

East of Eden Study Guide

East of Eden by John Steinbeck

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Introduction

Reviewers were quick to point out the flaws in structure and theme in this long novel, and later critics have in general not regarded it as the equal of Steinbeck's finest works. However, the story of the Trask family is a powerful, if melodramatic one, and the Hamilton chapters show Steinbeck's ability to create living characters and set them in motion is undiminished. The selection of *East of Eden* by Oprah Winfrey for her book club (2003) revived reader interest in this serious but entertaining novel that endeavors to lift up the human spirit in the face of everything that would destroy it. As a result of Oprah's selection, this book was reissued in a 2003 edition by Penguin publications.



Author Biography

John Ernst Steinbeck was born February 27, 1902, in Salinas, California, the son of John Ernst Steinbeck and Olive Hamilton Steinbeck. Steinbeck graduated from Salinas High School in 1919, and enrolled at Stanford University. He attended classes sporadically but left the university in 1925 without a degree. He moved to New York City to pursue a career as a writer but met with little success. Returning to California, he married Carol Henning in 1930.

Steinbeck supported himself by doing various odd jobs, including caretaker of an estate and fruit-picker. His first novel *Cup of Gold* (1929) went largely unnoticed and did not even recoup the very small advance the publisher gave him. Two subsequent novels *The Pastures of Heaven* (1932) and *To a God Unknown* (1933) fared no better. The first of Steinbeck's novels to attract attention was *Tortilla Flat* (1935), which received the Commonwealth Club of California's General Literature Gold Medal for best novel by a California author. The money Steinbeck made from the film rights to *Tortilla Flat* eased his financial problems. Steinbeck's novels *In Dubious Battle* (1936) and *Of Mice and Men* (1937) followed. The latter was his biggest success up to that point, and the play version of the novel won the New York Drama Critics Circle Award. After *The Long Valley* (1938), a collection of short stories, Steinbeck wrote his masterpiece, *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), a chronicle of the exodus of farm families from the Dust Bowl to California in the 1930s. The novel won the Pulitzer Prize and established Steinbeck's international reputation.

In 1940, Steinbeck traveled to Mexico to make the documentary film, *Forgotten Village*. During World War II he wrote *Bombs Away!* (1942), a propaganda novel, and in 1943 he traveled to Europe as a war correspondent for the *New York Herald Tribune*. He divorced his wife Carol in 1943 and married Gwyndolyn Conger the same year. They had two sons, Thom and John, but the marriage ended in 1948. Steinbeck married for the third time, to Elaine Scott, in 1950.

Steinbeck's next novels were *Cannery Row* (1945), *The Pearl* (1947), and *East of Eden* (1952). *East of Eden* was made into a film starring James Dean in 1954, the same year in which Steinbeck's *Sweet Thursday* was published. The Rodgers and Hammerstein musical *Pipe Dream* was based on *Sweet Thursday*. During these years of success, Steinbeck guarded his own privacy and avoided publicity as much as he could. The works of his later years included *The Short Reign of Pippin IV* (1957) and his last novel, *The Winter of Our Discontent* (1961).

Steinbeck was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1962 and received the Presidential Medal of Freedom from President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1964. In 1965 Steinbeck began a series, "Letters to Alicia," which appeared in *Long Island Newsday*. In these later years he divided his time between California and New York, and took on many assignments as a reporter abroad, including a trip to Vietnam. Steinbeck died of a heart attack on December 20, 1968, in New York City.



Plot Summary

East of Eden is the saga of two families living in the Salinas Valley in California and Connecticut in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The novel symbolizes the Biblical story of creation and the subsequent human travails inflicted after the commission of original sin. The novel is rife with metaphors and allegories related to the story of Cain and Abel, and good vs. evil as the characters struggle with the human condition in an imperfect world.

Steinbeck includes his own family beginning with his maternal grandparents, Samuel and Liza Hamilton, who are introduced first in the novel. The young couple had settled in the Salinas Valley having emigrated from Ireland. The Hamiltons eventually have nine children raised on little money but much love, and Samuel is well-loved in the region for his good humor and willingness to help his neighbors.

A young man named Adam Trask has a much more comfortable life in the Salinas Valley as he arrives in California with a healthy inheritance from his father, Cyrus, the recently deceased Secretary of War for the United States. Adam's half-brother, Charles, remains in Connecticut to work the Trask family farm. Adam and Charles grew up with a contentious relationship because Cyrus admittedly loved Adam more than he loved Charles.

Adam marries a young woman named Cathy Amesbury who had shown up at the Trask farm after having been brutally beaten and left for dead by her lover and pimp. Charles and Cathy despise each other yet sleep with each other on the night that Adam weds Cathy. Adam and Cathy move to California despite Cathy's unwillingness to do so. Cathy shoots Adam and then abandons him and her newborn twin boys soon after the delivery. Adam's Chinese housekeeper, Lee, raises the twins as Adam mourns the loss of the life he was creating with his young wife.

Cathy moves to Salinas, changes her name to Kate and works as a prostitute and eventually kills the brothel's owner and takes over the business. Kate's secret is intact for ten years until Samuel tells Adam the truth. Adam confronts Kate (Cathy) and is finally able to let go of her emotionally and engage in the lives of his boys named Caleb (Cal) and Aaron (Aron). Adam moves the family from their ranch to a house in town where they have more educational and social opportunities and Aron falls in love with a girl named Abra.

Through the years, Cal and Aron grow apart because of the differences in their personalities and Cal's jealousy of Adam's love for Aron also increases. Cal is more inclined to explore life's darker side and discovers the truth about their mother until his jealousy rages and he tells Aron the truth in order to hurt him. Aron runs away from the ugliness of the truth and enlists in the army, news of which gives Adam a mild heart attack.



Abra learns to love Cal more than Aron because Cal is a real person complete with good and bad as opposed to Aron who runs away from life's realities and refuses to engage in life himself in order to avoid the possibility of being bad. Aron's death in World War I gives Adam a stroke and in his dying moments, Adam releases Cal from his guilt over Aron's enlistment and resulting death, an action which breaks the chain of self-imposed guilt and feelings of doomed evil which have haunted Cal. Now Cal and Abra are able to go on with their lives using their own free wills to direct the course.



Part 1, Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

Part 1, Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 Summary

The novel begins with a full chapter devoted to the description of the heritage and geography of the Salinas Valley in California, the setting for the story. The author is the narrator of the story and the grandson of the first main character, Samuel Hamilton, introduced to the reader. Samuel is an Irishman who had brought his young wife, Liza, to live near King City in the Salinas Valley.

Samuel's farm is in one of the driest areas with the poorest soil because all the other good land had already been claimed. Samuel supports his family by working as a blacksmith and woodworker, and although he has no talent for making money, Samuel becomes well-loved in the area for his integrity and kindness.

In contrast to the Hamiltons' life of struggle, another settler in the area, a wealthy man named Adam Trask, arrives in the valley and is able to secure a huge ranch. Adam had grown up in Connecticut, the son of a farmer named Cyrus Trask who had lost his leg in the Civil War. Cyrus is a formidable presence stomping around the farm on his wooden leg and intimidates his very religious wife and son. When Mrs. Trask is stricken by a sexually-transmitted disease from her husband who contracted it during the war, Mrs. Trask kills herself by drowning herself in a shallow pond.

Cyrus soon takes a second wife, a timid woman named Alice. Cyrus and Alice have a son they name Charles, and Alice raises Adam as if he were her own child. Alice and the boys live in fear of Cyrus' tyrannical behavior and his unending militaristic demeanor. Alice hides her tuberculosis from Cyrus and continues to raise the boys while living in fear of her husband. Adam senses Alice's distress and secretly leaves little gifts around the house for some momentary delights. Charles, in contrast, is a belligerent child who taunts Adam and beats him up when Adam gets the better of him in games and contests. Cyrus is seemingly oblivious to the boys' behavior and ardently works to convince Adam to enter into a military career. Against his own wishes, Adam enlists in the army while Charles stays home because Cyrus feels that the military life would encourage negative behavior in the already aggressive Charles. Before Adam leaves, Cyrus tells him that he loves Adam better than Charles, a fact that Charles soon uncovers.

At the Hamilton ranch, the family grows with a new child each year: George who is good, gallant and kind; Will who has conservative and stodgy beliefs even as a young boy; Tom who is joyful, exuberant and full of inventive ideas; Joseph who is a dreamer and thought to be inept at physical labor; Una who is the oldest girl with a very studious nature; Lizzie who is named for her mother but who moves away from the family as soon as she is able; Dessie who is a joyful delight and always laughing; Olive who is the narrator's mother, and Mollie who is the beauty of the family.



Part 1, Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 Analysis

This novel is filled with Biblical undertones and allegories, the most important being man's constant struggle of good vs. evil. The contrast between the kind and good Samuel Hamilton vs. the tyrannical Cyrus Trask is one of the main contrasts of characters in the book. Steinbeck also uses geographical symbolism in the two mountain ranges that border the Salinas Valley; one is always bright and open while the other is dark and threatening. It is as if the residents in the lush Garden of Eden type setting of Salinas Valley are literally positioned between these two choices. Steinbeck begins the story with the description of the lushness of the Salinas Valley to set it up as a garden of bounty just as the Bible tells the story of the abundance and beauty in the Garden of Eden.

To extend the story of creation as told in the Bible, God creates the first man, Adam, who has sons named Cain and Abel. The contention between Cain and Abel are mirrored in the relationship of Charles and Adam Trask with one being the favored son, which leads to repeated violence. In the Bible, Cain kills Abel but in this story, Charles kills the relationship with his father and brother by his jealous, aggressive behavior. Steinbeck even positions Cyrus and Charles as evil when he writes, "Adam's father, Cyrus, was something of a devil—had always been wild—" Part 1, Chapter 3, Page 14 and "He ordered another drink for his new friends, and then he joined them for some kind of devilry in another place." Part 1, Chapter 4, Page 33 This parallels the story of creation in the Bible in which the devil takes the form of a snake and then leaves for another place once the original sin has been committed. Steinbeck will continue his own story of good and evil with Charles and Adam Trask, as well as Adam's two sons later in the book to illuminate the beauty and flaws of the human condition.



Part 1, Chapters 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11

Part 1, Chapters 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 Summary

Charles stays in Connecticut to run the Trask family farm after Adam goes away with the army to fight in the Indian wars, and Cyrus leaves for Washington D.C. to assume his duties as Secretary of War. One day while attempting to move a boulder from the land, Charles is injured on his forehead when his tool strikes his head. The injury and lingering scar make Charles even more of a recluse, and he hopes for Adam's return from the army even though Adam has not indicated that he will be returning.

In 1894 Charles receives a letter notifying him that Cyrus has died and left a fortune of \$100,000 to his sons Charles and Adam. Charles' suspicious nature leads him to believe that Cyrus has amassed this large sum through some illegal or dishonest means. Charles shares the news with Adam when he returns home, but Adam is not so quick to judge Cyrus' behavior and urges Charles to accept the inheritance and put it to good use such as moving to California and starting new lives.

The story transitions to the life of a young girl named Cathy Ames who, despite her physical beauty, has monstrous personal characteristics and attitudes. Cathy develops the habit of lying and manipulating people to get what she wants in life, which creates fear, not friendship, from her classmates. Cathy also uses overt sexuality to frighten and attract men and boys for the mere power she feels over them when she does so.

When Cathy turns sixteen, she becomes even more willful and is a virtual stranger to her parents. Cathy attempts to run away to Boston but is intercepted by her father at the train station and returned home where her father whips her for punishment. One day when her mother is out, Cathy kills a chicken and saves the blood in a jar which she hides under the kitchen steps. That night a fire breaks out in the Ames household killing Mr. and Mrs. Ames and investigators find a pool of blood by the kitchen door. Cathy runs away and assumes the name of Catherine Amesbury when she meets with a man named Mr. Edwards who runs a network of whores situated in inns throughout New England. Mr. Edwards is attracted to Cathy and sets her up in a little house where he can have her exclusively.

Mr. Edwards employs a private investigator who discovers the story about Cathy's parents dying in a house fire and he instinctively knows that Cathy had murdered her parents. Mr. Edwards demands that Cathy accompany him to her hometown in Connecticut where he hopes to expose her crime when someone sees that she is still alive. On the last leg of the trip, Mr. Edwards and Cathy walk from the train station to the small town in a remote area where Mr. Edwards beats Cathy almost to death, leaves his suitcase and money he was carrying and runs away. Cathy lies unconscious all night until she is able to drag herself into the yard of a farmhouse.



Charles and Adam are interrupted by the sound of something outside the door and find the severely beaten Cathy attempting to crawl up the steps. Cathy plays up to Adam who proposes marriage, an appealing proposition of security. Charles' distrust of Cathy increases when a neighbor finds an abandoned case of money and a suitcase of men's clothes nearby. Adam refuses to believe that Cathy has had anything to do with the items and marries Cathy despite Charles' protests. Cathy is not happy about Adam's plan for them to move to California and tells him that she cannot sleep with him on their wedding night and goes to Charles' bed instead after drugging Adam with opium.

Part 1, Chapters 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 11 Analysis

In this section Steinbeck continues the parallels between his characters and the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. In the Bible story, Eve submits to the temptation of the devil disguised as a snake and commits the original sin. In this novel, Cathy Ames represents Eve with her evil, malicious behavior which creates devastation all around her. Cathy feels no remorse for her actions believing that those she has duped and even murdered are fools who got in her way. Cathy marries Adam which represents the union of Adam and Eve in the Bible. Adam had tried to remove Cathy from a devastating situation by moving them to California but Cathy's refusal ends in her drugging Adam and sleeping with Adam's brother, Charles. Charles represents Cain from the Bible who does not find favor from his father or from God and ultimately kills his own brother. By sleeping with his brother's wife, Charles exhibits immoral behavior and commits an act that would emotionally kill Adam if he were to discover the indiscretion.

There is also symbolism in the injury and resulting scar on Charles' forehead because it mirrors what the Bible calls the mark of Cain put on Cain by God as a symbol of His displeasure and vengeance against Cain for his immoral behavior. Cain will forever carry the scar to mark him as different from moral men, as will Charles have his scar for life. Steinbeck also leads the reader to believe that the curse of Cyrus' questionable estate mirrors the curse handed down to Adam and Eve after their original sin. This curse will perpetuate throughout the Trask family for the remainder of the novel.



Part 2, Chapters 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17

Part 2, Chapters 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17 Summary

Adam is thrilled with his new wife, Cathy, who accompanies him to California even though she does not want to go. Adam soon purchases a 900-acre ranch located near King City and immediately begins his ambitious plans for a family home, but Cathy does not join in his enthusiasm. Adam's improvements on his home continue with the continual sounds of workmen crafting and rebuilding with only the finest of materials. Adam also attends to the internal machinations of the home and hires a Chinese man, Lee, to work as a housekeeper and cook.

Soon after, the well drilling begins, and one day Lee frantically rides out to enlist Samuel's help because Cathy has gone into labor and has been screaming in what Lee calls more of a bitter combat than a birth. Cathy does not want Samuel to attend to her but he is the only one with childbirth knowledge. At one point Cathy viciously bites Samuel's hand, and Samuel proceeds cautiously while Cathy delivers two baby boys.

