

Working Days: The Journals of The Grapes of Wrath

By John Steinbeck

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John Steinbeck wrote **The Grapes of Wrath** during an astonishing burst of activity between June and October of 1938. Throughout the time he was creating his greatest work, Steinbeck faithfully kept a journal revealing his arduous journey toward its completion.

The journal, like the novel it chronicles, tells a tale of dramatic proportions—of dogged determination and inspiration, yet also of paranoia, self-doubt, and obstacles. It records in intimate detail the conception and genesis of **The Grapes of Wrath** and its huge though controversial success. It is a unique and penetrating portrait of an emblematic American writer creating an essential American masterpiece.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
While writing his greatest novel in 1938, Steinbeck kept a journal that chronicled his torments, self-doubts, late and false starts, reversals and other struggles to achieve his goal. There are references to his typist-wife Carol Henning, his agent Elizabeth Otis, his publisher Pascal Covici and to the documentary filmmaker Pare Lorentz, whose style strongly influenced the structure of Steinbeck's novel. Entry #100, 26 October 1938, ends, "Finished this dayand I hope to God it's good." Another 21 entries deal with the aftermath, to January 1941. The repetitiveness and at times boring nature of the journal may deter general readers, who will, however, appreciate the extensive introduction, comments, notes and annotations of DeMott, professor of English at Ohio University.
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From School Library Journal
YA-- Divided into three parts, each with commentary, deMott provides preface and acknowledgements as well as a context-setting introduction for events and people in John Steinbeck's life during the time he wrote The Grapes of Wrath. Concluding with notes and annotations to the journal entries, this book may be a bit more than is needed for most student research at the high-school level. It does, however, provide some fascinating details on the great American writer's life and writing style, and gives insight into Steinbeck's commitment and dedication to his work.
- *Jenni Elliott, Episcopal High School, Bellaire, TX*
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From Library Journal
These journal notations, which Steinbeck used as "stretching exercises" to warm up to his daily 2000-word stints during his five months' labor on Grapes , shed an interesting light on his working habits. His references to the novel-in-progress take the completed novel pretty much for granted--much as a marathon runner is far less concerned with the route and the finish line than with what mile-marker he is at, how his condition is, and whether he will be able to slog out the distance. Few readers of Grapes , with its irresistible narrative drive and effortless panoramic prose style, would guess at the dogged, self-doubting day-laborer's mood of these notes. The accompanying commentary and annotations by the editor are informative, generally judicious, and relatively thorough.
- *Earl Rovit, City Coll., CUNY*
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