thoughts on America and Americans and determine what it is that Steinbeck discovered.

**Materials Needed/Preparation**

* Copies of *Travels with Charley*.
* Copies of graphic organizer (optional)

**Estimated Time**

* 1-2 periods if done after completing the book
* This activity can also be done as an ongoing project as students read

**Procedures**

* Journal topic: How do you define America (The United States)? What does it mean to you to be an American?
  + Allow students time to write.
  + Consider allowing students time to pair-share
  + As a class, discuss student responses to the journal topic
* Consider whether to have students work individually, with a partner, or in a small group
  + Have students skim through *Travels with Charley* and find examples of where Steinbeck explains or attempts to explain what he thinks America is and who Americans are.
  + Use the graphic organizer if necessary.
  + Include quotations, page numbers, and an explanation of what the passage means
* Writing prompt: Do you agree with Steinbeck’s analysis? Explain. (i.e. do you agree with his conclusions on what America is and who Americans are?).

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

* Post Activity
  + Students can use their findings to study for a cumulative exam.
  + Students can use their findings as pre-writing for an essay on *Travels with Charley*.
* Takeaways
  + Students should come away from this activity with a greater understanding of what Steinbeck discovered about America and Americans.
  + Students should come away from this activity with a greater understanding of what they think America is and who Americans are.
* Follow-up
  + If done as an ongoing assignment, have students return to their findings during different parts of the book.

**Assessment**

* Assess how well students support their analyses through passages in the text.
* Use student findings as part of a cumulative exam or essay.

**Standards Met**

Common Core State Standards Met

* Reading Standards for Literature 6-12
  + Key Ideas and Details: 1, 2, 3
  + Craft and Structure: 4, 5, 6
* 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: 8
* Writing Standards 6-12
  + Text Types and Purposes: 1, 2
  + Production and Distribution of Writing: 4, 5
  + Research to Build and Present Knowledge: 7, 9
* Speaking and Listening Standards 6-12
  + Comprehension and Collaboration: 1, 3
  + Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: 4
* Language Standards 6-12
  + Conventions of Standard English: 1, 2
  + Vocabulary Acquisition and Use: 4, 5
* Reading Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies 6-12
  + Key Ideas and Details: 1, 2
  + Craft and Structure: 4, 5, 6