

Unit 12

MIGRANT STRUGGLE

*The Bounty of the Land in Twentieth-Century
American Literature, 1929–1995*

Authors and Works

Featured in the Video:

John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath* (novel)

Carlos Bulosan, *America Is in the Heart* (autobiography or creative nonfiction), “Be American” (short story)

Helena Maria Viramontes, *Under the Feet of Jesus* (novel)

Discussed in This Unit:

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (nonfiction), “Walking,” “Resistance to Civil Government,” “Life Without Principle” (essays)

Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (novel)

Robinson Jeffers, “Birds and Fishes,” “Hurt Hawks,” “November Surf” (poems)

Muriel Rukeyser, “Alloy,” “The Conjugation of the Paramecium” (poems)

Tomas Rivera, . . . y no se lo tragó la tierra. . . And the Earth Did Not Devour Him (novel)

Rudolfo Anaya, “The Christmas Play” (short story)

Albertos Ríos, “Advice to a First Cousin,” “Refugio’s Hair,” “Day of the Refugios” (poems)

Overview Questions

■ How do the writers in this unit reflect the distinct cultures and experiences of different ethnic and socio-economic groups, including Sinclair’s portrayal of European immigrants, Bulosan’s depictions of Asian immigrants, and the **Latino/a** representations in the works of Viramontes, Rivera, and Ríos?

■ How do these works represent gender?

■ How do we have to expand our definitions of what is considered American after we read these works? Is citizenship the only thing that makes one

an American? What other factors should one consider?

■ How do these works “give voice” to those who do not usually have a voice in our society?

■ What are the distinguishing characteristics of the many works depicting the migrant story? What cultural values are reflected and promoted in them?

■ What historical events and cultural anxieties in the United States helped to inspire these works? How have economic booms and busts affected the literature about the American landscape and its farmlands?

■ What role do politics and environmental conditions play in these works?

■ In what ways can the stories of migrants and working people represent the stereotypical “American” experience? In what ways are these stories similar to and different from the stories of earlier settlers of the United States, such as the Puritans or those who settled at Jamestown?

■ What negative effects of technology and industrialization are portrayed in these works? What positive effects?

■ How have the plots of these literary works helped to preserve and comment on important moments in U.S. history?

■ Is the theme of “social justice” present in every work? What distinguishes its various treatments?

■ How is the land or the environment used as a repeated symbol in these works?

■ Though most of the characters depicted in these works are considered outsiders or are **marginalized** by society, how can they also be considered universal? How do their struggles and dreams relate to all of us?

■ How do these works participate in or challenge racial stereotypes, especially concerning Filipinos and Latinos/as?

■ How is class-consciousness present in migrant representations of American life? What classes of

people are depicted in these texts? How do the different classes treat each other?

■ Do these works demonstrate that everyone can achieve the American Dream?

Learning Objectives

After students have viewed the video, read the headnotes and literary selections in *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, and explored related archival materials on the *American Passages* Web site, they should be able to

1. understand the various expressions of migrant workers and the conditions they lived in and labored under;
2. discuss the impact on American literature and culture of these writers' emphasis on natural geographical settings and distinctive regional and ethnic customs;
3. discuss the importance of race, class, gender, culture, and socio-economic position in migrant workers' stories;
4. discuss the cultural values and assumptions that inform the differing migrant struggles examined in this unit;
5. understand the basic economic and environmental causes that led to a rise in the number of migrant and displaced workers in twentieth-century America;
6. understand eco-literature and the influence of the environment and the land on writers, literature, and society in relation to the rise of industrialization and technology.

Instructor Overview

The writers and works in Unit 12 explore the unfulfilled promises of the American Dream for segments of the population of the United States, especially immigrants and impoverished, dislocated workers. These "migrants" have the greatest confidence in the promises the United States has to offer; yet, ironically, these are the very people often denied access to its bounty. The coexistence of the migrants' disillusionment and their continued faith in the promise

of America informs many of these works. Much of the literature of the migrant struggle explores human relationships with the environment and the land, especially in the West. Though modern economic systems tend to look at nature only as a commodity, writers from Thoreau to Viramontes resist or reject that view. Indeed, they are part of a tradition of writers and thinkers who, since the earliest days of the United States, have emphasized a strong bond between people and the land. In the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries, however, this bond gradually loosened, as technology and inexpensive labor allowed those who owned or controlled the land to work it less themselves and turn their energies toward increasing its productivity. Unfortunately, these changes had negative consequences. Poor land conservation practices and a long and severe drought eventually led to the environmental disaster known as the Dust Bowl during the 1930s.

The writers in this unit share an interest in the effects of economic and political systems on workers, writers, and activists. In their works, the losers tend to be ethnic immigrants and unskilled workers, those at the bottom of the hierarchy of business, industry, and American society itself. Many of these workers have been, and remain today, lower-class laborers of color; some are not U.S. citizens. Migrant workers labor at back-breaking picking and planting jobs few white middle-class Americans would want, and even today they are often denied basic employment benefits and rights.

In many ways, the cultural and literary contributions of those labeled "migrants" are just now becoming more broadly recognized. Though Carlos Bulosan gained national popularity during the 1940s as a spokesperson for Filipinos and other immigrants, the House Un-American Activities Committee blacklisted him in the 1950s for his socialist activities, and he died in relative obscurity. Other writers in this unit enjoyed more lasting acclaim. John Steinbeck's novel *The Grapes of Wrath*, for example, still resonates in the American consciousness with its story of a family of "Okies" looking for a better life on the West Coast. Steinbeck's reshaping of the American epic around the family and the worker, instead of around the solitary male hero, marked an important turning point in American literature.

As the writers in this unit show, the stories of the migrant struggle in American literature and American culture are as diverse as the people who

live such struggles every day. Helena Maria Viramontes graphically reworks Steinbeck's story of migrant workers in *Under the Feet of Jesus*, this time through the eyes of a young Latina woman. Viramontes offers a totally different cultural perspective, but she also demonstrates that conditions have only slightly improved for migrants in the fifty years since Steinbeck's novel first appeared. Henry David Thoreau's ecological writing celebrates America, while his call for civil disobedience criticizes its faults. Robinson Jeffers's works convey both his love of the American landscape and his concern about the encroachment of civilization upon this landscape. This unit also explores works by leftist poet Muriel Rukeyser as well as those by Rudolfo Anaya, Tomas Rivera, and Alberto Ríos, who portray the lives of Latinos in the United States.

The literature of the migrant struggle often depicts characters with much stronger connections to the land than those who own it. From Thoreau to Steinbeck to Viramontes, these writers provide keen observations of the cultural changes occurring in the United States, with the rise of complex social structures made more and more possible by emerging technologies such as railroads, factories, and large corporate farms. These writers ask what is lost with this rise of technology and the lessening of direct connections to the land. Migrant workers often lose a sense of home as the agricultural industry envisions them as replaceable and disposable human harvesting-machines. Yet because these workers rely upon their burdensome work with the soil and its products to survive, they perceive the land as their only hope. They partake in the production of America's natural bounty but do not profit from their work. Not surprisingly, many of the texts discussed in this unit portray migrants as outsiders who see America's faults and virtues more clearly than do less marginalized members of American society.

The video, archive, and instructional materials accompanying this unit explore a wide and diverse range of writers who are linked more by theme than by time period. Most of the unit focuses on the period from the 1930s through the end of the twentieth century. The key issues covered are the migrant work force, immigration, the Great Depression, the Dust Bowl, WPA documentary photography and film, socialism, communism, the rise of unions, and the farm workers movement.

Student Overview

The writers and works in Unit 12 explore the unfulfilled promises of the American Dream for segments of the population of the United States, especially immigrants and impoverished, dislocated workers. These "migrants" have the greatest confidence in the promises the United States has to offer; yet, ironically, these are the very people often denied access to its bounty. The coexistence of the migrants' disillusionment and their continued faith in the promise of America informs many of these works. Much of the literature of the migrant struggle explores human relationships with the environment and the land, especially in the West. Though modern economic systems tend to look at nature only as a commodity, writers from Thoreau to Viramontes resist or reject that view. Indeed, they are part of a tradition of writers and thinkers who, since the earliest days of the United States, have emphasized a strong bond between people and the land. But in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this bond gradually loosened, as technological and labor changes allowed those who owned or controlled the land to work it less themselves and turn their energies toward increasing its productivity. Unfortunately, these changes had negative consequences. Poor land conservation practices and a long and severe drought eventually led to the environmental disaster known as the Dust Bowl during the 1930s.

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Video Overview

- **Authors covered:** John Steinbeck, Carlos Bulosan, Helena Maria Viramontes
- **Who's interviewed:** Cherrie Moraga, Chicana/Lesbian playwright and artist-in-residence (Stanford University); Louis Owens, professor of English (Choctaw/Cherokee) (University of California, Davis); Vicky Ruiz, professor of history and Chicano/Latino studies (University of California, Irvine); Sonia Saldivar-Hull, professor of English (University of Texas, San Antonio); Greg Sarris, professor of English (Loyola Marymount University) (Miwok Chief/Pomo); Helena Maria Viramontes, author
- **Points covered:**
 - American identity is a fluid concept that is defined in part by those who are pushed to the margins of American society.
 - The **Great Depression** and the **Dust Bowl** of the mid-1930s are foundational settings for many of these works.
 - **Eco-literature** emphasizes people's relationships to the environment and often focuses on social justice.
 - John Steinbeck published *The Grapes of Wrath* in 1939, generating attention and sympathy for the mid-western migrant workers who attempted to find employment in California during the Dust Bowl years. *The Grapes of Wrath* can be understood as a **jere-miad**: a literary work prophesying doom, or a lament or sermon recommending an immediate change in behavior or practices. Like many of the other works discussed in this unit, *The Grapes of Wrath* ends with an affirmation of humanity's basic goodness and a sense of hope for the future.
 - Carlos Bulosan's *America Is in the Heart* explores the **American Dream's** promises and questions whether it is possible for all. Bulosan was one of many leftist artists and writers **blacklisted** during the anti-communism of the 1950s.

Video Overview (continued)

- The rise of farmworkers' unions in the 1960s and 1970s coincided with the civil rights movement.
- Helena Maria Viramontes is one of many important Latina writers that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s. Her novel *Under the Feet of Jesus* depicts strong and enduring female Mexican American characters.

PREVIEW

- **Preview the video:** In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, waves of immigrants came to the United States from Europe and Asia seeking better lives for themselves and their families. Some came to escape hardship or oppression at home, or for freedom of religion, but many wished to pursue the American Dream. The idea that America's natural bounty was so large that it could accommodate all newcomers was appealing. After buying into the promises of this dream, however, many immigrants and migrants experienced a different reality. They discovered that only difficult low-paying jobs were available to them and that racism, prejudice, and hostility greeted them at nearly every turn. The writers discussed in the video offer glimpses of what it was, and is, like to be a marginalized person in the United States.
- **What to think about while watching:** What relationship have Americans had with the land? What does the American landscape mean to us? What power attaches to images such as "amber fields of grain," "purple mountain majesties," redwood forests, sweeping rivers, and unending cornfields. Is America's bounty meant to be available to everyone or only to a few? Who partakes in the advantages of the American way of life? Who doesn't? Who decides who participates?
- **Tying the video to the unit content:** Unit 12 materials incorporate a wide range of information that enhances and expands on the topics in the video and places these topics within a broader cultural and historical context. The materials also include information on additional writers associated with this unit in order to sample a wider range of migrant literature as well as eco-literature. For example, Robinson Jeffers displays a love of the American landscape while also admonishing those who destroy it in the name of capitalism. Muriel Rukeyser's verse explores the perils of labor and the promises of unionization. Rudolfo Anaya, Tomas Rivera, and Alberto Ríos all contribute to a larger picture of what it is like to be a marginalized ethnic worker in the United States while at the same time presenting the complex culture of Latino or Hispanic heritage. The unit also explores historical contexts relevant to this literature, including the Great Depression and Dust Bowl, the Works Progress Administration, documentary photography and films, socialism and communism, and the rise of trade unions, especially the farmworkers' unions.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR THE VIDEO

	<i>How do place and time shape literature and our understanding of it?</i>	<i>What is American literature? What are its distinctive voices and styles? How do social and political issues influence the American canon?</i>	<i>How are American myths created, challenged, and reimagined through these works of literature?</i>
Compre- hension Questions	How is the West positively portrayed in early-twentieth-century American literature and culture? How does this change in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s?	What is eco-literature? What is <i>testimonio</i> ?	What is a jeremiad, and how does Steinbeck use this form?
Context Questions	How have the geography and resources of the United States influenced American culture? How have Americans used and abused the land?	Why might Bulosan and his works have been “lost” for half a century? What forces worked against him, and what forces later advocated for him? Why did Steinbeck’s <i>The Grapes of Wrath</i> receive social and political criticism when it was first published? How is <i>Under the Feet of Jesus</i> a feminist story? How does this affect its social message?	How does Steinbeck show that the American Dream can be dangerous? How is that reaffirmed by Viramontes? Does the promise of “home” play an important role in the works discussed in this unit? What about in the works of Viramontes and Rivera?
Exploration Questions	To what extent is the American Dream dependent on the bounty promised by the land? How do politics influence these works? Are American ideals considered, examined, and evaluated most during times of crisis?	Why is it so difficult for the impoverished and for minorities to make their stories heard? What is the role of literature in providing a voice for these struggles, and how does this form of expression relate to those used in politics or the media?	What is the American Dream? How has the American Dream changed over time? How do diverse cultures view the American Dream? How have significant historical events affected the dream? How will new opportunities and threats in the twenty-first century challenge the American Dream? What is your version of the American Dream? Who might be able to achieve your version of the dream, and who might not be able to achieve it?

