THE AMERICAN SOCIAL LIFE IN JOHN STEINBECK’S _THE GRAPESE OF WRATH_

A THESIS

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Background of the Analysis

Literature is something beautiful. It is, of course, occurring from the creativity of the writers. From their high imagination, they can create a qualified literary work. A good literary work is not only arranged by the intrinsic elements, but also by the extrinsic ones. The Intrinsic elements are elements that arrange a literary work from inside. It includes theme, plot, characters, setting and point of view, etc. Whereas the extrinsic elements are elements which arrange a literary work from the outside, like history, sociology, psychology, religion, etc.

Besides intrinsic factors, extrinsic also give much contribution to a writer to create a literary work. It cannot be denied that the influence of environment, socio-culture, and the spirit of era has a high influence for the writers.

Sometimes, literary works try to picture the reality in the society. The important events that become a part of history of a country are expressed by the writers in their writing. Such thing could happen, because of the writers themselves are part of society. They see the events, and feel the impacts from those historical events, whether happiness or sadness. It is no wonder if there are some researchers who try to analyze the relationship between literature and sociology.
There are so many definitions of sociology according to the experts of sociology. First, Ellwood in Maryati (2001:7) states that sociology is a knowledge that explains the relationship of human being and their groups, their source and progress, and shape and duties. Second, Max Weber in Maryati (2001:7) states that sociology is a knowledge that tries to give the understanding of social attitude. From the two definitions above, there are two conclusions can be drawn, first, sociology is knowledge, and second, the object of sociology is human being. Like sociology, the object of literature is human being (Damono, 2002:9). It means that between sociology and literature has the same object that is human being. It makes both sociology and literature are having mutual inter-realtionship.

The sociological approach tries to reflect the social life on the certain time. How far the literary works reflect the reality. But Wellek and Warren (1977:95) give a limitation that a literary work does not tell every detail of events or history that occurs in one country or states. In their book, *Theory of Literature*, Wellek and Warren state that literature is really not a reflection of the social process, but the essence, the abridgement and summary of all history. There are three classifications of sociological problems, they are the sociology of the writer, the social content of the work itself and the last one is the influence of literature on society (Wellek and Warren, 1977:96). And in this analysis I would like to use the second classification to analyze my thesis.

The fact that literature is like a mirror of social life, has made me interested in analyzing a novel by John Steinbeck, entitled “*The Grapes of Wrath*” through my study entitled “An Analysis of American Social Life in John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*”. The story of this novel is set in the Great Depression time. Therefore, by
analyzing this novel I know what happened to the American Society before, during and after the Great Depression.

In 1939, the American novelist, John Steinbeck published his novel *The Grapes of Wrath*. The novel caused John Steinbeck to win a Pulitzer Prize and a Nobel Prize for literature. It tells about a long-heavy journey that is done by a poor family, represented by the Joad family, in Oklahoma, who lose their farm during the great economic depression. The whole family is suffering because of the pressure that is done by the land owner. The Joad family and their neighbors do not have the authority to fight the abstract power, represented by the banks, and the concrete power, represented by tractor machines. The Joads goes to California, The Hope Land, looking for jobs. But, their hope is not easy to be reached, because they should adapt to a new condition where they even do not know. They only have farming skill. It makes them difficult to get what they want. There, in California, they get nickname from the Californian, that was “Okies”. It made them fell different than others, and influenced them psychologically. Besides that, the people in California actually do not like these newcomers. They afraid, that they will take their jobs and land. There are jobs in California, but to get them, they have to struggle for getting them. But they do not want to give up because of such condition.

Actually, Steinbeck is not the writer that, just aim at entertaining his readers. The theme he chose is important and real, like in *Dubious Battle*.

The praise and critic toward the novel, *The Grapes of Wrath* are come. Most of the people, who praise this novel, see that this novel is a great literary work, admitted by the world. This can be proved by so many college students, especially the college students who are majoring in literature and language, take this novel as the material of
their thesis. And many seminars and symposiums talk about this novel. For the people who agree that this novel is worthy, think that the materials of the novel are not local and temporary, but universal and explained accurately. The characters which showed off by Steinbeck are really touched for every people who read it.

The different views about this novel are also rising. Howard Levant (in Damono, Amarah, 1997: ix) sum up as follows: That, since the published of *The Grapes of Wrath*, this novel have got the sharp critic and suit to be paid the high attention, because the materials are local and temporary, and it is not universal. The characters that occur are superficial, and there are the inter-chapters that can blur the general suggestion.

But, apart from the different view of this novel, I think *The Grapes of Wrath* is good, and reasonable to be analyzed.

**1.2 The Problems of the Analysis**

From the background of the analysis which is described above, the problems investigated are:

1. Does John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath* really reflect the condition of the American society at that time?
2. What happened to the American social life in 1930s which is reflected in John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*?
3. What are the impacts of that event on the American social life?
1.3 The Objectives of the Analysis

This analysis has two objectives. First, the theoretical objective and second, the pragmatic objective. In the theoretical objective, I apply the theory of sociology. In this approach, I analyze the literature by considering the aspects of the social life (Damono, 2002: 2). The pragmatic objective is:

1. To describe the condition of the American social life reflected in John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*.
2. To describe what happened to the American society in 1930s through John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*.
3. To describe the impacts of that event to the American social life.

1.4. The Significant of the Analysis

I hope this analysis can give many advantages in literary learning, understand about Sociological approach and the most important thing, it can be used as one of the references in doing the next analysis by the students of English Department, because analyzing the literary work by using the sociological approach is very interesting.
1.5 The Method of the Analysis

In accomplishing this thesis, I follow some procedures as follow; first, I determine the novel that will be analyzed, that is *The Grapes of Wrath*, written by the American novelist, John Steinbeck. This novel was published in 1939.

Second, I determine the main problem of analysis, by analyzing the American social life in John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*. After that I do library research to find out books which are needed to arrange my thesis. I also add some important information by browsing the internet.

After all data are collected, I make a brief description of Sociological Approach. Then I make a brief description about Great Depression that happened in America in 1930s and its impacts to the American social life.

Next I analyze the American social life in John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath* by applying the sociological approach. According to the sociological approach, a literary work is seen of its relationship with the reality, how far that literary work pictures the reality.

By the end of the thesis, I draw some conclusions and suggestion from the analysis I made.
1.6 Review of the related literature

This analysis uses some theoretical background as the basis of the analysis:

*Theory of literature* (Wellek and Warren: 1977). This book describes clearly about literature. According to Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, literature represents “life” and “life” in this case is a social reality. They classify three divisions of literary sociology problems, the sociology of writers, the social content of the works themselves, and the influence of literature on society.

