



Origin and Destination: The Push and Pull Theory of Migration in John Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath

Ms. A. Edel Flora Mary¹ & Dr. P. Nainar Sumathi²

¹Ph.D. Research Scholar, PG and Research Department of English, National College (Autonomous)
Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu

²Assistant Professor, PG and Research Department of English, National College (Autonomous)
Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu



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Abstract

Migration is as old as the foundation of the world, as a whole, it has received an extensive coverage in the academic sphere. During migration, disruption, mental hardship, and familial separation may result. John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* reveals the pathetic conditions of migrants who devoid better life at home and therefore they journey to find it in California. In their journey, the situations are worse and constitute a dire need for the miserable tenants to exile. The nature causes them to be not only poor but desperate and helpless. The study aims to analysis John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* with reference to Everett S. Lee 'A Theory of Migration' wherein Lee proposed the push and pull factors of migration. The migrants prove that migration made them poor. Therefore, this paper demonstrates how the migrants' dreams and hopes collapse once they get to the destination. Based on the analysis, it can be revealed that the dreamers do not fulfill themselves in the hosting spots.

Keywords: origin, migration, dreams, destination, push-pull

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Introduction

Migration has been one of the defining characteristics of humans since the dawn of humanity. Even in prehistoric times, individuals were able to move around freely in quest of better living conditions, more food, and safety from natural disasters. Since the advent of industry and urbanisation in the modern period, migration has been more important.

Everett S. Lee presented the pull and push components of migration in his 'A Theory of Migration.' For Lee, there are some factors that push people out of their local residences and other factors that attract them into the receiving countries. John Steinbeck through his writings marked the significant constant journey of migrants. His works revolve with

individuals of common people, characterised by their uncomplicated nature, striving to lead purposeful and valuable lives.

The *Grapes of Wrath* explores the striving of migrants and subsequent forced displacement. The plot is about the journey of migrants from Oklahoma to California who were affected by the Dust Bowl. It also reveals the physical and mental hardships, the collective anguish of thousands of uprooted families. Extreme heat, dehydration, and the ever-present risk of disease are just a few of the hazards that migrants face on the long trek to California. They feel despair because their self-worth is eroded by the constant cycle of poverty and exploitation.

The analysis effectively portrays the experiences of migrants who are aiming to provide a platform for those who are passionately pursuing their livelihoods. The characters demonstrate a strong work ethic by consuming little food throughout their journey, sometimes no food, enduring cold and harsh conditions, and reclining on beds while sleeping in their clothes. Highways serve as their place of residence, while mobility functions as their primary means of self-expression.

The migrants, hastily engaged in labour, urgently striving to sustain themselves, modestly examined, excavated, for their own enjoyment and eager for entertainment. Further, they experience homelessness and hunger, traversed the mountains in a state of restlessness in search of existence. Their desire for a place to stay was met with nothing but animosity. They are subject to animosity from those in positions of authority due to their perceived vulnerability and strength. They are typical homeless individuals who have become resilient, determined, and potentially dangerous.

The establishment of solidarity plays a vital role in their collective endeavors, as it enables people to combine their few resources and preserve a level of self-respect throughout challenging circumstances. Notwithstanding the many obstacles, families of migrants exhibit exceptional endurance. Specifically, they exemplify this ethos, often emphasising the need for the family to remain together and sustain optimism, even in the face of very challenging circumstances. The act of sacrificing for the betterment of society serves as a symbolic representation of the significance of advocating for justice, especially in the face of significant personal compromise. Notwithstanding the challenges they face, the migrants make concerted efforts to maintain their worth and humanity. There was a frequent emphasis placed on the importance of mutual care, the preservation of a cohesive family structure, and the adherence to personal ideals and self-esteem.

Lee's Theory of Migration

Everett Spurgeon Lee, a distinguished Professor of Sociology at the University of Georgia, is renowned for his groundbreaking theory of migration, famously referred to as the 'Push and Pull Theory'.

The theory draws on principles of sociology that attempts to formalize migration factors as origin and destination. Lee has hypothesized the features related with the resolution to migrate and migration into four categories: (1) Factors associated with the area of origin; (2) Factors associated with the area of destination; (3) Intervening obstacles; and (4) Personal factors.