Cathy informs Adam that she is leaving like she promised and they engage in a minor struggle ending with Adam locking Cathy in the room. Cathy does not respond to Adam's pleas so he opens the door and Cathy shoots Adam in his left shoulder. Cathy walks out of the house as the babies cry to be fed.

Part 2, Chapters 12, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17 Analysis

In this section, Steinbeck continues his contrasts of good vs. evil in the juxtaposed characters of the Hamilton family and the Trask family. Samuel, his wife, Liza, and their children, notably Steinbeck's mother, Olive, are all God-fearing people devoted to their children and living with strong ethics about right and wrong. By contrast, Cathy Trask seems to be evil incarnate, and Samuel even comments on her inhuman face and monstrous demeanor. Cathy's demonic persona is especially contrasted by her living in the lush, healthy Salinas Valley from which she can hardly wait to leave. Perhaps Cathy instinctively knows that she does not belong in a place of such abundance and goodness.

In addition to the Biblical symbolism that continues throughout the book, Steinbeck also uses the literary technique of foreshadowing when it is mentioned that some day a peach grown in the Salinas Valley could be shipped all across the country for someone on the East Coast to enjoy. This will have significance for Adam later in the book when he tries something of that nature.

It is also important to note the introduction of Lee's character as a voice of reason and calm. Ironically, Lee outwardly behaves like an anxious Chinaman, but he is truly an educated, wise man who will become vitally important as the story progresses.



Part 2, Chapters 18, 19, 20, 21 and 22

Part 2, Chapters 18, 19, 20, 21 and 22 Summary

The sheriff of the King City district, Horace Quinn, questions Adam about the shooting and Adam is adamant that he wounded himself while cleaning his gun. Adam's skittish behavior leads Horace to believe that there is more to the story despite Adam's claims that Cathy is merely away for awhile on a visit. Horace persists with the questions and temporarily thinks that Adam may have killed Cathy. When questioned later, Samuel tells Horace that Adam is incapable of murder. Horace goes to Salinas to meet with the sheriff there and learns that a local brothel owner named Faye had inquired about a young woman matching Cathy's description. Horace makes the sheriff swear to secrecy and vows to keep the secret himself so that Adam and the twin boys will never learn that Cathy is living in Salinas and working as a whore.

Samuel makes a point to call on the Trask household and encourages Adam to act out the motions of living even if he doesn't feel like it. Adam is inconsolable in his depression, and Lee assumes a parental role for the infant boys while Adam merely exists.

One night Faye invites Kate (aka Kathy) to her room for a special celebration, and Kate is careful to dress almost like a little girl before joining Faye. Faye gives Kate a gift box which contains a rolled-up will leaving Kate as Faye's sole beneficiary. Faye considers Kate to be her daughter and this legality will remove all doubt. Faye offers Kate some champagne to seal this new phase of their relationship, and Kate declines because it has ill effects on her but ultimately joins Faye in the drinking. As Kate continues to drink, her inhibitions melt and she launches into a verbal attack on Faye telling her that Kate will show Faye how to properly run a whorehouse.

Kate is eager to let the other girls know about the terms of Faye's new will and before long all the other whores know that Kate has a newfound power over their lives. Kate also leads the other girls to believe that Faye is ill, which leads to their dependence on her on a daily basis. Kate tires of this arrangement and devises a plan which involves her claiming an illness for which the doctor visits and dispenses pills to Kate. The next day, Kate visits the doctor's office on the pretense of obtaining more pills for herself, and she steals five little bottles of medicine and leaves without the doctor realizing what she had done.

Kate maintains her helpful demeanor at the brothel and ingratiates herself even further with Faye by assuming most of the management duties and telling Faye that she and Kate will take a trip to Europe soon. All the while, Kate gradually poisons Faye with the stolen drugs, which keep Faye in a constant state of sleep and near dementia. When Kate can wait no longer, she takes the final step and drops some of the medicine on green bean salads she has prepared for both herself and Faye. Kate gets violently sick after eating the salad and the doctor is called who diagnoses Kate with botulism from



eating the canned green beans. Kate eventually recovers but Faye steadily declines. One night Kate gives Faye a dropper full of poison and then buries the medicine bottles and the dropper in a field behind the house. Faye dies a few months later with everyone thinking the botulism was the fatal blow when actually it was Kate's steady poisoning of the old woman. Kate fakes unshakable grief so everyone will think she is devastated by Faye's death.

It is now fifteen months since Cathy left Adam who is still in a severe state of despondency. When Samuel learns that the twin boys still have not been named, he visits the Trask ranch to talk some sense into Adam. Samuel finds Adam gaunt and disinterested in anything about the ranch, which has fallen into a fallow state. Adam blames the fact that the boys haven't been named on Cathy's leaving them motherless, and he is in no state to be a proper father to them. Actually Adam takes little notice of the boys who are being raised by Lee.

Adam's anger at Samuel's intrusion into his life causes the two men to fight with Samuel knocking Adam to the ground. Eventually, Adam understands that Samuel is trying to help Adam and the boys and they, along with Lee, sit at the dining room table and theorize on what to name the boys. Using the Bible as a guide, the boys are named Caleb and Aaron and Adam thanks Samuel for helping his little family.

Part 2, Chapters 18, 19, 20, 21 and 22 Analysis

In this section, Steinbeck reveals the source for the novel's title when the men are trying to decide what to name the twin boys. Samuel is inspired to use the Bible as a source and reads, "My punishment is greater than I can bear. Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth, and from thy face shall I be hid. And I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass that everyone that findeth me shall slay me.' And the Lord said unto him, 'Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold.' And the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him. And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord and dwelt in the land of Nod on the east of Eden" Part 2, Chapter 22, Page 266. The significance of the title means that because all men are descended from this flawed man, the capacity for guilt, fear and pain are inherent in every person, and therefore no mortal man can ever again live in complete paradise; he must live east of Eden.



Part 3, Chapters 23, 24, 25 and 26

Part 3, Chapters 23, 24, 25 and 26 Summary

Samuel's oldest daughter, Una, had married a chemist and moved away, but her life is not happy and she dies as a young woman which devastates Samuel. The rest of the family notices that Samuel begins to grow old at this point. Samuel's other children are doing well; George sells insurance; Will is getting rich as a businessman; Joe moved to the East Coast to work in advertising; Olive and Mollie are married; and Dessie owns a dressmaking shop in Salinas. Samuel worries about Tom, though, because Tom still lives at home and does not have any life direction.

On Thanksgiving Day in 1911, all the Hamilton children discuss their aging parents and, knowing that Samuel will never willingly give up the ranch, devise a plan to take turns inviting Samuel and Liza for extended visits to their homes. After the holidays, Olive's letter of invitation arrives and Tom watches Samuel read the letter knowing its contents and can see the tears as his father realizes that the invitation means that he is old and will never be coming back to the ranch. Liza is uncharacteristically positive about the trip to Olive's house in Salinas but Samuel sadly makes the rounds to visit all his friends tell them goodbye. When Samuel visits Adam he finds that Adam is getting stronger but is still in love with Cathy, and Samuel admits that he, too, is still in love with a girl left long ago in Ireland and that the heart cannot let go of some things. Adam offers Samuel a position of superintendent of his ranch but Samuel tells Adam that he and Liza are moving away.

Samuel finds Lee in the kitchen fixing dinner with the boys, who are now ten-years-old and learns that Aaron now spells his name as Aron. During dinner, Lee shares a story of his posing a question to some old Chinese scholars about the Bible's Book of Genesis from which the story of Cain and Abel is extracted. In the King James version of the Bible, it reads "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him." Part 3, Chapter 24, Page 299

Lee continues by saying that the American Standard Bible version of the same passage says, "Do thou rule over him." Lee is perplexed over the distinctions of the same passage and investigates the Hebrew version of the same passage and discovers that it reads "Thou mayest rule over sin" Part 3, Chapter 24, Page 301. Lee is excited about this discovery but Samuel does not understand the distinction. Lee explains, "The American Standard translation orders men to triumph over sin, and you can call sin ignorance. The King James translation makes a promise in 'Thou shalt,' meaning that men will surely triumph over sin. But the Hebrew word, the word *timshel*—'Thou mayest'—that gives a choice. It might be the most important word in the world. That says the way is open. That throws it right back on a man. For if 'Thou mayest'—it is also true that "Thou mayest not." Don't you see?" Part 3, Chapter 24, Page 301.



To Lee, this distinction is the difference between the obedience and predestination of men in contrast to *timshel*, which offers men the choice to be great and that there is godliness in making virtuous choices. Lee continues, "This is not theology. I have no bent toward gods. But I have a new love for that glittering instrument, the human soul. It is a lovely and unique thing in the universe. It is always attacked and never destroyed—because "Thou mayest"" Part 3, Chapter 24, Page 302.

Before Samuel leaves that night he tells Adam that Cathy is living in Salinas and manages the most depraved whorehouse in that part of the country. Adam runs away in disbelief and Lee confides to Samuel that he had already known about Cathy. Lee is incredulous that Samuel had the ability to tell Adam the truth, but Samuel thinks he has done Adam a favor by telling him the truth so he can stop living in his memories of Cathy and begin to live his life. Lee also knows that Samuel is dying, and the two old friends part for the last time.

On March 15, 1912, Tom receives a telegram notifying him that Samuel has died and Tom is consumed with grief. Adam attends Samuel's funeral in Salinas and afterwards walks into town in the rain and stops in a bar to get a drink and dry off. Adam inquires about Kate's place and is advised to go to any other whorehouse than Kate's but Adam makes his way up Castroville Street and finds Kate's brothel.

Kate agrees to see Adam and Adam is surprised to see how much Kate has aged since he knew her as Cathy. Adam tells Kate that he needed to see her for himself so that he could begin to forget her and the life they had. Kate is not interested in sentimentality and tries to divert Adam with liquor and sex. Kate shows Adam a stack of photos of her customers, many of them important men in the town, in compromising positions, which she keeps for blackmail if needed. Adam is sickened by this innate evil and is even more disgusted when Kate tells him that she had slept with Charles. When Adam attempts to leave, Kate screams and the house pimp barges into the room and knocks Adam to the ground. Adam is able to crawl to the door and then walk out with no more words for Kate.

The emotionally taxing day in Salinas has strangely enervated Adam and he feels better than he has in a long time. Adam stops in King City and asks Will Hamilton to visit him because Adam wants some business advice. When Adam returns home, he takes a shower and then begins to really notice his home, Lee, and his children for the very first time. Adam tells Lee that he has been selfish by retaining Lee who may have other plans for his life. Lee tells Adam that he does want to open a bookstore in Chinatown in San Francisco and will go once Adam and the boys are better acquainted.

Part 3, Chapters 23, 24, 25 and 26 Analysis

This section marks an important turning point for Adam Trask. Up until this time, Adam has lived in mourning for his old life and has essentially missed the first ten years of his children's lives. Samuel, who has always been a friend to Adam, is frustrated to see Adam wasting his life when Samuel knows that his own is drawing to a close. Samuel's



brutal honesty about Cathy is able to wake up Adam from his comatose life he can take the next step and confront Cathy. Adam does just that when he goes to the whorehouse and faces Kate (Cathy) and tells her that he had been dead for many years but that seeing her has changed all that and he will now be able to engage in his life again. The death of Samuel is sad for Adam but is symbolic in that Adam does not need anything more from anyone to live his own life.

Steinbeck also introduces one of the most important themes into the novel in this section with the explanation of the word timshel. Timshel is the Hebrew word interpreted to mean "Thou mayest" in the Biblical Cain and Abel story. As opposed to the King James and American Standard Bible versions of the story which indicate "Thou shall," timshel gives a man free will to do good or evil. According to Steinbeck in this book, timshel is the most important word in the world because it is so powerful and has impact on so many people. If people were to rise above the state of obedience and predestination and exercise their free wills to do good over evil, the world would be a better place filled with people who are godlier for their having consciously chosen more virtuous paths.



Part 3, Chapters 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32 and 33

Part 3, Chapters 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32 and 33 Summary

Spring comes again to the Salinas Valley and eleven-year-old twins Caleb, who prefers to be called Cal, and Aron are hunting rabbits with their bows and arrows. A rabbit is killed but it is unclear which boy's arrow caused the death, so they argue on how to relate the deed with their father. Cal also tells Aron that he has heard men say that their mother is alive and not in Heaven as they had always believed. This is Adam's first night home since his return from Salinas, and Cal and Aron can sense a change in their father who seems uncharacteristically interested in what the boys are doing in their lives.

Lee waits until the boys have left the room to tell Adam that he should tell the boys the truth about their mother because it will come out one day, especially if they move to Salinas, and the lie will make the boys question everything Adam has ever told them. Lee had personal experience with something similar and recalls how his father had told him the truth when Lee was very small and reinforced it as Lee grew older so he would know the truth on a consistent basis. All this talk of family combined with Adam's new view on life prompts Adam to write a letter to Charles, who Adam has not seen or written to for over ten years.

When Adam had been in Salinas he ordered a new Model T Ford from Will Hamilton's automotive company, and one day Will arrives without notice driving the new vehicle. Will is not able to offer much help on how to operate the vehicle and offers to send a mechanic the next day. One of the first trips that the Trasks make in the new car is to the post office in King City. Adam, who is hoping for a response from Charles, receives instead a letter from a law firm telling Adam that Charles has died and that Adam is beneficiary of one half of Charles' \$100,000 estate. The other half is willed to Adam's wife, Cathy. Adam is understandably shocked by the news and then perplexed about how to handle the inheritance because Charles did not know that Cathy had shot Adam and left him to raise the twin boys.

Later that night, Adam consults Lee about the inheritance issue not knowing that Cal is listening to the conversation from the stairway. Even though Adam knows that Cathy (Kate) would take the inheritance money and leave town which would be good, Adam also knows that Kate would release the incriminating photos of her customers, which would be devastating for many people. Lee listens as Adam thinks through the situation and decides that Cathy (Kate) should have the money that Charles willed to her. Armed with the information that their mother is still alive, Cal goes to bed and prays that God will let him be as good as Aron is.



The next day Adam visits Kate at her warehouse to tell her about the inheritance. Kate questions Adam's ulterior motive for informing her about the money when he could just as easily not tell her and kept the money because there is no one else to contest it. Adam contends that he simply wants Kate to have what is rightfully hers, but she insists that there must be a catch to the deal somewhere and vows to find the trick with legal assistance.

Dessie is the most beloved of all the Hamilton children and laughter seems to follow wherever she goes. Dessie had had a successful dressmaking shop but now that machine-made clothes are becoming more available to more people, Dessie's business has sharply declined. Dessie had never recovered from a broken love affair years ago and never sought out love again, leaving her to manage her life alone. Dessie closes her business and moves back to the ranch much to the delight of Tom, who has been very lonely living and working by himself. Dessie and Tom settle into a happy life in their childhood home, but Dessie hides sporadic but debilitating stomach pains from her brother.