*Pedoman Penelitian Sosiologi Sastra* (Damono: 2002). This book talks about the social and environmental aspects, so it is called the sociology of literature. The important factors that should be considered in analyzing the sociology of literature are the writers, the literary works itself, and the readers. Nowadays, the sociological approach that is most done by the researcher is paying attention to the aspect of documentary of literature. The basic idea is that literature is a mirror of its era. In this case, the job of sociology of literature is to connect the experience of the imaginative characters and situation created by the writer to the real condition that happen in one state or country.


*Garis Besar Sejarah Amerika* (Francis Whitney: 1949-1950). This book describes every important event that happens in America. One of them is the Great Economic
Depression in American in 1930s. It was the worst worldwide economic crisis of the modern industrial era.

CHAPTER 2

A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH

2.1 The Definition

Sociology is the branch of the social science. It is an effort to use systematic methods of empirical investigation and critical analysis to develop a body of knowledge about human societies and human social activity.

The sociology of literature comes from two words, they are sociology and literature. The word “sociology” comes from the Latin word “socius” and “logos”. Socius means together, unity, and friends, whereas “logos” means words and knowledge. So sociology is the study of origins and evolution of society; the knowledge that study about the whole relationship. In Encyclopedia Americana (2004: ) it is said that Sociology is the scientific study of the social behavior of human beings, or put differently, the study of human groups.

Literature also comes from Latin word “littera” means “alphabet”. Roman Jacobson, the formalist from Russia, defines literature as an organized violence committed on ordinary speech. According to Imam Ja’far Al Shadiq, a Muslim Scholar and Philosopher literature is the garment which one puts on what he says or writes so that it may appear more attractive, added that literature is a slice of life that has been given
direction and meaning, an artistic interpretation of the world according to the percipient’s point of view.

Actually, both sociology and literature have the same object, which is human being. However, the essence of sociology and literature is very different. Sociology is the objective knowledge. It limits to what happen in recent times. But literature is evaluative, subjective and imaginative.

In her book, *Paradigma Sosiologi Sastra* Ratna (2003:2) states that there are some definitions of sociology of literature that needs to be considered in order to find out the objectivities of relationship between literary works and society, they are

1. The understanding toward the literary works by considering the aspects of social.
2. The understanding toward the literary works and its relationship with the society as the background of a literary work.
3. The sociology of literature is dialectic relationship between literature and society.
4. The sociology of literature tries to find out the quality of interdependency between literature and society.
5. The analysis of toward the literary work by considering how far its role in change the structure of social.
6. The analysis which is related to the advantage of work in promoting the development of society.
7. The sociology of literature is the analysis of literature institutions.
8. The sociology of literature is the direct relation between a literary works with the society.
9. The sociology of literature is the positivistic that is the relationship between literature and society. The understanding that relate with the creative activity as the process socio-culture.

From some definition above, the definition of number 1 is the first priority that represents the balances of both component, which is literature and society.

2.2 The Sociological Approach

A literary of sociology is an analysis toward the literary works by considering the involvement of its social structure (Ratna, 2003: ). The study of Sociology is based on the understanding that actually, every cultural fact is born and grown in a certain historical social condition. So that, the understanding of the social aspects in literary sociology- in one side- explaining that the fiction story is not contrast with the reality in the society.

By using the sociological approach, a literary work is seen as a document of social. Wellek and Waren (1977:102) states that much the most common approach to the relations of literature and society is the study of works of literature as social documents, as assumed pictures of social reality. Then Wellek and Warren say that used as a social document, literature can be made to yield the outlines of social history. Whereas, Damono (2002:11) states that
bahwa sastra merupakan cermin langsung dari pelbagai struktur sosial, hubungan kekeluargaan, pertentangan kelas, dan lain-lain.

The essence, the social phenomenon is a concrete things, which happens in our surroundings in daily lifes, which can be observed, and can be documented. By the writer, that phenomenon is “re-lifted up” to be a new discourse with the creative process (observation, analysis, interpretation, imagination, evaluation, etc) into the literary work. The literature present the view of life, most of the life itself consist of the social fact. In this understanding, the life includes the relationship of inter-society with other people (Gunoto Sapaire, ).

2.3 The theory in Sociological Approach.

There are some theories of sociological approach which are used when analyzing a literary work. The sociology of literature, by joining two difference discipline, sociology and literature, basically, must be supported by two different theories. The problem that must be considered is the domination in the analysis; therefore the aim which is meant can be reached maximally. In the sociology of literature, the dominating theories are the theory which are related to the literature, whereas, the theories that relate with the sociology just as the complement.

Some of the relevant theories of sociology are:

1. The theory of Augusta Comte and Pitirim Sorokin. It describes about the level of culture, the dominant culture, for example the analysis of the role of the world view to understand the certain social system.
2. The theory of Karl Marx. It is about the system of socio-culture, for example, the analysis of ideology, etc.

3. The theory of Max Weber. It is about the quality of rationality and authority of birocracy, for example the analysis of individualistic character in interaction structure, the convention role, etc.

4. The theory of Emile Durkheim. It is about the structure of social, the solidarity of social, for example the typology analysis of socio-culture facts.

The theories of literature that can be applied in the sociological approach are:

1. The theory of mimetic by Plato and Aristoteles. This is about the art works as the imitation of the society.

2. The theory of genetic by Hippolyte Taine. This is about the influence of race and the surroundings toward the origin of the works.

3. The theory of trilogy of writer-works-readers by Rene Wellek and Austin Warren. Wellek and Warren states that there are three classification of the problems in sociology of literature they are first, the sociology of the writer that make of problem out of social status, the social ideology etc, that relate to the writer as the creator of literary works. Second, the literary works’ sociology that make of problem out the literary works themselves. The main analysis is what is implicit in a literary works and what the aim of the literary works. And the third, the literary’s sociology that make of problem out the reader and the social influences of a literary work.
There are some of the theories which are commonly used in analyzing the literary works by using the sociological approach, but in this case I just apply the theory of Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, that is second classification. What is contained in a literary works and what is to be the aim of it. And the kind of event that is to be the background of a literary works. In this case, the literary works as a social document.
CHAPTER 3

A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF GREAT DEPRESSION IN AMERICA IN 20TH CENTURY

3.1 The Great Depression in America

America is a big country. It is laid in the middle of North America, bordered by Canada (north) and Mexico (south). America is a country with its 50 states that was colonialized by the Great Britain for a long time. America declared its independence day on July, 4, 1776 (next, every July, 4 is celebrated as American Independence Day).