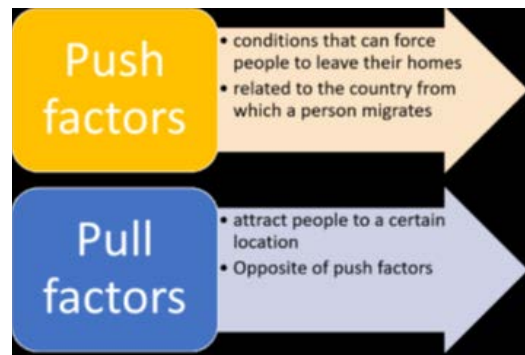


Figure 1 Lee's Theory of Migration - Push and Pull Factors

Study Objectives

The study aims to analyse John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* that represents migrations' origin and destination factors in line with Everett Spurgeon Lee's Push and Pull theory. The study uncovers the various challenges faced by the characters, including adversity, discrimination, societal inequities, and acts of selflessness. This exceptional novel serves as a testament to the depth of human experience during challenging periods. Therefore, this research has the objectives of a study based on the forms of characters. The following are the objectives of the study:

1. To find out the reasons that prompted the migrants to leave their homeland.
2. To analysis possession less life and fight back hunger and starvation.
3. To discuss how the migrants received in the labor markets of the host countries.

The Significance of the Study

Mass migration throughout the globe has become a hallmark of the modern era. These social and historical events have shaped the migrant into a central figure in the 21st century, ushering in waves



of refugees, migrants, and exiles. As one might expect, migration has had an impact on many facets of society and culture. One of the most pervasive social and cultural concerns in every culture, migration has been explored in literature for quite some time. Taking into account, the theory that has become so expansive to cover a number of diverse issues and therefore occupy a prominent position in the contemporary world of literature. Therefore, the study is significant that highlights the different aspects of the theory of migration, in order to keep pace with the universal developments in the literary theories.

The Origin of Migration in The Grapes of Wrath

John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* recounts the unforgettable journey of Tom Joad and his family as they embark on a quest for a brighter future and the promise of prosperity in California. Migration is not a matter of choice for them; they are forced to abandon their farm and embark on a journey, just like everyone else. The narration evokes a sense of empathy towards the subject matter and the surroundings in which these characters reside, symbolising the challenges of life. Steinbeck's realistic writing evokes a profound sense of empathy for his characters. This study highlights the remarkable resilience of migrants in maintaining a positive attitude and sense of motive despite facing dehumanizing circumstances.

One of the migrants, Joad family perseveres in the face of economic ruin and societal inequity, endeavoring to sustain their livelihood while being marginalised within the social fabric. As a consequence of the Dust Bowl and subsequent economic collapse, the Joads, akin to other tenant farmers, experience displacement from their property. Their endeavour to maintain their life starts with the deprivation of their residence and means of subsistence. The protagonist of *The Grapes of Wrath*, Joads migrated from Oklahoma to California in search of their dream.

Leaving behind everything of their possessions and memories, the farmers embark on their journey to California with a sad heart. By revealing the importance of the migrants' houses, Steinbeck conveys their feelings. They are forced to sell their

prized possessions since they cannot afford to travel with all of them and because they simply cannot carry them all. Steinbeck's portrayal of the turtle's arduous journey across the road serves as a powerful symbol of the challenges faced by farmers as they make their way to the west. Therefore, this indicates that the universe is brimming with challenges that permeate life with difficulty and risk.

John Steinbeck affirms that the Joad family, like a turtle plodding across the road, would face relentless challenges from forces like industry, unemployment, poverty, jealousy, and dread. People move to other locations with the hope to be accepted and given a place to settle down. But this is not always the case in the landing spots because the reality is that they are not most of the time welcomed by their hosts. They are usually perceived as threat to the hosts' freedom and wellbeing. Steinbeck strongly caricature this real fact about the welcoming of the migrants into the host countries. The study reveals that there are several factors that contribute to the push factors of migration in the plot, they are bank foreclosures, economic hardship, environmental crisis, mechanization of agriculture, promises of jobs in California and social displacement.