In an attempt to create some excitement in their lives, Dessie suggests that she and Tom take a trip to Europe. Tom catches the excitement and plans to raise and sell pigs to make the necessary money. One day Tom returns home to find Dessie ill and lying on the sofa. Tom fixes a medicinal drink of Epsom salt and water and soon after drinking it, Dessie feels even worse and goes to bed. Later that night Dessie tells Tom that she is very sick, and he sits by her bedside while she sleeps. Before long, Dessie screams and Tom can see that she is foaming at the mouth.

Tom rides off to a nearby house to make a phone call to the doctor who yells at Tom for giving Dessie the salt solution. The doctor promises to come but not before telling the phone operator to contact Will Hamilton because Dessie is dying.

Dessie's death devastates Tom, and he contemplates suicide as he has imaginary conversations with his dead father. Tom imagines his father trying to dissuade him from killing himself but if he must do it to please make it as easy as possible on Liza. Tom writes a letter to Liza telling her that he is trying to break in a new horse and that he will see her on Thanksgiving. Tom writes a second letter to his brother, Will, which says, "Dear Will, No matter what you yourself may think—please help me now. For Mother's sake—please. I was killed by a horse—thrown and kicked in the head—please! Your brother Tom" Part 3, Chapter 33, Page 407. Tom saddles up his horse at three o'clock in the morning to drop the letters at the post office in King City and returns home to shoot himself with his revolver.

Part 3, Chapters 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32 and 33 Analysis

In addition to being a brilliant storyteller incorporating allegories and symbolic myths, Steinbeck masterfully uses literary devices such as symbolism, metaphors and similes. For example, when Steinbeck tells about how Cal senses Aron's pain about not having a mother in his life he writes, "Cal put his new tool away. He could bring it out anytime,



and he knew it was the sharpest weapon he had found. He would inspect it at his ease and judge just when and how much to use it" Part 3, Chapter 27, Page 335. Obviously, Aron's pain is not an implement that can be sharpened, but Cal sees it this way and will use the emotional distress whenever he feels the need to wound his brother's feelings.

Steinbeck also masterfully describes his characters in little vignettes such as when he describes the differences between Cal and Aron. "Maybe the difference between the two boys can best be described in this way. If Aron should come upon an anthill in a little clearing in the brush, he would lie on his stomach and watch the complications of ant life—he would see some of them bringing food in the ant roads and others carrying the white eggs. He would see how two members of the hill on meeting put their antennas together and talked. For hours he would lie absorbed in the economy of the ground. If, on the other hand, Cal came upon the same anthill, he would kick it to pieces and watch while the frantic ants took care of their disaster. Aron was content to be a part of his world, but Cal must change it" Part 3, Chapter 27, Page 345. This is a much more descriptive way of filling in the personalities of the characters as opposed to simply saying that Cal is aggressive and Aron is contemplative.



Part 4, Chapter 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39 and 40

Part 4, Chapter 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39 and 40 Summary

Shortly after Adam, Lee, Cal and Aron move to Salinas, Lee tells Adam that it is time for him to leave to open his bookstore in San Francisco. The departure is hard on Adam and the boys and, unable to believe that Lee is gone forever from their lives, Aron bets Cal that Lee will return. Just a few days later, Aron wins the bet as Lee comes back to stay with the admission that he had never been so lonely in his entire life.

Aron and Cal attend the West End school in Salinas, and Aron quickly collects friends by his amiable nature while Cal struggles because of his bullying personality. Aron, especially, is glad to be going to school in town because he can see Abra every day. One day Abra takes Aron to a secret place under a willow tree and Aron declares that he wants to marry Abra one day. Abra senses that Aron has suffered from the lack of a mother's influence so she allows Aron to lay his head in her lap. As Abra strokes Aron's hair, Aron begins to cry unashamedly. Even though Aron is in a vulnerable state, Abra tells Aron that she has overheard adults say that Aron's mother is still alive, a fact which Aron cannot believe, since it would mean that his father and Lee had lied to him his entire life.

The Trask family adjusts to living in town and Lee makes several purchases of furniture and household goods, including an icebox, which prompts Adam to consider a new business idea. Adam has read about the Siberian discovery of a mastodon with the meat still good because it had been preserved in ice for so long. Adam consults Will Hamilton on the prospect of packing Salinas Valley lettuce in ice and shipping it to the East Coast, an idea that Will shoots down as impractical and sure to fail.

Nevertheless, Adam purchases the ice company in Salinas and promotes his new project, which is claimed to be progressive and far-thinking. On the day of the business launch, six train car loads of lettuce leave the station bound for New York. Misfortune hits when weather is bad and scheduling problems significantly delay the cargo, which is unusable when it finally reaches its destination. Adam is mortified by the loss which had depleted his fortune so that he has only \$9,000 left. Cal and Aron are humiliated by the failure and become known as Aron and Cal Lettuce. Lee and Abra support the Trasks with positive reinforcement, but it is a long time before the stigma of rotting lettuce leaves the family.

Cal craves affection just as Aron does but Cal's personality seems to alienate people just as Aron's draws people closer. Cal has a restless spirit which makes him walk the streets at night while the rest of the family sleeps. One night Cal encounters a drunk man who tells Cal about Kate's brothel and the man takes Cal to the whorehouse where



Cal sees his mother for the first time. Cal tells Lee about the episode, and Lee tells Cal the truth and warns Cal not to tell Aron anything he has learned.

It is now the autumn of 1916 and Cal continues to walk the streets of Salinas at night. One night Cal is arrested during a raid at a gambling den and is released to Adam who is baffled by Cal's behavior. Adam attempts to get to know Cal better and Cal feels a closeness to his father that he has never experienced before. Emboldened by his new bond with his father Cal decides to learn as much as he can about his mother so she can no longer hurt Adam. Cal decides to follow Kate as she does her errands around town each week. Cal is startled one day when Kate abruptly stops and demands to know who Cal is and why he is following her. When Cal admits that he is Kate's son, Kate invites him inside the brothel.

Kate questions Cal about himself, Adam and Aron, but Cal divulges no real details just telling Kate that the family is fine. As the conversation continues, Cal gets bold enough to ask if Kate if she ever thought she were missing something that most other people have and Kate abruptly interrupts him. Kate tells Cal that he has her in him and Cal declares that he exercises his free will and tries not to be evil. Cal tells Kate that she is afraid of the light and the truth and leaves her in a very agitated state.

Kate is unnerved by Cal's visit and retreats to a small, windowless room off her bedroom where she can collect her thoughts. Kate receives a letter from a woman named Ethel concerning some money. A few days later Ethel arrives and Kate does not recognize her but learns that she had been a whore at Faye's at one time. Ethel attempts to blackmail Kate by telling her that Ethel had found glass shards from the bottles of poison that Kate had buried in the field behind the brothel after Kate killed Faye. Ethel wants \$100 each month to keep her secret. Kate agrees and gives Kate the initial \$100, but Kate uses her influence in town to have Ethel arrested and run out of town.

Part 4, Chapter 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39 and 40 Analysis

Steinbeck begins this section with some philosophizing about the good and evil in men and lists three examples of men who have exhibited varying degrees of these qualities. One man was the richest man of the century who used the labor of men to amass his fortune but when realizing the personal pain he had caused, spent many years trying to do philanthropic deeds. The second man is Satan incarnate who bribed and threatened men until he reaches power to commit heinous deeds. The third man is one of integrity who spends his life trying to better the lives of men in a time when fear ruled the world. It is up to the reader's interpretation as to the identity of these men but given that the book was written in 1952, it is safe to say that the three men were Andrew Carnegie, Adolf Hitler and Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Steinbeck wants the reader to understand that the inherent qualities of good and evil are magnified when set upon a world stage but no less important when lived in the everyday lives of the average man.



This section is important because the chain of evil has the potential to be broken by Cal, who realizes that he is different from Aron who has inherent goodness. Cal's burgeoning goodness exhibits in his unwillingness to tell Aron about their mother because he knows it would cause Aron great pain. Cal still struggles to win the battle for goodness and his restlessness shows in his nightly walks through the town. Being arrested at the gambling den is a turning point for Cal who not only gains the respect of his father but confronts his mother to see firsthand how evil she is. Cal's goodness takes the form of protectiveness for his father, too, as Cal wants to learn all he can about his mother so he can prevent her from hurting Adam again if at all possible. The ultimate test for Cal comes when he confronts Kate face-to-face and admits he may have some of her evil inside him, but he chooses to exhibit his free will to push down that side of himself and make better life choices than she did.



Part 4, Chapters 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46 and 47

Part 4, Chapters 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46 and 47 Summary

Cal and Aron think about their future, and Cal would like to farm on Adam's ranch while Aron has plans to attend college. Cal's ambition drives him to contact Will Hamilton for advice, and he and Will enter into a business buying beans grown in the Salinas Valley and export them during wartime. The new partners buy beans from the local farmers for 2.5 cents per pound and sell them to British merchants for 12 cents per pound. After the war breaks out, Cal's plan proves to be very profitable and he nets \$15,000, which he plans to give to Adam to replace the money lost on the lettuce fiasco.

After Aron goes away to college, Abra begins to spend more time with the Trask family, especially Lee who comes to think of Abra as his own daughter. Abra shares with Lee her concerns that she is not good enough for Aron, who Abra believes has transferred all his longings for a perfect mother into Abra who cannot live up to that ideal. Abra also questions Lee about whether Cal and Aron's mother is a whore and Lee admits that it is true. They both worry about what would happen to Aron if he were to find out the truth about his mother.

The story transitions to a man named Joe Valery who works in Kate's brothel as her assistant-in-chief. Joe is an ex-convict and keeps a low profile while doing Kate's bidding with no complaint. Joe also lives hoping to catch a break that will allow him to leave Kate's employ and make money as his own man. As Kate's arthritis progresses, she grows to depend on Joe more each day, so he has a chance to watch how she manipulates people in order to get what she wants. Unbeknownst to Joe, Kate is aware Joe is an escaped convict and keeps this information in her secret arsenal to be used when she needs it.

Kate broaches the topic of Ethel with Joe one day because Kate is afraid Ethel may attempt to return to Salinas and go to the authorities with the story that Kate had killed Faye. Kate gives Joe a bonus to travel around the region to see what information he can find about Ethel. While on his trip, Joe considers possibilities to outwit Kate, get his money and leave Kate for good. When Joe returns to the brothel he reports that a bartender who knows Ethel said Ethel has plans to return to Salinas someday but there are no definite details. Kate is rattled by the information but does not let her reaction show to Joe.

Adam and Lee immerse themselves in details of the war and Adam is appointed to the local draft board. The responsibility of his position weighs heavily on Adam's conscience. Adam recalls the conversation between Lee and Samuel Hamilton many years ago about the concept of free will, and Lee reinforces the word *timshel* so that



Adam will know that assuming the guilt and responsibility he feels for his draft board work is his own choice.

Aron attends Stanford University but college life is not the experience he had hoped for and Aron spends most of his time in his room miserably thinking about how to tell Adam he does not want to return after the Thanksgiving holiday.

Part 4, Chapters 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46 and 47 Analysis

In the middle of all the personal drama of the characters in the book, Steinbeck interjects the horrible spectacle of World War I. As war is the ultimate symbol of good vs. evil, Steinbeck wants the reader to put his characters' behaviors in perspective. It can be argued that the characters' actions are negligible when compared to the tragedy unfolding on the world stage, but it can also be viewed that each action of a man, whether good or bad, can have a huge impact when magnified by a large number of people. Conversely, each good or bad deed can be devastating on an individual basis if the action or intention is directed personally. Steinbeck recalls an incident when he and his sister joined in the town's verbal and property harassment of a German tailor in Salinas. As young people at the time, the incident probably seemed like a game, but in hindsight, the tailor lost his home and business due to some arbitrary judgment that all German people are evil. It seems as if Steinbeck is saying that good and evil have the same effects regardless of the scale on which they are enacted and that no good can come of evil in any situation.

Just as in the case of the German tailor, Steinbeck wants the reader to know that appearances do not tell the whole story. For example, Adam thinks that Aron is the better son because he is quiet and studious while Cal is rebellious and given to wayward behavior. In actuality, Aron desperately dislikes school and uses his religious vocation to hide from the world while Cal faces the world, good and bad, head on and on his own terms. Cal is living a much more authentic life and will be happier because of his experiences and his ability to question morality. Cal is also working secretly to replenish Adam's finances in order to be able to send Aron to college, while Adam thinks that Cal is unfocused and aimless.



Part 4, Chapters 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54 and 55

Part 4, Chapters 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54 and 55 Summary

Adam, Cal, Lee and Abra meet Aron's train which arrives the night before Thanksgiving, and Aron is overjoyed to be back home. Because of Adam's high hopes for Aron, Aron does not know how to broach the topic of his unhappiness at school and his desire to not return after the holiday. Aron shares his feelings with Cal who encourages Aron to continue but Aron is noncommittal about it. In his room, Cal wraps fifteen \$1,000 bills to present to his father on Thanksgiving.

Because dinner won't be served until 5 p.m., the day drags for Cal who is anxious to give Adam the gift of money. Finally Abra arrives and the family enjoys its holiday meal topped off by Cal's gift to his father. Adam is stunned and wants to know how a boy could get such a large amount of money. When Cal reveals how he earned the cash, Adam refuses the gift because it was earned off the hardship of farmers who had to sell their beans to Cal at a loss because they had no other market for them.

Cal had never anticipated this reaction and storms from the room in anger. Finally Lee goes to Cal's room to talk to the boy and tells him to get control over his anger and jealousy. Cal apologizes to Adam and takes back the money but cannot get over his father's rejection of his gift and the continuing favoritism showed to Aron. Later that evening Cal takes Aron to Kate's brothel and tells Aron the truth about their mother. The next morning Aron goes to San Jose to enlist in the army.

That same morning Kate wonders what will happen now that both of her sons have seen her and know what kind of person she is. Joe makes one more attempt to blackmail Kate by telling her that he had talked with another man who knows about the connection between Ethel, Kate and Faye. Kate sends Joe away and immediately writes a letter to the sheriff telling him to check into Joe's fingerprints. Kate summons one of her girls to mail the letter and drifts into recalled memories of her fictional childhood friendship with Alice of Alice in Wonderland.

Kate informs her staff that she is not to be disturbed under any circumstance and returns to her room where she drafts an impromptu will leaving everything she owns to Aron. Kate then retreats to her darkened room, takes the morphine pill contained in a vial around her neck, and lies back thinking of Alice as Kate waits for death to come.

The next morning Joe finds Kate's dead body and then discovers the quickly-written will left on her desk. Joe takes Kate's safe deposit box keys hanging around her neck and the incriminating photographs of her customers and prepares to go to the bank. Before Joe can leave the house, however, a sheriff's deputy arrives to take Joe to the station



for questioning related to the letter Kate had sent regarding Joe's fingerprints. Joe tries to escape and is shot to death by the deputy.

Adam weeps when he hears of Kate's death and also tells the sheriff to tear up the will because Aron would not want anything that belonged to his mother. The sheriff cannot legally do that, so Adam calls for Aron only to find that Aron is not home. Cal feels that he is responsible for Aron's absence and is ashamed that he had taken Aron to see Kate at the brothel. In shame and despair, Cal burns each one of the thousand dollar bills.