America has a long history. The journey to be a big country like today, is not easy. There are so many problems faced by this country for the sake of its development. One of the parts of the history of America that will be remembered, not only by the citizens of America themselves, but also the people around the world with its the Great Economic Depression. A deep economic recession that happened in the late of 1929, and lasted near the World War II, 1942.

According to Encyclopedia Americana (2004:747), “Depression” is a state of sadness, decreased initiative, and introversion. The great depression was the slump worldwide economic crisis, that happened not only in America, but also almost entire the European countries in 1929.
From 1929 to 1933, industrial production in the United States fell by nearly 50 percent, and unemployment rose from about 4 percents to at least 25 percents. Stock prices fell down to about 20 percent of their 1929 worth, and well over 30 percent of the nation’s banks failed, wiping out the life savings of depositors. (The New Book of Knowledge: 119)

The great depression was one of the most horrible events in the history of America. The huge effects that triggered the great depression has made millions of its citizens were in economic pressure. Poverty, unemployment, and starving are some of its effects.

3.2 The Causes of Great Depression

The great Depression was caused by some factors. First, the crashed of the stock-market prices on the New York Stock Exchange in October 1929. It is often identified as the major cause of the Great Depression; it is more accurate to see the sudden drop stock prices as a reflection of the underlying problems that already existed in the economy. These were the real causes of the Great Depression. Next, some of the problems resulted from the high costs of World War I (1914-1918). The depression was also weakened by the increasing of the income taxation. And then the imbalances between demand and supply.

The system of American Economic also mentioned as one of the factor that caused the Great Depression. Before the great depression, the American government applied the laissez-faire economic system. In this sort of economic system, the
government is not interfere the economic. In the view of laissez-faire, the obligation of the state is not to interfere to stabilize the distribution of the wealthy or to make the prosperous country to protect the people from the poverty, but it depends on the contribution and the market system. In the view of laissez-faire economic system, the government also is not allowed to give the special rights in business.

3.3 The Impacts of Great Depression to the American Social Life

Every problem, absolutely leave the impacts to the people. So did the Great Depression. The great depression was one horrible event in the history of America. The huge effects those are occurred by the great depression has made millions of its citizens were in economic pressure. The impacts of Great Depression to American Social life are:

1. **Poverty.**
   Most American people were in poverty. They also lost everything such as, house, land, and deposit.

2. **Starving**
   The lack of food also was felt by the most American people. They were difficult to find out the food. Even, they had to line up for meters just to got some bread.

3. **The Loss of the houses**
   The loss of the house is sad case. Most of American people lose the house. They borrowed money from the bank, and when they could not pay their debt, the bank come to them and wanted their house and land, without people on it.

4. **The business of property was dead.**
Many businesses were bankrupt. Of them was the business of property.

5. The banks were collapse

Many banks were collapse. No more than eleven thousand of banks were bankrupt from twenty five thousand that existed in America. (Www. Google.com)

6. The stock market were crashed

The stock market that become the economic barometer in America at that time, were fall. Even, the fall of this stock market was told as the major cause of the happened of the great depression. The stock was fall on the low level.

7. The factories were closed

The factories also were closed. The decrease of the production and make the owner of the factory they had to reduce their employees

8. The production stopped, the export was stuck

The demand of things was decrease, so the production stopped, and the export was stuck.

9. The mass-workers reduce. Reducing of the mass-workers cannot be avoided by the companies. They had to do it, because many companies were bankrupt and closed. In the Great Depression, millions of American people were jobless.
CHAPTER 4
THE AMERICAN SOCIAL LIFE IN JOHN STEINBECK’S  *THE GRAPES OF WRATH*

4.1. The Condition of the American Social Life before the Great Depression

The condition of American social life before the great economic depression was signed by the era called The Roaring Twenties. Roaring Twenties is a phrase used to describe the 1925’s, principally in North America, that emphasizes the period’s social, artistic, and cultural dynamism. Normalcy returned to politics in the wake of World War I, jazz music blossomed, the flapper redefined modern womanhood, Art Deco peaked, and finally the Wall Street Crash of 1929 served to punctuate the end of the era, as The Great Depression set in. Cited from the [www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roaring-Twenties](http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roaring-Twenties),

“The Roaring Twenties were a decade in which nothing big happened-no major catastrophes of larges events- at least until the stock market crash in 1929- it is one of the most significance decades in U.S history because of the great changes that came about in American society”

This era was further distinguished by several inventions and discoveries of far-reaching importance, unprecedented industrial growth and accelerated consumer demand.
and aspirations, and significant change in lifestyle. The young people had fun by often hold the party and dance

The spirit of the Roaring Twenties was marked by the general feeling of discontinuity associated with modernity, a break with tradition. Everything seemed easy through the modern technology, especially, automobiles, movie and radio.

In the Roaring Twenties, every family tried to full up their home with the luxurious items. They became consumerism. They bought everything. But not all people at that time were rich. Not everyone prospered in 1920s. Farmers became increasingly more skillful and efficient in producing food; found that laws of supply and demand still plague them. The more they produced, the lower prices tended to fall. In the early 1920s bread was at its lowest price in 500 years relatively to other necessities. It was still tough to make a living down on farm.

In *The Grapes of Wrath*, the condition of the American social life before the Great Depression is pictured as follows:

The condition of the American life is relatively stabile. They can fulfill their needs, have adequate food, and absolutely, they have a nice house etc.

“Well I remember. I sure did pick a nice time to get paroled. I figgered I was gonna lay aroun’ an’ get up late an’ ate a lot when I come home. I was goin’ out an’ dance, an I was gonna go tom-cattin’-an’ here I ain’t had time to do none of them things.” (Steinbeck, 1936: 396).

They also have cars. The good cars. This quotation proves that before the great depression, the most American people are in prosperity.
“In the towns, on the edge of the towns, in field, invacant lots, the used-car yards, the wreckers’ yards, the garages with blazoned signs- Used Cars, Good Used Cars. Cheap transportations, three trailers. ’27 Ford, clean. Checked cars, guaranteed cars. Free radio. Car with 100 gallons of gas free. Come in and look. Used cars. No overhead” (Steinbeck, 1936: 274).