TIMELINE

	Texts	Contexts
1840s–70s	Henry David Thoreau, “A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers” (1849), “Resistance to Civil Government” (1849), <i>Walden</i> (1854), “Life Without Principle” (1863)	Migration to Oregon over the Oregon Trail begins (1843) U.S.-Mexican War (1846–48) California Gold Rush begins (1849)
1900s	Upton Sinclair, <i>The Jungle</i> (1906)	International Workers of the World union founded (1905) Ford Model T goes into production (1908)
1910s	Upton Sinclair, <i>King Coal</i> (1917)	Russian Revolution (1917)
1920s	Robinson Jeffers, <i>Tamar and Other Poems</i> (1924), “Hurt Hawks” (1928), “November Surf” (1929) Upton Sinclair, <i>Oil!</i> (1927), <i>Boston</i> (1928)	Wall Street Crash begins Great Depression (1929)
1930s	John Steinbeck, <i>Cannery Row</i> (1935), <i>Tortilla Flat</i> (1935), <i>Dubious Battle</i> (1936), <i>Of Mice and Men</i> (1937), <i>The Long Valley</i> (1938), <i>Their Blood Is Strong</i> (1938), <i>The Grapes of Wrath</i> (1939) Muriel Rukeyser, “Alloy” (1938)	Dust Bowl (1931–39) President Roosevelt launches the New Deal (1933) Tydings-McDuffie Act (1934) Works Progress Administration (WPA) established (1935) House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) founded (1938)
1940s	Upton Sinclair, <i>World’s End</i> (1940), <i>Between Two Worlds</i> (1941), <i>Dragon’s Teeth</i> (1942) Carlos Bulosan, <i>Letter from America</i> (1942), <i>Chorus from America</i> (1942), <i>The Voice of Bataan</i> (1943), “Freedom from Want” (1943), “Four Freedoms” (1945), <i>America Is in the Heart</i> (1946) John Steinbeck, <i>The Pearl</i> (1945)	United States enters World War II (1939–45) after Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor (1941) Filipino Naturalization Act (1946) HUAC hearings on communism in the entertainment industry (1947)
1950s	John Steinbeck, <i>East of Eden</i> (1952)	Korean War (1950–53) Heyday of McCarthyism (1953–54) U.S. Supreme Court bans school segregation in <i>Brown v. Board of Education</i> (1954)
1960s	Carlos Bulosan, <i>The Sound of Falling Light</i> (1960) John Steinbeck, <i>The Winter of Our Discontent</i> (1961), <i>Travels with Charley</i> (1962) Robinson Jeffers, “Birds and Fishes” (1963) Muriel Rukeyser, “The Conjugation of the Paramecium” (1968)	Farm Workers Movement founded (1962) Rachel Carson publishes <i>Silent Spring</i> (1962) Cuban Missile Crisis (1962) Civil Rights Act (1964) Vietnam War (1964–75)

TIMELINE (continued)

	Texts	Contexts
1970s	<p>Tomas Rivera, . . . y no se lo tragó la tierra/. . . <i>And the Earth Did Not Devour Him</i> (1971), <i>The Searchers</i> (1973)</p> <p>Rudolfo Anaya, <i>Bless Me, Ultima</i> (1972), <i>Heart of Aztlán</i> (1976), <i>Tortuga</i> (1979)</p> <p>Muriel Rukeyser, <i>The Collected Poems of Muriel Rukeyser</i> (1978)</p>	<p>First "Earth Day" celebrated (1970)</p> <p>A Presidential Executive Order establishes the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as an independent agency of the Executive Branch (1970)</p> <p>Watergate scandal (1972)</p> <p>Moral Majority founded (1979)</p> <p>Iran hostage crisis (1979–81)</p>
1980s	<p>Alberto Ríos, <i>Whispering to Fool the Wind</i> (1982), <i>The Iguana Killer</i> (1984), <i>Five Indiscretions</i> (1985), "Advice to a First Cousin" (1985), "Seniors" (1985), <i>The Dime Orchard Woman: Poems</i> (1988)</p> <p>Helena Maria Viramontes, "The Moth" and <i>Other Stories</i> (1985)</p> <p>Tomas Rivera, <i>The Harvest</i> (1989)</p>	<p>Cold War ends (1989)</p> <p>Exxon Valdez runs aground in Alaska, spilling 11 million gallons of oil in one of the worst ecological disasters of the century (1989)</p>
1990s	<p>Rudolfo Anaya, <i>Albuquerque</i> (1992), <i>Zia Summer</i> (1995)</p> <p>Alberto Ríos, <i>Teodora Luna's Two Kisses</i> (1992), "Day of the Refugios" (1994), <i>Pig Cookies and Other Stories</i> (1995), <i>Capirotada</i> (1999), <i>The Curtain of Trees: Stories</i> (1999)</p> <p>Helena Maria Viramontes, <i>Paris Rats in E.L.A.</i> (1993), <i>Under the Feet of Jesus</i> (1995), <i>Their Dogs Came with Them</i> (1996)</p> <p>Carlos Bulosan, <i>The Cry and the Dedication</i> (first published, 1995)</p>	<p>Persian Gulf War (1990–91)</p> <p>Welfare Reform Act (1996)</p>
2000s	<p>Alberto Ríos, <i>The Smallest Muscle in the Human Body</i> (2002)</p>	<p>Terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon (2001)</p>

AUTHOR/TEXT REVIEW

Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862)

Best known as one of the first proponents of American Transcendentalism, Henry David Thoreau was also one of the first American naturalists and eco-literature writers. He was the third child of John Thoreau and Cynthia Dunbar and spent most of his life in and around Concord, Massachusetts. His father operated a pencil manufacturing business in the area. Thoreau attended Concord Academy and graduated from Harvard College in 1837. The next year he and his brother John opened an innovative school, which operated until 1841. Afterward, Thoreau worked as a tutor, handyman, carpenter, surveyor, essayist, and speaker. At the outbreak of the Mexican War, Thoreau protested slavery by refusing to pay his poll tax and was jailed for one night. His essay “Resistance to Civil Government” was written as a response to that event. During his life, he was an outspoken abolitionist and wrote a number of popular antislavery tracts. His books, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (1849) and *Walden* (1854), and his journals, record observations of nature and meditations on humanity’s place within it.



[5678] Currier & Ives, *Battle of Buena Vista. Fought Feby. 23rd, 1847. In Which the American Army Under Gen. Taylor Were Completely Victorious* (1847), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USZC4-2957].

Thoreau’s most widely read book, *Walden*, documents two years he spent living in a small cabin beside Walden Pond just outside of Concord. This experiment in self-reliance gave Thoreau a way to practice his philosophy of living. (Recent scholars have noted that *Walden* conveniently neglects to acknowledge the extent of the domestic and practical help Thoreau’s mother and sister provided.) Thoreau believed that people were too concerned with materialistic desires and that they should lead simpler and more purposeful lives. His rejection of the values of a rising consumer society complemented his reverence for nature and belief that humankind should live in harmony with it.

Considered by many of his fellow townspeople to be a loafer, Thoreau worked from time to time in his father’s pencil factory, but the dust from the graphite aggravated the tuberculosis he would later die from. His legacy continues to inspire social and environmental activists. Thoreau’s early biographies and published works attracted the attention of European socialists and Labor Party members, and his essays “Resistance to Civil Government” and “Life Without Principle” influenced Mahatma Gandhi’s struggle for Indian independence and were also inspiring to Martin Luther King Jr. in his efforts to gain broader civil rights for African Americans. Edward Abbey, naturalist and author of *Desert Solitaire* and *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, is among the many environmental writers Thoreau inspired. Jon Krakauer’s *Into the Wild*, the story of a young man who journeys alone into the Alaskan wilderness, pays homage to Thoreau’s naturalist philosophy but shows what can happen if his ideas are taken too far.

TEACHING TIPS

■ After students have read selections from Thoreau's works, have them write about how Americans should properly "use" nature and lead their lives. Have them share their own beliefs regarding wilderness, technology, progress, success, and independent thinking. Offer them several Thoreau quotations with which to agree or disagree.

■ Have students cite recent instances of "civil disobedience" in the news. Discuss why individuals found it important to break the law and whether their action was justified. Debate the effectiveness of these instances of civil disobedience.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: Why does Thoreau see the idea of "owned" property as immoral?

Comprehension: Take a look at the two introductions to *Walden* ("Economy" and "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For"). How does each of these chapters introduce what is to follow? What kind of readers does each ask us to be? Why wasn't "Economy" enough of an introduction? What does "Where I Lived . . ." add to our understanding of how to read *Walden*?

Context: Machine tools, steam engines, steamboats, railroads, textile machinery for factories, and the telegraph were all being developed and used more widely during Thoreau's lifetime. Thoreau's family owned a pencil factory, in which he worked from time to time. What changes in American society and culture were brought on by the Industrial Revolution? What were Thoreau's specific objections to those changes?

Exploration: Thoreau makes clear in his works how dependent industrialization is on cheap labor. He points to the role of slavery in developing the South's agricultural production and the abuse of Chinese and Irish immigrants in building the railroads as two examples. In "Life without Principle," he writes, "The ways by which you may get money almost without exception lead downward." Was Thoreau right in believing that for one person to succeed economically, he or she has to exploit others? Does that seem to be illustrated by the works discussed in this unit? What about bankers? Lawyers? Mechanics? Plumbers? Professors? Can you think of cases where one person's economic success does *not* depend upon the exploitation of others?

Upton Sinclair (1878–1968)

Upton Sinclair was born in Baltimore, Maryland, and is best known for his 1906 muckraking novel, *The Jungle*. He received a degree from the College of the City of New York and did graduate work at Columbia University. Early on, he supported himself as a journalist and a writer. His serials for boys' weekly magazines, the Cliff Faraday

THOREAU WEB ARCHIVE

[1031] Anonymous, *Emerson's Grave* (1850–1920), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-D4-72358]. Emerson is buried on Author's Ridge in the Sleepy Hollow Cemetery of Concord, Massachusetts, alongside Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry David Thoreau, and Louisa May Alcott. His epitaph, "The passive master lent his hand to the vast soul that o'er him planned," comes from his poem "The Problem."

[5678] Currier & Ives, *Battle of Buena Vista. Fought Feby. 23rd, 1847. In Which the American Army Under Gen. Taylor Were Completely Victorious* (1847), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USZC4-2957]. Painting of the Battle of Buena Vista, led by General Zachary Taylor. This popular scene of one of the major American victories of the war spoke to America's belief in Manifest Destiny. Thoreau was jailed for refusing to pay his poll tax, which would have helped finance the Mexican War.

[6964] Anonymous, *Thoreau's Cove, Lake Walden, Concord, Mass.* (n.d.), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-D4-34878DLC]. Photograph of woods and pond. Henry David Thoreau lived in a small cabin by Walden Pond for two years and wrote *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* and *Walden*.

[7226] John Carlos Rowe, Interview: "Nature in the Slave Narrative Versus the Transcendentalism of Emerson and Thoreau" (2001), courtesy of *American Passages* and Annenberg Media. Professor of English and comparative studies John Carlos Rowe discusses the differences between the depiction of nature in Transcendentalist works and in slave narratives: in one genre, nature is a place for calm meditation; in the other, it is a place of terror.

[8581] John Carlos Rowe, Interview: "The Transcendental Critique of America" (2002), courtesy of *American Passages* and Annenberg Media. Professor John Carlos Rowe discusses the way in which the Transcendentalists criticized the American thirst for profit at the expense of nature and a high quality of life.



[7110] H. C. White Company, *Making Link Sausages—Machines Stuff 10 Ft. per Second* (c. 1905), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-50217].

SINCLAIR WEB ARCHIVE

[1850] Lewis W. Hine, *The Children of John Meiskell* (1909), courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration. Trained as both a teacher and a sociologist and photographer, Hine was hired by the National Child Labor Committee in 1908 to document child labor conditions in America. He traveled around the country photographing the horrible working conditions of children in mines, factories, textile mills, and canneries. The children in this picture, ages two to eleven, all worked thirteen-hour days in an oyster factory in Maryland. Their mother, Mrs. Meiskell, said, "This is worse than the days of slavery." Their plight might be compared to the depiction of child labor in Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, Stephen Crane's *Maggie*, *A Girl of the Streets*, and Rebecca Harding Davis's *Life in the Iron-Mills*.

[5637] Joseph C. Borden, Jr., *To the Arm and the Hammer, A Song for May Day* (1898), courtesy of the Library of

stories and the Mark Mallory stories, were particularly lucrative. Sinclair's later writing emphasized socialist causes. By 1904 he was a regular reader of the *Appeal to Reason*, a populist-socialist newspaper. Though his works were celebrated in Russia, he opposed the communist regime there after the 1917 revolution.

Sinclair wrote over a hundred books. In addition to *The Jungle*, important works include *King Coal* (1917); *Oil!* (1927), about the corruption of southern California society; *Boston* (1928), about the Sacco-Vanzetti trial; and the Lanny Budd series, which includes *World's End* (1940), *Between Two Worlds* (1941), and *Dragon's Teeth* (1942). The Lanny Budd series offers a Marxist interpretation of the years between the two world wars.

Sinclair is famous for his muckraking novels. Turn-of-the-twentieth-century writers and journalists who exposed scandals in politics and business through their writing were called "muckrakers."

Muckrakers often had proletarian and socialist sympathies. Other writers associated with this movement include Jack London, David Graham Phillips, and Robert Herrick, along with Lincoln Steffens and Ida Tarbell.

Though Sinclair had to publish *The Jungle* himself after it was rejected by a number of publishers, it became his first popular literary success. The novel was inspired by journalistic investigations into the dirty and dangerous working conditions in the Chicago stockyards. Its protagonist, Jurgis Rudkus, a Lithuanian immigrant, endures the exploitation of the Brown and Durham meatpacking company as he witnesses the rest of his family being victimized and destroyed. Sinclair intended his novel to cause public outrage for the immigrants who were forced to work for substandard pay in the intolerable conditions of the stockyards. While the novel had little effect on working conditions, it did incite public concern about poor food quality and impurities in processed meats, which resulted in the passage of federal food inspection legislation.

TEACHING TIPS

■ Ask students to consider Sinclair's works as political commentaries and historic records. Suggest that they research a topic about which Sinclair wrote—the meatpacking industry or labor unions, for example; then have them share their assessment of the accuracy of Sinclair's representation.

■ The muckrakers used the media to alert the public to important issues and to initiate social change. Have students discuss how today's media is used to investigate social and economic problems. Have them list the topics covered in a week's worth of television "newsmagazine" shows. Ask them to compare and contrast the approaches and sub-

jects of contemporary television investigative reports with those of the early-twentieth-century muckrakers.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: What is Jurgis's original response to getting a job with the meatpacking company? What are we to make of that response?

Comprehension: Why did meatpacking companies almost always employ only immigrants?

Comprehension: How are European immigrants portrayed by Sinclair throughout *The Jungle*? How does this compare to his portrayal of nonimmigrants?

Context: Compare the living and working conditions of the Rudkus family with those portrayed by Bulosan in *America Is in the Heart*, by Rivera in . . . *y no se lo tragó la tierra*. . . *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him*, and by Viramontes in *Under the Feet of Jesus*. What are the similarities and differences between the ethnic workers in all these works? What burdens do they share? How are their dreams similar or different?

Exploration: *The Jungle* is a novel in the tradition of literary naturalism. Compare it with earlier naturalistic works, such as Stephen Crane's *Maggie* or Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*. Note the differences in the way Sinclair incorporates socialist themes in his novel.

Exploration: To better understand popular opinion regarding European immigrants in the early twentieth century, investigate the Sacco-Vanzetti trial. Who was involved? What happened? Was the verdict right? In addition to Sinclair, which other important American writers wrote about the trial?

Robinson Jeffers (1887–1962)

Robinson Jeffers was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. His father was a minister and professor of Old Testament literature. When he was young, Jeffers traveled extensively in Europe, where he received his early education. In the United States, he attended Occidental College, the University of Southern California, and the University of Washington. An inheritance allowed Jeffers to devote himself to the writing of poetry. His first volume of verse was completed in 1912, and he published over twenty-five volumes of poetry during his life. In 1913, he moved to Carmel, California, and built a stone cottage and a large observation tower overlooking the Pacific Ocean. Much of his verse captures the images of his surroundings on the coast.

Published in 1924, *Tamar and Other Poems* demonstrates Jeffers's desire to break with the poetics of the past and write original, vigorous, and realistic verse. Here as in most of his works, Jeffers's major themes are lust and humankind's destructive self-obsessions. Jeffers integrates a broad knowledge of literature, religion, philosophy, languages, myth, and the sciences in his work. He represents a pantheistic universe that is revealed through constant and sometimes brutal

Congress [rbpe 0100230a]. Socialism was an important theme in Upton Sinclair's writing, although he opposed the communists that came into power after the Russian Revolution of 1917.

[6934] Drieser, *Breaker Boys* (c. 1900), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-D401-11590 DLC]. Investigative journalists and novelists such as Upton Sinclair, who sympathized with progressive and socialist causes, exposed corporations' abuses of power with photos of, and stories about, poor working conditions.