Later that day Adam receives a post card from Aron saying that Aron has enlisted in the army. Adam suffers a mild heart attack from the news but only Lee suspects the nature of Adam's continuing diminished health. With Aron away at war, Cal and Abra spend some time together, and Abra admits that she no longer loves Aron and loves Cal instead. Cal does not think he is worthy of Abra's love because of his bad behavior, but Abra would rather love a man complete with flaws instead of the reclusive pillar of virtue that Aron has become.

One afternoon a telegram is delivered to the house and Lee reads that Aron has been killed in the war. Adam's weakened heart cannot bear the news and he has an incapacitating stroke. Cal is overwhelmed with remorse and grief about causing Aron's death and Adam's resulting stroke. Cal admits to Adam that he had taken Aron to Kate's brothel, which was the impetus for Aron's enlisting in the army.

While a nurse tends to Adam, Lee talks to Cal and Abra and tells them they are not necessarily fated to repeat the patterns of their parents because each generation is refired just as craftsmen never feel they have reached perfection and keep working toward it. Lee feels that the higher power that made man would never tire of trying to make people better. Lee, Cal and Abra go to Adam's bedside and Lee asks Adam to relieve Cal of his burden of guilt so that Cal will not have to carry that weight for the rest of his life. With great effort, Adam makes a move with his arm signifying his assent and speaks his last word—*timshel*—and dies.

Part 4, Chapters 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54 and 55 Analysis

The last section of the novel contains two more direct references to the story of Cain and Abel. The first one comes when Adam wants to know where Aron is and Cal responds to him. "Adam asked, 'Do you know where your brother is?' 'No, I don't,' said Cal. 'Weren't you with him at all?' 'No.' 'He hasn't been home for two nights. Where is he?' 'How do I know?' said Cal. 'Am I supposed to look after him?'" Part 4, Chapter 51, Page 562 In the book of Genesis in the Bible, after Cain has killed Abel, God asks Cain where Abel is and Cain asks, "Am I my brother's keeper?"

In this instance, although Cal has not directly killed Aron, Cal feels responsible for Aron's disappearance from the house, which the reader will soon learn means that Aron

has enlisted in the army, an act which will ultimately result in Aron's death. This is the second reference to the same Genesis passage, and Steinbeck compares Cal's indirect responsibility to Aron's death just as Cain killed Abel in the Bible.

The story differs from the Bible, however, in that Adam pardons his son, Cal, for his act while God does not pardon Cain in the Bible. By uttering the word *timshel*, Adam essentially removes the curse of evil from his family by acknowledging that each man has free will and can choose to act according to his conscience. Steinbeck wants the reader to know that man has potential for greatness and is not limited by preconceived notions or ancestral patterns that can limit and make lives smaller and less virtuous than they are capable of becoming.



Characters

Cathy Ames

Cathy Ames is described by the narrator as a monster. She is consistently evil in her thoughts and actions, manipulating others for her own ends without a trace of conscience. Cold and callous, she seems to be without a single decent feeling. Cathy is the only daughter of a respectable family in Massachusetts. As a young girl she is different from the other children; she is a nonconformist and a liar. At the age of ten she gets two boys punished for indulging in sex play with her, which she initiated; at high school she drives her Latin teacher to suicide. At sixteen she murders her parents by burning down the family home. She then becomes a prostitute, but when she is beaten almost to death by Edwards, she crawls to the Trask farm, where Adam and Charles take her in. After Adam falls in love with her, they marry and move to California. Cathy gives birth to twins but then decides to leave. She shoots Adam in the shoulder and walks out. She becomes a prostitute in Salinas, where she eventually murders the owner, Faye, and inherits the business. She turns it into a nasty establishment, keeping incriminating photographs of her clients, many of whom are prominent citizens, in order to later disgrace them. Caleb makes himself known to her, and later brings Aron to see her as well. After this she deteriorates physically, and even seems to feel some pangs of conscience. She writes her will, leaving everything to Aron, and then commits suicide.

Kate Ames

See Cathy Ames

Abra Bacon

Abra Bacon is the daughter of a dishonest county supervisor in Salinas. In high school she becomes Aron's girlfriend, and they expect to marry. But Abra is disturbed by their relationship because she thinks Aron has too high an opinion of her purity and does not see her for who she really is. After Aron goes to college, she falls out of love with him and burns his letters. She shifts her affections to Caleb and also gets close to Adam and Lee. Abra is a marked contrast to Cathy; she has goodness, strength, and wisdom.

Mr. Edwards

Mr. Edwards runs a prostitution business in Massachusetts and Connecticut, even though on the surface he lives a respectable life as a married man with two sons. He employs Cathy as a prostitute but then falls in love with her. When he discovers she murdered her parents, he turns on her and beats her almost to death.



Ethel

Ethel is an old prostitute who thinks she can prove that Kate murdered Faye. She tries to blackmail Kate over the matter, but she dies by drowning before she can profit from her plot.

Faye

Faye is the owner of a brothel in Salinas where Kate works. Faye takes a liking to Kate and wills her business to her. Kate slowly poisons Faye and then inherits the business when Faye dies.

Dessie Hamilton

Dessie Hamilton is the daughter of Samuel and Liza. Warm-hearted and full of laughter, she owns a dressmaker shop in Salinas. But she sells her business and moves back to the ranch to be with her brother Tom. Dessie dies of an illness, and Tom, guilt-stricken, commits suicide.

George Hamilton

George Hamilton is Samuel Hamilton's eldest son. He lives an exemplary life, but suffers from anemia.

Joe Hamilton

Joe Hamilton is the youngest son of Samuel and Liza, and the darling of the family. He shows little aptitude for any kind of practical work, so he is sent to college at Stanford. He goes into advertising and is a great success on the East Coast.

Liza Hamilton

Liza Hamilton is Samuel Hamilton's Irish wife. She keeps a clean house and is a good cook, and is respected in the neighborhood. She is also extremely pious, and hates idleness, card-playing, and drink. She is suspicious of fun and has no sense of humor. Whatever happens in life she does not complain, since she believes she will be rewarded by God after death. Later in her life she begins to take wine for medicinal purposes, and becomes more relaxed and happier.



Lizzy Hamilton

Lizzy Hamilton is the oldest of the Hamilton daughters. She marries young and goes away, after which time she is seen only at funerals.

Mollie Hamilton

Mollie Hamilton is the youngest and the prettiest of the Hamilton daughters. She marries and moves to San Francisco.

Olive Hamilton

Olive Hamilton is the third daughter of the Hamiltons, and the narrator's mother. She becomes a teacher and is a source of pride to the family. She marries and lives in Paso Robles, then King City, and finally Salinas.

Samuel Hamilton

Samuel Hamilton immigrates to California from Ireland with his wife Liza. He is an intelligent, self-educated man who has a genius for invention, but he is not very astute when it comes to money, which means that the family never becomes rich. He is handicapped by the dryness of his land; he drills wells for everyone else but cannot find water on his own property. Samuel is a visionary, and he dreams of how the Salinas Valley might look in the future when it is fully developed. Samuel is lively, exuberant, full of joy, and is a fine storyteller. He can also take charge in a crisis, as when he delivers Cathy's twins. He also brings Adam to his senses when Adam refuses to acknowledge his own sons. Samuel is youthful and energetic until the death of his daughter Una, which saddens him and makes him old.

Tom Hamilton

Tom Hamilton is the third son of Samuel and Liza, and the one who is most like his father. He has a talent for inventing and is even bolder than his father. Remaining a bachelor, he lives on the ranch when everyone else has left. He is delighted when Dessie comes back to live there, but is devastated when she succumbs to an illness. He blames himself for giving her the wrong medicine and commits suicide.

Una Hamilton

Una Hamilton is the Hamiltons' second eldest daughter. She is thoughtful, studious, and dark, and Samuel Hamilton's greatest joy. She marries and moves to Oregon but dies young. Her father Samuel is crushed by her death and ages considerably as a result.



Will Hamilton

Will Hamilton is Samuel Hamilton's second son. He possesses great energy but not much imagination. Lucky and with a talent for making money, he develops a business selling Ford automobiles and becomes a rich man. He gives Adam sound business advice, which Adam ignores, and also advises Cal, enabling Cal to make \$15,000 by selling beans in wartime.

Lee

Lee is Adam's Chinese cook, housekeeper, and advisor. He is an educated, philosophical, level-headed man, much given to reflection and serious thought. In contrast to the impractical Adam, Lee runs the household efficiently and plays a large part in the upbringing of Aron and Caleb. Lee harbors ambitions to leave the farm and start a bookstore in San Francisco, but when he finally makes the move he quickly gets lonely and returns. It is Lee who first brings up the definition of the Hebrew word *timshel* that plays such a large part in the novel, and it is Lee who at the very end, pleads with Adam to forgive Caleb.

Horace Quinn

Horace Quinn is the deputy sheriff in King City. He investigates the shooting of Adam and discovers that Cathy has become a prostitute in Salinas.

Adam Trask

Adam Trask is the son of Cyrus Trask and the half-brother of Charles. He has a difficult relationship with his brother, who is jealous of him and beats him when they are boys. Adam joins the army and fights in the Indian wars. When he rejoins his brother at the family farm they quarrel frequently. Adam is honest, and more innocent and good-natured than his aggressive and brooding brother. He falls in love with Cathy and idealizes her. He has no intimation of her evil nature, which Lee, Samuel, and even Charles all sense. Adam is not a success in business, and it is only because he inherits a fortune from his father that he can lead the comfortable life he does. For practical matters he is greatly dependent on his servant Lee. Adam learns only painfully through experience. Eventually he has to accept that Cathy is a prostitute in Salinas, and he even goes to visit her. But he bears her no hatred and even makes excuses for her conduct. When Adam is in his fifties, he is weighed down by his responsibilities on the draft board, and his health deteriorates. He shows great interest in the word *timshel* ("thou mayest") from the Cain and Abel story, and after his stroke, this is the last word he speaks. It indicates he has forgiven his son Cal.



Alice Trask

Alice Trask is Cyrus's second wife, and the mother of Charles. She is a quiet woman who does her duty without complaint.

Aron Trask

Aron Trask is the son of Adam and Cathy, and the twin brother of Caleb. As in the relationship of Adam and Charles (his father and uncle), Aron is the innocent, good brother, in contrast to the aggressive, malicious Caleb. Aron is fair, while his brother is dark, and Aron is the more popular of the two. Aron is pure-minded, and he goes to college at Stanford, wanting to train as a minister. He does not wish to face up to anything dark or difficult, and he knows nothing of his mother's sordid life as a prostitute until Caleb takes him to see her. Aron is extremely shocked by the experience and decides to leave college and enlist in the army. He is killed during World War I.

Caleb Trask

Caleb Trask is the son of Adam and Cathy, and the twin brother of Aron. Caleb is dark, unlike the fair Aron, and he has inherited from Cathy some of the evil that is in her. When he and Aron are boys, he dishonestly tricks Abra into rejecting Aron's gift of a rabbit. He is jealous of Aron because Aron is more popular than he. However, Cal has enough self-awareness to know the evil he is capable of, and he tries to fight against it and choose a better path. He knows that his mother is a prostitute, for example, but at first he protects Aron by shielding him from this knowledge. But he does not always succeed in mastering his tendency toward malice. After his father rejects his gift of \$15,000, Cal takes Aron to see Cathy, with tragic results. Cal feels deep guilt because of his actions, but his father forgives him.

Charles Trask

Charles Trask is the son of Cyrus Trask, and Adam's half-brother. He is more aggressive than Adam. As a boy he is jealous of the fact that their father seems to love Adam but not Charles. Charles beats Adam severely because of this jealousy. When Adam joins the army, Charles remains on the ranch but he misses his brother. When Adam returns, there is always tension between the two men, and they quarrel. Charles sleeps with Cathy without Adam's knowledge. After Adam and Cathy move to California, Charles becomes a miser, accumulating money but doing nothing with it. When he dies he leaves half his money to Adam and the other half to Cathy.



Cyrus Trask

Cyrus Trask is the father of Adam and Charles. Rather wild in his youth, he loses a leg only thirty minutes into his first taste of combat in the Civil War. But he becomes an expert in military matters, and he also lies about the extent of his own role in the Civil War. He goes to Washington and holds important jobs in the army administration. An authoritarian figure and a hard taskmaster, he forces the unwilling Adam to join the army. On his death he leaves his sons a fortune, but Charles suspects that he came about it dishonestly.

Mrs. Trask

Mrs. Trask is the first wife of Cyrus, and the mother of Adam. She is an unhappy woman who commits suicide by drowning herself.

Joe Valery

Joe Valery is employed as a bouncer by Kate at her brothel. He is a petty criminal who will do anything for Kate as long as he is paid for it. He uses Kate's fear of Ethel to try to extort money from her, but she outwits him because she knows he escaped from a road gang when he was serving a five-year sentence for robbery. She betrays him to the police, and he is shot dead trying to escape with her money after her death.

Samuel Hamilton

Samuel Hamilton is more than a character; he is John Steinbeck's maternal grandfather. Born in Ireland, Samuel immigrates to the United States around the year 1870 with his stern little wife, Liza, and settles in the Salinas Valley in California. By the time Samuel arrives in the valley, all the prime real estate is gone and Samuel buys a ranch of non-fertile land and makes his living as a blacksmith, carpenter and well driller. Samuel and Liza have nine children who are raised with more love than money, and Samuel finds the good in each of his children. Samuel is known for being a good neighbor and can be counted on for a helping hand, a good story, or a dose of tough love when necessary. Samuel befriends Adam Trask who is the recipient of two of Samuel's dosages of strong advice; once when Adam's twin boys remain unnamed after they are more than a year old; and second, when Samuel tells Adam about Cathy being a whore in Salinas. Samuel is a dreamer at heart and creates many tools and apparatuses during his life but goes broke on the fees for the patent attorneys. Even though Samuel's land is not productive, he loves the valley and the countryside and when it comes time for the elderly Samuel to leave his ranch, he feels as if he is stabbing a beloved friend by not being able to return. Steinbeck positions Samuel as a good and wise, almost God-like character, who is patient with the human condition but strives to better himself and those around him.



Adam Trask

Adam Trask is the son of Cyrus Trask and his wife in Connecticut and is born after the Civil War. The Trask home is ruled by Cyrus who dominates his religious wife and son, Adam, and then his second wife and son, Charles, after the death of the first Mrs. Trask. As a young person, Adam is the living representation of Abel, the good son in the story of Genesis in the Bible. Adam is good, patient, and kind as opposed to his devious and aggressive brother, Charles. Adam is peace-loving but pushed into the army by his militaristic father who eventually becomes Secretary of War of the United States. Adam and Charles communicate during the years that Adam is away but during the times they are together, the men do not get along. Adam's naiveté and inability to see the bad in people lead him into an ill-fated marriage with the cunning and manipulative Cathy, who abandons Adam and their newly-born twins in favor of life as a prostitute. Adam mourns the loss of his wife for ten years before he is able to confront her and surpass his grief. At this point in his life, Adam transitions to the more traditional role of Adam the father in the story of Genesis while his twin sons, Cal and Aron, take on the Cain and Abel roles. Although Adam is a good man with much integrity, he is also flawed because of the favoritism he shows toward Aron and not recognizing the potential in Cal. Toward the end of his life, Adam works on the Draft Board during World War I, and true to his personality, struggles with his duty vs. the guilt of sending young men to war and possible death. Ultimately, Adam realizes that true love forgives and he releases Cal from blame related to the circumstances of Aron's death so Cal may live his life unburdened from the yoke of guilt.

