



AMERICAN  
LITERATURE

# Depression, dust, & Steinbeck

from the Esri GeoInquiries™ collection for American Literature

Target audience – American literature learners

Time required – 15 minutes

**Activity** Explore the economic, environmental, and cultural influences in Steinbeck's work.

**English Standards** CCSS: ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3. Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama.  
CCSS: ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.9. Demonstrate knowledge of eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and early twentieth-century foundational works of American literature, including how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics.

**Learning Outcomes**

- Students will analyze the impact of the drought on characters.
- Students will analyze the agricultural and economic influences in the literature.

Map URL: <http://esriurl.com/litGeoInquiry10>

## Ask

### Where did they come from?

- Click the URL above to launch the map.
- ? How do we define refugees? [*Economic/environmental/political migrants*]
- Examine the population change displayed on the map.
- ? How does the population change in Oklahoma and California between 1930 and 1940? [*People fled the Dust Bowl for jobs in California.*]

## Acquire

### Why did so many farmers leave their land?

- Read aloud: "Houses were shut tight, and cloth wedged around doors and windows, but the dust came in so thinly that it could not be seen in the air, and it settled like pollen on the chairs and tables, on the dishes." – John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath*
- With the Details button depressed, click the button, Content.
- Click the checkbox to the left of the layer name, Population Change, to turn the layer off.
- Turn on the layer, Farm Count Change By County.
- Turn on the layer, Dust Outline.
- ? What role did farming play in the story? [*Farms dried up in the Dust Bowl and flourished in California.*]

## Explore

### How did people migrate?

- Turn on the layer, Route 66.
- Click the line to see the mileage for each state of Route 66.
- ? How far did the characters possibly travel? [*Answers vary based on the novel.*]
- ? How many miles did the Dust Bowl "refugees" travel/migrate? [*More than 1,200 miles*]
- Look back at the data from population and farm count.

more ➔



## Analyze

### What waited for migrants in California?

- Click the button, Bookmark. Select the bookmark, Of Mice And Men.
- Turn on the layer, Of Mice And Men.
- ? Why were there so many ranches in the Salinas River Valley? [*The river provided water for crops and livestock. Large, thriving ranches meant jobs for strong men.*]
- Select the bookmark, San Bernardino.
- ? What proof in the map data do we find that people like our characters migrated? [*Areas of Northern and Southern California have farm and population growth. Both areas would be accessible by common routes.*]



## Act

### What do modern climate migrants look like?

- Global sea level rise will make many populations migrants, even in the United States.
- Press the button, Basemap. Select the Imagery basemap.
- Select the bookmark, Isle Of Jean Charles.
- ? What is happening here? [*Water rising will overtake the area in time, like other areas.*]
- ? Where will these people move? [*Student speculations might include nearby higher-ground cities.*]

### ZOOM TO A BOOKMARK

- Click the button, Bookmarks.
- Select a bookmark name to zoom to a map location and scale.

### USE THE MEASURE TOOL

- Click Measure, select the Distance button, and from the drop-down list, choose a unit of measurement.
- On the map, click once to start the measurement, click again to change direction, and double-click to stop measuring.
- Hint: Position the area of interest on the map so that it is not obscured by the Measure window.

## Next Steps

DID YOU KNOW? ArcGIS Online is a mapping platform freely available to public, private, and home schools. A school subscription provides additional security, privacy, and content features. Learn more about ArcGIS Online and how to get a school subscription at <http://www.esri.com/schools>.

### THEN TRY THIS...

- Have refugee circumstances changed since the 1930s? Compare modern circumstances to those from the novels. Explore other Climate Migrants (<http://esriurl.com/Geo227>) or explore The Uprooted (<http://esriurl.com/Geo228>).
- With an ArcGIS Online organizational account for schools, use the Routing tool to determine modern migration or refugee routes.



### TEXT REFERENCES

This GIS map has been cross-referenced to material in sections of chapters from these American novels.

- *The Grapes of Wrath*, John Steinbeck
- *Out of the Dust*, Karen Hesse
- *Of Mice and Men*, John Steinbeck