[7110] H. C. White Company, *Making Link Sausages—Machines Stuff 10 Ft. per Second* (c. 1905), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-50217]. Photograph of Swift and Company's Chicago packing house. Mechanization and urbanization encouraged some writers' feelings of alienation from and nostalgia for the United States's agricultural past.

[7426] Herbert Photos, Inc., *Bartolomeo Vanzetti and Nicola Sacco, Manacled Together* (1927), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-124547]. Sacco and Vanzetti surrounded by a crowd of onlookers and guards before entering a Dedham, Massachusetts, courthouse. Victims of the first Red Scare, these political radicals received the death penalty, despite a lack of evidence.



[7599] Euphronios, *Calyx-Krater* (c. 515 B.C.E.), courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

JEFFERS WEB ARCHIVE

[7341] Arthur Rothstein, *Strip Mining Operations with a Thirty-Two Cubic Yard Steam Shovel*. Cherokee County, Kansas (1936), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, FSA/OWI Collection [LC-USF34-004274-D DLC]. Heavy machinery at mining site. Meditative poets found inspiration in nature and were alarmed by increasing environmental destruction in the United States.

[7377] Lee Russell, *Grant County, Oregon. Malheur National Forest. Lumberjack Hitching Cable on Log Which Will Be Loaded Onto Trucks* (1942), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USF34-073482-D DLC]. Picture of a Pacific Northwest lumberjack. Beat poet Gary Snyder went to Reed College in Oregon and worked as a logger before doing graduate work in anthropology. Snyder, like Robinson Jeffers, revered the rugged western landscape.

[7404] Asher B. Durand, *Progress (The Advance of Civilization)* (1853), courtesy of the Gulf States Paper Corporation, Warner Collection. The Native Americans in the lower left of this painting observe the steady approach of American progress and settlement. Depictions of westward expansion such as this one helped publicize and legitimize what was seen as American progress, an ideology that began to be questioned only in the twentieth century, by such writers as Robinson Jeffers.

[7599] Euphronios, *Calyx-Krater* (c. 515 B.C.E.), courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Greek bowl intended for mixing wine and water. Greek and Roman myths were central to Robinson Jeffers's poetry.

change. Many of his images connote cycles of creation, growth, and destruction. Jeffers's representations of defaced and dehumanized landscapes have influenced modern environmentalists and writers of "eco-literature."

TEACHING TIPS

■ As *The Norton Anthology of American Literature* states, Jeffers "berated rather than celebrated American democracy, expressing his rage at the careless destruction of irrecoverable natural beauty." This stance aligns him with the modern environmental movement, but Jeffers's philosophy was controversial in his day. In "Hurt Hawks," he writes, "I'd sooner, except the penalties, kill a man than a hawk." Use this line as a basis for a class discussion on how far people should go to protect the environment. Remind them of some of the tactics of radical environmental groups, like Earth First, who have "spiked" trees to prevent them from being cut and harvested (a spiked tree has a steel rod placed in its trunk, making it dangerous for loggers to cut the tree with a chainsaw).

■ Have students research and discuss books that were influential in the environmental movement of the last fifty years. Guide them toward Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, Paul Ehrlich's *Population Bomb*, Aldo Leopold's *Sand County Almanac*, Daniel Quinn's *Ishmael*, and Joel Cohen's *How Many People Can the Earth Support?* Have them discuss the themes important in the environmental movement; then tie these themes back to Jeffers.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: Reread the two sections of "Hurt Hawks." What is the difference between the hawks in each section? List some of the things the hawks might symbolize.

Comprehension: What kind of storm is referred to in line 11 of "November Surf"?

Context: How do the images of California in Jeffers's verse compare to the images of California in the works of other writers in this unit? How do Viramontes, Bulosan, and Steinbeck describe the land? What do these otherwise divergent images have in common?

Context: Animal symbolism is plentiful in many cultures. In the United States, dogs often represent loyalty, eagles freedom, and donkeys stubbornness. List the different animals catalogued in "Birds and Fishes." What might each type of animal represent for the poet or reader? Is the symbolic meaning particularly American?

Exploration: Read several Jeffers poems and summarize their representation of nature and humanity. Compare Jeffers's attitude to what you know about literary **modernism**. Based on this exercise, is Jeffers a modernist? What made the modernist writers lose faith in humanity and its institutions?

Exploration: Poems about animals can be understood as the poetic equivalent of still lives: places to show off the poet's powers of

observation and empathy. Compare Jeffers's animal poems to those by Elizabeth Bishop ("The Fish" or "The Armadillo") and Marianne Moore ("The Jerboa," "To a Chameleon," or "Poetry").

John Steinbeck (1902–1968)

John Steinbeck's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*, published in 1939, depicts the plight of the Joads, a family of Oklahoma sharecropper farmers who were driven off the land they worked by the Dust Bowl of the 1930s. The story of their journey to California to find work as agricultural laborers, a journey that they made along the often bleak Highway 66, helped secure Steinbeck's place in American literature.

Born in the Salinas Valley of California, Steinbeck attended Stanford University for a time and then spent a number of years traveling and studying on his own, while developing his craft as a writer. He lived in New York for a short while and attempted to earn money from his writing. He eventually returned to California. His first literary successes were his 1935 novel, *Tortilla Flat*, followed the next year by *In Dubious Battle*. *Tortilla Flat* was about people in a small town in northern California whose exploits mirrored those of the knights of King Arthur, while *In Dubious Battle* focused on a migrant fruit pickers' strike. In 1937, Steinbeck wrote *Of Mice and Men* about two drifters who dreamed of owning their own ranch. Steinbeck's 1938 story collection, *The Long Valley*, includes often-anthologized tales of a young boy, Jody, growing up in a West that is no longer a frontier. Steinbeck's other works include *Cannery Row* (1935), *The Pearl* (1945), *East of Eden* (1952), *The Winter of Our Discontent* (1961), and *Travels with Charley* (1962). He was most interested in the plight of disempowered outsiders, outcasts, and the underprivileged. He died in New York City in 1968, having won the Nobel Prize for literature five years earlier.

While doing research for *The Grapes of Wrath*, Steinbeck visited several of the camps the Farm Security Administration had built to house the homeless migrants who arrived in California from the Dust Bowl states. He spoke to the migrants there and listened to their stories. In fact, Steinbeck wrote a series of newspaper and journal articles about these workers and their plights, which were later gathered into a collection called *Their Blood Is Strong*, published in 1938. Steinbeck's ideas about social justice for the economic underclass of American society influenced both later American writers such as William Kennedy and popular songwriters such as Woody Guthrie, Bob Dylan, and Bruce Springsteen. His journalistic style has been imitated and admired by authors such as Dorothy Parker and Tom Wolfe.

TEACHING TIPS

■ Writer John Steinbeck and director John Ford had very different visions of *The Grapes of Wrath*. Ask students to watch the film after having read the book and compare the two versions of the story, espe-



[5872] Dorothea Lange, *Migrant Workers Near Manteca, Ca.* (1938), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USF34-018767-C].

STEINBECK WEB ARCHIVE

[3343] Dorothea Lange, *People Living in Miserable Poverty, Elm Grove, Oklahoma County, Oklahoma* (1936), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USF34-009695-E]. In *The Grapes of Wrath* Steinbeck depicts the life of Oklahoma farmers during the Dust Bowl. The Great Depression coincided with terrible droughts that killed crops and pushed families like the Joads west to California seeking better land and a better life.

[3347] Dorothea Lange, *Power Farming Displaces Tenants. Childress County, Texas Panhandle* (1938), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USF34-TO1-018281-C DLC]. Alternately titled "Tractored Out." Mechanization made large farmers wealthy, but left small farmers, tenants, and sharecroppers without jobs. The increased use of machines instead of manual labor, coupled with drought and falling crop prices during the Great Depression, left many farmers homeless.

[5695] Anonymous, *Film Set during the Making of The Grapes of Wrath, with Part of Cast and Film Crew in Front of Small, Dilapidated House* (1939), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-114292]. Photograph of set and actors for *The Grapes of Wrath*, one of John Steinbeck's most famous novels. The book centered on the Joads, a family of Oklahoma sharecroppers during the Dust Bowl who became migrant workers.

[5872] Dorothea Lange, *Migrant Workers Near Manteca, Ca.* (1938), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USF34-018767-C]. Dorothea Lange's caption to this picture reads, "A former rehabilitation client harvesting milo maize. Now operating own farm under Tenant Purchase Act. A year and a half ahead on their payments. Average loan for purchase of farm and improvements in San Joaquin County is seven thousand four hundred and sixty-five dollars."

[5910] Anonymous, *Steinbeck Portrait* (n.d.), courtesy of the Center for Steinbeck Studies. Like many American authors, John Steinbeck, though never formally investigated, attracted the attention of the FBI in the 1940s due to his involvement with communist organizations.

[5911] Anonymous, *Younger Steinbeck Head Shot* (n.d.), courtesy of the Center for Steinbeck Studies. Steinbeck concluded his Nobel Prize acceptance speech with the following words: "Having taken God-like power, we must seek in ourselves for the responsibility and the wisdom we once prayed some deity might have. Man himself has become our greatest hazard and our only hope. So that today, Saint John the Apostle may well be paraphrased: In the end is the word, and the word is man, and the word is with man."

[8968] Louis Owens, Interview: "Steinbeck's Major Theme" (2002), courtesy of *American Passages* and Annenberg Media. Professor Louis Owens discusses Steinbeck's critique of America.

cially the altered ending. Ask why Ford may have wished to change the story in the way that he did. You might encourage them to research this topic, as there are many easily accessible works that discuss its significance.

■ Many of Steinbeck's fictional works focus on outsiders at odds with the local community. Throughout his career, Steinbeck was fascinated by the tales of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. Discuss the themes and ethics underlying the Arthurian myths, focusing on Arthur's desire to unify a kingdom in conflict with itself. Examine some of the rules these tales propose for running society. Connect this discussion to *The Grapes of Wrath*.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: Acts of charity and compassion occur from time to time in *The Grapes of Wrath*. Examine the scene near the end of Chapter 15 concerning the bread and the candy. Why did Steinbeck include such scenes in a novel that is often intent on showing American cruelty and social injustice?

Comprehension: Steinbeck's novel includes many images of the horrific condition of the land and juxtaposes them with images of the horrific social conditions brought on by industrialization and business. What is the purpose of such juxtaposed images?

Context: *The Grapes of Wrath* is sometimes referred to as a jeremiad: a lament of the spiritual and moral decline of a community and an interpretation of recent misfortunes as God's just punishment for that decline. (See Unit 3 for more discussion of this form in the American literary tradition.) Paradoxically, these misfortunes are seen as proof of God's love and of the group's status as a "chosen people." Do you think this novel fits well within that genre? Why or why not?

Context: Compare Chapter 11 of *The Grapes of Wrath* with the many Dust Bowl images in the *American Passages* archive. How do these photographs compare to Steinbeck's descriptions of the land?

Exploration: In his essay "Freedom from Want," Carlos Bulosan writes, "We are not really free unless we use what we produce. So long as the fruit of our labor is denied us, so long will want manifest itself in a world of slaves." Review the literary elements of slave narratives (focus on food and water, fear for the family, variations of hope and hopelessness, dehumanization, power and powerlessness, and the desire for education). Think about the ways that Steinbeck's novel about migrants compares and contrasts with the slave narratives of the nineteenth century. What qualities do they share? What are some differences?

Muriel Rukeyser (1913–1980)

Muriel Rukeyser was a political poet whose verse is noted for its intricate style and sophistication. She was born in New York City and attended Vassar College and Columbia University. Though from a

wealthy family, Rukeyser was deeply concerned with the plight of laborers, the downtrodden, and the disadvantaged. She was shocked by the working conditions and meager wages of the lower classes and attracted to the solidarity she witnessed in the labor movement. Her political activism began in 1932 when she was covering the Scottsboro trials in Alabama for the *Student Review* and was briefly detained by the police because she was seen speaking with African American journalists. Later, she would lobby for the loyalists during the Spanish Civil War, speak out on behalf of Sacco and Vanzetti, protest the Vietnam War, and write against the persecution of Kurds in Iran. Her poems of social protest deal with the inequalities she witnessed in race, gender, and class, both in America and abroad. Rukeyser always considered herself a poet of the radical left, and her poems often connect an emotional reaction with a political or social event.

She published over twenty books of poetry, including *The Collected Poems of Muriel Rukeyser* (1978), seven books of prose, and five books of letters. In addition to writing poetry, Rukeyser translated works by Octavio Paz and Bertolt Brecht; wrote a biography of Wendell Willkie, an internationalist and strong opponent of American isolationism before World War II; and authored several children's books. Rukeyser never wrote in any particular poetical form, but instead preferred to experiment with language and structure. Her intricate and complex verse addresses a wide variety of subjects, including anthropology, war, the environment, biology, psychology, religion, and social issues such as women's rights, motherhood, lesbianism, and anti-Semitism.

TEACHING TIPS

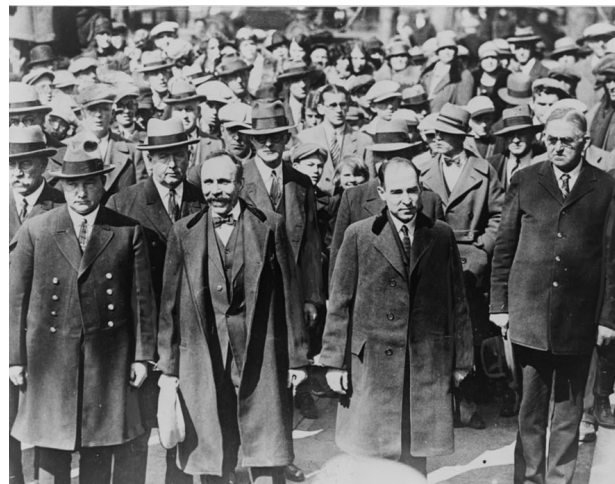
■ Rukeyser often celebrates working people in her poems. Have students list ten categories of working people. For each category, have them come up with one or two powerful symbols that represent that category of worker or profession. Use the activity to discuss how symbols function in literary works.

■ Have students read "The Conjugation of the Paramecium," which on the surface appears to be a brief vignette about reproduction. Ask them to think about what the poem might mean. Remind students about Rukeyser's usual themes of social protest, the "uniting spirit" between common workers and laborers, and the emptiness of individual consumption.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: In what ways does Rukeyser's "Alloy" condemn the steel-making industry?

Comprehension: Though the speaker of "Alloy" seems to be addressing "things," how is the poem really about people?



[7426] Herbert Photos, Inc., *Bartolomeo Vanzetti and Nicola Sacco, Manacled Together* (1927), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-124547].

RUKEYSER WEB ARCHIVE

[4554] Prentiss Taylor, *Scottsboro Limited* (1931), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZC4-4717]. Lithograph from *Scottsboro Limited*, a collection of four poems and a play by Langston Hughes. This collection protested the incarceration, conviction, and death sentence of the Scottsboro boys, nine African American youths unjustly accused of raping two white women.

[6180] United Women's Contingent, *When Women Decide This War Should End, This War Will End: Join the United Women's Contingent on April 24* (1971), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZC4-6882]. Protest poster against the Vietnam War. The anti-war, civil rights, women's rights, and gay liberation movements were connected politically and artistically.

[7426] Herbert Photos, Inc., *Bartolomeo Vanzetti and Nicola Sacco, Manacled Together* (1927), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-124547]. Sacco and Vanzetti surrounded by a crowd of onlookers and guards before entering a Dedham, Massachusetts, courthouse. Victims of the first Red

Scare, these political radicals received the death penalty, despite a lack of evidence.