“Cars lined up, Model T’s, high and snotty, creaking wheel, worn bands. Buicks, Nashes, De Sotos. Yes Sir, ’22 Dodge. Best goddamn car Dodge ever made. Never wear out. Low compression got lots a sap for a while, but the metal ain’t made that’ll hold it for long. Plymouts, Rocknes, Stars” (Steinbeck, 1936: 275)

In the Roaring Twenties, most of the people are rich. In *The Grapes of Wrath*, it is said the Joad Family never feel the poverty like that.

Uncle John broke in, “We never did have no paupers.” Tom said, “Maybe we got to learn. We never got booted off no land before neither.” (Steinbeck, 1936: 357)

4.2. The Condition of the American Social Life during the Great Depression

During the Great Depression, the American people suffer the kind of problems. Their problems are varies, began with the loss of the house until migrate to the California. Briefly, we can see the condition of American Social life during the Great Depression in John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath* as follow:

4.2.1. Unemployment
Unemployment or jobless is the term used to refer the people who do not work; the people who are looking for the job; the people who work less than two days in a week; or the people who try to find out the job.

The causes of the unemployment or jobless are varies. Generally, it is caused by the imbalances between the amount of the workers and the job vacancies provided. Unemployment often creates the problem of economic, because by the existing of the unemployment, the productivities are decrease, and automatically, the income of the people are low. It can create another problem, that is the poverty and other social problems.

The problem of unemployment can happen in every country. Even in the well developed countries like America, the Great Britain, and Japan. But their amount is not as many as the amount of unemployment in the developing countries.

The economic condition of every country is not always stable. Sometimes there is a shake, and in other times the economic condition is normal. There are two kinds of economic depression. First it is called, recession and second called depression. The two terms are similar, but impacts resulted are different.

The common things that could happen to a country which undergoes the economic crisis are the reduce of the workers of a company. It is natural. The companies do not make the production as usual, because the demands of the market are low/decrease. Consequently, the companies cannot pay their workers anymore. This case happens to the people in America too, during the great depression. Most people lost their works. In Sejarah Amerika (American History) it is said that in 1933, millions of
American people were jobless. Not only did the companies or industries, suffer, unemployment also occurred in the whole fields, including the agriculture sector.

*The Grapes of Wrath* is the story about a peasant family in Oklahoma. When the great depression occurs, it is said that, the owner of the land cannot allow the tenants to work on their land anymore. Because they cannot give the owner of land the advantages or profit, whereas what is looked for by the owner of the land is profit.

> “Well, the folks that own the lan’ says, we can’t afford to keep no tenants.’ An’ they says, “The share a tenant gets is jus’ the margin a profit we can’t afford to lose.” (Steinbeck, 1936: 259)

The land-rental system is not valid anymore. Because the owner of land will exchange the human power (the tenants) with the machines (tractor). For the land owners, this exchange is more efficient, because of economical. They should not pay the tenants anymore. The work by tractor machines is considered faster than human power. This concrete power can be opposed by the tenants.

> “And last the owner men came to the point. The tenant system won’t work anymore. One man on a tractor can take the place of twelve or fourteen families. Pay him a wage and take the entire crop. We have to do it. We don’t like to do it. But the monster’s sick. Something’s happened to the monster”. (Steinbeck, 1939:244)

### 4.2.2. The Poverty, Suffering and Sadness
The problem of poverty has been existed for long time. The poverty, as a social economic “sick” not only hit the developing countries, but also the developed countries like the Great Britain and America.

The Great Britain was hit by the poverty at the end of 1700s when the rising of Industrial Revolution in Europe. At that time, the poor in England came from the factories labors, which previous works as farmers got the low wages, and it made the ability to buy things was low. Most of them lived in the slum area which risk of crime, like prostitutes and criminals.

The United States which is one of the super power countries in the world also faces the problem of poverty, especially in the Great Depression, from 1929 till 1939.

According to Karl Marx, there are three classes of people in the society: first, Capitalists, the owner of the capital, the machines of production, and land. Through their capital, they can do everything; even use the sort of efforts to fulfill all they want. Secondly, the middle class. The members of this class are the government officers. (In the end, this class is included to the Capitalists, because, in fact, they (the middle class group) always support whatever done by the capitalists). Thirdly, it is called the proletar. The members of this class do not have the production machines, modal, etc. The comparison of these three levels of social class is dominated by the Proletar. With the occurring of the Great economic crisis in America, it could be sure that the list of the poor was more and more increase.

There are two kinds of the causes of poverty, they are first, the natural poverty (kemiskinan alamiah) and made poverty (kemiskinan buatan). (Nurske, 1953).
The natural poverty happens because of the limited natural resources, the low technology usage, and the disaster. Whereas, the made poverty occurs because the departments which are in the society, make the part of society member cannot authorize the economic tools and some other facilities; it makes the people still in poverty.

Some problems that are related to the poverty, are interesting to be studied, whether from social, political or economic aspect. From the economic aspect, it can be seen that the poor is difficult to buy anything, the limited production tools, low wages, no deposits, etc. And from the political aspect, it can also be seen that there is no link between some facilities and occasions for the poor, discriminative, and weak position in making the decisions.

In the *Grapes of Wrath*, John Steinbeck pictures that most of the people in America when the Great Depression occurred, are in poverty. They lose their house, do not have clothes and do not have enough food. Two of the basic needs of human being could not be fulfilled by them.

They do not have the proper place to live. The needs of people include three parts; the primary necessity, like food, housing and clothes, education; the secondary necessity, like recreation, etc; and the last one is the luxurious or tertier necessity, like cars, deposits, etc. The basic necessities of human being that should be fulfilled are the primary necessities. If a family can not fulfill the primary necessities, they are called the poor.

The Joad family has to live in the un-proper house. Their grandparents even has to sleep in the barn.
Tom asked, “Where is Grampa? I ain’t seen the ol’ devil.”
Ma stacked the plates on the kitchen table and piled cups beside
them. She said confidentially, “Oh, him an’ Granma sleeps in the
barn…….”
“……. But now Granma an’ Granpa both sleeps in the barn.”
(Steinbeck, 1936: 289)

They also do not have proper clothes to use. Their clothes are rag, old and bad.

“Across the yard came over four people. Grampa was ahead, a
lean, ragged, quick old man, jumping with quick steps and
favouring his right leg…….He wore dark ragged pants and a torn
blue shirt, open all the way down”. (Steinbeck, 1936: 291)

In the *The Grapes of Wrath*, John Steinbeck expresses the suffering and sadness
of the American people at that time, when the great Depression occur

“The squatting men looked down again, what do you want us to
do? We can’t take less share of the corp-we’re half starved now.
The kids are hungry all the time. We got no clothes, torn an’
ragged. If all the neighbors weren’t the same, we’d be ashamed to
go to meeting”. (Steinbeck, 1936:244).

