

Mae moved down and looked in. "Which ones?"

"There, them stripy ones."

The little boys raised their eyes to her face and they stopped breathing; their mouths were partly opened, their half-naked bodies were rigid.

"Oh—them. Well, no—them's two for a penny."

"Well, gimme two then, ma'am." He placed the copper cent carefully on the counter. The boys expelled their held breath softly. Mae held the big sticks out.

Steinbeck, John. *The Grapes of Wrath*.  
New York: Viking, 1967 (1939).

Figure 6: Annotation of *The Grapes of Wrath*

Qualitative Measures	Quantitative Measures
<p><b>Levels of Meaning</b></p> <p>There are multiple and often implicit levels of meaning within the excerpt and the novel as a whole. The surface level focuses on the literal journey of the Joads, but the novel also works on metaphorical and philosophical levels.</p>	<p>The quantitative assessment of <i>The Grapes of Wrath</i> demonstrates the difficulty many currently existing readability measures have in capturing adequately the richness of sophisticated works of literature, as various ratings suggest a placement within the grades 2-3 text complexity band. A Coh-Metrix analysis also tends to suggest the text is an easy one since the syntax is uncomplicated and the author uses a conventional story structure and only a moderate number of abstract words. (The analysis does indicate, however, that a great deal of inferencing will be required to interpret and connect the text's words, sentences, and central ideas.)</p>
<p><b>Structure</b></p> <p>The text is relatively simple, explicit, and conventional in form. Events are largely related in chronological order.</p>	<p><b>Reader-Task Considerations</b></p> <p>These are to be determined locally with reference to such variables as a student's motivation, knowledge, and experiences as well as purpose and the complexity of the task assigned and the questions posed.</p>
<p><b>Language Conventinality and Clarity</b></p> <p>Although the language used is generally familiar, clear, and conversational, the dialect of the characters may pose a challenge for some readers. Steinbeck also puts a great deal of weight on certain less familiar words, such as faltering. In various portions of the novel not fully represented in the excerpt, the author combines rich, vivid, and detailed description with an economy of words that requires heavy inferencing.</p>	<p><b>Recommended Placement</b></p> <p>Though considered extremely easy by many quantitative measures, <i>The Grapes of Wrath</i> has a sophistication of theme and content that makes it more suitable for early high school (grades 9-10), which is where the Standards have placed it. In this case, qualitative measures have overruled the quantitative measures.</p>
<p><b>Knowledge Demands</b></p> <p>The themes are sophisticated. The experiences and perspective conveyed will be different from those of many students. Knowledge of the Great Depression, the "Okie Migration" to California, and the religion and music of the migrants is helpful, but the author himself provides much of the context needed for comprehension.</p>	