

Travels with Charley Socratic Seminar Prep Questions

DUE: _____

(Typed, MLA Format)

Throughout the novel, *Travels with Charley*, Steinbeck makes it a point to have interactions with a variety of people along his journey. I would like to spend some time looking into who Steinbeck talks to, why, and what point he is making by the interactions he includes in the book. Some of these issues, and others, will be dealt with in a Socratic Seminar on Thursday, August 7th.

There are a total of 11 questions to answer, 3 of which are Honors Students' Questions. All students are welcome to answer all 11, but must answer all 8 of the other questions. Answers must be typed and include page number references and/or quotes from the book.

The more thorough your answers are here, the better quality seminar we will have on Thursday. Feel free to make notes in your book with pencil or post-its to be prepared. If you are not able to participate in the Seminar be either you did not complete the HW or are absent, you will be assigned an alternate writing assignment to make up for it.

Part I:

1. Look at the list of items Steinbeck packs to take with him. Why does he bring so much? What kinds of items did he end up not using on his trip?
2. How does he characterize Charley's role on the trip – i.e. how does he plan on using Charley in his interactions with people?

Part II:

3. Describe the experience in the sterile diner/motel. How is Steinbeck emotionally effected? Considering his surroundings at the time, how is Steinbeck's statement "a sad soul can kill you quicker, far quicker than a germ" ironic? **(Honors Question)**
4. Does Steinbeck seem to approve of religion or not? What does he want religion to do for people?
5. When discussing the migrant workers from Canada, Steinbeck sadly observes, "It occurs to me that, just as the Carthaginians hired mercenaries to do their fighting for them, we Americans bring in mercenaries to do our hard and humble work." Overall, what is his impression of the migrant workers themselves?

Part III:

6. If the clash between the young man who wants to be a hairdresser and his father can be interpreted as a clash between emerging and traditional values, what values do the father and son represent? How are their opposing value systems representative of larger changes occurring in America during the time period? **(Honors Question)**

7. Describe the pros and cons of living in a mobile home as described by the family (who seem to like it) and Steinbeck (who doesn't seem to like it). What does he see as some of the broader social problems of living a rootless lifestyle?
8. Steinbeck stops to visit a grove of redwoods in his native California. Describe his response to the trees. What does that response reveal about his overall attitude toward America's natural landscape?

Part IV:

9. Who are "The Cheerleaders" and what are they protesting? Why does Steinbeck think this is bad for the whole country?
10. Describe the interaction with the hitchhiker. What did Steinbeck want the reader to take from this conversation?
11. Steinbeck spends a lot of his trip being lost. He gets lost again in New York on his way home. How can this state of being directionless or lost be read symbolically? (**Honors Question**)