[7650] Anonymous, Ozzie Powell, *Defendant in the Scottsboro Case, Full Length Portrait* (1936), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-121575]. Photograph of Ozzie Powell, one of the nine defendants in the Scottsboro case, in Decatur, Alabama. Author Muriel Rukeyser's political activism began when she covered the Scottsboro trials and was questioned by police because she had been seen speaking with African American journalists. The Scottsboro case was characterized by extreme racial and social injustice.

Comprehension: Find the definition of “alloy” in the dictionary. Why might Rukeyser have used this word as the title of her poem?

Context: Steel production was a major industry in the United States in the late 1930s; however, relatively high labor costs and concerns about pollution and the environment gradually moved most steel production overseas. How does Rukeyser foreshadow the loss of this industry in “Alloy”?

Context: Who is “the gangster” referred to in the beginning of “Alloy” and what effect does that term have on the reader? Remember that gangsters loomed large in the public imagination in the 1920s and 1930s. Figures such as John Dillinger, Al Capone, and Bugsy Siegel dominated newspaper headlines for their involvement in drug dealing, prostitution, gambling, and loan sharking.

Exploration: Apprehension about the power of technology and industry continues as a major theme in late-twentieth-century science fiction movies. Analyze how such films as *Terminator* and *Minority Report* represent these fears. Pay particular attention to what the films' endings say about the place of technology in our lives.

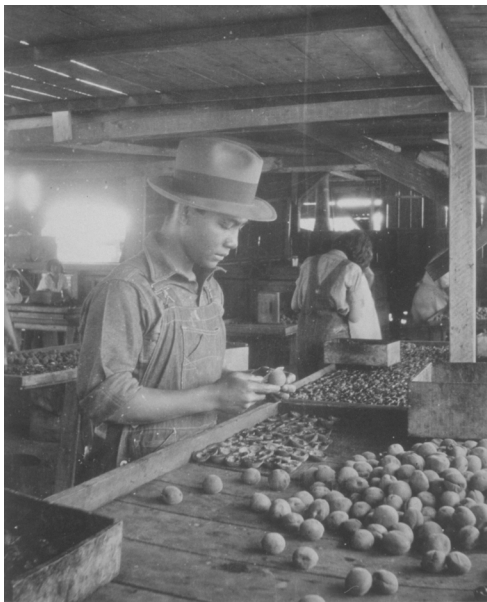
Carlos Bulosan (1913–1956)

About 150,000 Filipinos immigrated to the United States between 1906 and 1946. Early on, many Filipinos came to America to seek an education and then return home. But starting in the 1920s, most came looking for work. Along the West Coast and in Hawaii and Alaska, they

sought jobs as migrant workers, cannery workers, and domestic servants. They were subject to intense racism and discrimination, and Filipino men were beaten and driven out of town by mobs if they were seen with white women. It was within this atmosphere that Bulosan arrived in the United States.

Carlos Bulosan is the first important literary voice for Filipinos in the United States. Bulosan's most famous novel, *America Is in the Heart*, was published in 1946. It depicts the terrible living and working conditions of Filipino immigrants struggling to survive in America. Bulosan came to the United States from the Philippines in the early 1930s. He washed dishes, worked in canneries, and picked fruits and vegetables up and down the West Coast, including the area in the Salinas Valley where many of John Steinbeck's novels take place. He eventually became a labor activist and tried to address racial and economic discrimination in the United States. After meeting labor organizer Chris Mensalves, he helped organize a union for fish cannery workers in California. During a long period of poor health, Bulosan read the works of many American writers, which helped improve his English and

inspired him to become a writer. Bulosan gradually gained recognition and respect as a poet and social commentator. His work appeared in a number of prominent magazines and journals in the 1940s, including the *Saturday Evening Post*, *New Yorker*, *Harper's Bazaar*, and *Poetry*. Bulosan's works include poetry collections, *Letter from America* (1942),



[6061] Anonymous, *Filipino Man Processing Fruit* (c. 1930), courtesy of the James Earl Wood Collection of Photographs Relating to Filipinos in California, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Chorus from America (1942), and *The Voice of Bataan* (1943), as well as the novels *The Cry and the Dedication* (written in the 1950s and published posthumously in 1995) and *The Sound of Falling Light* (1960).

In the 1950s, at the height of the anti-communist movement, Bulosan's labor-organizing activities and early involvement with the communist party prompted Senator Joseph McCarthy and the House **Un-American Activities Committee** to blacklist him. Bulosan died in Seattle in poverty and relative obscurity in 1956. In the 1970s his works were "discovered" by the Asian American community, which recognized their historical and cultural importance. As one of the first writers to explore how Filipinos were forging an American identity, Bulosan influenced such Asian American writers as Jessica Hagedorn and Maxine Hong Kingston.

TEACHING TIPS

■ To give students a better contextual understanding of Bulosan's works, divide them into groups and have them prepare class presentations on (1) a brief history of the Philippines before 1895, (2) the interaction between the Philippines and the United States between 1895 and the 1950s, (3) the treatment of Filipino immigrants in the United States, especially in the mid-twentieth century, and (4) a recent history of the Philippines, focusing on the Marcos family.

■ Bulosan's writing depicts the economic and racial prejudice he encountered and observed in the United States. However, even after enduring open hostility, continuous threats, violence, and insufferable living and working conditions, he still fills his work with the hope of equality for all people. What other stories, films, or television programs can students recall where characters face constant adversity but never give up on their hopes and dreams? Examples might range from classical works, such as *The Odyssey*, to Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, to more recent works such as Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*. They might also include works from popular culture, like *The Lord of the Rings*, *Star Wars*, or *Billy Elliot*. Discuss these examples in the context of Bulosan's works.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: *America Is in the Heart* was criticized for its negative portrayal of the lives of Filipinos in the United States. Why would Bulosan show such a dark side to Filipino life in America, from constant drinking and gambling to stealing, prostitution, and murder? How do these portrayals help him make a point about the lives of these immigrants?

Comprehension: According to the narrator of "Be American," in what ways has Consorcio "become" an American?

Context: The status of Filipinos who immigrated to America was often indeterminate. Since the Philippines were a U.S. territory, immigrants were known as "nationals" and could enter the country freely until 1934, when the Tydings-McDuffie Act promised independence

BULOSAN WEB ARCHIVE

[1891] Rand McNally & Co., *New and Enlarged Scale Railroad and County Map of California Showing Every Railroad Station and Post Office in the State* (1883), courtesy of the Library of Congress, Geography and Map Division [LC Railroad maps, 189]. Building railroads, a major force in California's economic development, required extensive mapping of geographical features. Later maps like this one redefined territory through industrial transportation, political units, and government communications outposts, which guided investment and commerce.

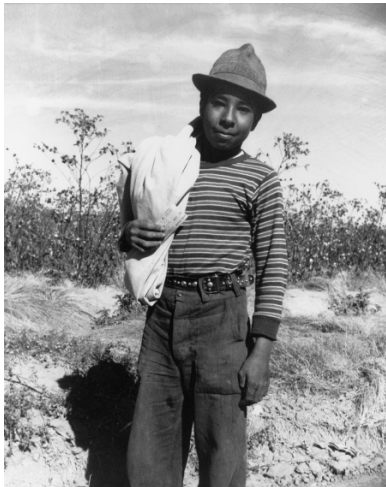
[5385] Anonymous, *Carlos Bulosan* (n.d.), courtesy of *Filipinos: Forgotten Asian Americans*. Posed portrait of author Carlos Bulosan. Bulosan's semi-autobiographical work *America Is in the Heart* describes the lives of Filipino immigrants in America, particularly their difficult working and living conditions.

[5869] Dorothea Lange, *Filipino Migrant Workers* (1938), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USF34-018671-D]. Large field with Filipino migrant laborers working in row. Filipinos migrated to the United States in three major waves. The first and second wave faced exploitative working conditions in agriculture, canneries, and other manual labor industries.

[6060] James Earl Wood, *Filipino Laborers, Wide Shot* (n.d.), courtesy of the University of California at Berkeley, Bancroft Library. Young Filipino working with boxes from cannery in field. Many Filipino immigrants found work at canneries, where conditions were often poor.

[6061] Anonymous, *Filipino Man Processing Fruit* (c. 1930), courtesy of the James Earl Wood Collection of Photographs Relating to Filipinos in California, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. Photograph of a Filipino man preparing fruit to be sold. Despite the Philippines' status as a U.S. territory, Filipino immigrants faced discrimination and racism in twentieth-century America. Carlos Bulosan worked as a fruit picker when he first arrived in the United States.

[8976] Louis Owens, Interview: "Bulosan's View of American Capitalism" (2002), courtesy of *American Passages* and Annenberg Media. Professor Louis Owens discusses Carlos Bulosan's view of American capitalism.



[5979] Dorothea Lange, *Pinal County, Arizona. Mexican Boy Age 13, Coming in from Cotton Field at Noon* (1940), courtesy of the U.S. National Archives & Records Administration [CTL# NWDNS-83-G-41839].

to the Philippines in ten years. At the outbreak of World War II, Franklin Delano Roosevelt granted Filipino military enlistees U.S. citizenship, but it wasn't until 1946, when Truman signed the Filipino Naturalization Bill, that Filipinos became citizens. Keeping all this in mind, locate passages in Bulosan's work that demonstrate a sense of homelessness or a longing for identity and place.

Exploration: In *America Is in the Heart*, Bulosan recalls the creation of a culture of anti-colonial insurgency by Filipino peasants against those who had attempted to control the Philippines in the past (Spain and the United States). Why would this past make immigrant Filipinos especially good organizers of labor and **trade unions** to stand against the U.S. businesses and farms that exploited migrant workers?

Exploration: *America Is in the Heart*, an autobiography, includes stories and tales of incidents that did not actually happen to Bulosan but were culled from the lives of other Filipino Americans much like himself. How does Bulosan's use of the autobiographical genre compare with other famous American autobiographies, such as Franklin's *Autobiography*, Douglass's *Narrative*, Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, or Adams's *The Education of Henry Adams*? Consider stylistic as well as thematic similarities and differences.

Tomas Rivera (1935–1984)

Tomas Rivera was born in Crystal City, Texas. During his childhood, he accompanied his parents, who worked as farm laborers, on their journeys in the Midwest, from Missouri to Michigan to Minnesota. Rivera worked as a migrant farm laborer himself in the 1950s. He graduated from Southwest Texas State University with a degree in English and earned his Ph.D. in romance languages and literature from the University of Oklahoma. He was a professor of Spanish and held administrative positions at various universities, including the University of Texas at El Paso. Rivera's works include . . . *y no se lo tragó la tierra* / . . . *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him* (1971); *The Harvest* (1989), a short story collection; and *The Searchers* (1973), a volume of collected poetry. *This Migrant Earth* (1987) is an English translation by Rolando Hinojosa of . . . *y no se lo tragó la tierra* / . . . *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him*.

A number of Rivera's works explore the world of the migrant worker in America. Rivera did not view his writing as political but rather as a universal statement about the human condition. . . . *y no se lo tragó la tierra* / . . . *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him* is considered a milestone in the Mexican American literary canon. It is written in South Texas Spanish and does not follow a chronological storyline but presents a series of stream-of-consciousness vignettes and tales that are loosely united by an anonymous child-narrator reflecting on the lives of migrant workers in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Somewhat Faulknerian in style, it deftly portrays the economic and cultural conditions experienced by Mexican American migrant workers in the years following World War II.

TEACHING TIPS

■ Have your students brainstorm in small groups about migrant workers, keeping notes that they can use to present a report to the class. Collect the information from the groups and display it on a chalkboard or screen so that you can discuss it as a class. After they have read Rivera's novel, ask students to revisit their compiled information and make revisions. What changes in facts and opinions occur? Discuss those changes.

■ Have students compare different translations of the opening or closing paragraphs of . . . *y no se lo tragó la tierra* / . . . *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him*. What differences do they find? Discuss the problems of reading translated works.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: What is most shocking about the chapter "The Children Couldn't Wait"? What does this chapter say about the values and views of those who hire migrants? What broader social views are reflected in it?

Comprehension: The final chapter, "Under the House," seems to bind these discordant stories into a whole. Try to identify which italicized quotations go with which story. How does this chapter help unify the work?

Comprehension: . . . *y no se lo tragó la tierra* / . . . *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him* demands that readers make connections among the twenty-seven episodes. Why is it important to the author that readers make these connections? Why might Rivera want readers to feel uncomfortable and somewhat lost until after they've experienced these bits and pieces of tales and conversations?

Context: Rivera's . . . *y no se lo tragó la tierra* / . . . *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him* is very fragmented in style, somewhat in the nature of works by the U.S. and European modernists. What elements of literary **modernism** does Rivera's book embrace? How does it differ from other modernist works you have read?

Context: Have students imagine how Rivera's . . . *y no se lo tragó la tierra* / . . . *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him* could be made into a film. What would such a film be like? What changes would need to be made in the plot or structure of the work to make it a viewable film? If possible, show the class the 1994 film by Severo Perez, *And the Earth Did Not Swallow Him*, based on the book.

Exploration: . . . *y no se lo tragó la tierra* / . . . *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him* makes clear the extent of child labor that goes on among industries and farms that hire migrant workers. Research U.S. and international child labor laws. Which other works from this unit demonstrate child labor abuses?

Rudolfo Anaya (b. 1937)

Rudolfo Anaya was born in Pastura, New Mexico. His family moved to Albuquerque when he was fifteen. While working as a public school

RIVERA WEB ARCHIVE

[5864] Dorothea Lange, *Mexicans, Field Laborers, on Strike in Cotton Picking Season, Apply to Farm Security Administration for Relief*. Bakersfield, California (1938), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USF34-018627]. The Farm Security Administration (1937–42) was formed under the Department of Agriculture. It provided low-cost loans and assistance to small farmers and sharecroppers, constructed camps for migrant workers, restored eroded soil, and put flood prevention practices into effect.

[5979] Dorothea Lange, *Pinal County, Arizona. Mexican Boy Age 13, Coming in from Cotton Field at Noon* (1940), courtesy of the U.S. National Archives & Records Administration [CTL# NWDNS-83-G-41839]. Dorothea Lange's full caption for this image reads, "Pinal County, Arizona. Mexican boy age 13, coming in from cotton field at noon. He picked 27 pounds of Pima cotton (earnings about \$.45) during the morning. Note stamped work ticket in his hand."

[6138] Anonymous, *Mrs. Lionel Sanchez with Child during Migrant Hunger Strike* (1970), courtesy of the Denver Public Library, Western History Collection. This Hispanic American woman feeds her daughter from a bottle during a strike of Colorado migrant workers. Author Tomas Rivera worked as a migrant farm laborer in the 1950s; his novel *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him* is narrated by a child laborer.

[6364] Russell Lee, *Mexican Woman Cutting Spinach, La Pryor, Texas* (1939), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USF33-012046-M3]. Agricultural worker in Texas. Author Tomas Rivera, who was born in Texas, experienced and wrote about migrant agricultural work.



[6133] Anonymous, *Young Hispanic Woman* (c. 1969), courtesy of the Denver Public Library, Western History Collection.

ANAYA WEB ARCHIVE

[6125] Anonymous, *Protest for Legislature to Improve Conditions [for Migrant Farm Workers]* (1969), courtesy of the Denver Public Library, Western History Collection. Photograph of a migrant worker protest at the Capitol Building in Denver, Colorado. Hispanic and white men and women join together to urge improved living conditions for migrant workers. A priest holds a flag that says, “Huelga U.F.W.O.C. AFL-CIO Delano.” Another man holds a sign that reads, “Denver Witnesses for Human Dignity.”