Charles Trask

Charles Trask is the son born to Cyrus Trask and his second wife, Alice, who live on a farm in Connecticut in the years after the Civil War. Charles lives in the shadow of his older half-brother, Adam, who is in better favor with their father. Charles' jealousy toward Adam and anger toward Cyrus exhibit in aggressive, competitive behavior between the brothers. Charles has a habit of beating up on Adam, even though Adam is older; one night Charles nearly beats Adam to death. Charles is the parallel character to Cain in the Genesis story in the Bible because Charles, like Cain, lives in disfavor and tries to destroy his own brother as a result. After Adam leaves for the Army and Cyrus goes to Washington to serve as Secretary of War, Charles remains in Connecticut to work the family farm. Charles never takes a wife but visits the prostitutes in town and even sleeps with Adam's wife, Cathy, on the night Adam marries her, even though she claims to be too ill to sleep with her own husband. It is never revealed in the story whether Cathy's twin boys are the sons of Adam or Charles so the reader can speculate about the characters of the boys created from these two bad characters. As another metaphor to the Genesis story, Charles receives an injury to his forehead when working on the farm one day and is forever scarred just as the Biblical character Cain forever has the mark of sin on him. Charles and Adam share a love-hate relationship probably because they are polar opposites in character and integrity. It is interesting to note that Cathy sees some of herself in Charles which is probably the reason for their hatred of each other. At



Charles' death his will splits his estate between Adam and Cathy, which indicates that Charles probably found Cathy pleasing but could never admit it during his lifetime.

Cathy Ames, Cathy Amesbury, Cathy Trask, Kate

Cathy is the only truly evil character in the novel because she shows no redeeming qualities at any point in her life. As a young girl in New England, Cathy manipulates her naïve parents and intimidates her classmates to get what she wants. Cathy learns early on how to use her sexuality to control men and is ruthless in her indiscreet behavior to get her own way. Cathy's mother finds her in a compromising position in the carriage house one day with two boys and the boys are sent away for punishment when Cathy knows she had initiated the deed. When she goes to school, Cathy's Latin teacher commits suicide when she refuses to sleep with him, and she laughs as she hears him begging at her door before ending his life. Cathy tries to escape her moralistic home by running away to Boston but is apprehended by her father who beats her for punishment. Cathy buries her rage but soon kills both her parents by setting fire to the house and faking her own murder, runs away to Boston to become a prostitute. Her pimp, Mr. Edwards, keeps Cathy in a brick house all for himself but when he learns the secrets of her past, forces Cathy to accompany him back to her hometown where he severely beats her and leaves her for dead. Cathy crawls to the farmhouse of Adam and Charles Trask who take her in. Adam soon marries Cathy who sleeps with Charles on the night of her wedding to Adam. Adam takes Cathy to California despite her protests. They learn she is pregnant but Cathy tells Adam she wants to leave. A few days after the birth of twin boys, Cathy shoots Adam and abandons him and her infants in favor of life as a whore in Salinas. Cathy changes her name to Kate and eventually kills the madam of the brothel, Faye, and takes over the business, which she turns into a sadomasochistic circus. Kate is eventually confronted by Adam and one of her sons, Cal, on different occasions yet she feels no remorse for what she has done to them. Eventually, Kate has nothing more to live for and kills herself immediately after leaving an impromptu will leaving her entire estate to her other son, Aron. Perhaps it could be said that Kate/Cathy's act of suicide was an act of self-redemption, in that she looked at herself as her son saw her and could no longer live with who she was.

Lee

Lee is hired by Adam to be cook and housekeeper for Adam and Cathy, but Lee's role takes on a much broader scope as the novel progresses. Lee can sense that something is not right in the Trask marriage but he stays quiet in keeping with the subservient Chinese role he is to play. After Cathy shoots Adam and leaves the ranch, Lee takes over and raises the babies while Adam lives in a deep depression. Lee makes friends with Samuel Hamilton who visits the Trask ranch on various occasions. Samuel learns that Lee is actually an educated American man of Cantonese heritage and not at all the lowly Chinese servant he portrays. Lee tells Samuel that the subservient role is what other people expect of Chinese people in that part of California, so he adopts the stereotype in order to make his life easier. While Adam mourns for ten years for the loss



of the life he thought he was going to have with Cathy, Lee runs the household and raises the twin boys who come to think of Lee as a family member and not just domestic help. Ironically, Lee is the one who analyzes the various versions of the Bible, especially the Book of Genesis and brings to light the concept of *timshel*, which will be a prevalent theme in the book. Lee ultimately serves as a source of wisdom and the voice of reason asking people to put their lives in perspective and exercise their free will as God has given it.

Cal Trask

Cal is one of the twin boys born to Adam and Cathy Trask and abandoned by Cathy shortly after his birth. Cal's given name is Caleb given to him when Samuel Hamilton discovers that the twin boys still have no names a year after their birth. Cal represents the Cain figure in the next generation of the Trask figure and has qualities that distinguish him as "bad" as opposed to his twin, Aron. Cal's appearance is dark and mysterious and he has a highly competitive nature that makes people shy away from him at the same time that they are attracted to the more pleasant demeanor of Aron. Cal is very jealous of everything Aron has and does, especially Adam's more overt love for Aron and Abra's early love for Aron. Cal is restless and walks the streets at night as a young man, which brings him in contact with the darker side of life where he eventually meets his mother who runs a whorehouse in Salinas. Cal has the nerve to confront her and states that he must have her evil in him, a fact which she validates, but then Cal reverts and realizes that he has free will and any wrong he does is because of his own actions, not some bad personality traits he inherited from his mother. Cal's jealousy over Adam's high regard for Aron's life choices combined with Adam's rejection of Cal's financial gift leads Cal to show Aron the truth about their mother. This act forces Aron to join the army where he is killed in battle, and Cal suffers tremendous guilt for his actions. At the end of the novel Abra admits she loves Cal not in spite of his flaws but because of them because he is a person who is willing to live life on his own terms and face realities as opposed to the idealistic Aron, who hides from everything in life, the good and the bad.

Aron Trask

Aron is one of the twin boys born to Adam and Cathy Trask and abandoned by Cathy shortly after his birth. Aron's given name is Aaron given him when Samuel Hamilton discovers the twin boys still have no names a year after their birth. Aron represents the Abel figure in the next generation of the Trask figure and has qualities that distinguish him as "good" as opposed to his twin, Cal. Aron's appearance is fair and angelic as opposed to Cal's dark, mysterious looks. The author suggests that Adam favors Aron not only for his pleasant demeanor but also because Aron looks most like Cathy. Aron also favors Adam more in his naïve, virtuous behavior. Aron seems to feel the lack of a mother in his life more sorely than Cal does, and Aron is immediately attracted to the gentleness of Abra. As the children grow older, Aron and Abra agree to marry but Aron chooses the religious life as a vocation and intends to remain celibate, a direction which



Abra hopes Aron will change after some time. Aron leaves Salinas to escape the shame of Adam's failed lettuce venture but realizes that he is miserable at college and hiding from the world is not working. This is a pattern that Aron uses throughout his entire life, though, and he rashly joins the army after Cal shows him the harsh reality of their mother's life. Aron is killed in battle during the war and his death also kills Adam who suffers a stroke when hearing the news.

Cyrus Trask

Cyrus is the father of Adam and Charles Trask and who raises his family on a farm in Connecticut in the years immediately following the Civil War. Although he serves only six weeks in the military before losing a leg and being sent home, Cyrus professes to be a military expert and gleans most of his knowledge from books. Ultimately, Cyrus is appointed Secretary of War for the United States and moves to Washington, D.C., where he receives a full military funeral after his death. Adam and Charles receive a significant inheritance from Cyrus, which Charles believes is ill-gotten gains.

Mrs. Trask

Mrs. Trask is Cyrus' first wife and Adam's mother. An extremely religious woman, Mrs. Trask determines that her husband will never return from the Civil War, and when he does, he brings along syphilis which she contracts. Unable to handle the humiliation of the disease, Mrs. Trask drowns herself in a shallow pond.

Alice Trask

Alice is Cyrus' second wife who he marries very shortly after the death of his first wife. Alice and Cyrus have a son named Charles and Alice assumes the mothering role of Adam, who comes to love Alice more than Charles does. Alice is extremely subservient to the overbearing Cyrus and even hides her tuberculosis from her husband in fear of what treatment he may inflict. Alice manages to raise the boys to young manhood and dies after Adam leaves to join the Army.

Liza Hamilton

Liza Hamilton is Samuel's small, feisty wife brought with him from Ireland at the time of the Civil War in America. Liza is extremely religious and believes nothing she reads except the Bible and raises her nine children with a strong sense of right and wrong. Liza's belief that life is just preparation for her real life in heaven one day allows her to accept tragedies in a more matter-of-fact manner than her more emotional husband Samuel.



Abra Bacon

She meets the Trask family one day when her family stops at the Trask ranch to take shelter from a storm. Abra becomes friends with Cal and Aron who, even as a young boy, knows immediately that he wants to marry Abra some day. Abra's love for Aron continues until Aron exhibits signs of retreating from life in order to avoid realities. Abra eventually falls in love with Cal who she considers to be a more-rounded person. Abra also develops a fondness for Lee who comes to consider the sweet girl to be like a daughter to him.

George Hamilton

George is Samuel and Liza's oldest child who creates no problems for the couple. Not much is revealed about George's life other than the fact that he is handsome and well-mannered.

Will Hamilton

Will has a more active role in the novel as a businessman in King City. As a child, Will is known for not being very adventurous which leads to his unwillingness to take risks as an adult.

Lizzie Hamilton

Lizzie is Samuel and Liza's oldest daughter who marries early and moves away to live in San Francisco. Lizzie has little interaction with the family after that other than to come to funerals.

Una Hamilton

Una is a studious, serious girl who marries a chemist and moves away. Una has little communication with her family because of her restrictive husband, and her untimely death creates suspicions among her family. Samuel takes Una's death especially hard and begins to die a little himself each day from then on.

Tom Hamilton

Tom is more like Samuel than his siblings are in that he is a passionate dreamer. Samuel values Tom's integrity and honesty, which are highly prized qualities. Tom has a difficult time facing reality and lives alone on the Hamilton ranch until Dessie comes back to live there, too. Tom kills himself after he inadvertently gives Dessie medication which results in the worsening of a stomach disease and she dies a painful death.



Dessie Hamilton

Dessie is the joy of the Hamilton family and is known for her happy, laughing demeanor. Dessie never marries, having never recovered from an early heartbreak. Dessie owns a dressmaking business in Salinas which fails with the entrée of manufactured clothing, and she moves back to the ranch to live with her brother Tom. Dessie hides the full extent of a stomach disease, and Tom unwittingly gives her salts to drink which results in her death.

Olive Hamilton

Olive is the mother of the narrator and John Steinbeck's mother. She studies to be a teacher, which is a real source of pride for her family. Olive marries and moves to Salinas and adapts her home to accommodate her aging parents, Samuel and Liza.

Mollie Hamilton

Mollie is Samuel and Liza's youngest and most beautiful daughter. Mollie has a happy life living in a smart apartment in San Francisco.

Joe Hamilton

Joe is Samuel and Liza's youngest child and as much a dreamer as his father. Joe has no inclinations toward physical work on the ranch and eventually moves east to work in advertising.

Mr. Edwards

Mr. Edwards is the pimp who manages a network of whores throughout New England. Mr. Edwards hires Cathy for himself and installs her in a brick house to live a privileged life. When Mr. Edwards is rejected by Cathy he finds incriminating evidence against her and ultimately beats her severely and leaves her for dead on a Connecticut road.

Faye

Faye is the stereotypical whore with a heart of gold who establishes a brothel in Salinas. Faye hires Cathy (Kate) bestowing gifts and favors on Kate including an inheritance of Faye's entire estate. Faye is slowly poisoned to death by Kate who cannot wait to take control of Faye's brothel.



Ethel

Ethel is a whore at Faye's brothel who knows that Kate killed Faye. Unbeknown to Kate, Ethel had retrieved incriminating evidence against Kate and attempts to blackmail Kate. Kate has Ethel run out of town but Kate lives in fear that Ethel will return and Kate's life will be ruined.

Joe Valery

Joe is an escaped ex-convict who works as a bouncer and assistant in Kate's brothel. Joe does odd jobs and serves Kate in both domestic and business capacities. Joe tries to blackmail Kate but she is always steps ahead of him and she has Joe arrested. When Joe resists arrest and flees he is shot and dies in the street.



Objects/Places

The Salinas Valley

The story takes place in the fertile Salinas Valley area of Northern California.

King City, California

King City is a town in the Salinas Valley in California close to the farm settled by Samuel Hamilton.

The Trask Farm

Cyrus Trask works his farm in Connecticut, and after Adam leaves to go to the army and Cyrus takes his position of Secretary of War in Washington, Charles stays back and works the farm.

The inns

Mr. Edwards keeps a network of prostitutes at inns throughout New England, and Charles makes a habit of visiting the inns periodically.

The Ames House

Cathy kills her parents by setting fire to their home while they are sleeping one night.

Adam's Wanderings

After his discharge from the army, Adam wanders several states as a hobo and is eventually apprehended for vagrancy in Florida where he works on chain gangs building roads. Adam eventually escapes into Georgia where he wires Charles to send money so he can return to Connecticut.

Washington D.C.

Cyrus moves to Washington D.C. to work as Secretary of War and is buried with military honors there after his death.



Charles' and Cathy's Scars

Charles receives an injury to his forehead while working in the fields one day and the resulting scar grows darker with age, symbolizing the mark of Cain handed down by God to show his wrath for Cain's immoral behavior. Cathy sustains wounds to her forehead, too, when Mr. Edwards beats her. She wears an ugly scar for the rest of her life, indicating that she, too, lives an immoral life and has the wrath of God on her.

The Trask Inheritance

Cyrus bequeaths \$100,000 to Adam and Charles, an inheritance which will bring grief and misery to the men just as the curse God put on Adam and Eve when banished from the Garden of Eden.

Doxology

Doxology is Samuel Hamilton's horse.

ng-ka-py

Ng-ka-py is Chinese brandy that tastes like rotten apples. Lee drinks it and offers it to guests on social occasions and during difficult times.

Adam's Ranch

Adam buys a ranch near King City in the Salinas Valley where he intends to raise his family. After Cathy leaves, Adam, Lee, Cal and Aron live on the ranch for several years.

Castroville Street

Castroville Street is the street in Salinas where all three of the town's whorehouses are located.

Liza's Bible

Samuel borrows Liza's Bible to take to the Trask ranch so it can serve as inspiration for naming Adam's twin babies.



Faye's Whorehouse

Cathy (Kate) goes to work for Faye as a prostitute and eventually takes over the brothel after Faye's death.