Various passages delineate how these people are unwanted into the nebulous host country. First and foremost, the Joads' first contact with California through the police officer opens up to migrants' undesirableness. Here is what the officer say to Ma Joad: "If you're here tomorra this time I'll run you in [prison]. We don't want none of you settlin' down here." (213) These words constitute a transparentized warning against the migrants' stay in California. Migrants have been reserved cruel treatments on the American soil. And this repels them to look for going back home or seek a residence. The problem with the Californian migrants, especially the Joads in Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* is that they no longer have any other place to go due to the banks' repossessing of the tenants' lands. Thus, they were subdued to remorse and regret wishing they had not made that hazardous adventure to California. Almost all of the migrants wanted to go back home but they found themselves entangled. Instances in the novel



display how most of them wished to go back to find a more comfortable place.

The characters dreamed of success before moving to their promise land. Yet, almost all these characters fail in their migration. They could not grasp what they were envisioning to get in the host societies at their departure. Instead, they are disappointed to point that they long to go back home. It is believed that John Steinbeck purposely wrote this plot to expose the suffering of people as they migrate to other locations.

The goal of this thorough analysis of the work is to pinpoint the moral transgressions experienced by the three characters. The study navigates the unsettling reality of imperial rule and women's subordination. During the worst of times, when everyone is struggling to make ends meet due to an economic system that puts certain people's pain ahead of everyone else's, Steinbeck describes how people depend on each other. As their own society turns its backs on them, migrant labourers find themselves in Steinbeck's gripping narrative. Every person has an admirable goal in life, and the book *The Grapes of Wrath* reassures them that they can reach that goal if they are patient and work hard enough. In this way, the book demonstrates its strength by drawing attention to the plight of other displaced individuals. With a variety of optimism, honesty, and solidarity, it portrays unfulfilled wishes and indescribable pain.

Unfortunately, they fall into the hands of the capitalists who auction jobs off for their own profit. They are therefore starved by the owners just to prevent from enjoying the American Dream. They do not have any promising opportunity in California. Instead, they collide with the harsh and xenophobic treatments. And at the end of the day, the Joad family sinks and does not achieve any success in their migration though America promised success to everyone who dreams of it in their upward mobility.

This paper has argued that migration oftentimes leads to disillusionment. People always believe in a radical change as soon as the move to the so-called promising destinations. However, the hosts usually discourage them by telling them through their weird welcoming attitudes that they do not belong there.

The feeling of belonging is extremely important to the accomplishment of self. But these migrants are always reminded of their otherness; and this threatens their existence in the host societies. First, the characters moved in search of a promising future for themselves and their families. This intended future will enable them to live under better conditions with neither pain nor suffering.

Once the migrants reach California, they encounter several push factors that made their life there equally difficult and force them to struggling to survive. From the analysis, it can be revealed exploitation by large landowners, government harassment, lack of employment opportunities, hostility from locals, hunger, malnutrition, poor living conditions, temporary and seasonal work and broken promises of a better life that there are some push factors that made the migrants.

Results

This investigation has come up with three main results. First, it can be said that the characters are prompted to leave their homeland due to the economic and environmental hardships. Further, this migration was not just about the search for economic stability but also a quest for dignity and survival in the face of overwhelming adversity. Second, it is observed in the migrants lose almost everything they own study and hunger and starvation are constant threats. The fight against hunger is not just a physical struggle but also an emotional and moral one, as they must maintain their dignity and humanity in the face of dehumanizing poverty. Finally, it is found that the promise of jobs in California turns out to be largely illusory. Thus, the paper suggests that before pursuing success in a faraway place, people should properly think about the intended destination and investigate the possibilities of success to avoid disillusionment. Again, it maintains that the potential migrant must reconsider the legal and legitimate means before any hazardous move.

Conclusion

The chosen characters in the plot make it clear that humans are entangled by exposing this deliberate abuse. John Steinbeck encouraged readers to persevere despite adversity and show no sign of



giving up. A deluge threatens human life at the conclusion of the book. A natural tragedy can only cause people to band together, not give up. Rather of ending on a depressing note, *The Grapes of Wrath* offers hope for a brighter tomorrow. Even after failures, it guarantees development. The struggle of migrants, as shown by John Steinbeck, to maintain honour and family values in the face of hardship and male influence is a powerful one. Thus, the characters' dramatic journey may be seen through the lens of migration theory. The dramatic appeal and personal touch are gifts that Steinbeck bestows.

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