Ma never believes that one day she and her family will suffer. She
never imagines that one day her family lives in the road for days. She has to sell
everything she has.

“Her face hardened and her eyes grew cold. “I never had my house
pushed over,” she said. “I never had my fambly stuck out on the
road. I never had to sell-ever’ thing- Here they come now…”
(Steinbeck, 1936 291).
Ma’s sadness not only because of losing house, land and lack of food, or do not get the job, but she is also sad because she has to be separated from her other family members. Grandpa is dead because he does not want to leave his land. Moving from the land means the death for him. Grandma is also dead because of sickness, and both Grandpa and Grandma are buried as the poor. While Noah does not want to go with them. And Roshasarn’s husband goes to look for his own way.

“Granma a pauper, an’ buried a pauper. That’s sharp now. That’s awful sharp. An’ Noah walkin away down the river. He don’t know. We ain’t never gonna know if he’s alive or dead. Never gonna know. An’ Connie sneakin’ away”. (Steinbeck, 1939:554)

4.2.3. The Loss of the Houses and Land

In The Grapes of Wrath, John Steinbeck talks much about the people who lose their houses when the Great Depression hit America.

In the beginning of the novel, Joad who is just paroled from the jail, hitchikes the truck. He is involved in the conversations with the truck’s driver. Joad says that his family has forty acres of land. They have been living there for a long time. But the truck’s driver says that in nowadays, the farmers are going fast, because there are tractors that shove them out.

“No, my old man got a place, forty acres. He’s a cropper, but we been there a long time”.
“A forty-acre cropper and he ain’t been dusted out and he ain’t been tracted out?”
“’Course I ain’t heard lately,” said the hitch-hiker
“Long time,” said the driver. A bee flew into the cab and buzzed in back of the windshield. The driver put out his hand and carefully drove the bee into the air stream that blew it out of the window.
“Croppers going fast now,” he said. “One cat’ takes and shoves ten families out. Cat’s all over hell now. Tear in and shove the croppers out. How your ma hold on?”(Steinbeck, 1939: 218)

Joad goes back home –accompanied by the preacher, Jim Casy- and finds at everything in his home has changed. There are no homes or kinds of building anymore, and there is also nobody there. He is very shocked.

They moved over the curving top of the hill and saw the Joad place below them. And Joad stopped. “It ain’t the same,” he said. “Looka that house. Somepin’s happened. They ain’t nobody there.” The two stood and stared at the little cluster of buildings…” (Steinbeck, 1939: 241).

“The Reverend Casy and young Tom stood up on the hill and looked down on the Joad Place. The small unpainted house was mashed at one corner, and it had been pushed off its foundations so that it slumped at an angle, its blind front windows pointing at a spot of sky well above the horizon…. “There ain’t nothin’ left,” said Joad. “We had pretty nice tools. There ain’t nothin’ left…” (Steinbeck, 1939:251).

Tom Joad meets his families in their bad conditions. Joad’s family is happy because they can see him again. From his family, Joad knows, what has happened to their home and land. Now they live in a simple house.

“Ma waved the flies away from the bowl of gravy. “We ain’t got room to set down,” she said. “Jus’ get yaself a plate an’ set down
The people are confused because of the change.

“[The western States] nervous under the beginning change. Texas and Oklahoma, Kansas and Arkansas, New Mexico, Arizona, California. A single family moved from the land”. (Steinbeck, 1939: 370).

They have to get out from their own houses, because their houses will be tractored out. The bank wants their land and no families on it.

“Pa borrowed money from the bank, and now the bank wants the land. The land company— that’s the bank when it has land— wants tractors, not families on the land……. The people are driven, intimidated, hurt by both. We must think about this.

“One man, one family driven from the land; this rusty car creaking along the highway to the west. I lost my land, a single tractor took my land. I am alone and I am bewildered. And in the night one family camps in a ditch and another family pulls in and tents come out…” (Steinbeck, 1936:370).

“And in Kansas and Arizona, in Oklahoma and Texas and New Mexico, the tractors moved and pushed the tenants out”. (Steinbeck, 1939: 463)

4.2.4. The Lack of food (starving)

Starving is the condition where the body still needs the supply of food. Usually, when the stomach is empty, whether it is deliberate or not, for a long time. This term is used to refer the condition of malnutrition that attacks the group of people for a long time.
caused by the poverty, the conflict of politic, or the drought. (Cited from www.google.com)

The poverty that attacks the American people in the great depression had made them lack of food. The starving has to be a certain thing. They are difficult to get food. The line up of bread has to become a common view (Sejarah Amerika: 291).

In the *The Grapes of Wrath*, John Steinbeck views how difficult for the people to get food.

“My wife an’ the kids an’ her brother all took an’ went to California. They wasn’t nothin’ to eat. They wasn’t as mad as me, so they went. Bought an ol’ Chevy an’ took what they could. Fella came a-passin’ out han’bills say good wages in California. So they went. They wasn’t nothin’to eat here” (Steinbeck, 1939 260).

If there is food, the amount is little, and must be distributed among the other family members

“Ma threw some sticks into the stove, “I’ll get you a bit now, but it ain’t much.” (Steinbeck, 1939:310).

Some of them also eat the unusual food, like frogs, prairie dogs, etc. They must eat these kinds of “food”, otherwise, they will die of starving.

Some people even do not have enough money to buy adequate food for their families. This novel also pictures the way how to get food.

“The man took off his dark, stained hat and stood with a curious humility in front of the screen. “Could you see your way to sell us a loaf of bread, ma’am?” Mae said, “This ain’t a grocery store. We got bread to make san’widges.” “I know, ma’am.” His humility was insistent. “We need bread and there ain’t nothin’ for quite a piece, they say.” “F we sell bread we gonna run out.” Mae’s tone was faltering. “We’re hungry,” said the man “why’n’t you buy a san’widges? We got nice san’widges, humburgs.” “We’d sure admire to do that, ma’am. But we can’t. We got to make a dime do all of us.” And he said embarrassedly, “We ain’t got but a little.” (Steinbeck, 1939: 379)

4.2.5. Migration to another States seeking for job and the better living

Whitney (1950:16) states that, people have to go out from their city in the great depression. They aim to look for jobs and better lives. One of four from American people was a jobless at that time. It was because in the great depression, the factories were closed and the industries reduced their production. So, the companies, in consequences, reduce their workers too. It was no amazing that when the economic crisis came, the jobless also increased.