Medicine Bottles

After Kate murders Faye she buries the poisonous medicine bottles and dropper in the field behind the whorehouse.

Model T Ford

Adam buys a Model T Ford from Will Hamilton's auto dealership so the Trask family can get to town quicker than riding in a horse-drawn carriage.

Kate's Back Room

Kate has a small, unlit room built off her bedroom so she can rest her eyes and hide from the world.

Stanford University

Aron goes away to college at Stanford University in California.

Inheritances

Both Adam and Aron inherit large sums of money from their parents; Adam from Cyrus' ill-gotten gains and Aron from Kate's whorehouse money.

Trask House in Salinas

When Cal and Aron are eleven-years-old, Adam moves the family to the house vacated by Dessie Hamilton in Salinas.

The Draft Board

Adam is appointed to serve on the local draft board and spends much time there deliberating over his responsibilities.



The Streets of Salinas

Cal spends many nightly hours walking the streets of Salinas while he ponders his life and destiny.

Telegrams and Letters

Adam and Charles exchange letters while Adam is in the Army. Charles receives a letter notifying him of Cyrus' death. Tom Hamilton receives a telegram notifying him of Samuel's death. Adam receives a post card from Aron after Aron enters the Army. Lee reads the telegram notifying Adam of Aron's death.



Themes

Good vs. Evil

Steinbeck utilizes the story of Adam and Eve and their sons, Cain and Abel, extracted from the Book of Genesis in the Bible, to illustrate the theme of good vs. evil in life. In the Bible story, Adam and Eve are created to live in paradise in the Garden of Eden but their sin casts them out. Their sons, Cain and Abel, take different paths, and Cain ultimately kills Abel and is banished to live in Nod, a land east of Eden. Steinbeck believes that all men have both good and evil in them and, although most do not commit the heinous crime of fratricide, all men live east of Eden, where they must struggle with the human condition. There are obvious contrasts in the characters exhibiting good and evil: Mrs. Trask, Alice Trask, Adam and Aron are the virtuous characters in the Trask family while all the Hamiltons exhibit good qualities. Evil is represented primarily by Cathy Ames with some of the other characters exhibiting negative qualities to a lesser extent. Cyrus Trask, Charles Trask, Cal Trask, Joe Valery, Faye and Ethel are all characters lured to the dark side of life. Steinbeck heavily weaves the contrasts between good and evil throughout the book and even pontificates at several points saying that the story of good vs. evil is the only story for humankind. Everything men do swings to one side of the pendulum or the other, and at the end of a man's life, he has only one question to ask and that is whether his life has been good or bad.

Timshel, the Freedom to Choose between Good and Evil

Lee investigates the passages from Genesis in the King James Bible and the American Standard Bible and finds that they stem from a position of obedience or predestination—"thou shalt rule over him" and "do thou rule over him" when addressing the issue of Cain's sin. However, upon investigation of the Hebrew passage of the same story, Lee finds a big difference hinging on the definition of the word—timshel—which means "thou mayest rule over him." This is an amazing revelation because it means that man has free will to not only commit sin but also to seek redemption by changing his life. Cal Trask is the most obvious example of living with timshel because, although he is extremely jealous of Aron and inadvertently causes Aron's death, he does not want to be bad and simply needs the chance for redemption. At Lee's urging at Adam's deathbed, Adam whispers the word timshel to indicate that he forgives Cal, and the curse of being marked with irredeemable sin has ended. Just as timshel gives Cal the opportunity to be a better person, it also allowed Adam the right to withhold his grace, but he pardons Cal which is the essence of living a fully spiritual life.

Rejection

At one point, Steinbeck says that rejection is the thing feared most by any child because it means a loveless life, and all behavior stems from seeking parental approval. As a child matures, however, rejection becomes a part of life and the person's belief system will determine how he or she manages it. As Steinbeck presents it in his story, all rejection stems from God's rejection of Cain for his jealousy and murder of his brother. This is exhibited in the story through Cyrus' rejection of Charles and Adam's favoring of Aron over Cal. There are other rejections that are just as painful and devastating, which include Cathy's rejection of Adam, Aron's rejection of Abra through his choice of celibacy, and Dessie's rejection by her first sweetheart. The lovable Samuel has also experienced major rejection by an unnamed sweetheart in Ireland, which is probably the impetus for his emigration to America with a woman who is not his first choice for a wife. Lee also experiences rejection because he lives in a society and in a region of the country that imposes stereotypes on Chinese people that means they must be ignorant and subservient. Lee is actually an educated American of Chinese descent but he chooses to assume the pidgin Chinese demeanor in order to avoid harassment and rejection from society as a whole. Fortunately, Adam has the grace on his deathbed to forgive Cal and save him from a future of irredeemable parental rejection and guilt, so the curse of Cain can be stopped from proliferating in the Trask family.

Style

Point of View

The story is told primarily in the third person omniscient perspective, which means that an unknown narrator is telling the story and sometimes lets the readers into the thoughts and feelings of certain characters. The author gives details about settings and events as though narrating but will interject personal thoughts from the characters, especially Samuel, Cathy and Cal. These personal thoughts are not available or known to any other characters, which make them private and let only the reader in on the true thoughts and feelings. Steinbeck also slips into first person narrative perspective and interjects personal opinions on events, circumstances, and the human condition in general. It is not until the book is well underway that Steinbeck names himself as the narrator by being the son of Olive Hamilton, one of Samuel's children. From this point forward, the reader understands that the story is semi-autobiographical and that the opinions for much of the story's parables come from the author himself.

Setting

The setting for the story is primarily the Salinas Valley located in northern California. Samuel and Liza emigrate from Ireland and settle on a non-productive ranch near King City, California. The Trask family originates from their farm in Connecticut where Charles stays for his whole life. Adam leaves the farm to join the army and travels west to fight in the Indian wars in the late 1800s. After his discharge, Adam wanders through many states in the United States and spends time on a road gang in Florida. Adam eventually returns to Connecticut where he marries Cathy. Cathy is also raised in Connecticut and moves to Boston after killing her parents to work as a prostitute. Cathy marries Adam and they move to the Salinas Valley where they buy a ranch. Cathy abandons her family and moves to the town of Salinas where she eventually runs a brothel. The story takes place between the years following the Civil War up to the end of World War I.

Language and Meaning

Because Steinbeck's novel is strongly based on the story of Genesis in the Bible, it is important for the reader to have at least some familiarity with the Biblical story in order to understand the plot and resulting allegories and lessons. Steinbeck also writes in an elegant style befitting the re-telling of one of the most universally-believed stories of all time. Steinbeck also masterfully captures the styles of each of his characters to make them even more believable. For example, Samuel, who is of Irish descent, speaks with a lilt and singing rhythm when he tells stories and gives advice to friends and family. Lee, in contrast, is of Chinese descent and Steinbeck gives him perfect pidgin Chinese as well as the typical philosophical view on life to combine with his patient demeanor.



Cathy's language completes her evil personality as she speaks with foul language that the reader can almost hear hissing out of her tiny mouth. Interestingly, Steinbeck gives very few words to Cyrus' wives because they are meant to be seen and not heard and that is exactly how they are perceived. The Trask men are two sides of the verbal spectrum with Cyrus, Charles and Cal being very verbose and almost always belligerent. In contrast, Adam and Aron are quiet and reflective people as indicated in their being people of few words who do not speak without first thinking.

Structure

The novel is 601 pages and divided into four parts and 55 chapters. Each of the four parts denotes a transition in the novel's plot: Part 1 sets up the story and provides backgrounds of the Hamilton and Trask families up until the marriage of Adam and Cathy; Part 2 covers Cathy's abandonment of Adam and her sons and ends with Samuel and Lee helping Adam name the twins; Part 3 covers the deaths of Samuel and Tom as well as Adam's recovery from his ten-year depression; and Part 4 concludes the book with the deaths of Kate, Adam and Aron and Adam's blessing and forgiveness for Cal. Each chapter also includes sub chapters, which allow the author to transition the setting or character insight slightly without distracting from the overall plot extension. Although most of the novel is plot-driven, Steinbeck occasionally begins a chapter or section with diatribes of his own opinions, which provide the reader with insight and guidance with which to approach the coming action.



Historical Context

The Development of California

California became the thirty-first state in 1850, when its population, boosted by the gold rush, numbered over 100,000. This population included many Chinese immigrants. In 1852, 10 percent of Californian residents were Chinese. After the Civil War, more settlers moved west, attracted by high wages and cheap land. The first transcontinental railroad system, begun in 1863 and finished in 1869, linked Sacramento to the Eastern states. Many Chinese laborers were brought in to work on the railroads (including Lee's parents in the novel). They built the railroad through the foothills and over the high Sierra Nevada. The work was hard and dangerous, and many lives were lost. But there was prejudice against the Chinese. For example, Chinese children were banned from attending public schools, according to a California law passed in 1860.

By 1870 California's population had risen to 560,000. But an economic depression during the next decade produced high unemployment. The depression was caused by the influx of cheap manufactured goods from well established industries on the East Coast, with which California's newer manufacturing companies could not compete. The unemployment was exacerbated by the arrival by railroad of thousands of European immigrants from the East Coast. Some Californians blamed their unemployment on Chinese laborers, who were willing to work for low wages. There were anti-Chinese riots in Los Angeles in 1871, and anti-Chinese prejudice was written into law. Chinese people were denied U.S. citizenship, which meant they were not allowed to vote or hold government office. They were even disallowed from testifying in court against whites. A hint of the white prejudice against the Chinese occurs in *East of Eden* when Lee tells Samuel he always speaks in pidgin English to whites because that is what they expect. If he were to speak grammatical English that would show he was an educated man, and whites would not understand him.

Because the Chinese in California often faced discrimination, they took to setting up their own laundry businesses, where there was little competition from whites. (In *East of Eden* when Lee says he is going to move to San Francisco, Samuel's first thought is that Lee must want to start a laundry business.)

America's Industrial Growth

The period covered by the novel was a time of growth in all areas for the United States. The population of the country increased by 140 percent between 1860 and 1900. There was a huge expansion in the production of coal, petroleum, pig iron, and crude steel. A system of railroads that crisscrossed the country supported this industrial expansion and allowed westward movement for farmers and immigrants. By 1890 all large American cities were linked by rail. One-third of all railroad tracks in the world were in the United States. It was also an inventive period. Between 1860 and 1890, 440,400



patents were issued. In every field the old ways were giving way to the new. In Chicago, for example, Gustavus Swift shipped meat under refrigeration and built refrigerator cars (thus making possible what Adam in *East of Eden* tries, but fails, to do when he ships lettuce to the East Coast packed in ice).

The period between the 1870s and 1890s is often known as the Gilded Age, during which aggressive individualism and the spirit of optimism fueled national growth, producing industrial growth through the exploitation of natural resources. There was a belief in the inevitability of progress. However, the ruthlessness of the leading industrialists of the era gained them a reputation as "robber barons." These were men such as Andrew Carnegie (steel industry) and John D. Rockefeller (oil industry). Such men amassed huge fortunes, but the lot of the ordinary worker was often dire, toiling long hours for low wages. This was an unfortunate age for Native Americans as well, as they endured two decades of wars with whites, from 1864 to the mid-1880s (these are the wars in which Adam fights as a young man in *East of Eden*).

By the beginning of the century, America was becoming the foremost industrial power in the world, and for those who could afford it, there was an abundance of consumer goods available. One of the newest inventions was the automobile. In 1900 there were only about 8,000 automobiles in the entire country, and they were only for the wealthy, but in the following decade Henry Ford began to build affordable cars (like the one Adam buys in the novel sometime in the 1910s).

Critical Overview

Reviews of *East of Eden* have been decidedly mixed. Although there is plenty of praise, almost all reviewers note major flaws in the novel. Orville Prescott in the *New York Times* calls it clumsy in structure and too melodramatic and sensational, but nonetheless declares it to be "a serious and on the whole successful effort to grapple with a major theme." Prescott also argues that after some trivial works unworthy of his talent, Steinbeck "achieved a considered philosophy and it is a fine and generous one." Mark Schorer in the *New York Times Book Review* describes *East of Eden* as "probably the best" of Steinbeck's novels. But Leo Gurko in the *Nation* writes that the characters are mere abstractions and that the novel resembles an old medieval morality play. According to Gurko, the novel marks a major decline in Steinbeck's talent. Some critics feel that Steinbeck reduces the complexities of life to a simple story of good against evil. For example, in the *New Yorker*, Anthony West writes that the novel is the equivalent of "those nineteenth-century melodramas in which the villains could always be recognized because they waxed their mustaches and in which the conflict between good and evil operated like a well-run series of professional tennis matches."

Later critics have tended to agree with the earlier reviewers, often finding more to blame than praise in the novel. The structure of the novel has been much criticized, the argument being that the two strands of the narrative, the stories of the Trasks and the Hamiltons, are not properly integrated. Complaint is also frequently made that Steinbeck applied his moral philosophy in a heavyhanded way. Critics have felt that the author's focus on the moral dimensions of the story had a detrimental effect on his writing, which at its best allowed moral meaning to emerge from the details rather than being imposed on them. In *The Novels of John Steinbeck: A Critical Study*, Howard Levant comments, "*East of Eden* is a strangely unblended novel, an impressive, greatly flawed work." It is testament, notes Levant, "to the author's enduring difficulty in fusing structure and materials into a harmonious whole."

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1



Critical Essay #1

Aubrey holds a Ph.D. in English and has published many articles on twentieth-century literature. In this essay Aubrey discusses East of Eden in the context of a series of letters Steinbeck wrote to his friend and editor Pascal Covici as he was writing the first draft of the novel.

Steinbeck labored long and hard on *East of Eden*, declaring it to be the most difficult book he had undertaken. For a long time he had wanted to be able to write such a book and had carefully prepared himself for the task. During the writing of the first draft, he wrote a remarkable series of letters to his friend and editor Pascal Covici. The letters were published as *Journal of a Novel: The "East of Eden" Letters* in 1969, a year after Steinbeck's death.

Steinbeck wrote one letter early each day from January to November 1951 as a way of limbering up for the writing task that lay ahead. The letters give a close-up view of the ups and downs of a novelist at work, his successful days as well as the days when nothing went right. One day he wonders whether the novel will be interesting to anyone other than himself. On another occasion he wonders whether his "devilish playing with the verities" (his metaphysical ideas) will put people off in an age when readers of novels want plot and action. Often, however, his enthusiasm for his task bubbles over, and he conveys how it feels to be a writer when the full rush of creativity sweeps through him. It is a very physical feeling for Steinbeck: "The joy comes in the words going down and the rhythms crowding in the chest and pulsing to get out."

The *East of Eden* letters provide many fascinating details about the novel (all the anecdotes about the Hamilton family are true, for example) and leave no doubt about the primary significance Steinbeck attached to the Cain and Abel story. His first idea for the title of the novel was "Canable." Then he thought of "Cain Sign" before settling on *East of Eden*, which is itself taken from the Cain and Abel story. Steinbeck thought the story of jealousy and strife between siblings lay at the basis of all neuroses, and he was thrilled by his interpretation of the Hebrew word *timshel* as "thou mayest." He went to great trouble to be certain that his etymology was at least possible. He felt sure it would interest scholars and psychiatrists and provoke great argument and scholarly discussion (it did not).