[6133] Anonymous, *Young Hispanic Woman* (c. 1969), courtesy of the Denver Public Library, Western History Collection. In the 1960s and 1970s, a number of Chicana women protested definitions of womanhood and American identity that did not include Chicana heritage and life. Author Rudolfo Anaya’s writing is in part an exploration of how Chicano and Anglo cultures can combine to enrich people’s understanding.

[7613] Russell Lee, *Spanish-American Family. Chamisal, New Mexico* (1940), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USF34-037007-D]. Author Rudolfo Anaya, who grew up in New Mexico, sets many of his stories in the villages of the Southwest. His novels include *Bless Me, Ultima* and *Heart of Aztlán*.

teacher, he earned degrees from the University of New Mexico. Anaya’s first novel, *Bless Me, Ultima* (1972), is the story of a boy growing up in a small New Mexico village during World War II. His second novel, *Heart of Aztlán* (1976), mixes mystical elements with an examination of social concerns for the twentieth-century Chicano worker. *Tortuga* (1979), his third novel, is another story about growing up as a **Hispanic** in America, this time from the perspective of a boy wearing a full body cast. Anaya has published many other books, including epic poems, short story collections, and nonfiction works. Two of his more recent works are *Albuquerque* (1992) and *Zia Summer* (1995).

Bless Me, Ultima focuses on the impact of World War II on a small community in New Mexico. The protagonist’s participation in the war lessens his feeling of isolation from American society. As it did for other minority groups, World War II accelerated the process of assimilation and acculturation for Mexican Americans. The war prompted the movement of Mexican Americans into cities where industries were badly in need of labor. Many Mexican Americans joined the various branches of the armed forces. *Bless Me, Ultima* was one of the first novels to document this process.

Many of Anaya’s works blend elements from Chicano and Anglo culture and explore how personal and public mythologies answer questions about an individual’s place in the universe. Anaya is particularly influenced by the geography and culture of the area he grew up in, the Mexico–New Mexico border.

TEACHING TIPS

■ Have your students research *Bless Me, Ultima* (1972), the most frequently taught Latino juvenile book and one of the first Chicano books to enter the American literary canon. Ask them to explore why this novel is so popular with junior high and high school readers.

■ The antics in Anaya’s “The Christmas Play” are reminiscent of the slapstick comedy of the Marx Brothers and the Three Stooges. If possible, show the class a Three Stooges episode and ask them to analyze it beyond the physical comedy. Many of the Three Stooges episodes have a background of the Stooges looking for work or food during the depression, which leads to their getting into trouble. Have the students discuss the film clip in that context. Another comparison to the comedy in this story is the traditional *actos* from the early days of the Teatro Campesino. Some of the *actos* of Luis Valdez contained comic figures that satirized the roles Chicanos were relegated to as irrelevant and stereotypical. Examining Anaya’s story in this light might offer interesting insights into its meaning and purpose.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: What is the overall tone of “The Christmas Play”? Why did the author choose this tone?

Comprehension: Why don’t the boys care that they are messing up

Miss Violet's play? What is surprising about how Miss Violet treats the boys?

Comprehension: “The Christmas Play” begins and ends with images of a quiet tomb. Why is this important to the story?

Context: How do the tone and setting of “The Christmas Play” compare to the tones and settings of works by Helena Maria Viramontes and Tomas Rivera?

Exploration: Late-capitalist societies often value immediate access to goods, information, and institutional resources as basic features of everyday life. How does such an environment affect people's expectations of a “proper” education, and how does it compare with other environments' notions of education? While also considering how the process of becoming educated influences one's aesthetic preferences for art and literature, explore this question in relation to Anaya's story as well as the works of Harriet Jacobs, Frederick Douglass, and Mark Twain.

Alberto Ríos (b. 1952)

The son of a Mexican American father and a British mother, Alberto Ríos was born in Nogales, Arizona, on the Mexican border. Much of his work draws on the mixture of his parents' cultures and growing up in the American Southwest. He received his B.A. from the University of Arizona and earned an M.F.A. in creative writing in 1979. Ríos's collections of poetry include *Whispering to Fool the Wind* (1982), *Five Indiscretions* (1985), *The Dime Orchard Woman: Poems* (1988), *Teodora Luna's Two Kisses* (1992), and *The Smallest Muscle in the Human Body* (2002). He has also published three collections of stories, *The Iguana Killer* (1984), *Pig Cookies and Other Stories* (1995), and *The Curtain of Trees* (1999). In addition, he has written a memoir, *Capirotada* (1999), about growing up on the U.S.-Mexican border. Ríos has taught at Arizona State University since the early 1980s.

Ríos's storytelling draws on the oral traditions of his Latino heritage while celebrating its diversity and sense of community. His speakers and characters reveal the tensions of living in a racially charged area of the Southwest. **Magical realism**—a mixture of fantasy and realism—characterizes much of Ríos's work. Ríos thinks of teaching and writing as complementary activities. In one interview he explains, “When I sit down to write something, I'm not neglecting my teaching one bit. And when I speak aloud in front of a class, I'm not neglecting my writing one bit. They are two arms of the same body. They serve each other.” Frequently taught and translated, Ríos's work has been adapted both for dance and as popular music.

TEACHING TIP

■ A skillful promoter of his own work and reputation, Ríos has an elaborate Web site hosted by Arizona State University. Review this Web site in class with your students or have them review it at home. What message about his own life and work does Ríos seem to be pro-



[5245] Salvador Brquez, Dolores del Ríos as Ramona (1928), courtesy of the Los Angeles Times.

RÍOS WEB ARCHIVE

[2195] Robert Runyon, *Woman and Two Children, South Texas Border* (1920), courtesy of the Library of Congress. Photograph of woman and children at the Mexico-U.S. border. Folk music and literature from this region often highlight the conflicts between Anglos and Chicanos. See Americo Paredes's novel *George Washington Gomez*. Writer Alberto Ríos was born near the border, and much of his work deals with the

interaction of Mexican and American cultures. His first book, *Whispering to Fool the Wind*, won the Walt Whitman Award.

[3551] Anonymous, *Latino. A Jitterbugging Yuma. Arizona 1942* (1942), courtesy of the Library of Congress. Latino youths dancing in Yuma, Arizona, near the hometown of writer Alberto Ríos. Ríos teaches English at Arizona State University. His memoir *Capirotada* recounts his childhood on the Mexico-U.S. border.

[5245] Salvador Brquez, *Dolores del Rios as Ramona* (1928), courtesy of the *Los Angeles Times*. Newspaper movie illustration. Helen Hunt Jackson's novel *Ramona* failed to improve treatment of California Indians as she had hoped it would. Instead, elements of the story's romantic depiction of California's Hispanic heritage became firmly entrenched in the mythology of the region.

[8754] Elliot Young, Interview: "Aztlán as the U.S. Southwest" (2002), courtesy of *American Passages* and Annenberg Media. Professor Elliot Young discusses Aztlán, the mythical city from which the Mexiques came before they arrived in central Mexico, and the role Aztlán plays in Chicano consciousness.

moting? Ask students to support their answers with specific evidence from the site.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: In "Advice to a First Cousin," the speaker combines humor and superstition with wisdom. In the second part of the poem, who are the "scorpions" about which grandmother speaks? What is the moral? Why does this poem fit well into the oral tradition of storytelling?

Comprehension: "Refugio's Hair" tells how a woman's hair had to be cut off. What gives this poem its mythic quality? Instead of just telling a story, how does this poem incorporate religious or cultural icons?

Comprehension: What two cultures are represented in "Day of the Refugios"? Are they given equal time in the poem?

Context: Compare and contrast Ríos's poem "Seniors" with the ending of Viramontes's novel *Under the Feet of Jesus* or Anaya's story "The Christmas Play." What similar images and themes are displayed? How does the verse presentation differ from the prose presentations?

Exploration: In 1965, Congress amended the Immigration and Nationality Act, repealing the national-origin quotas and race-based policies that had all but prohibited the entrance of "less desirable" people who might not have had the "capacity to assimilate." This legislative change profoundly impacted U.S. demographics, allowing for an ethnic heterogeneity that went against the grain of "melting pot" cultural homogeneity. Research this topic, while also comparing the experiences of marginalized or oppressed groups as documented by authors writing before and after this date. Consider too a prominent theme in Ríos's work—that cultures can be woven together, preserving their best parts, without losing their unique traditions.

Helena Maria Viramontes (b. 1954)

Viramontes is a Chicana writer who was born in East Los Angeles, California. She attended Immaculate Heart College and the University of California, Irvine. She is co-founder of the Southern California Latino Writers and Film Makers group and teaches at Cornell University. Her first published book of short stories, *The Moth and Other Stories* (1985), focuses on everyday oppression in the lives of ordinary women, mostly Chicanas. In 1993 she published *Paris Rats in E.L.A.*, which she also rewrote as a screenplay. Her best-known work, the 1995 novel *Under the Feet of Jesus*, portrays the life of Estrella, a young migrant worker who must cope with the many difficult situations in which she and her family find themselves. Viramontes's most recent novel is *Their Dogs Came with Them* (1996), which explores the brutality of the Spanish Conquest of the Americas. Viramontes's powerful style is sweepingly realistic in scope and uses natural and religious symbolism.

Because Viramontes believes that writing can bring about social

change, she tackles social issues in her work. In *Feminism on the Border*, Sonia Saldivar-Hull notes that many of Viramontes's works are not typical Latina "quest for origins" stories but rather seek to transform and rework concepts of the **Chicano** family. They tend to disrupt the notion of the monolithic Latino/a family as a refuge from racism and class exploitation and instead relocate "chicano families from secretive, barricaded sites of male rule to contested terrains where girls and women perform valued rituals that do not necessarily adhere to androcentric familial traditions." According to Saldivar-Hull, Viramontes's work permits both Chicanas and Chicanos to exist as unique subjects in a U.S. Latino/a America.



[6125] Anonymous, *Protest for Legislature to Improve Conditions [for Migrant Farm Workers]* (1969), courtesy of the Denver Public Library, Western History Collection.

TEACHING TIPS

■ Ask your students to imagine that producers have decided to make a film of *Under the Feet of Jesus* but want to extend the story beyond the novel's ending. Have them make a plot outline for a new Section 6 and consider these questions: How would you carry on the story? Would you radically change the mood, tone, or theme of the story or keep it the same? How would Viramontes feel about this new ending?

■ Have students consider where their fresh produce comes from, other than shelves in the supermarket. Ask them to ponder on all the people who have touched the fruits and vegetables they eat.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: Early in *Under the Feet of Jesus*, Estrella thinks, "It was always a question of work, and work depended on the harvest, the car running, their health, the condition of the road, how long the money held out, and the weather, which meant they could depend on nothing." How does this foreshadowing affect the novel?

Comprehension: Do you think Estrella was justified in the actions she took at the doctor's office? Was the nurse to blame? Why or why not?

Comprehension: Why does Viramontes use so many Spanish phrases and sentences in the novel? How does the presence of so much Spanish affect a reader's experience of the text?

Comprehension: What does the statue of Jesucristo represent or symbolize for Petra? What happens to the statue? What might this signify?

Context: Compare and contrast the racial, social, and economic conditions of the migrant workers in *Under the Feet of Jesus*, *America Is in the Heart*, and *The Grapes of Wrath*. Make a table or chart that clearly displays your findings. Create categories that are repeated in all these works.

Context: At the center of *Under the Feet of Jesus* are two women who must endure enormous suffering and hardship. How does having

VIRAMONTES WEB ARCHIVE

[6125] Anonymous, *Protest for Legislature to Improve Conditions [for Migrant Farm Workers]* (1969), courtesy of the Denver Public Library, Western History Collection. Photograph of a migrant worker protest at the Capitol Building in Denver, Colorado. Hispanic and white men and women join together to urge improved living conditions for migrant workers. A priest holds a flag that says, "Huelga U.F.W.O.C. AFL-CIO Delano." Another man holds a sign that reads, "Denver Witnesses for Human Dignity."

[6708] Judith F. Baca, *Pieces of Stardust* (1992), courtesy of the Social and Public Art Resource Center, © Judith F. Baca, *Pieces of Stardust*, 1992. Judith Baca is an acclaimed muralist whose work is informed by the belief that art can be a forum for social dialogue, as well as a tool for social change. In this sense, her work shares much with the writings of Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherrie Moraga, and Helena Maria Viramontes and builds on the work of Mexican muralist Diego Rivera.

[7916] Helena Maria Viramontes, *Helena Maria Viramontes—Writer* (2002), courtesy of Annenberg Media. Frame of author Helena Maria Viramontes. Best known for her novel *Under the Feet of Jesus*, Viramontes deals with social justice in much of her work.

[8755] Helena Maria Viramontes, Interview: “Dominant Cultures in the United States” (2002), courtesy of *American Passages* and Annenberg/CPB. Helena Maria Viramontes discusses the message of the dominant U.S. cultures to the Chicano/a population.

[8981] Helena Maria Viramontes, Interview: “Looking for Hope” (2002), courtesy of *American Passages* and Annenberg Media. Helena Maria Viramontes discusses the importance of communication to the creation of hope.

women as protagonists make this work different from similar works with male protagonists?

Exploration: One definition of charity is benevolence or generosity toward others. Many claim that significant portions of our own social and governmental structures are based on this concept of charity. If this is the case, why is such a lack of charity by either socially dominant white characters or uncaring governmental organizations portrayed in the literary works associated with this unit? In what ways does this lack of charity seem to extend particularly to migrants, immigrants, and minorities?

Exploration: Compare Viramontes to the Chicana authors in Unit 2, particularly to Gloria Anzaldúa and her definition of the Borderlands as an open wound. How are these authors similar? How are they different? Do they concentrate on the same subjects and themes? How do the authors in Unit 2 provide a context for Viramontes’s works?

Suggested Author Pairings

CARLOS BULOSAN AND HELENA MARIA VIRAMONTES

Both Bulosan and Viramontes focus on the importance of family and the connections among family members. How do these authors demonstrate the effects of class restrictions and racism on the family? How does each of them demonstrate the value of family in hard times? Do they have different approaches to their treatment of family issues? Which author seems more celebratory of family connections and relationships? Why might this be?

HENRY DAVID THOREAU AND JOHN STEINBECK

Both Thoreau and Steinbeck explore the social and moral disadvantages of increased mechanization and technology. Their harsh criticisms of “progress” and technology may seem counterintuitive to many Americans. After all, most of our institutions, and certainly the popular press, seem to praise these advances. Do these writers offer effective arguments against technology? How do their treatments of this subject overlap? How do they differ?

HELENA MARIA VIRAMONTES AND TOMAS RIVERA

Viramontes’s *Under the Feet of Jesus* details the physical labor performed by migrant workers, while Rivera’s . . . *y no se lo tragó la tierra* . . . *And the Earth Did Not Devour Him* more subtly alludes to such labor. Both works are coming-of-age stories as well as *testimonios*, narratives that bear witness to the migrant worker’s plight. What effects do these themes have on the reader? How do Viramontes’s and Rivera’s representations of physical labor illuminate these themes?