They moved to the west, because they had no other choice. In the Great Depression, approximately 800,000 people often called “Okies” left Arkansas, Texas, Missouri, and Oklahoma in 1930s and 1940s. Most of them moved to the California, the Hope land. The people who left their land were not only the farmers, but also the
professionals. In the beginning, California was not the dream place. Most of them snatched away the jobs like picking the harvest of cotton and fruits with low wages.

“The Western States are nervous under the beginning change. Need is the stimulus to concept, concept to action. A half-million people moving over the country; a million more restive, ready to move; ten million more feeling the first nervousness. And tractors turning the multiple furrows in the vacant land”.
(Steinbeck, 1936: 371)

Having got the brochure that is brought by the people; the Joad Family decides to go to the Hope Land, California, to get the job, as grape or orange pickers, and in order to get a better life.

“Well, I am, kinda. But I ain’t nowhere near the fella I was. Jus’ let me get out to California where I can pick me an orange when I want it. Or grapes. There’s a thing I ain’t never had enough of. Gonna get me a whole big bunch a grapes off a bush, or whatever, an’ I’m gonna squash ‘em on my face an’ let ‘em run offen my chin.” (Steinbeck, 1936:297)

“Maybe we can start again, in the new rich land- in California, where he fruit grows. We’ll start over”. (Steinbeck, 1936: 302)

They have the good view, that, in California, everything is well.

She said, “Tom, I hope things is all right in California.” (Page 305)

They hope California will give them the prosperity and wealthy
Tom laughed, “Gonna get ‘im bore in a orange ranch, huh? In one them white houses with orange tress all aroun’.” (Steinbeck, 1936: 314).

“Well, hell, I don’t know nobody here. If I’m gonna ride aroun’ much, I’m gonna get married. I’m gonna have me a hell of a time when we get to California (Steinbeck, 1936: 397).

Actually they have never gone to California before. They do not know about it.

“Ma,” the girl said, “when we get there, all you gonna pick fruit an’ kinda live in the country, ain’t you?
Ma smiled a little satirically, “We ain’t there yet,” she said. “We don’t know what it’s like. We got to see.” (Steinbeck, 1936: 384)

The Joad family hopes that in California, they will get the job with the good salary so they can buy something, like land, house and cars.

“….. When we get to California I aim to get me a nice car. Maybe she won’t break down.”
“Oh, but she’s worth it”, said Wilson. “Why, I seen the han’bills how they need folks to pick fruit, an’ good wages. Why jus’ think how it’s gona be, under them shady trees a pickin’ fruit an’ takin’ a bite ever’ once in a while. Why, hell, they don’t care how much you eat ‘cause they got so much. An’ with them good wages, maybe a fella can get hisself a little piece a land an’ work out for extra cash. Why, hell in a couple years. I bet a fella could have a place of his own.” (Steinbeck: page 366).

When the Joads are in the journey to California, they meet the people who have just come back from California. From them, the Joads get the little view about California. They even suggest that family go back to their land/city if it is possible for California is not as beautiful as they think of. California does not give what they want. They get the
work, but, they are paid with the very low salary. They work not for the wages anymore, but for food. More and more they have no other choice, except receive the situation

The ragged man shut his mouth and looked sullently at the porch boards, “You folks all goin’ to California, I bet.”
“Told you that,” said Pa. “You didn’ guess nothin’

…….The ragged man said slowly, “Me- I’m comin’ back. I been there.”
……
“I’m goin’ back to starve. I ruther starve all over at oncet.”
Pa said, “what the hell you talkin’ about? I got the han’bill says they got good wages, an’ little while ago I seen a thing in the paper says they need folks to pick fruit”.
The ragged man turned to Pa. “You got any place to go, back home?”
“No,” said Pa. “we are out. They put a tractor past the house.”
“You wouldn’ go back then?”
“Of course not”
“Then I ain’t wanna fret you
The ragged man drew himself up. “I tried to tell you fellas,” he said. “Somepin it took me a year to find out. Took two kids dead, took my wife dead to show me. But a can’t tell you. I should of knew that. Nobody couldn’t tell me neither. I can’t tell ya about them little fellas layin’ in the tent with their bellies puffed our an jus’ skin on their bones, an’ shiverin’ an’ whinin’ like pups, an’ me runnin’ aroun’ tryin’ to get work-not for money, not for wages!” he shouted. Jesus Christ, jus’ for a cup a flour an’a spoon a lard. An’ then the coroner come, “them children died a heart failure,” he said. Put it on his paper. Shiverin’, they was, an’ their bellies stuck out like a pig bladder…” (Steinbeck, 1939:413).

“In California they got high wages. I got han’bill here tells about it. Horeshit! I seen folks comin’ back. Somebody’s kiddin’ you”.
(Steinbeck, 1939: 336)

But, the Joads family does not give up because of the information. They keep the journey to the California because they do not have any other choice. They believe the handbill they have got, that in California they will get the prosperity, and guaranteed life.
When they arrive in California, they find the difficulties. They have to face the chain of investigation from the policemen who check their stuff.

One officer put down the license number and raised the hood. Tom asked, “What’s this here?”
“Agricultural inspection. We got to look over your stuff. Got any vegetables or seeds?”
“No,” said Tom.
“Well, we got to look over your stuff. You got to unload.”
“Yeah? Well, we got to look you over.” (Steinbeck, 1939:450)

The people in California actually do not want these immigrants. They hate them. The people from the Oklahoma even have the names that are given by the people there (Californians) that is “Okies”. These Californians are afraid that something happens when these Okies come to their State. And they are afraid that these Okies take their job, so they will be paid lower.

“They were hungry, and they were fierce. And they had hoped to find a home, and they found only hatred. Okies- the owners hated them because the owners knew they were soft and the Okies strong, that they were fed and the Okies hungry; and perhaps the owners had heard from their grandfathers how easy it is to steal land from the soft man if you are fierce and hungry and armed. The owner hated them. And in the towns, the storekeepers hated them because they had no money to spend, there is no shorter path to a storekeeper’s contempt, and all his admirations are exactly opposite. The town men little bankers, hated Okies because there was nothing to gain from them. They had nothing. And the laboring people hated Okies because a hungry man must work, and if he must work, if he has to work, the wage payer automically gives him less for his work; and then no one can get more”. (Steinbeck, 1939:458)
The children also feel sad because of this nickname. They are not happy when they go to school, because other children call them with “Okie” too. Their shoes and clothes are rag, while the other children are wearing nice suits. These children, even almost everyday, are fighting with other children.