Perhaps the most important idea to emerge from Steinbeck's letters is his great affirmative vision of what the purpose of the writer should be. He comments on this in the context of his character Samuel Hamilton, a man of energy and vision who goes through life without being defeated. Steinbeck laments the fact that it has become fashionable amongst writers to show the destruction rather than the endurance of the human spirit. He argues that there have been a few men—he names Plato, Lao Tze, Buddha, Christ, and Paul—who were not destroyed by life, and these are the men the world lives by. They are remembered not for negation and denial, but for affirmation. Steinbeck goes on to argue that "It is the duty of the writer to lift up, to extend, to encourage." Great writing must give out strength, courage, and wisdom rather than



dwell on the weakness and ugliness that is also part of the human condition. Steinbeck believed he had achieved this affirmative vision in his novel. "Although East of Eden is not Eden," he said in the same letter, "it is not insuperably far away."

How far away from Eden is it? Some readers may feel that there are so many cruelties, vices, and tragedies in this novel, culminating in Aron's unnecessary death and Adam's devastating stroke, that if it is "not insuperably far away" from Eden, it is not far away from hell either.

But that may be part of Steinbeck's point. It is unlikely that he conceived the condition of Eden as one of perpetual bliss, but rather one of perpetual striving, because wherever there is good, there is also evil. In the interaction between the two lies the possibility of human growth and freedom. Steinbeck said as much in the letter he wrote to Covici on January 29, 1951, before he had written a single word of the novel. He wrote that the opposites of good and evil, strength and weakness, love and hate, beauty and ugliness, are inseparable: "neither can exist without the other." Out of the interaction of these opposites, "creativity is born."

This comment is the key to so much of what goes on in the novel. Although the idea that good and evil are mixed up together in most individuals is not an especially interesting or original one, there is a more subtle idea at work too: the fact that even those characters in the novel who are firmly in one or other of the opposing camps are drawn inexorably together. Each quality, good and evil, has a kind of gravitational pull for the other, which is beyond the control of either. So it is that the mysterious processes of life place Charles (a Cain character) in close proximity to Adam (an Abel character) and through their stormy interaction Adam is forced to seek his own destiny, away from his brother. But then in his turn, Adam cannot help but pull into his life Cathy, who has as little good in her as Adam has evil.

It is interesting to note that while Cathy is as close to pure evil as one is likely to get this side of hell, the "good" characters Adam and Aron share culpability for the bad things that happen to them. Their errors are failures of perception, knowledge, and imagination. They fail to understand that life must be grasped whole, that it is a mixed bag of good and evil. Adam, for example, never comes close to seeing Cathy as she really is. He idealizes her, projecting onto her an unreal image of sweetness that he never questions. When Cathy indicates that she does not want to move to California, Adam does not listen; he does not take her objections seriously. Nor does he notice her unhappiness in California. He is too busy creating his Eden in the Salinas Valley. But this manmade Eden is not built on solid foundations, so it is no surprise (except to Adam) when it crumbles. In a sense, he is just as much to blame as Cathy is for the bullet she fires into his shoulder.

It is the same with Aron. Steinbeck alerts his correspondent Covici to the importance of Aron, telling him to note the gradual, subtle development of Aron's character. During his childhood, Aron's simple goodness wins him the affection of everyone. As soon as he reaches adolescence, however, he starts to lose his innocence and his balance. He channels all his emerging passions into religion. Deciding to become a minister, he



devotedly attends the Episcopal church and takes spiritual instruction from the clergyman. Of course, there is nothing wrong with this, but Aron takes it to excess. He desperately needs (or thinks he needs) to shut out anything that seems to him impure. He soon reaches "a point of passionate purity that made everyone else foul." When he learns from the clergyman that the owner of a brothel is starting to attend church services—he does not yet know this is his mother, Cathy—he tells Lee that he wants to go away, because Salinas is a "dirty" town. Lee tries to prod him into a more realistic view of life ("Try to believe that things are neither so good nor so bad as they seem to you now"), but Aron does not have the maturity to grasp it. And when he goes off to Stanford, he shuts himself off from the life around him.

Aron's biggest mistake is in his attitude to Abra, in which he replicates his father's idealization of Cathy. Abra is mature enough to notice this. She says to Lee, of Aron, "He doesn't think about me. He's made someone up, and it's like he put my skin on her. I'm not like that—not like the made-up one." Aron wants a girl who is absolutely pure, with not a single bad thing about her. Abra knows that she can never live up to such an ideal. "He doesn't know me," she says. "He doesn't even want to know me." Like father, like son, and the outcome is inevitable. Abra and Aron drift apart.

The consequences for Aron of his refusal to accept life in its wholeness—the ugliness as well as the beauty—are dire. He is so devastated by his discovery that his mother runs a brothel that he literally runs away as far as he can go—to the battlefields of Europe, where he is killed. The false world in which he tried to wall himself off from the real one cannot stand the light of real experience.

If Aron and Adam are examples of the inadequacy of a one-dimensional view of reality, Steinbeck also offers many moments of illumination, when wisdom about life shines through. He poured himself into this novel with a passion, writing to Covici that it had to contain everything in the world he knew. Whether it is in the practical wisdom of Samuel, or the studious reflections of Lee, there are many such moments to savor. Each reader will find his or her favorite. The scene near the end of the novel, when Abra talks with Cal on their way home from school (chapter 52, section 3), is as good an example as any. Abra is only in her mid-teens, but she expresses a wisdom that others spend a lifetime missing. Steinbeck alerted Covici to Abra's importance in the story (she is "the strong female principle of good"), and in this scene Abra is explaining to Cal that Aron never grew up. He lived in a story-world that he made up, and he refused to accept any outcome different from the one he wanted. But Abra's attitude is different. Not only has she outgrown the story that she and Aron made up for themselves, she comments, "I don't want to know how it comes out. I only want to be there while it's going on." Abra's refusal to live in a fantasy world, her determination not to be trapped by fixed expectations, and her courageous desire to live fully in the present, without illusions, make her, like Lee and Samuel, a touchstone of how life can be lived truthfully and with integrity.

Source: Bryan Aubrey, Critical Essay on *East of Eden*, in *Novels for Students*, Gale, 2004.



Quotes

"I always found in myself a dread of west and a love of east. Where I ever got such an idea I cannot say, unless it could be that the morning came over the peaks of the Gabilans and the night drifted back from the ridges of the Santa Lucias. It may be that the birth and death of the day had some part in my feeling about the two ranges of mountains." Part 1, Chapter 1, Page 3

"I don't know what directed his steps toward the Salinas Valley. It was an unlikely place for a man from a green country to come to, but he came about thirty years before the turn of the century and he brought with him his tiny Irish wife, a tight hard little woman humor-less as a chicken. She had a dour Presbyterian mind and a code of morals that pinned down and beat the brains out of nearly everything that was pleasant to do." Part 1, Chapter 2, Page 9

"When a child first catches adults out—when it first walks into his grave little head that adults do not have divine intelligence, that their judgments are not always wise, their thinking true, their sentences just—his world falls into panic desolation. The gods are fallen and all safety gone. And there is one sure thing about the fall of gods: they do not fall a little; they crash and shatter or sink deeply into green muck. It is a tedious job to build them up again; they never quite shine. And the child's world is never quite whole again. It is an aching kind of growing." Part 1, Chapter 3, Page 20

"Once in a while there is a man who won't do what is demanded of him, and do you know what happens? The whole machine devotes itself coldly to the destruction of his difference. They'll beat your spirit and your nerves, your body and your mind, with iron rods until the dangerous difference goes out of you. And if you can't finally give in, they'll vomit you up and leave you stinking outside—neither part of themselves nor yet free. It's better to fall in with them. They only do it to protect themselves." Part 1, Chapter 3, Page 25

"You asked a question. I guess I'll have to answer. Maybe it's good and maybe it's bad to answer it. You're not clever. You don't know what you want. You have no proper fierceness. You let other people walk over you. Sometimes I think you're a weakling who will never amount to a dog turd. Does that answer your question? I love you better. I always have. This may be a bad thing to tell you, but it's true. I love you better. Else why would I have given myself the trouble of hurting you? Now shut your mouth and go to your supper. I'll talk to you tomorrow night. My leg aches." Part 1, Chapter 3, Page 27

"It looks,' he wrote, 'like somebody marked me like a cow. The damn thing gets darker. By the time you get home it will maybe be black. All I need is one going the other way



and I would look like a Papist on Ash Wednesday. I don't know why it bothers me. I got plenty other scars. It just seems like I was marked. And when I go to town, like to the inn, why, people are always looking at it. I can hear them talking about it when they don't know I can hear. I don't know why they're so damn curious about it. It gets so I don't feel like going in town at all." Part 1, Chapter 6, Page 46

"'Maybe that's the reason,' Adam said slowly, feeling his way. 'Maybe if I had loved him I would have been jealous of him. You were. Maybe—maybe love makes you suspicious and doubting. Is it true that when you love a woman you are never sure—never sure of her because you aren't sure of yourself? I can see it pretty clearly. I can see how you loved him and what it did to you. I did not love him. Maybe he loved me. He tested me and hurt me and punished me and finally he sent me out like a sacrifice, maybe to make up for something. But he did not love you, and so he had faith in you. Maybe—why, maybe it's a kind of reverse.'" Part 1, Chapter 7, Page 69

"I believe there are monsters born in the world to human parents. Some you can see, misshapen and horrible, with huge heads or tiny bodies; some are born with no arms, no legs, some with three arms, some with tails or mouths in odd places. They are accidents and no one's fault, as used to be thought. Once they were considered the visible punishments for concealed sins. And just as there are physical monsters, can there not be mental or psychic monsters born? The face and body may be perfect, but if a twisted gene or a malformed egg can produce physical monsters, may not the same process produce a malformed soul?" Part 1, Chapter 8, Page 71

"And this I believe: that the free, exploring mind of the individual human is the most valuable thing in the world. And this I would fight for: the freedom of the mind to take any direction it wishes, undirected. And this I must fight against: any idea, religion, or government which limits or destroys the individual. This is what I am and what I am about. I can understand why a system built on a pattern must try to destroy the free mind, for that is one thing which can by inspection destroy such a system. Surely I can understand this, and I hate it and I will fight against it to preserve the one thing that separates us from the uncreative beasts. If the glory can be killed, we are lost." Part 2, Chapter 13, Page 131

"Adam Trask grew up in grayness, and the curtains of his life were like dusty cobwebs, and his days a slow file of half-sorrows and sick dissatisfactions, and then, through Cathy, the glory came to him." Part 2, Chapter 13, Page 131

"'And I guess humility must be a good thing, since it's a rare man who has not a piece of it, but when you look at humbleness it's hard to see where its value rests unless you grant that it is a pleasurable pain and very precious. Suffering—I wonder has it been properly looked at.'" Part 2, Chapter 15, Page 166



"Sometimes a silence tells the most," said Samuel, and he saw Cathy's eyes leap up and down again, and it seemed to him that the scar on her forehead grew darker. Something had flicked her the way you'd flick a horse with the braided string popper on a buggy whip. Samuel couldn't recall what he had said that had made her give a small inward start. He felt a tenseness coming over him that was somewhat like the feeling he had just before the water wand pulled down, an awareness of something strange and strained. He glanced at Adam and saw that he was looking raptly at his wife. Whatever was strange was not strange to Adam. His face had happiness on it." Part 2, Chapter 15, Page 171

"Her voice was dead and metallic. 'I don't give a damn what you believe. I'm going.' 'The babies—' 'Throw them in one of your wells.' He cried in panic, 'Cathy, you're sick. You can't go—not from me—not from me.' 'I can do anything to you. Any woman can do anything to you. You're a fool.'" Part 2, Chapter 17, Page 199

"You listen to me, Horace. There's only three people in the world that knows—her and you and me. I'm going to warn her that if she ever tells I'll brush her ass out of this county so fast it'll burn. And, Horace—if you should ever get an itchy tongue, before you tell anybody, even your wife, why, you think about those little boys finding out their mother is a whore." Part 2, Chapter 18, Page 213

"I don't want advice.' 'Nobody does. It's a giver's present. Go through the motions, Adam.' 'What motions?' 'Act out being alive, like a play. And after a while, a long while, it will be true.' 'Why should I?' Adam asked. Samuel was looking at the twins. 'You're going to pass something down no matter what you do or if you do nothing. Even if you let yourself go fallow, the weeds will grow and the brambles. Something will grow.'" Part 2, Chapter 18, Page 213

"The girl Kate puzzled Faye—she was so young and pretty, so lady-like, so well educated. Faye took her into her own inviolate bedroom and questioned her far more than she would if Kate had been another kind of girl. There were always women knocking on the door of a whorehouse, and Faye recognized most of them instantly. She could tick them off—lazy, vengeful, lustful, unsatisfied, greedy, ambitious. Kate didn't fall into any of these classes." Part 2, Chapter 19, Page 219

"In human affairs of danger and delicacy successful conclusion is sharply limited by hurry. So often men trip by being in a rush. If one were properly to perform a difficult and subtle act, he should first inspect the end to be achieved and then, once he had accepted the end as desirable, he should forget it completely and concentrate solely on the means. By this method he would not be moved to false action by anxiety or hurry or fear. Very few people learn this." Part 2, Chapter 21, Page 238



"Adam replied, 'Their mother left them motherless.' 'And you have left them fatherless. Can't you feel the cold at night of a lone child? What warm is there, what bird song, what possible morning can be good? Don't you remember, Adam, how it was, even a little?' 'I didn't do it,' Adam said. 'Have you undone it? Your boys have no names.' He stooped down and put his arms around Adam's shoulders and helped him to his feet. 'We'll give them names,' he said. 'We'll think long and find good names to clothe them.' He whipped the dust from Adam's shirt with his hands." Part 2, Chapter 22, Page 257

"'Did she mean to kill you?' 'I've thought of that more than anything else. No, I don't think she meant to kill me. She didn't allow me that dignity. There was no hatred in her, no passion at all. I learned about that in the army. If you want to kill a man, you shoot at head or heart or stomach. No, she hit me where she intended. I can see the gun barrel moving over. I guess I wouldn't have minded so much if she had wanted my death. That would have been a kind of love. But I was an annoyance, not an enemy.'" Part 2, Chapter 22, Page 260

"The greatest terror a child can have is that he is not loved, and rejection is the hell he fears. I think everyone in the world to a large or small extent has felt rejection. And with rejection comes anger, and with anger some kind of crime in revenge for the rejection, and with the crime guilt—and there is the story of mankind." Part 2, Chapter 22, Page 268

"And now his tissue, which had fought joyously against time, gave up a little. His young skin turned old, his clear eyes dulled, and a little stoop came to his great shoulders. Liza with her acceptance could take care of tragedy' she had no real hope this side of Heaven. But Samuel had put up a laughing wall against natural laws, and Una's death breached his battlements. He became an old man." Part 3, Chapter 23, Page 274

