

# LES RAISINS DE LA COLÈRE

by John FORD

## FICHE TECHNIQUE

Titre original : The Grapes of Wrath

Pays (country) : USA

Durée (running time) : 2h09

Année (year) : 1940

Genre : Drama

Scénario : Nunnally JOHNSON based on a novel by John STEINBECK (Pulitzer Prize 1940)

Directeur de la photographie : Gregg TOLAND

Costumes : Gwen WAKELING

Montage : Robert L. SIMPSON

Musique (music) : Alfred NEWMAN

Production : 20th Century Fox

Interprètes : Henry FONDA (Tom Joad), Jane DARWELL (Ma Joad), John CARRADINE (Casy), Charley GRAPEWIN (Grandpa Joad), Dorris BOWDON (Rose-of-Sharon Rivers), Russell SIMPSON (Pa Joad), O.Z. WHITEHEAD (Al Joad), John QUALEN (Muley Graves), Eddie QUILLAN (Connie Rivers), Zeffie TILBURY (Grandma Joad), Frank SULLY (Noah Joad), Frank DARIEN (Uncle John Joad), Darryl HICKMAN (Winfield Joad), Shirley MILLS (Ruthie Joad), Roger IMHOF (Mr Thomas, ditch employer)



**Seven Academy Award nominations for the film – with two wins: Best Supporting Actress (Jane Darwell) for her role as the archetypal mother figure, and Best Director (John Ford)**

**The other five nominations were Best Picture (that lost to Hitchcock's *Rebecca*), Best Actor (Henry Fonda in one of his greatest film roles), Best Screenplay (Nunnally Johnson), Best Sound Recording, and Best Film Editing**

## SYNOPSIS

Aux Etats-Unis, dans les années 1930. Après avoir purgé une peine de quatre ans pour homicide involontaire, Tom Joad, un modeste paysan de l'Oklahoma, sort de prison et regagne la ferme de ses parents. Mais il trouve la maison abandonnée et les champs alentours déserts. Seul un pauvre bougre, Muley Graves, erre encore sur les lieux. Il explique que la plupart des fermiers de la région sont partis pour la Californie, expulsés par une grosse société agricole, la compagnie Shawnee, à la suite de plusieurs mauvaises récoltes...

*Driven off their Oklahoma farm during the dust bowl days of the Great Depression, the members of the Joad family load their belongings into a truck. Like millions of other dispossessed farmers they head to California in search of work. The screenplay is based on the Pulitzer Prize winning novel by John Steinbeck.*

*"The Grapes of Wrath" is a classic film of the Great Depression. It describes the plight of the "Oakies" and explores the stress of hard times on a family.*

Synopsis très complet dans *La Documentation Française*: <http://www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr/revues-collections/documentation-photographique/2002/sommaire8028.shtml> en complément de « Histoire et Cinéma aux Etats-Unis », *La Documentation photographique* n°8028, 2002.

## AUTOUR DU FILM

### Contexte historique / Historical context :

During the 1920s and 1930s farmers plowed up grassland on the Southern Great Plains to plant wheat. In 1934 and 1935, in parts of Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado and the Dakotas, a severe drought killed the wheat plants. High winds blew the topsoil off the land and into huge dunes. Violent dust storms turned the sky black at midday and people had to breathe through handkerchiefs to keep from choking on the dust. About 150,000 square miles of land in the Southern Great Plains came to be called the Dust Bowl.

Because of these conditions, farmers were unable to make their mortgage payments and the banks took the land. Many small farms were consolidated into large holdings owned by corporations and farmed by employees.

Hundreds of thousands of once independent and self-sufficient farmers were run off their land. Many emigrated west to California where they became migrant farm workers taking low paid temporary jobs. They were called "Oakies" since many came from Oklahoma, one of the states hardest hit by the drought and soil erosion. They lived in their cars or in camps, usually in miserable conditions. They worked when they could but since the California farmers needed them only at certain times of the year, such as harvest time, they spent many months without work.