“Our kids ain’t happy in them schools,” Black Hat said.
“Why not? They’re pretty nice, them schools.”
“Well, a raggedy kid with no shoes, an’ them other kids with socks on, an’ nice pants, an’ them a yellin’Okie. My boy went to school. Had a fight everyday. Done good too. (Steinbeck, 1939:570)

4.2.6 The Political Pressure

The great depression cannot be separated by the policies which are made by the Republican Government. To keep the prosperity -especially in the city - the government made the policies in 1920s which are very conservative. This case, because, is based on the belief that if the government can do everything to grow up the private sector, the prosperity will reach most of the people.

These Republican policies are also made to create a very advantageous condition for the industrial sector in America. The government also recommends the monopoly of the America factory businessmen in the domestic market (Whitney, 1950:35). However, the policies of Republican Party in the agricultural field get the big criticism, because the farmers just get a little prosperity in 1920s.

When the great depression occurs, there is the pressure from the plantation’s owners. They set the wages for their workers up to them. If the workers agree with the
wages, the owner of plantations can work them up in their plantations, but if the workers do not agree with the wages, they can leave it. But, because these people really need the jobs, they can not say anything; just agree with the wages which is set by the owner. These people work as the cotton and fruit pickers. They can do anything to get money and buy food.

The six cars stopped. Two bookkeepers moved from car to car. “Want to work?”
Tom answered, “sure, but what is this?”
“That’s not your affair. Want to work?”
“Sure we do.”
“Name?”
“Joad.”
“How many men?”
“Four.”
“How many women?”
“Two.”
“How many kids?”
“Two.”
“Can all of you work?”
“Why- I guess so.”
‘O.K. find house sixty-three. Wages five cents a box. No bruised fruit. All right, move along now. Go to work right away.” (Steinbeck, 1939:602)

4.3. The condition of the American Social Life after the Great Depression

Every problem which occurs must have been the way how to solve it. Whether the problem is big or small, actually it depends on how we look at it.

The great depression that happened in America in 1930s is a big problem, where everybody (every element of society) whether the government or society is forced to have the good work in solving the problem. This is not only the problem of government only.
The problem will never accomplish, if all of the element of society are blame for each other.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt gave his opinion that the Great depression was based on the flawed American economic, and then weakened by the policies that hade made by the republican government during 1920s. (Sejarah Amerika p: 286)

The crisis that happened in America was the broke out the basic of lives. The government of United States had tried to solve this crisis. So many ways that had been done to out from these horrible events. The chosen president from the Democratic Party, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, had done some efforts. His program, well-known by New Deal, had given the new spirit to the American people. His New Deal program were aimed to help the people from the suffer of the Great economic depression by giving the unemployed people job, not the financial support, give farmers subsidies, etc. Some of the New Deal’s programs were:

1. Work Program Administration (WPA)

   Work Program Administration or WPA was authorized in April 1935 to put the unemployed workers back to work on public project. With this program, it is hoped that those unemployed workers can be reduced, because this program take the mass-public workers. Kinds of works are offer, such as build the street, and dig the ditch, etc.

2. Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)

   It was a work relief program for young men from unemployed families, established on March, 21, 1933 by Franklin Delano Roosevelt. As part of
Roosevelt’s New Deal legislation, it was designed to combat unemployment during the Great Depression. The Civilian conservation corps become one of the most popular New Deal program among the General public and operated in every U.S states and several territories.

3. Public Work Administration (PWA)

The United States Public Work Administration was a New Deal Program. It was created by the National Industrial recovery Act in June 1933 during the Great Depression. It allowed almost $3 billion to be spent on the construction of public works to provide employment, stabilize purchasing power, improve the public welfare, and contribute to a revival of American industry.

4. Farm Security Administration (FSA)

It was an effort during the Depression to combat rural poverty. The Farm Security Administration stressed “rural rehabilitation” efforts to improve the lifestyle of sharecroppers, tenants, and very poor landowning farmers, and a program to purchase sub marginal land owned by the poor farmers and resettle them in group farms on land more suitable for efficient farming.

5. National Recovery Administration (NRA)

The NRA allowed industries to create “codes of fair competition” which were intended to reduce “destruction competition” and to help workers by setting minimum wages and maximum weekly hours. It also allowed industry heads to collectively set minimum prices.
Although Franklin Delano Roosevelt tried hard to solve that problem, actually, the New Deal program cannot be said as the success program. Many the rules he made were contrast, and so quick the rules were made.

The Great Depression takes a long time to end. It needs ten years for the government to end this crisis. In 1939, the condition of the American social life were begin to be better.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

5.1 CONCLUSIONS

Having analyzed Steinbeck’s novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*, I come to some conclusions as follows:

- John Steinbeck clearly describes, although implicitly, the real conditions of the American social life which happened in 1930s. He describes the characters’ hardships and troubles in their search for a better life in the West.

- Because of the Great Depression, most the American people, in this case is represented by the Joad family, had lose everything they have, such as houses lands, and jobs, etc. they become poor, starve and then, they have to move from their land. The Joad family goes to California. They face the difficulties during the journey to California until when they arrive there.

- The Great Depression is the longest financial crisis which happened in America during the history of that country. To solve the problem, the government tries to make the policies. The chosen president from the Democratic Party, Franklin
Delano Roosevelt, had his new program called, the New Deal. This program was made to overcome the Great Economic Depression. In 1939, the Great Depression ended.

5.2 SUGGESTIONS

This thesis is about the American Social life in the Great Depression which is described in the novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*, by John Steinbeck.

Talking about the social life, guide us to see the condition in the society. It is one of the interesting themes to be discussed. Why? Because, it is relating to the reality that we face everyday. John Steinbeck sees the reality of the American society in 1929. It makes him re-write his idea about the condition of American people at that time into a novel.

Analyzing a literary work by using the sociological approach is a very interesting thing for me. Besides the deep curiosity, in fact through the sociological approach, we can know the other side of social living in society. For the other English college students who want to know the real event that form the background of a literary works, just do the analysis by applying the sociological approach.

I hope the result of this thesis could be useful for others. For college students, who want to analyze the literary works by using the sociological approach, I hope this thesis could help them too.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

Summary of the novel

This novel was begun when young Joad was paroled from the jail in McAllister because he had killed someone in a party. He was sentenced for seven years. But because he had a good act, he spent four years only. When he went home to Oklahoma, he met the ex-preacher, Jim Casy, and Muley, his neighbour. Muley talked everything that happened to their home and land.

