

Steinbeck's Use of Nonfiction Sources

Student Name _____ Date _____

BORDER PATROL Treatment of Migrants at the California Border

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Before the Supreme Court's 1941 ruling in Edwards v. California, states were allowed to restrict interstate migration. Generally, such restrictions were used to discourage the poor from entering a state. California earned a reputation in the 1930s as being particularly hostile to migrants. The Los Angeles police department went as far as establishing its own border patrol. In some cases, vigilante groups patrolled the border.

CUTTING FROM THE COLLINS REPORT

From Tom Collins's report of February 29, 1936

NOTE: Collins included a lengthy letter in this report. The following excerpts preserve some of the original spelling and language wherever such does not interfere with understanding.

Mr. Collins

We dessert (?) to tell you our trouble that we had at the line of Calif. As we came to the line office, they searched our car, taken out everything, tramped over our bedding like it was a dog bed and went into all of our clothes boxes and tumbled them all up... They walked around our car and ask us a lot of questions and called for the papers to our car and the men took the papers and went in the office... And the officers began to ask where we are from and where we were going. And we told them and they ask(ed) how much money we had and we told them ...and he said you havent got enough money. Said you will have to have fifty dollars and the tag for your car. ... and we were out and didnt have no shelter and (a) sick child and that night in came up a awful wind and cold rain... and we had to get up and rope our bedding and clothes the best we could to keep them dry. ...the men made three tries to the office to try to get our car papers that they destroyed there but never did find them. I dont know how we are going to make it.

Signed: Mr and Mrs Albern Stout
R 5 Box 215
Bakersfield, California

GUIDING QUESTIONS FOR THIS CUTTING

1. Find one or two brief passages in *The Grapes of Wrath* that relate to the border patrol and the treatment of incoming migrants.
2. Find one or two brief passages that, though not necessarily about the border patrol, mirror one or more other elements in the letter that relate to how the migrants were treated or to the hardships they endured.

3. In what ways is each the passage from *The Grapes of Wrath* similar to its matching passage in the Collins report?
4. In what ways is each passage from *The Grapes of Wrath* different from its matching passage in the Collins report?
5. What label describing how Steinbeck is using each Collins cutting would you apply to each