When people lose their jobs and homes, families come under stress. Some break up, others get stronger, but adversity changes most families. Some family members will die earlier than they would normally, others will leave home, and some may get into trouble with the law. The relative positions of the various people in the family may also change. The father of the Joad family had been the head of the household on the farm in Oklahoma. By the time the family reached California, he admitted that he didn't feel useful any more and that he kept thinking of the way it was before the family was forced off their land. By the end of the story, the mother is the strongest member of the family. It is she to whom Tom says goodbye when he leaves. The character of the mother acknowledges this by saying, "*A woman can change better than a man.*"

The "reds" referred to in the film are the communists. The movie shows how at times red scare tactics were used to prejudice people against Americans who protested oppressive conditions or tried to form labor unions.

### Meaning of the title :

The title of the film was taken from the Battle Hymn of the Republic, by Julia Ward Howe : "Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord, He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored, He has loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword, His truth is marching on".

### More information :

SITES (anglophones)	DESCRIPTION
<a href="http://www.filmsite.org/grap.html">http://www.filmsite.org/grap.html</a>	Critiques, synopsis, discussions sur le film
GradeSaver <a href="http://www.gradesaver.com/ClassicNotes/Titles/grapeswrath/essays/essay1.html">http://www.gradesaver.com/ClassicNotes/Titles/grapeswrath/essays/essay1.html</a>	Présentation de l'œuvre de Steinbeck, comparaison avec le film, analyse par chapitre du livre
<a href="http://www.ac.wvu.edu/~stephan/Steinbeck/grapes.html">http://www.ac.wvu.edu/~stephan/Steinbeck/grapes.html</a>	Résumé des chapitres, cartes permettant de situer des lieux

### DVD :

Le film est paru en DVD le 6 avril 2005 chez Fox Pathé Europa : il n'y a malheureusement pas de bonus dans cette édition.

### PISTES PÉDAGOGIQUES

#### En Histoire-Géographie :

- Place dans les programmes :

En Collège, la crise des années 30 en Amérique ne fait plus partie des programmes de 3<sup>e</sup> : il est donc difficile de l'étudier en classe sauf en collaboration avec les professeurs d'Anglais et de Français : le film permettant une ouverture sur la crise des années 30 dans un pays autre que l'Allemagne et la France, études de cas au programme.

Au Lycée, le film *Les raisins de la colère* peut être exploité en classe de 1<sup>ère</sup> L / ES / S et STG dans le cadre de la crise des années 30 :

- En STG, il peut s'intégrer au 2<sup>e</sup> thème obligatoire en Histoire : « *Les transformations économiques et sociales en Europe et Amérique du Nord du milieu du XIX<sup>e</sup> s. à 1939* ».
- En L / ES / S, il peut s'étudier dans le cadre de la première partie du programme : « *L'âge industriel et sa civilisation, du milieu du XIX<sup>e</sup> s. à 1939* ».

« C'est dans ce cadre d'ensemble que les crises majeures qui ont marqué ces mutations (Grande Dépression du XIX<sup>e</sup> s. ou crise de 1929) sont étudiées » Instructions Officielles / Accompagnement des programmes 2003.

- Site proposant une exploitation pédagogique du film en classe de 1<sup>ère</sup> : Cinehig (<http://cinehig.clionautes.org>)
- ⇒ Film d'abord visionné lors d'une séance de 2 h.
- ⇒ Travail par groupes de 3 des élèves à partir d'un dossier documentaire (n°7) du CNC / Centre National de Cinématographie et guidé par un questionnaire.

NB : Possibilité de télécharger la fiche de travail et le dossier documentaire.

⇒ Travail réalisé par les élèves : un mini-dossier de 5 pages sur le film :

- présentation de l'œuvre (1 page)
- le film témoignage de son époque (1-2 pages)
- le film discours sur une époque (1-2 pages)
- conclusion (1 page)

- Activités pédagogiques dans certains manuels :

De nombreux manuels d'Histoire de 1<sup>ère</sup> utilisent des extraits de l'œuvre de Steinbeck dans le cadre de diverses activités :

