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The Grapes of Wrath is a western to my understanding. When comparing the Grapes of Wrath to a Western there are a few key factors that sway my decision, nomads and hostile environments. One of the factors that stands out the most would be the main characters, the Joads, are nomads. They travel from place to place in order to survive. The setting of the Grapes of Wrath, the west, is also a factor in placing it into the western category. The environments in which the Joads come from in Oklahoma, and go to in California are hostile environments, giving more evidence to the Grapes of Wrath being a western.

A western can consist of many different key elements; I would have to say the location in which the western is taking place, obviously the setting would have to be in the west. Another key factor would be the fact that the settlers in the west were nomads. The Indians being the first, most tribes never stayed in one place for too long, they followed the game for food and the climate of different regions in the west for planting crops, they used these methods often and as tool for survival. The cowboys also were nomads in the west, traveling from state to state to feed their herds, and make a living, constantly on the move. In many westerns there is often conflict or hostile environments in which the main characters must overcome or live with.

Nomads have been a tradition throughout western history. The Native Americans were the first to settle in the West. Their lives consisted of hunting and gathering. In order to live successfully the Native Americans would follow the game from place to place in order to survive and feed their tribes. They also went where there was gathering to be done, whether it be berries or edible shrubs they followed the trails of food in order to survive. The western or plains Indians were considered to be the Indians everyone knew about. Limerick states, "In the southwest, some of the people were nomadic hunters, while others farmed and lived in villages hundreds of years old, practicing a complex religion. None of these ways of life matched the plains Indians model enshrined in novels and movies as the "real Indian" way of life," (Limerick, 216). Native Americans in the West lived off the land and traveled from place to place as the Joads did too.

In the movie, "Stagecoach," the setting is in the west, as is with the Joads, and it is based on the nomadic movements of people in the West. They are all traveling to the same place from different areas in order to start a new life or to move on to the next place, just as the Joads are doing in moving to California and from place to place.

The Joads were nomadic people as well. Being kicked out of their home they needed other options to survive. Traveling to California to seek their fortune they were not in one place for too long. As the seasons and crops changed the Joads moved with the change. The difference between the Cowboys, Indians and the Joads was the cowboys and Indians were born into this way of life, while the Joads were forced into this lifestyle. They were kicked out of their homes and sent to the

streets. Going where there was work was the only thing they knew to do. Steinbeck writes of the Joads and their unfortunate event of having to leave their home and become nomads, "Those families which had lived on a little piece of land, who had lived and died on forty acres, had eaten or starved on the produce of forty acres, had now the whole West to rove," (Steinbeck, 282). Given the chance to survive as a nomad, the Joads were eager to get to California and start work, as so many were from Oklahoma. The choices for the people from the dust were to travel west and move from orchard to orchard.

Cowboys lived and breathed harsh environments; they had a diet of manly beef, slept without accommodations, like tents or did not sleep at all. They had been raised this way and many knew no different. Richardson sheds some light on the environment the cowboys came from, "The cowboy's life was harsh, but quickly got a romantic image. Cowboys often went days without sleep, especially in the first two weeks of the drive when cattle were liable to stampede," (Richardson, 71). The cowboy way was long days and occasionally risking their lives for the cattle they were herding, saving them from harsh conditions or Native American attacks.

The Native Americans were no strangers to the hostile environments created by the white man. Being kicked off their lands and being told they only had a small portion of land to survive and having to assimilate their ways of life to conform to the white man. Limerick states, "They had tried to help the Indians, it would seem to white philanthropists, and the Indians had failed them-failed to seize the opportunities they offered, persisting in their ways like a patient willfully remaining ill to frustrate a doctor," (Limerick, 191) The Indians did not want to change their

way of life and by remaining the same suffered the consequences. The disease that swept through their tribes and killed thousands of them brought by the white man can only be seen as an unforgettable event for those who survived and had to live with what had happened.

Living in Oklahoma had been the life of the Joads for many years; being told they had to leave the only home they knew was what many faced. Times were hard for farmers in the west, especially in the dust bowl. Oklahoma had many farmers that were share crop holders. These farmers did not own the land, but worked and lived on the land and paid with their farming. The farming was done on the same land year after year not giving the land time to rejuvenate, leaving the soil malnourished and starving for nutrients. The environment had become less than adequate for many. In the *Grapes of Wrath*, the farmers here did the same thing, they needed the crops to survive, so the land was planted over and over again. John Steinbeck states, "You know what cotton does to land; robs it, sucks all the blood out of it," (Steinbeck, 32) This was also true in many other areas in the west. The harsh environment of the used up land made it difficult for one to survive. The environment had become less than adequate for many, but they stayed because it was there home. Having no other choice they were eventually kicked off their home and faced with unknown territories and promises of hope. They hoped the new environment would be less harsh and more suitable for living conditions.

The moving to California had been a way out for many "Okies," they were sure of the work they would be able to find and soon be back on their feet again. The Joads did not take into consideration the hostile environments they would find

once they reached California. The camps they came into were filled with starving children, and the cops, and security men throughout the orchards were mean and cruel. Steinbeck states, "Throw out the cops that ain't our people. All work together for our own thing-all farm our own land," (Limerick, 419). They wanted to survive and not have to deal with hostile environments caused by people who took no notice of what they were trying to do, survive. The cops and security men were mean and would often pick fights with the workers or people who lives in the camps.

The Indians' that were portrayed in the movie Stagecoach created a hostile environment for the travelers. They attacked the travellers and were intent on killing them and taking what they could after they had stopped the carriage. This is not unusual to see in western films. The Joads also ran into many hostile environments at their home as well as along the way and to their destination.

In considering a western it easy to see the outcome of the Grapes of Wrath as a western. The Joad's family is of the nomadic sort traveling from place to place to maintain work and survive, as well as the fact that the environment in which they came form and go to are hostile environments. There are many hostile environments in the west, whether it is from the environment or the people that live in the area.