

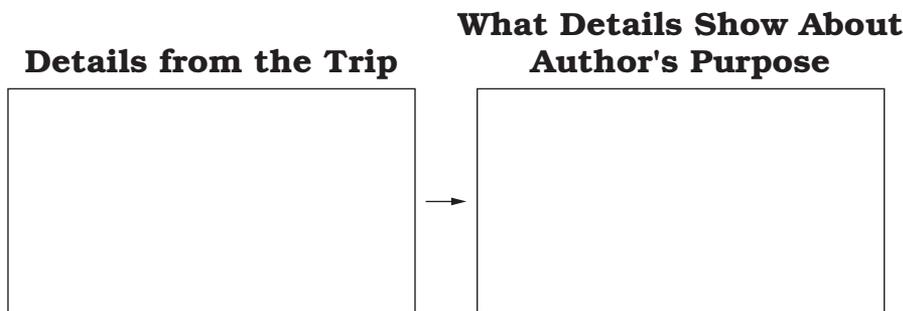
from Steinbeck: A Life in Letters
from Travels with Charley by John Steinbeck
Open-Book Test

Short Answer Write your responses to the questions in this section on the lines provided.

1. In the excerpt from *Steinbeck: A Life in Letters*, Steinbeck tells about talking to a man at a gas pump, conversing with a trucker in Minnesota, and talking to “lots of people” along the way. What do these details reveal about Steinbeck's purpose for taking a cross-country trip and writing about it?

2. According to this excerpt from *Travels with Charley*, John Steinbeck named his truck Rocinante after the horse in the novel *Don Quixote*. Steinbeck also recounts conversations he has with Charley, the poodle he takes along with him. What do these details indicate about Steinbeck's attitude toward himself and his travels?

3. In the excerpt from *Steinbeck: A Life in Letters*, Steinbeck gives detailed descriptions of various kinds of sights, activities, and people he encounters on his trip across the country. Cite one example of each kind of detail Steinbeck includes in his letters—a sight, an activity, and kinds of people—and for each one state what it reveals about his purpose in writing.



4. In this excerpt from *Travels with Charley*, John Steinbeck writes of a night “loaded with omens.” Name one omen that Steinbeck noticed, and describe his reaction to the omen. Base your answer on the definition of *omen*.

5. In both *Steinbeck: A Life in Letters* and *Travels with Charley*, Steinbeck gives detailed descriptions of his interactions with his dog, Charley. From what you learn in these descriptions, why do you think Steinbeck brings Charley along? What function does Charley serve in Steinbeck's writing about his journey? Cite a detail from each work to support your answer.

6. How do John Steinbeck's feelings about the Bad Lands change? How does the tone of his writing change during the course of his description of the place? Cite two details from this excerpt from *Travels with Charley* to support your answer.

7. What is John Steinbeck's attitude toward the Bad Lands in the late afternoon? Cite two phrases in this excerpt from *Travels with Charley* to support your answer.

8. At the end of this excerpt from *Travels with Charley*, John Steinbeck observes that each "safe generality I gathered in my travels was canceled by another." What in particular is he referring to? What does he mean in a more general sense?

9. Do you think John Steinbeck's main reason for taking his trip was the same as his main reason for writing the letters to his wife and, later, the book *Travels with Charley*? Or was it different? Cite details from each work to support your answer.

10. In the excerpts from *Steinbeck: A Life in Letters* and *Travels with Charley*, Steinbeck gathers a number of small details and observations in the hope of arriving at some larger truth about America and its people. Based on your reading of these excerpts, do you think that Steinbeck succeeds in this task? Cite at least one detail from each selection to support your answer.

Essay

Write an extended response to the question of your choice or to the question or questions your teacher assigns you.

11. Based on details that Steinbeck provides in the excerpts from *Steinbeck: A Life in Letters* and *Travels with Charley*, do you think Steinbeck equipped himself physically and emotionally for the journey that led to these writings? In an essay, state your opinion of Steinbeck's preparations.
12. Based on the information in this excerpt from *Travels with Charley*, what would you expect to find in the Bad Lands if you had never been there? Again based on Steinbeck's description, how would you feel if you were traveling through the region? In a brief essay, describe your attitude toward the Bad Lands. Cite two or three details from the excerpt to support your points.
13. What important things does John Steinbeck discover about America, and what important thing does he discover about himself on the trip that he describes in *Steinbeck: A Life in Letters* and in *Travels with Charley*? In an essay, answer those questions, referring to details in the excerpt to support your points.
14. **Thinking About the Big Question: Is truth the same for everyone?** In *Travels with Charley*, both the man of few words and the talkative lady live in the Bad Lands. Yet what they make of the setting—their truth about it—seems different. Write an essay that describes their reactions to this harsh yet beautiful land. Suggest possible reasons for their differences.

Oral Response

15. Choose question 1, 6, 8, or 9 or the question or questions your teacher assigns you. Take a few minutes to expand your answer and prepare an oral response. Find additional details in the excerpt from *Travels with Charley* to support your points. If necessary, make notes to guide your oral response.