- Manuel d'Histoire Première L / ES Belin (coll. L. Bourquin), 2003 : Un dossier « *Crises et adaptation du secteur agricole* » p. 32-33
- Manuel d'Histoire Première L / ES / S Belin, 1997 : Une étude de documents sur le thème « *La crise de 1929* », p. 224-225
- Manuel d'Histoire Première L / ES / S Nathan (coll. J. Marseille), 1994 : Etudier une œuvre littéraire ou cinématographique, *Les Raisins de la Colère* de John Ford (p.218 : une photo, un extrait de l'œuvre)
- Manuel d'Histoire Première Hatier L / ES / S (coll. Bernstein / Milza), 1988 : Commentaire de documents sur le thème « *Les conséquences sociales de la crise* », p. 238-239

### **En Anglais :**

- Place dans les programmes :

En Collège, le film peut être étudié en classe de 3<sup>e</sup> malgré l'absence de l'étude de la crise des années 20 en Histoire-Géographie : cela suppose une présentation du contexte historique avant la séance du film car les élèves n'ont aucune connaissance sur le sujet.

En Lycée, le film peut être particulièrement étudié en classe de 1<sup>ère</sup> : l'activité permet alors un travail en coordination avec le professeur d'Histoire-Géographie, d'autant plus que le sujet est vu lors du 1<sup>er</sup> trimestre.

- Activités pédagogiques dans certains manuels :

Peu de manuels d'Anglais récents utilisent l'œuvre de Steinbeck.

Le manuel de Terminale *New Flying Colours* aux éditions Didier (1997) propose une Unit 1 sur "The 20s and 30s" comprenant :

- une présentation générale de la période "Warm-up",
- l'étude d'un extrait de *The Great Gatsby*,
- l'étude du discours fait par F.D. Roosevelt lors de son arrivée au pouvoir en 1933 : "*Inauguration Speech*",
- l'étude d'un extrait de *The Grapes of Wrath* avec un ensemble de questions très développé.

### **Propositions de travail :**

- Pre-viewing activities :

On the Internet, do some research about the movie *The Grapes of Wrath* :

- When was the movie shot?
- Who directed it?
- Who plays in it?
- What is the story?

Check what information students have on the Great Depression.

- After viewing the movie : discussions, debate or essays about the movie

#### General questions :

1. What is the conflict in this film? Who are the contending characters? How is the conflict resolved?

2. What was the theme of this film? What was the film maker trying to tell us? Was he successful? Justify your answer.
3. Did you learn anything from this movie? What was it?
4. Was there something you didn't understand about the movie? What was it?
5. What did you like best about the movie? Why?
6. What did you like least about the movie? Why?
7. Select an action performed by one of the characters in the film and explain why the character took that action. What motivated him or her? What did this motivation have to do with the theme of the film?
8. Who was your favorite character in the movie? Why?
9. Who was your least favorite character in the movie? Why?
10. Analyze the use of music in the movie. Did it enhance the story that the film maker was trying to tell? How would you have used music in this movie?
11. Did all of the events portrayed in the film ring true? Describe the scenes that you found especially accurate. Which sequences didn't seem to match reality? Why?
12. What was the structure of the story told by the movie?

Students can be asked to write an essay on any of the discussion questions described above.

The class can be asked to take positions on and to debate any of the discussion questions.

Change the ending of the film. (This can be done by the teacher describing a new ending or permitting the class or different groups of students to choose their own ending.) Break the class into groups to create a story board or a script of an altered version of the film accommodating the new ending and, if necessary, changing the order of the scenes.

#### Specific questions about the movie :

1. Why did Tom Joad have to leave the family?
2. Why was the ex-preacher, Casey, killed?
3. Why did the deputy sheriffs burn transient camps?
4. On a map trace Route 66 from Oklahoma through New Mexico, then into Arizona and California. Show where the Colorado River flows.
5. Why did the deputy sheriffs need a warrant or a fight before they came into the camp?

#### Themes evoked :

- the Great Depression
- Families in crisis – Female role model

Who kept the family together and emerged as the person to whom all others turned for support?

A theme of this story is that when family circumstances radically change it is the women that keep the family together. The father admits that he is lost and always thinking of the way it had been before. The son-in-law runs away. Tom has to leave to avoid being arrested. Do you agree with Steinbeck that in general women can deal with total disruption of their prior way of life better than men?

- Enlarging the study :

Other movies : *Modern Times* directed by Charlie Chaplin, 1936, 87 min