Together with Casy, Joad continued his journey home. When he arrived, he saw everything has changed. Everything had been broken out. No one left. House were broke, and young Joad did not know where his family now. Then he had known the information of his family from Uncle John. When he met his family, he found his family were ready to go to California, the Hope Land. With the minus provisions and the under-safe vehicle, the Joad family went to California which long and difficult.

While en route, they dejectedly discover that all of the roads and the highways are saturated with the crowds of other families who are also making the same trek, ensnared by the same promise. As the Joads continue on their journey and hear many stories from
others, some coming from California, they are ultimately forced to confront the eerie possibility that their prospects may not be what they hoped. This realization, supported by the deaths of Grandpa and Grandma and the departure of Noah (the eldest son of Joad) and Connie (the husband of the pregnant Joad daughter, Rose of Sharon) is forced from their thoughts: they must go on because they have no other choice.

In the journey, they found so many difficulties. It was began with the death of the Joad Family’s dog, and then followed by the Grandpa. Actually grandpa did not want to leave his house and land. Leaving the land means death. Then grandma also was dead because of sick.

Upon arrival, they find hordes of applicants for every job and little hope of finding a decent wage, because of the oversupply of labor, lack of rights, and the collusions of the big corporate farmers. The tragedy lies in simplicity and impossibility of their dream: a house, a family, and a steady job. A gleam of hope is presented by Weedpatch, the clean, warm camps operated by the Resettlement Administration, a New Deal agency that tried to help the migrants. However, the benevolent bureaucrat Jim Rawley who manages the camp does not have enough money and space to care for all of the needy.

In response to the exploitation of laborers, the workers join the unions. The surviving members of the family unknowingly work as strikebreakers on an orchard involved in a strike that eventually turns violent, killing the preacher Jim Casy and forcing Tom Joad to kill again and become a fugitive. He bids farewell to his mother, promising that no matter he runs, he will be a tireless advocate for the oppressed. Rose of Sharon’s baby is stillborn; however, Ma Joad remains steadfast and forces the family
through the bereavement. In the end, Rose of Sharon commits the only act in the book that is not futile; she breast feeds a starving man, still trying to show the hope in humanity after her own negative experience. The final act is said to illustrate the spontaneous mutual sharing that will lead to a new awareness of collective values.

APPENDIX II

The biography of John Steinbeck

Early life

John Ernest Steinbeck was born on February 27, 1902 in Salinas, California. He was of German American and Irish American descent. Johann Adolf Grobsteinbeck, Steinbeck’s grandfather, changed the family name from Grossteinbeck to Steinbeck when he migrated to the United States. His father, John Steinbeck, Sr., served as the Monterey County Treasurer while his mother, Olive (Hamilton) Steinbeck, a former school teacher, fostered Steinbeck’s love of reading and writing. At this time of his childhood, Salinas was a small Californian town. Though growing larger, more prosperous, and modern, it was essentially a rough-and-tumble frontier place, set amid some of the world’s most fertile land. Steinbeck spent his summer working on nearby ranches and later with migrants on the huge Spreckels ranch. During this time, Steinbeck became aware of the harsher aspects of the migrant life in the region and of the darker side of human nature—material which was to be explored in works such as Of Mice and Men. He also explored the surrounding Salinas Valley, walking across local forests, fields, and farms. This material was to provide background for most of his short stories.
Steinbeck graduated from Salinas High School in 1919. He then attended Stanford University intermittently until 1925, eventually leaving without a degree, as he disliked the university lifestyle. From Stanford, he traveled to New York City and held various temporary jobs while pursuing his dream as a writer. However, he was unable to get any of his work published and returned to California where for a time he was resort handyman in Lake Tahoe.

**Work**

In California he continued to write. His first novel, *Cup of Gold* was published in 1929. It is based on the privateer Henry Morgan’s life and death. It centers on Morgan’s assault and sacking of the city of Panama, sometimes referred to as the ‘Cup of Gold’, and the woman fairer than the sun reputed to be found there.

After *Cup of Gold*, Steinbeck produced three shorter works between 1931 and 1933: The Pastures of Heaven, published in 1932, consisted of twelve interconnected stories about a valley on Monterey, California, which was discovered by a Spanish corporal while chasing runaway American Indian Slaves. In 1933 Steinbeck brought out two works: *The Red Pony* is a short 100-page, four-chapter story, which recollects memories from Steinbeck’s childhood. *To a Good Unknown* follows the life of a homesteader and his family in California, depicting

His father, John Steinbeck sr, served as the County Treasures while his mother Olive (Hamilton) steinbeck, a former school teacher, fostered Steinbeck’s love of reading and the written word. During summers, he worked as a hired hand on nearby ranches, nourishing his impression of the California countryside and its people.
After graduating from Salinas High School in 1919, Steinbeck attended Stanford University, originally an English major, he pursued a program of independent study and his attendance was sporadic. During this time he worked periodically at various jobs and left Stanford permanently in 1920 to pursue his writing career in New York. However, he was unsuccessful in getting any of his writing published and finally returned to California.

His first novel, *Cup of Gold*, was published in 1929, but attracted little attention. His two subsequent novels, *The Pastures of Heaven* and *To a God Unknown*, were also poorly received by the literary world.

Steinbeck married his first wife, Carol Henning in 1930. They lived in Pacific Grove where much of the material for *Tortilla Flat and Channery Row* was gathered. *Tortilla Flat* (1935) marked the turning point in Steinbeck’s literary career. It received the California Commonwealth Club’s Gold Medal for best novel by California author. Steinbeck continued writing, relying upon extensive research and his personal observation of the human condition for his stories. *The Grapes of Wrath*, which published in 1939, won the Pulitzer Prize. Steinbeck wrote *The Grapes of Wrath* at his home, 16250 Greenwood Lane, in what is now Monte Sereno, California. Set during the Great Depression, the novel focuses on a poor family of sharecroppers, the Joads, driven from their home by drought, economic hardship, and changes in the agriculture industry. In a nearly hopeless situation, they set out for California’s central Valley along with other “Okies” in search of land, jobs, and dignity.

Throughout his life, John Steinbeck remained a private person, who shunned publicity. He died December, 20, 1968 in New York City and is survived by his third wife,
Elaine (Scott) steinbeck, and one sone, Thomas. His ashes were placed in the garden of memories cemetry in Salinas, California.