"Places were very important to Samuel. The ranch was a relative, and when he left it he plunged a knife into a darling. But having made up his mind, Samuel set about doing it well. He made formal calls on all of his neighbors, the old-timers who remembered how it used to be and how it was. And when he drove away from his old friends they knew they would not see him again, although he did not say it. He took to gazing at the mountains and the trees, even at faces, as though to memorize them for eternity." Part 3, Chapter 24, Page 291

"'It was your two-word translation, Lee—'Thou mayest.' It took me by the throat and shook me. And when the dizziness was over, a path was open, new and bright. And my life which is ending seems to be going on to an ending wonderful. And my music has a new last melody like a bird song in the night.'" Part 3, Chapter 24, Page 306



"I wonder what it is you hate so much.' 'You wonder, do you?' Her caution was almost entirely gone. 'It isn't hatred, it's contempt. When I was a little girl I knew what stupid lying fools they were—my own mother and father pretending goodness. And they weren't good. I knew them. I could make them do whatever I wanted. I could always make people do what I wanted. When I was half-grown I made a man kill himself. He pretended to be good too, and all he wanted was to go to bed with me—a little girl.' 'But you say he killed himself. He must have been very sorry about something.' 'He was a fool,' said Kate. 'I heard him come to the door and beg. I laughed all night.'" Part 3, Chapter 25, Page 319

"It's one of the great fallacies, it seems to me,' said Lee, 'that time gives much of anything but years and sadness to a man.'" Part 3, Chapter 30, Page 373

"Why not? I have always disliked deception. Your course is drawn. What you will do is written—written in every breath you've ever taken. I'll speak any way I want to. I'm crotchety. I feel sand under my skin. I'm looking forward to the ugly smell of old books and the sweet smell of good thinking. Faced with two sets of morals, you'll follow your training. What you call thinking won't change it. The fact that your wife is a whore in Salinas won't change a thing.'" Part 3, Chapter 30, Page 376

"Dear Lord,' he said, 'let me be like Aron. Don't make me mean. I don't want to be. If you will let everybody like me, why, I'll give you anything in the world, and if I haven't got it, why, I'll go for to get it. I don't want to be mean. I don't want to be lonely. For Jesus' sake, Amen.' Slow warm tears were running down his cheeks. His muscles were tight and he fought against making any crying sound or snuffle." Part 3, Chapter 30, Page 377

"You know about the ugliness in people. You showed me the pictures. You use all the sad, weak parts of a man, and God knows he has them.' 'Everybody—' Adam went on, astonished at his own thoughts, 'But you—yes, that's right—you don't know about the rest. You don't believe I brought you the letter because I don't want your money. You don't believe I loved you. And the men who come to you here with their ugliness, the men in the pictures—you don't believe those men could have goodness and beauty in them. You see only one side, and you think—more than that, you're sure—that's all there is.'" Part 3, Chapter 31, Page 381

"Dessie was not beautiful. Perhaps she wasn't even pretty, but she had the glow that makes men follow a woman in the hope of reflecting a little of it. You would have thought that in time she would have got over her first love affair and found another love, but she did not. Come to think of it, none of the Hamiltons, with all their versatility, had any versatility in love. None of them seemed capable of light or changeable love." Part 3, Chapter 32, Page 387

"It was startling to both of them when Dessie said one evening on the hill, 'Tom, why don't you get married?' He looked quickly at her and away. He said, 'Who'd have me?'



'Is that a joke or do you really mean it?' 'Who'd have me?' he said again. 'Who'd want a thing like me?' 'It sounds to me as though you really mean it.' Then she violated their unstated code. 'Have you been in love with someone?' 'No,' he said shortly. 'I wish I knew,' she said as though he had not answered. Tom did not speak again as they walked down the hill. But on the porch he said suddenly, 'You're lonely here. You don't want to stay.' He waited for a moment. 'Answer me. Isn't that true?' 'I want to stay here more than I want to stay anyplace else.'" Part 3, Chapter 33, Page 398

"I believe that there is one story in the world, and only one, that has frightened and inspired us, so that we live in a Pearl White serial of continuing thought and wonder. Humans are caught—in their lives, in their thoughts, in their hungers and ambitions, in their avarice and cruelty, and in their kindness and generosity too—in a net of good and evil. I think this is the only story we have and that it occurs on all levels of feeling and intelligence. Virtue and vice were the warp and woof of our first consciousness, and they will be the fabric of our last, and this despite any changes we may impose on field and river and mountain, on economy and manners. There is no other story. A man, after he has brushed off the dust and chips of his life, will have only the hard, clean questions: Was it good or was it evil? Have I done well—or ill?" Part 4, Chapter 34, Page 411

"Cal knew his brother and could handle him by keeping him off balance, but this only worked up to a certain point. Cal had learned when to sidestep, when to run away. Change of direction confused Aron, but that was the only thing that cushioned him. He set his path and followed it and he did not see nor was he interested in anything beside his path. His emotions were few and heavy. All of him was hidden by his angelic face, and for this he had no more concern or responsibility than has a fawn for the dappling spots on its young hide." Part 4, Chapter 36, Page 420

"Lee's voice said, 'I know that sometimes a lie is used in kindness. I don't believe it ever works kindly. The quick pain of truth can pass away, but the slow, eating agony of a lie is never lost. That's a running sore.'" Part 4, Chapter 36, Page 427

"Cal spoke happily. 'I'm going now. It's all right. What Lee said was true.' 'What did Lee say?' Cal said, 'I was afraid I had you in me.' 'You have,' said Kate. 'No, I haven't. I'm my own. I don't have to be you.' 'How do you know that?' she demanded. 'I just know. It just came to me whole. If I'm mean, it's my own mean.'" Part 4, Chapter 39, Page 462

"Will had never met anyone who spoke so nakedly. He was near to embarrassment because of the nakedness, and he knew how safe Cal was in his stripped honesty. 'Only one more,' he said, 'and I won't mind if you don't answer it. I don't think I would answer it. Here it is. Suppose you should get this money and give it to your father—would it cross your mind that you were trying to buy his love?' 'Yes, sir. It would. And it would be true.'" Part 4, Chapter 41, Page 477



"Hate cannot live alone. It must have love as a trigger, a goad, or a stimulant. Joe early developed a gentle protective love for Joe. He comforted and flattered and cherished Joe. He set up walls to save Joe from a hostile world. And gradually Joe became proof against wrong. If Joe got into trouble, it was because the world was in angry conspiracy against him. And if Joe attacked the world, it was revenge and they damn well deserved it—the sons of bitches. Joe lavished every care on his love..." Part 4, Chapter 45, Page 498

"There is no dignity in death in battle. Mostly that is a splashing about of human meat and fluid, and the result is filthy, but there is a great and almost sweet dignity in the sorrow, the helpless, the hopeless sorrow, that comes down over a family with the telegram. Nothing to say, nothing to do, and only one hope—I hope he didn't suffer—and what a forlorn and last-choice hope that is. And it is true that there were some people who, when their sorrow was beginning to lose its savor, gently edged it toward pride and felt increasingly important because of their loss. Some of these even made a good thing of it after the war was over. That is only natural, just as it is natural for a man whose life function is the making of money to make money out of a war. No one blamed a man for that, but it was expected that he should invest a part of his loot in war bonds. We thought we invented all of it in Salinas, even the sorrow." Part 4, Chapter 46, Page 516

"'Is it responsibility or blame that bothers you?' 'I don't want blame.' 'Sometimes responsibility is worse. It doesn't carry any pleasant egoism.' 'I was thinking about the time when Sam Hamilton and you and I had a long discussion about a word,' said Adam. 'What was that word?' 'Now I see. The word was timshel.' 'Timshel—and you said—' 'I said that word carried a man's greatness if he wanted to take advantage of it.' 'I remember Sam Hamilton felt good about it.' 'It set him free,' said Lee. 'It gave him the right to be a man, separate from every other man.' 'That's lonely.' 'All great and precious things are lonely.' 'What is the word again?' 'Timshel—thou mayest.'" Part 4, Chapter 47, Page 520

"'No, I don't want it ever. I would have been so happy if you could have given me—well what your brother has—pride in the thing he's doing, gladness in his progress. Money, even clean money, doesn't stack up with that.' His eyes widened a little and he said, 'Have I made you angry, son? Don't be angry. If you want to give me a present—give me a good life. That would be something I could value.'" Part 4, Chapter 49, Page 541

"Lee said, 'Help him, Adam—help him. Give him his chance. Let him be free. That's all a man has over the beasts. Free him! Bless him!'" Part 4, Chapter 55, Page 600

"Adam looked up with sick weariness. His lips parted and failed and tried again. Then

his lungs filled. He expelled the air and his lips combed the rushing sigh. His whispered word seemed to hang in the air: "Timshel!" Part 4, Chapter 55, Page 601

Adaptations

East of Eden was made into a film by Elia Kazan in 1954. It features James Dean as Caleb, in Dean's first starring role.

In 1981 *East of Eden* was made into a miniseries starring Timothy Bottoms as Adam Trask, Jane Seymour as Cathy Ames, and Bruce Boxleitner as Charles Trask.

Topics for Further Study

World War I is an important part of the background to the last part of the novel. Why did America enter World War I, and what contribution did it make in the war effort?

Analyze the character of Charles Trask and the role he plays in the novel. What are some of the many parallels between Charles and the biblical figure of Cain?

The theme of the novel is that humans can choose good over evil. Discuss this in the context of social problems in America today. Do all criminals, for example, freely choose to commit antisocial acts, or does the environment in which they are born and raised also contribute to their actions? Provide an example of a twentieth-century criminal you believe supports your answer.

Steinbeck said that all the anecdotes of the Hamilton family were true. Read over several of these (Mary wanting to be a boy in chapter 23 and Olive in the airplane in chapter 14 are just two examples), as well as the way Steinbeck describes each member of the family when he first introduces them. Then write an anecdote about a member of your own family.



Compare and Contrast

1860s: The American Civil War is fought, and when it ends in 1865 there are 620,000 dead soldiers.

1910s: World War I is fought. Between April 1917 and November 1918, 116,708 American servicemen die.

Today: The United States fights wars against terrorism in Afghanistan and Iraq. The modern war involves more advanced tactics supported by advanced technology in the areas of weaponry and defense, and fewer American lives are lost as a result.

1860s: The great railroads are built across the United States.

1910s: The aviation era begins. In 1919 the first transatlantic flight takes place, from Newfoundland to Ireland. The flight takes sixteen hours and twenty-two minutes.

Today: The commercial airplane is the way most people prefer to travel from city to city within the United States. Unlike Europe, which has a thriving rail network, the use of the railroad system in the United States is in decline.

1860s: Large numbers of Chinese and French Canadian immigrants arrive in the United States during this decade.

1910s: This decade marks the middle of peak U.S. immigration years. The pattern of immigration has changed over the past fifty years, and most new immigrants are from eastern and southern Europe. The first large wave of Mexicans arrives during this time period.

Today: Immigration patterns change once more. The majority of immigrants now come not from Europe but from Asia and Latin America.

What Do I Read Next?

Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) is considered his finest work. It describes the plight of migrant workers in California in the 1930s through the story of one family that makes its way to California from Oklahoma.

Like Steinbeck, English romantic poet Lord Byron was inspired by the story of Cain. His dramatic poem "Cain: A Dramatic Mystery in Three Acts" is an attack on Christianity as well as on political and social institutions in nineteenth century England. It can be found in the Oxford World's Classics series volume edited by Jerome J. McGann and titled *Lord Byron: The Major Works* (2000).

Americans and the California Dream, 1850—1915 (1986) by Kevin Starr describes the emergence of Californian culture in the second half of the nineteenth century. Starr discusses the California dream from a social, psychological, and symbolic point of view, as well as some of its fallacies and contradictions.

John Steinbeck: A Biography (1994), by Jay Parini, is a thorough, sympathetic biography of the author. Parini conducted many interviews with people who knew Steinbeck, and he also made use of published and unpublished letters, diaries, and manuscripts.



Topics for Discussion

The novel is based heavily on the story of Cain and Abel in the Book of Genesis in the Bible. What are the characteristics of Cain and Abel that you know from that story?

Which characters represent Cain and which represent Abel in the story. Explain.

Discuss the irony of a man of Chinese descent dissembling a Hebrew Bible passage to illuminate the hope of mankind.

Do you think it's possible for a person like Cathy to be born bad and stay bad forever? Can you think of any figures living today or in history who are like Cathy in her evilness?

Now that you know the concept of *timshel*, discuss how it has affected your own life if at all.

Steinbeck paints a verdant picture of the Salinas Valley as the Garden of Eden. What other literary examples occur within the book to reflect the Biblical story of Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel?

Samuel and Lee seem to be steadying forces throughout the novel. Why do you think Steinbeck used them in this manner?

This novel was originally published in 1952. What lessons can people today glean from the story and why do you think it remains one of the best-read books of all time?



Further Study

French, Warren, *John Steinbeck*, 2d ed., Twayne's United States Authors Series, No. 2, Twayne Publishers, 1975.

French discusses the novel in terms of Steinbeck's attempt to write about the evolution of a higher consciousness. The author holds that Steinbeck was not successful in this attempt because he remained essentially a naturalistic writer.

Lisca, Peter, *John Steinbeck: Nature and Myth*, Thomas Y. Crowell, 1978.

Lisca gives a generally negative assessment of the novel, describing it as deficient in characterization, invention, style, and discipline. Lisca also faults Steinbeck for contradictions in his theme of good and evil.

Owens, Louis, "East of Eden," in *A New Study Guide to Steinbeck's Major Works, with Critical Explications*, edited by Tetsumaro Hayashi, Scarecrow Press, 1993, pp. 66—89.

This work contains a background section, a synopsis of the novel, and a critical explication in which Owens describes the novel as one of the most misunderstood of all Steinbeck's works, contending that the real subject is not the biblical allegory but the creative consciousness.

Timmerman, John H., *John Steinbeck's Fiction: The Aesthetics of the Road Taken*, University of Oklahoma Press, 1986.

Timmerman examines Cathy's role as the structural and thematic center of the novel, including her relationship with several other characters (Horace Quinn, Charles, Caleb, Lee and Samuel Hamilton) on the issue of good and evil.



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West, Anthony, "California Moonshine," in *John Steinbeck: The Contemporary Reviews*, edited by Joseph R. McElrath Jr., Jesse S. Crisler, and Susan Shillinglaw, Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 389; originally published in *New Yorker*, September 20, 1952.



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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Novels for Students (NfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's □For Students□ Literature line, NfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels



frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of NfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of NfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel; and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of "classic" novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members—educational professionals—helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized



Each entry, or chapter, in NfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- **Introduction:** a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- **Author Biography:** this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- **Plot Summary:** a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- **Characters:** an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed—for instance, the narrator in *Invisible Man*—the character is listed as "The Narrator" and alphabetized as "Narrator." If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name "Jean Louise Finch" would head the listing for the narrator of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname "Scout Finch."
- **Themes:** a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- **Style:** this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- **Historical Context:** This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- **Critical Overview:** this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- **Criticism:** an essay commissioned by NfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).



- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an "at-a-glance" comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

NfS includes "The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature," a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Novels for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.



Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Novels for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Novels for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from NfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from NfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

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Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

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