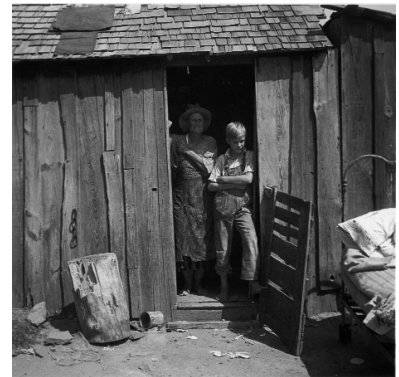
HENRY DAVID THOREAU AND CARLOS BULOSAN

In their writings, both Thoreau and Bulosan combine events from their own lives with events that happened to others. Discuss autobiography as a genre, and consider whether it is possible for any author to write an autobiography that is entirely without embellishment of some kind. Such a discussion could start with Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography*, which begins with a letter of advice about growing up to a son who was in fact already grown when the *Autobiography* was written. Thoreau takes an experience that occurs over two years and condenses it to one in *Walden*; in addition, he downplays the extent to which his mother and sister made his "simple life" possible. Likewise, many of the events that Bulosan writes about in the first person in *America Is in the Heart* never really happened to him.

CORE CONTEXTS

The Great Depression and the Dust Bowl

The New York Stock Exchange collapse in October of 1929 marked the beginning of the Great Depression, which lasted until America entered World War II in the early 1940s. The longest and most severe economic depression in American history, the Great Depression caused untold economic hardship and great social upheaval throughout the United States and the world. From 1929 to 1932, stock prices fell dramatically in the United States, with many stocks losing over 80 percent of their value. Banks closed, unemployment skyrocketed, and factory and industrial production fell sharply. By 1932 nearly a third of the workforce in America was unable to find jobs. Many Americans lost their savings, their homes, and their livelihoods. Adding to the nation's difficulties, the ecological disaster of the Dust Bowl descended on the Midwest between 1935 and 1939. Constant drought and poor land management led to arid, lifeless growing conditions for struggling farmers and sharecroppers and ruined the little livelihood they had during the depression. Over 300,000 people were forced to leave the afflicted area and migrate to the West to look for employment. The advanced mechanization of industry, factory, and farm work also adversely affected some American workers during this period. Many work functions were taken over by machines, causing widespread worker displacement and relocation. The Great Depression, the Dust Bowl, and other factors caused a massive worker migration to alternate professions and alternate areas of the country. The Great Depression shaped the psyches of an entire generation; those who lived through the depression became acutely aware of the power of broad economic forces to impact individual lives.



[3343] Dorothea Lange, *People Living in Miserable Poverty, Elm Grove, Oklahoma County, Oklahoma* (1936), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USF34-009695-E].



[5158] Ben Shahn, *Men Loafing in Crossville, Tennessee* (1937), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USF33-006224-M4 DLC].



[2944] Anonymous, Aaron Douglas with Arthur Schomburg and the Song of Towers Mural (1934), courtesy of the Arthur Schomburg Photograph Collection, Photographs and Prints Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations.

"THE GREAT DEPRESSION" WEB ARCHIVE

[2944] Anonymous, Aaron Douglas with Arthur Schomburg and the Song of Towers Mural (1934), courtesy of the Arthur Schomburg Photograph Collection, Photographs and Prints Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations. Aaron Douglas was commissioned to paint murals for the New York Public Library under the Works Progress Administration. This mural represents the massive migration of African Americans from the South to the urban North during the early twentieth century.

[3334] Anonymous, *The Trading Floor of the New York Stock Exchange Just After the Crash of 1929* (1929), courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration [1930-67B]. Photograph taken from above the stock exchange floor. The crash and ensuing depression brought many expatriate artists back to

The Great Depression helped Franklin Delano Roosevelt, a Democrat, unseat Herbert Hoover to win the presidency in 1932. Roosevelt quickly enacted major legislative initiatives to help Americans endure and recover from the economic downturn. Increased government regulations, extensive public-works projects, and other measures helped bolster public confidence that the economy would pull out of the depression. Roosevelt's "New Deal" included a broad range of legislation, such as the creation of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) to protect the savings of individuals, the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) to better regulate the stock market and other areas of investment, and the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) to better ensure the security of mortgages and home loans. The Roosevelt administration also created the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) to provide work relief and jobs to thousands of out-of-work men and the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) to assist with flood control and electricity generation. Nineteen thirty-three saw even more New Deal legislation, including an Agricultural Adjustment Act, a National Industrial Recovery Act, the Rural Electrification Administration, and a much-expanded public works effort, managed by the Public Works Administration. Under Roosevelt's guidance, the National Labor Relations Act and the Fair Labor Standards Act were passed. These two acts guaranteed the rights of workers to organize and bargain through unions and mandated maximum weekly work hours and minimum wages for many types of employees. The Social Security Act of 1935 helped guarantee unemployment insurance, created a retirement program for all American citizens, and instituted mechanisms to provide aid to dependent children. The unique combination of economic stagnation and disillusionment with big business and laissez-faire capitalism allowed Roosevelt to create and enact an impressive series of liberal reforms and social programs to assist a broad spectrum of the American public.

The effects of the depression were far-reaching on the arts in general and on literature in particular. The sense of loss, alienation, and fragmentation that developed after World War I increased. As the energy of the Roaring '20s dissipated, literature reflected new enervation and despair. For example, the lighthearted, optimistic tone of many of F. Scott Fitzgerald's earlier stories is absent from "Babylon Revisited" (1935). The depression also stifled the Harlem Renaissance. As economic resources to support African American writers, musicians, and artists dried up, African American writers and artists became increasingly disillusioned. Such works as Richard Wright's *Native Son* and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* reflect this pessimistic outlook.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: What were the major effects of the Great Depression on the country?

Comprehension: How did the Dust Bowl worsen conditions for many workers?

Comprehension: What was the Roosevelt administration's response to the Great Depression?

Context: Technology and mechanization helped reduce reliance on unskilled labor in many areas, and many people had to change professions or relocate. At the same time, as the literary works discussed in this unit show, migrant workers were often treated as easily replaceable pieces of equipment and forced to move from location to location. How do the authors in this unit allude to and implicitly or explicitly critique such treatment of humans? You might start with Bulosan's descriptions of Filipino migrants and compare them to the descriptions of Mexican Americans in Viramontes's and Rivera's works.

Exploration: Viktor Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning* suggests that humor can be an important survival strategy. How does American literature develop humor as a strategy for dealing with oppression? Is there a tie between the works of Mark Twain or Flannery O'Connor and those of writers in this unit, such as Rudolfo Anaya or Tomas Rivera?

Documentary Photography and Film

In *Official Images: New Deal Photography*, Pete Daniel and Sally Stein ponder why so many photographs were taken and viewed during the depression era. They speculate, "Maybe people feeling deprived of material goods were attracted to those images that most closely resembled the look, surface, and solidity of things. Maybe, too, people feeling suddenly insecure about the future were comforted by photography's apparent matter-of-factness, even when the 'facts' were often distressing. Most likely, the appeal of photography contained contradictory impulses: to document and transform, to gain familiarity and distance" (viii). Whatever the reasons, the 1930s were one of the most photographically documented decades of all time.

As the country became more and more divided between those who favored social reform through government intervention and those who did not, documentary photography proved to be a powerful tool on the side of the reformers, revealing to a broad spectrum of the American public the horrific conditions brought on by both the depression and the Dust Bowl. Some of the documentary photographers' techniques found their way into literary works. For example, Steinbeck's use of documentary style in depicting people, places, and conditions during the depression contributed to the power of *The Grapes of Wrath*. And John Dos Passos used techniques he called "the camera eye" and the "newsreel" in *Manhattan Transfer* (1925) and in the USA Trilogy (*The 42nd Parallel* [1930]; *Nineteen Nineteen* [1932]; *The Big Money* [1936]). Like the documentary photographers, these authors sought to represent the suffering and despair of struggling American workers and families.

Early photographic pioneers such as Alfred Stieglitz, Edward Steichen, and Clarence White helped establish photography as an

the United States and diverted the focus of some away from wealth and luxury.

[3343] Dorothea Lange, *People Living in Miserable Poverty*, Elm Grove, Oklahoma County, Oklahoma (1936), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USF34- 009695-E]. In *The Grapes of Wrath* Steinbeck depicts the life of Oklahoma farmers during the Dust Bowl, when terrible droughts killed crops and pushed families like the Joads west to California seeking better land and a better life.

[4792] Arthur Rothstein, *Farm Sale*, Pettis County, Missouri (1939), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USF33- 003448-M2]. Rothstein began his photography career while at Columbia University. After graduation, he became the first staff photographer for the Farm Security Administration. He is known mainly for his Dust Bowl images. By documenting the problems of the depression, he helped justify New Deal legislation. He went on to be a photographer for and director of *Look* magazine. As a child, author Tomas Rivera traveled throughout the Midwest with his parents, who were migrant farm laborers.

[4791] Arthur Rothstein, *Erosion on a Missouri Farm* (1936), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USF34- 001875-E]. Historian Donald Worster's book *Dust Bowl* opened people's eyes to the human causes of the Dust Bowl of the 1930s. Now ranked among the greatest manmade ecological disasters, the Dust Bowl worsened the effects of the Great Depression.

[5158] Ben Shahn, *Men Loafing in Crossville*, Tennessee (1937), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USF33- 006224-M4 DLC]. Unemployed men outside storefront in rural Tennessee during the Great Depression. Eventually, New Deal programs like the Civil Conservation Corps put many back to work on national projects such as road building and maintaining national parks.

[5935] Dorothea Lange, *Depression* (1935), courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration. Unemployed man leaning against vacant storefront with "for lease" signs. Many lost their jobs and savings during the Great Depression. New Deal photographer Dorothea Lange captured images of the hardships during this time.



[3347] Dorothea Lange, *Power Farming Displaces Tenants. Childress County, Texas Panhandle* (1938), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USF34-TO1-018281-C DLC].

emerging art form, but social documentary photography actually began with Jacob Riis's depictions of New York City slums in the 1880s, collected in his book *How the Other Half Lives*. Riis's groundbreaking work was followed by Lewis Hines's images of child labor abuses in factories, mills, and mines. The work of Riis and Hines inspired later photographers who worked for the Farm Security Administration (FSA). In 1935, the director of the FSA, Roy Stryker, hired a small corps of photographers to help inform the public of the brutal living and working conditions of displaced migrant workers. Among these photographers were Dorothea Lange, Ben Shahn, and Walker Evans. Lange and her sociologist husband studied poor farmworkers in southern

California. Lange would later travel throughout the country documenting the stories of displaced workers through her images. Shahn, better known as a Works Progress Administration (WPA) painter, also photographed the harsh realities of American farming life, while Evans teamed up with writer James Agee to document southern sharecroppers' lives in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1941).

Documentary films also played an important role in depicting American life during the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl years. Partly to communicate to the public what the administration was doing to alleviate the suffering, the Roosevelt administration sponsored a number of documentary films directed by Pare Lorentz. Among these is *The Plow That Broke the Plains* (1936), the first film the

United States government produced for commercial distribution. *The Plow That Broke the Plains* argues that a lack of ecological conservation and misuse of soil could have dire consequences. The film asserts that, by failing to practice land conservation and crop rotation, farmers themselves unwittingly created many of the conditions leading to the Dust Bowl. Many opponents of Roosevelt's New Deal legislation argued that this and other documentaries were designed to win approval for the broad range of social programs created by the government. Congress held a long and contentious debate about whether to fund the film, and some farmers protested the finished project. Today the film is hailed for its Whitmanesque free-verse script and its powerful and moving musical score. Lorentz's second



[5224] Dorothea Lange, *White Sharecropper Family, Formerly Mill Workers in the Gastonia Textile Mills. When the Mills Closed Down Seven Years Ago, They Came to This Farm Near Hartwell, Georgia* (1937), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USF34-018147-C DLC].

Farm Security Administration film, *The River*, tells the story of the Mississippi River and its many tributaries. The film argues that, by controlling the river with dams, the country could avoid the disastrous seasonal flooding that stripped away valuable topsoil, put hundreds out of work, and destroyed homes and livestock.

Appreciated today primarily for their artistry and their sociological significance, the documentary photography and films of the Great

Depression provide an important historical record of the cultural and economic changes that were occurring in the country during that time.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: What allowed the depression era to be so well documented?

Comprehension: What were the benefits of government-sponsored documentation of conditions in the country during the depression?

Context: How does the stark realism of these depression-era photographs relate to works by Bulosan, Steinbeck, and Viramontes?

Context: Compare the depression-era Dust Bowl photographs in the archive with pictures from contemporary newspaper articles about poverty (the Associated Press Web site is a good source for such images). Do the depression-era photographs have a distinctive style? Do the contemporary photographs seem more or less powerful to you than their depression-era counterparts? What accounts for these differences?

Exploration: A documentary is a work, such as a film or television program, that presents political, social, or historical subject matter in a factual and informative manner. Documentaries often include photographs, news footage, or interviews and are typically accompanied by narration. Think about photographs or documentaries that you have seen that help illustrate an era, a decade, a cause, or a movement. Search the archive, the Internet, or magazines, especially newsmagazines, for these definitive photographs, and put together a collection. You might focus on the 1950s, 1960s, or 1970s; the civil rights movement or Vietnam War protests; the women's liberation movement or the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. What about these collected photos helps convey a political or social message? How can the viewer judge whether that message is objective and accurate?



[3346] Marion Post Wolcott, *Rex Theatre for Colored People*. Leland, Mississippi Delta (1944), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USF34-052508-D].

"DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHY AND FILM" WEB ARCHIVE

[3346] Marion Post Wolcott, *Rex Theatre for Colored People*. Leland, Mississippi Delta (1944), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USF34-052508-D]. Photograph of front of all-black movie theater in the South. Blacks and whites attended separate theaters and other civic facilities in the South. In the North, African Americans were separated from white audiences for movies, plays, and music by more informal social codes of segregation.

[3347] Dorothea Lange, *Power Farming Displaces Tenants*. Childress County, Texas Panhandle (1938), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USF34-TO1-018281-C DLC]. Alternately titled "Tractored Out." Mechanization made large farmers wealthy, but left small farmers, tenants, and sharecroppers without jobs. The rising use of machines instead of manual labor, coupled with drought and falling crop prices during the Great Depression, left many farmers homeless.

Unionism and the Farm Workers Movement

Industry, Perseverance and Frugality, make Fortune yield
—Benjamin Franklin

Our movement is spreading like flames across a dry plain. We seek our basic, God-given rights as human beings. We shall do it without violence because it is our destiny.
—Cesar Chavez

In some ways, social institutions like **trade unions** seem to stand in opposition to an American culture that praises hard-working individualism. The first European concepts of America envisioned this land as a new Eden, a place without toil or labor. The early Puritans and, later,

[4725] Arthur Rothstein, *Eroded Land, Alabama* (c. 1930s), courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration [Photographs: FSA: Weather]. Farmer stands outside house, surveying eroded fields. Rothstein began his photography career while at Columbia University. After graduation, he became first staff photographer for the Farm Security Administration. He is mainly known for his Dust Bowl images. He went on to be a photographer for and director of *Look* magazine.

[4734] Marion Post Wolcott, *Picking Cotton Outside Clarksdale, Mississippi Delta, Mississippi* (1939), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USF33-030629-M3]. Impoverished Mississippi farm worker harvesting cotton. Wolcott was a documentary photographer for the Farm Security Administration; her poignant photos strengthened support for many New Deal programs. The conflict between sharecroppers and landowners is depicted in William Faulkner's "Barn Burning."

[5224] Dorothea Lange, *White Sharecropper Family, Formerly Mill Workers in the Gastonia Textile Mills. When the Mills Closed Down Seven Years Ago, They Came to This Farm Near Hartwell, Georgia* (1937), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USF34-018147-C DLC]. The less glamorous side of rural southern life; a white sharecropping family seated on the porch of their cabin. This family is an example of the poorer, "everyday people" that writers such as William Faulkner and Eudora Welty depicted.



[5864] Dorothea Lange, *Mexicans, Field Laborers, on Strike in Cotton Picking Season, Apply to Farm Security Administration for Relief. Bakersfield, California* (1938), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USF34-018627].

the colonists and the citizens of the new Republic reshaped this naïve vision and wrote of the need for the American individual to work hard to tame and civilize a rugged and often hostile land. Benjamin Franklin's many pithy aphorisms about hard work remain engrained in the American consciousness, though the resonance of the agrarian ideal has faded. The capitalistic excesses of the Gilded Age and the rise of industrial robber barons, who benefited greatly at the expense of the common worker, helped to strip away people's confidence in their ability to prosper through hard work alone. Capitalism's excesses are represented in such literary works as Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner's *The Gilded Age* (1873), Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889), William Dean Howell's *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885), Stephen Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* (1893), Theodore Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* (1900), Frank Norris's *The Octopus* (1901), and Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1906).

In the United States, the movement from an agrarian-based economy to an industrial one reflected a shift that had already occurred in much of Europe. Railroads, textiles, and the iron and steel industries all expanded in nineteenth-century America. The labor shortages and relatively good wages that resulted from this industrialization brought two major waves of immigrants from Europe. The first, arriving in the 1840s, included mostly Germans, English, Welsh, Scottish, and Irish. The second, in the 1880s, consisted mainly of people from Eastern Europe and the Balkans. This second wave of immigrants was treated more poorly than their predecessors had been. By and large, their assimilation into mainstream American culture was more difficult, as illustrated in literature by the treatment of the Rudkus family in Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*. On the West Coast, Asian and Latino immigrants were arriving in great numbers and encountering racism as they sought work on the railroads and on large vegetable farms. Such writers as Carlos Bulosan, Amy Tan, Maxine Hong Kingston, and Tomas Rivera explore the stories of these immigrants. On both coasts, many immigrants found themselves working in industries that devalued their humanity by treating them as easily replaceable commodities.

Trade unions had begun to rise in Europe and the United States in the nineteenth century. However, it was not until the formation of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) in 1886 that large organized union activities in America began. Union involvement and activity tended to increase during the early twentieth century, but also tended to fluctuate with the economic climate of the times. Originally, formally organized unions were made up almost exclusively of skilled workers. These unionized workers feared the influx of unskilled immigrants into the country and the workforce, and they sought to limit their influence. Early on, the AFL opposed unionization of these unskilled workers and in 1935 expelled a small group of unions that were trying to organize them. The expelled unions formed the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), which later unionized the auto and steel industries. The AFL and CIO eventually merged in 1955.

Union activity in the United States often engendered violence and

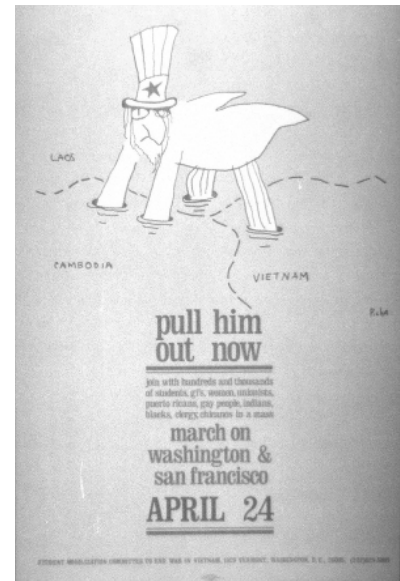
controversy. Influential industry leaders and large corporate farm owners went to great lengths to prevent or disrupt union activity through the jailing of leaders, the hiring of replacement workers, intimidation, and other legal and illegal means. They feared that unions would lead to higher wages and more benefits for workers, which would in turn make their products more costly and less competitive and thus cut into profits.

Compared to other types of union activity in the United States, the farm workers movement began modestly and relatively late. Led primarily by West Coast migrant workers who labored in fruit, vegetable, and flower fields, the movement attempted to address the harsh working conditions, low wages, substandard housing, and lack of benefits that existed for migrant workers. There had been attempts at addressing farm labor problems in the 1940s and 1950s. A small but active National Farm Labor Union attempted to expand in California in the 1940s and 1950s, but pressure from powerful corporate growers prevented more extensive union activities and membership. These growers relied upon 1951 legislation called Public Law 78, or the Bracero Program, to control Mexican agricultural workers who came to the United States seasonally. Despite union efforts, conditions in the field and wages remained poor. According to one history of the United Farm Workers:

No ranches had portable field toilets. Workers' temporary housing was strictly segregated by race, and they paid two dollars or more per day for unheated metal shacks—often infested with mosquitoes—with no indoor plumbing or cooking facilities. Farm labor contractors played favorites with workers, selecting friends first, sometimes accepting bribes. Child labor was rampant, and many workers were injured or died in easily preventable accidents. The average life expectancy of a farm worker was 49 years. (UFW History)

In 1959, the AFL-CIO formed the Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee (AWOC), which consisted of Filipinos, Chicanos, Anglos, and African Americans. In 1962, Cesar Chavez started the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA). These organizations grew slowly, but in 1965 and 1966 a series of strikes finally led the two largest growers on the West Coast to recognize their employees as members of an organized labor union, especially when the two unions combined to create the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (UFWOC).

As part of the farm workers movement, the **Chicano movement** was, and is, a force for socio-economic and cultural change in the Mexican American community. The movement generated a cultural renaissance in art, music, literature, and theatre. One of the most distinctive aspects of Chicano expression is El Teatro Campesino, or the Farm Workers' Theater. Founded in 1965 by Luis Valdez, El Teatro Campesino mounts productions that blend Spanish and English and often include music. Many artistic and political publications, including newspapers, magazines, and journals, arose out of the Chicano movement.



[6932] Student Mobilization Committee to End the War in S.E. Asia, *Pull Him Out Now: Join with the Hundreds and Thousands of Students, GI's, Women, Unionists, Puerto Ricans, Gay People . . .* (c. 1970), courtesy of the Library of Congress.

"UNIONISM / FARM WORKERS MOVEMENT" WEB ARCHIVE

[5864] Dorothea Lange, *Mexicans, Field Laborers, on Strike in Cotton Picking Season, Apply to Farm Security Administration for Relief. Bakersfield, California* (1938), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USF34-018627]. The Farm Security Administration (1937–42) was formed under the Department of Agriculture. It provided low-cost loans and assistance to small farmers and sharecroppers, constructed camps for migrant workers, restored eroded soil, and put flood prevention practices into effect.

[5869] Dorothea Lange, *Filipino Migrant Workers* (1938), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USF34-018671-D]. Large field with Filipino migrant laborers working in row. Filipinos migrated to the United States in three major waves. The first and second

wave faced exploitative working conditions in agriculture, canneries, and other manual labor industries.

[6099] Cesar Chavez, *Migrant Workers Union Leader* (1972), courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration [NWDNS-412-DA-1576]. Cesar Chavez speaking at a union event. Chavez organized the National Farm Workers Association in the 1960s to help migrant farm workers gain rights and better working conditions and pay. Lalo Guerrero composed his “Corrido de Cesar Chavez” after reading a newspaper account of Chavez’s twenty-five day fast in 1968.

[6932] Student Mobilization Committee to End the War in S.E. Asia, *Pull Him Out Now: Join with the Hundreds and Thousands of Students, GI’s, Women, Unionists, Puerto Ricans, Gay People . . .* (c. 1970), courtesy of the Library of Congress. Political poster protesting U.S. military involvement in Vietnam. The antiwar movement linked and encouraged a number of other movements, including the civil rights movement, the Chicano movement, and the farm worker’s movement. Many American poets protested the war, including Adrienne Rich, Robert Lowell, and Allen Ginsberg.

[8613] Vito Marcantonio, *Labor’s Martyrs* (1937), courtesy of Special Collections, Michigan State University Libraries. Socialist publication describing the “great labor martyrs of the past 50 years.” This pamphlet discusses the trial and public execution of “Chicago Anarchists” who organized the Hay-market bombing in 1887, as well as the trials of Sacco and Vanzetti in 1927 and the Scottsboro Boys in the 1930s. The pamphlet goes on to talk about the thriving state of the 1930s labor movement.

Union activity among farm workers continued to increase in the 1960s and 1970s. Aided by growing public awareness of discrimination against and abuses of minorities, fruit boycotts and other forms of public pressure, along with expanded union membership, eventually helped to provide relief from the worst problems faced by migrant farm workers. However, even today employers exploit migrant workers, and debates about immigration, housing, education, public services, citizenship issues, and discriminatory property ownership laws continue.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: Why does the concept of “unionization” sometimes seem at odds with the American Dream?

Comprehension: Why didn’t more widespread unionization of workers take place in the United States before the late 1800s?

Comprehension: What conditions led to the need for trade unions? Why were businesses and corporations opposed to the unions? What did they fear?

Comprehension: How did union activity lead to an artistic renaissance in some communities?

Context: Chapter 21 of *The Grapes of Wrath* offers a snapshot of some of the economic and cultural issues associated with the distrust of migrants and suggests that the sudden influx of workers into California was dangerous. Identify the particular perspectives or “voices” that Steinbeck presents in this chapter. Were these voices justified in their concerns or not?

Context: How does *America Is in the Heart* portray attempts to unionize Filipino and other minority migrant workers? What tactics do the local and state authorities and large farm owners use to try and squelch these efforts?

Exploration: Why did the migrant workers see unionization as the best way to improve working conditions and wages? Why didn’t some of the original trade unions for skilled workers want to help unionize unskilled workers?

EXTENDED CONTEXTS

Socialism and Communism

Socialism can be understood as an economic theory or system of social organization whereby the means of producing and distributing goods are collectively owned or controlled. At its heart is the desire for a just and equitable distribution of wealth, property, and labor. Communism is an established system of government in which the state plans and controls the economy with the putative intent that goods should be shared equally among the people.

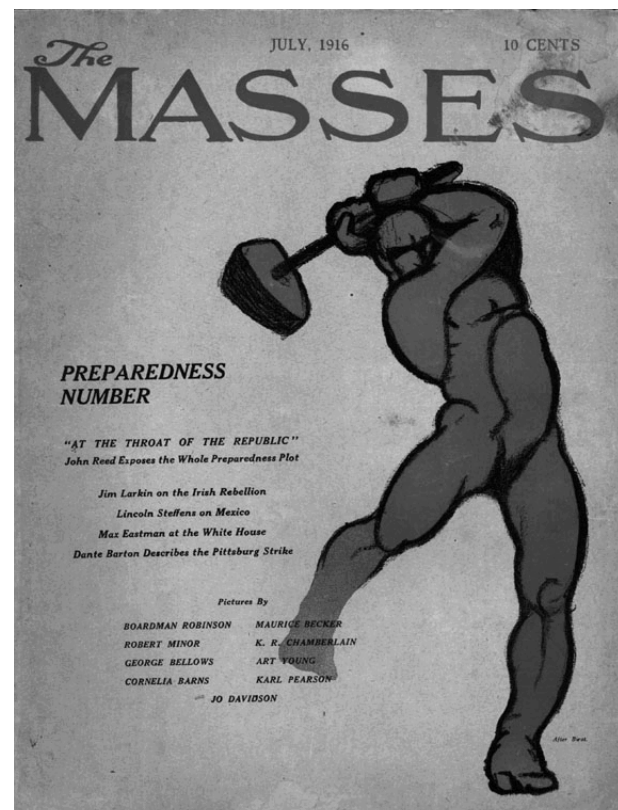
As industrialization gained momentum and technology improved, skilled workers and artisans became less important to the production

of goods and were often replaced by factory wage earners with fewer technical skills. Unskilled workers soon dominated many industries, including shipping, transportation, and building. In the mid-to-late nineteenth century, most factories and jobs moved to the cities and unskilled workers followed. In an effort to receive better benefits, pay, and working conditions, these workers began to organize into trade unions. Many union leaders were inspired by socialist ideologies that promised just treatment for workers.

Though the ideals of socialism go back to classical times, contemporary socialism had its roots in the reaction to the industrial age and the treatment of workers as commodities. As the perception grew that capitalism and industrialism were causing widespread suffering, socialists called for fundamental changes to what they perceived as unfair economic and social systems. European socialist leaders championed different versions of socialist ideology. The utopian socialists, such as Comte Saint-Simon, Charles Fourier, and Robert Owen, envisioned a naturally occurring course of progress for humanity leading to shared wealth and resources for all. These thinkers influenced experiments with utopian societies in America, such as the Oneida Community and Brook Farm, the basis of Hawthorne's satire in *The Blithedale Romance*. Scientific socialists, such as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, argued that organized trade unions and radical political parties were needed to overthrow capitalist systems. Depictions of unions and leftist ideology appear in the works of Muriel Rukeyser, Carlos Bulosan, Upton Sinclair, and John Steinbeck, as well as in the writings of Ralph Waldo Ellison, Richard Wright, and Chaim Potok.

Some American laborers joined socialist movements, but the majority did not. There were three different socialist parties in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: the Socialist Labor Party, formed in 1876; the Social Democratic Party, formed in 1898; and the Socialist Party, formed in 1901. Eugene V. Debs repeatedly ran for president on the Socialist Party ticket in the early twentieth century, but he never received more than 900,000 votes nationwide. Though socialist party membership dropped off during World War I, it grew somewhat during the Great Depression. After World War II, the Socialist Party in America split into conservative and progressive wings and lost much of its following, partly as a result of the anti-communist sentiment of the late 1940s and 1950s. Senator Joseph McCarthy and his followers fostered the perception that socialists and communists were closely associated.

Communism, in a broad sense, refers to radical political movements meant to overthrow capitalist systems of government. After the 1917 Russian Revolution brought the Bolsheviks to power, they



[7892] Robert Minor, Back cover of *The Masses*, July 1916 (1916), courtesy of Special Collections, Michigan State University Libraries.



[4775] Mabel Dwight, *In the Crowd* (1931), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZC4-6582].

"SOCIALISM AND COMMUNISM" WEB ARCHIVE

[4775] Mabel Dwight, *In the Crowd* (1931), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZC4-6582]. Socialists and communists encouraged people to work together to rebel against capitalism, which they held responsible for the oppression of the masses and exploitation of workers. Important works of American socialist literature include Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* and Carlos Bulosan's *America Is in the Heart*.

[6240] Anonymous, *Look Behind the Mask! Communism Is Death* (n.d.), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-80757]. Propaganda poster depicting Stalin and a skull. U.S. anti-communism peaked during the 1950s Red Scare. Many political, union, and popular culture figures were accused of being communists. Cold War politics often made labor organizers unpopular, as depicted in Carlos Bulosan's *America Is in the Heart*.

[7892] Robert Minor, Back cover of *The Masses*, July 1916 (1916), courtesy of Special Collections, Michigan State University Libraries. Radical magazine *The Masses* parody of desired qualities in army recruits. Leftist political movements, such as socialism and communism, continued during World War I, despite government censorship efforts.

[8609] Patriotic Tract Society, *Red Stars in Hollywood* (1949), courtesy of the

renamed themselves the Communist Party. Eventually, under Lenin and then Stalin, the Soviet Union became the international leader of the communist movement. Many other countries became communist, including much of Eastern Europe, China, North Korea, Vietnam, and Cuba.

Although governments like that of the Soviet Union called for the overthrow of capitalistic systems, the United States did not perceive international communism as a serious threat until after World War II. A "cold war" began between the Soviet Union and the United States, with each vying for world domination. American fear of communism was enhanced by the emergence of Joseph McCarthy, a Wisconsin senator who spearheaded an anti-communist campaign from 1950 to 1954. During the same period, in the House of Representatives, the Un-American Activities Committee held numerous highly publicized hearings on suspected communists. The "Red Scare" campaign mounted by McCarthy and the Republican Party alleged that communists had infiltrated America and were intent on overthrowing the country. Arthur Miller's play *The Crucible* is perhaps the best-known literary response to this era. The anti-communist campaign and the public support it garnered allowed for unscrupulous congressional committee investigations, which Miller likened to the witch trials of centuries before, that sought to discredit or blacklist individuals with "known ties" to communists or socialists, even if those ties were well in the past. Many literary figures and people in the motion picture industry fell victim to these investigations.

The Cold War loomed large in the American consciousness throughout the late 1950s and the 1960s. Films and literature were the primary genres where these concerns surfaced. Movies like *Dr. Strangelove* and *Fail-Safe* expressed anxiety about atomic annihilation. Nuclear holocaust, Russian invasion, and the perceived rise of totalitarianism in American society were all themes in popular books and films like *Fahrenheit 451*, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, *It Came from Outer Space*, and *The Thing*. Similar themes appear in such popular works of fiction as Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*, Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*, and Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*. Each novel explores how coping with constant Cold War fears leads to alienation, absurdity, and paranoia.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: How did American capitalism fail certain segments of the population? Why were people attracted to socialism and communism?

Comprehension: How did the fear of communism affect the United States in the 1950s? Was the government justified in the measures it took to root out communism?

Context: Why would a poet like Muriel Rukeyser, who was born into a wealthy family, support American communist and leftist organizations?

Context: In Chapter 26 of *The Grapes of Wrath*, Casey is called a "red

son-of-a-bitch” just before he is killed. “Red” was a slang word for “communist.” Does Casey seem to be a communist or socialist? What are his concerns? Why did Steinbeck portray Casey in this way?

Exploration: In the first decade of the twenty-first century, some people have compared the actions the U.S. government took in investigating possible communist “infiltrators and collaborators” in the 1950s to the post-9/11 suspension of civil rights for many people living in the United States. Are those comparisons fair? Do they help you understand why the government acted the way it did in the 1950s?

The Works Progress Administration (WPA)

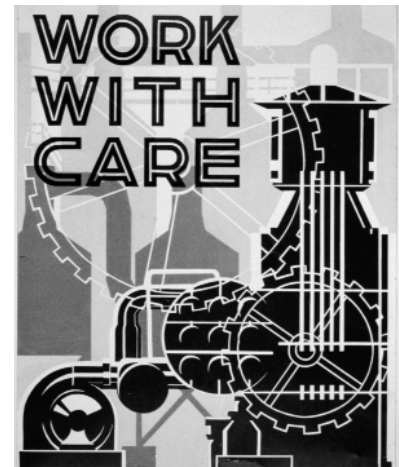
During his acceptance speech at the 1932 Democratic National Convention, Franklin D. Roosevelt said, “I pledge you—I pledge myself to a new deal for the American people.” One of the major components of the “new deal” was the **Works Progress Administration (WPA)**. The WPA provided over nine million people with work and sustaining wages by employing them to build roads, beautify buildings, play concerts, and write histories, along with a wide range of other activities. Created in 1935, the WPA was led by Roosevelt appointee Harry Hopkins. Whereas the previous president, Herbert Hoover, and his administration had refused to offer government assistance to individuals, Roosevelt’s plan was to provide multiple forms of relief to the army of unemployed people created by the Great Depression.

The Civil Works Administration (CWA), the predecessor of the WPA, was created in the fall of 1933. In exchange for a weekly government check of fifteen dollars, previously unemployed workers repaired schools, built or beautified parks, constructed swimming pools and athletic fields, and taught people how to read. Writers and artists were also employed and paid for their services. About four million people found work under this program.

After the CWA expired, the WPA was formed and became the largest and farthest-reaching work-relief program of all those founded during the Roosevelt years. WPA workers participated in public service projects and programs, but the WPA is best remembered for its many artistic and literary projects. One division of the WPA, known as Federal Project Number One, included a Music Project, a Theater Project, an Arts Project, and a Writer’s Project. The Federal Theater Project put on plays across the country, along with vaudeville shows, puppet circuses, and dance festivals. The Federal Music Project offered free concerts and music education across the country and created an Index of American Composers, cataloguing thousands of pieces of American music and gathering the biographies of U.S. composers. Artists such as Ben Shahn painted large murals inside and outside public buildings as part of the Arts Project. This project also included art education classes and seminars. As part of the Writer’s Project, well-known authors like Richard Wright and John Steinbeck were paid to create

Vincent Voice Library, Michigan State University. Contains part of a speech made after the opening-night performance of *Thieves Paradise* on April 12, 1948. The speech talks about the presence of communism in Hollywood and “the menace of these traitors to the safety of America.”

[8615] Anonymous, *The Story of the Sacco-Vanzetti Case* (1921), courtesy of Special Collections, Michigan State University Libraries. Written after the initial trial of Italian anarchists Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti. Sacco and Vanzetti were originally arrested in 1920 on the charge of being “suspicious reds” but later charged with the murder of two men. They were found guilty and executed in 1927, though over one hundred people testified to their innocence. This pamphlet was partially designed to raise money for a new trial for them.



[7023] Nathan Sherman, *Work With Care* (1937), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZC2-1172].



[5865] Dorothea Lange, *Farm Security Administration (FSA) Rural Rehabilitation Client. Tulare County, California* (1938), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USF34-018636-C].

“WPA” WEB ARCHIVE

[4672] Conrad A. Albrizio, *The New Deal* (1934), courtesy of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). Franklin D. Roosevelt Library (NLR). A fresco of New York’s Leonardo Da Vinci Art School showing working people. The mural was dedicated to President Roosevelt and commissioned by the WPA. Work was an important theme in depression-era art.

[4808] Alan Lomax, *Rev. Haynes’s Methodist Church, Eatonville, Florida* (1935), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZ62-1707]. Zora Neale Hurston worked with Alan Lomax on a WPA project collecting recordings and images of southern black life.

African American religious beliefs, practices, and music were of particular interest to both of them. This is a church in Hurston’s hometown of Eatonville, which she wrote about in both her fiction and her ethnographic work.

[5865] Dorothea Lange, *Farm Security Administration (FSA) Rural Rehabilitation Client. Tulare County, California* (1938), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USF34-018636-C]. In the 1930s, the Rural Rehabilitation Program was established to provide loans and other assistance to small-scale farmers who were hard hit by the depression. The Farm Security Administration also hired teams

regional histories of the areas they lived in. Other famous writers who were part of this project include Saul Bellow, John Cheever, Ralph Ellison, and Zora Neale Hurston, all of whom documented life histories and regional folklore. The Writer’s Project also helped record many of the narratives of living African Americans who had been born into slavery.

QUESTIONS

Comprehension: Who do you think benefited the most from WPA projects? Who did not benefit?

Comprehension: How were the arts influenced by these government programs? What was created or saved that might have been lost had it not been for the WPA?

Context: In Chapter 34 of *America Is in the Heart*, Bulosan seems to both poke fun at and praise the WPA and some of its projects. How does he do so? What does this brief chapter tell us about Bulosan’s general impression of the WPA?

Context: How do you think Henry David Thoreau, who wrote, “The government is best that governs least,” would have reacted to the government programs of the 1930s? How do you think the American public would react to such initiatives today?

Exploration: Research President Johnson’s efforts to enlarge government in the 1960s, especially the expansion of programs like Medicare, Medicaid, VISTA, and Head Start. In the 1980s and 1990s, these programs came under great scrutiny and were attacked as wasteful and counterproductive. Do you agree with this assessment? Why or why not?

ASSIGNMENTS

Personal and Creative Responses

1. *Poet’s Corner:* Describe what “being an American” means to you. What makes Americans distinctive? Make a list of American characteristics. Now write a free-verse poem that explains why you do or do not see yourself as “American.” Use Langston Hughes’s “Theme for English B” as a model for your poem.
2. *Creative Writing:* Write a creative story about one day in the life of a person in a small midwestern town on the eastern edge of the state on a major East-West interstate highway. A highly contagious disease has broken out on the East Coast, and people are fleeing that part of the country and coming west in great numbers. No one knows who might be carrying the disease. How would you react to these travelers? What do the officials of your town and state do to protect residents from this disease? Include a scene of confrontation. Use Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath* as a model.

3. *Journal*: Have you ever entered an environment in which you felt like an outsider? Perhaps you left home to go to college or moved to a new town or visited another country? Did you at times feel powerless, voiceless? Did you feel like you had little control over your own life? Describe the situation and what it felt like. How did you handle it? Now interview others using these questions, including students, relatives, or your parents. Write down your observations in a journal.
4. *Letter Writing*: Assume the role of Helena Maria Viramontes. Have Viramontes write a letter to John Steinbeck, explaining to Steinbeck what he left out or got wrong about migrant workers in *The Grapes of Wrath*. Then, write a reply from Steinbeck to Viramontes.
5. *Letter Writing*: Write a letter to a local, state, or national politician explaining a situation that you would like to see changed. Use an activist's voice, and list the reasons why the present situation is unfair and the changes you'd like to see take place. Justify the expenditure of money it would take to enact your changes.
6. *Presentation*: Tackle a project on any of the themes associated with this unit, such as migrant workers, labor unions, environmentalism, the Great Depression, or the Dust Bowl. Create a poster, put together a videotape, do a PowerPoint presentation, write and produce a radio play, make a map, or anything else that inspires you to explore your theme in more depth.

of photographers to document both the necessity for and the benefits of the program.

[7023] Nathan Sherman, *Work With Care* (1937), courtesy of the Library of Congress [LC-USZC2-1172]. This woodprint was created as part of the WPA Federal Art Project. The Works Progress Administration provided millions of people with work and sustaining wages by employing them to build roads, beautify buildings, play concerts, and write histories, along with a wide range of other activities. President Franklin D. Roosevelt's plan was to provide multiple forms of relief to the army of unemployed people created by the Great Depression.

Problem-Based Learning Projects

1. Imagine that you have been asked to create a museum exhibit on the migrant struggle in the United States. Using the archive and literature in this unit, choose ten to fifteen items that you feel are representative of this topic. Then write a justification for the pieces that you will display. How did you decide on these items? What values seem most important in what you have chosen to display? How do your items reflect those values? What does it mean to be a migrant worker in the United States?
2. You are a high school teacher, and you've just finished teaching a unit on Hispanic and Latino/a writers. Imagine that you must now compose an essay exam for your students. Write three questions that you would like to have your students explore. What themes are important to the unit? What symbols or images have remained influential?
3. Imagine you are on the school board for your local district. A group of parents, students, and teachers has circulated a petition asking that more Hispanic literature that focuses on migrant issues be included in the curriculum. Other parents, students, and teachers have sent letters saying that the current curriculum is fine. The board is going to hold a community meeting to decide the issue. Take the position of wanting to include these works, and prepare a presentation to support your point of view. How will you make your

argument? What kinds of evidence will you cite to demonstrate the educational value of these works? How will you construct your argument so that it addresses the concerns of those who think there is no reason to include these works in the curriculum?

4. You are a reporter for the *Chicago Tribune*, and you've been assigned to write an article on how U.S. employers take advantage of migrant workers. You want to begin the article with a history of employer–migrant worker relations in the United States. What would you include in your history? Where would you begin? Which groups would you focus on? What writers would you refer to and why?

GLOSSARY

American Dream The belief that a better life is possible for anyone in the United States. Because of its near mythic status, the “American Dream” means different things to different people. One component of the American Dream is seen in the rags-to-riches tales of Benjamin Franklin and the nineteenth-century “Ragged Dick” stories. Another component is the notion of America as the “Gold Mountain,” put forth by Chinese immigrants who came to the western United States in the 1850s, during the Gold Rush years, to make their fortunes. Sadly, few of them earned enough to pay for passage home and instead became miners, railroad builders, fishermen, service workers, and menial laborers.

blacklist A list of persons or organizations that have incurred disapproval or suspicion and are to be denied employment or otherwise penalized. Suspensions of communism led to many Hollywood writers and producers/directors being blacklisted in the 1950s.

Chicano/Chicana A Mexican American man or woman. Originally a derogatory term, it has been reclaimed as an acceptable, indeed proud, designation.

Chicano movement A Mexican American movement to obtain civil rights and better wages and working conditions, improve educational opportunities, and increase appreciation for Chicano/a fine arts.

Dust Bowl The area in the Midwest affected by a four-year drought (1935–39) that destroyed all cash crops and caused much of the topsoil to be stripped away by the wind in terrible dust storms.

eco-literature Writing that explores our relationship to the environment and the land around us; nature writing. Eco-literature often combines stories of the land with tales of social injustice.

Great Depression The period of great economic downturn in the United States and the world from 1929 to the early 1940s.

Hispanic See Latino/Latina.

jeremiad A literary work prophesying doom or a sermon strongly recommending an immediate change in behavior or practices.

Latino/Latina A person of Latin American descent, often living in the United States. The *American Heritage Dictionary* notes that,

although “Hispanic” and “Latino” are often used interchangeably, they are not identical. “Hispanic” is more global, referring to Spanish-speaking peoples around the world. But for some segments of the Spanish-speaking population, “Hispanic” can be offensive, bearing a stamp of Anglo labeling, whereas “Latino/Latina” is more a term of ethnic pride and distinct associations with a Latin American background.

magical realism A primarily Latin American literary movement that arose in the 1960s. The Cuban writer Alejo Carpentier first applied the term to Latin American fiction in 1949. Works of magical realism combine realistic portrayals of ordinary events with elements of fantasy and myth, creating a fictional world both familiar and dreamlike. The best-known practitioner of magical realism is Colombian novelist Gabriel García Márquez, who has used the technique in such novels as *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967).

marginalize To relegate or confine to a lower social standing or to proscribe as an outsider.

migrant workers Workers who must travel to find employment. The term is often associated with agricultural workers on the West Coast and in the South.

modernism A literary movement that reached its peak in the 1920s, modernism developed in two rather different strands. American modernism, as practiced by Williams and Hughes, is characterized by an interest in portraying ordinary subject matter by using concrete, vernacular language. Modernist poetry written in Europe, as characterized by Eliot, tends to be highly allusive. The poems are nonlinear and often refer to the modern condition, particularly the city, in a deeply critical manner. This strand of modernism tends to use a disembodied voice and a collage-like method.

testimonio A form of collective autobiographical witnessing that provides a voice to oppressed peoples. It generally plays an important role in developing and supporting international human rights, solidarity movements, and liberation struggles.

trade union An association of laborers in a particular trade, mostly created to help lobby for higher wages, benefits, and improved working conditions.

Un-American Activities Committee A committee of the U.S. House of Representatives, created in 1938 to investigate disloyalty and subversive organizations. It is associated today with the excesses of the Cold War and the unwarranted national fear of a communist takeover.

WPA The Works Progress Administration, created in 1935 by the Roosevelt administration to provide millions of people with work and sustaining wages by employing them to build roads, beautify buildings, play concerts, and write histories, along with a wide range of other activities.

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