A Spectrum of Windows

Windows to the soul, eyes allow a fleeting insight into the mysterious depths of a variety of souls in John Steinbeck’s novel, East of Eden. With the introduction of many characters of varied moral and philosophical standpoints, Steinbeck implicitly uses descriptions of key characters’ eyes to display an aspect of their souls. No soul is alike, and hence no eye is alike. Steinbeck uses unique eye color throughout his novel to portray the basis of each character’s soul, and to add layers to the already present character development.

Cathy Ames’ soul is more accurately portrayed through Steinbeck’s description of her eyes than his narration. Cathy’s eyes “had no message, no communication of any kind. There was nothing recognizable behind them. They were not human eyes” (175). Even as a child, people saw something foreign hiding behind Cathy’s eyes. To say Cathy’s eyes are inhuman is to say Cathy’s soul is inhuman. Presumably born without a conscience, she lacks a certain guilt and contrition that constitutes normalcy. Her blank eyes reflect this quality of blank disconnect in her soul. Adding to Cathy’s developing character, this description of her eyes provides foreshadowing for the many heinous, nearly soulless acts that she commits. Cathy is but one of the many characters who project a portion of their souls in their eyes.
Samuel Hamilton’s eyes project a version of him that he tries to hide from the world. Sam never showed aging until a terrible sadness crept over him and enveloped him. Samuel’s “clear eyes dulled…he became an old man” (274-275). With the death of his daughter came the death of his youth and the sickening of his soul. Sadness strikes Sam with force, and his eyes, once clear and youthful as he is, become dull and faded. Samuel’s soul once brimmed with youth and joy, reflected outward in his clear, bright eyes. However, as sadness and age affect him, Sam’s soul becomes muted and faded. As youth slips inevitably from his eyes, happiness slips inevitably from his soul. Steinbeck uses Samuel’s eyes to portray his youth leaving him, showing an insight to his aging soul.

Steinbeck shows the twists and struggles in Caleb Trask’s soul through the appearance of his eyes. Throughout *East of Eden*, Cal is conflicted within his soul over his morality. At times when the evil bits of his soul arise, Cal’s eyes shift to portray this. At these times, “Cal’s eyes [have a] look of sluggish and fulfilled cruelty” (545). With the rotating shift of Cal’s soul, his eyes accurately portray each phase. The look captured in his eyes represents the moment of triumphant evil captured in his soul. Steinbeck uses his characters’ eyes to show a snapshot of their souls. Caleb Trask’s eyes often shift in color to match the shift in the prevailing contestant (good or evil) in his internal battle. By showing the reader this image of his eyes, Steinbeck is allowing a secret look at Cal’s struggles to reaffirm the continuing theme of humanity’s internal struggle between good and evil.

Charles Trask is a character whose harsh evil undertones come out boldly through his eyes. Adam could see his brother’s “innocent, noncommittal eyes” even as Charles was beating him (30). Charles is described this way to show that he has a side of him that is
innocent, but never shows it because he is always faced with competition for his father’s love. By describing his eyes as noncommittal, Steinbeck shows that Charles’ whole soul was not in agreement over beating Adam. Some part of Charles’ soul must be good, some part holy, for his eyes portray him as a much more innocent character than his actions do. While many of the other characters have more straightforward eyes than his, Charles is more cunning and devious than the others in this novel. Charles most closely resembles Cathy, who similarly has eyes that reveal only a small, somewhat biased part of her soul. Charles and Cathy have learned to mask slightly the telling look in their eyes. Steinbeck shows a different view of Charles here than the reader expects.

Adam Trask is a character that is often taken advantage of, made fun of, and trampled on, as shown by the light in his eyes. Adam’s eyes “had great depth and clarity, as though one could see deep into them and as though they could see deep into their surroundings” (593). Adam’s eyes accurately reflect the naïve nature of his soul. Their clearness and depth represents Adam’s innocence and ability to be tricked. By specifically mentioning the depth of his eyes, Steinbeck draws a parallel to the depths of which Adam becomes involved in unfortunate or sad things due to his innocence. Just as clear, pristine glass shatters, Adam’s clear eyes shatter with every devastating blow he receives. Adam’s eyes show him as a person of naïve innocence and unfailing trust in those that are morally questionable.

By describing with detail the shape, color, and appearance of some main characters’ eyes, Steinbeck shows his belief in the well-known idea that eyes are the windows to the soul, using this idea to fuel character development. With each main character, a different aspect of his/her soul is demonstrated in the imagery Steinbeck provides about his/her eyes.
As Steinbeck believes, the soul of every living being can be observed through his/her eyes. With the wide variation of eye color then, comes the wide variation of morality, innocence, and purity. Scientists say that no iris is alike, similar to snowflakes. By this logic, no soul is alike. This allows for an infinite spectrum of souls- each leaving their individual impact like the whorl of a fingerprint.
A Contrasting Valley

With every good aspect of something, there is always an underlying evil. In John Steinbeck’s classic novel, *East of Eden*, the Salinas Valley is used to represent a plethora of contrasting themes; it is safe and deadly, pure and corrupt, welcoming and repulsive. Steinbeck uses the Salinas Valley’s three seasons to foreshadow the internal struggles contrasting characters, Cathy Ames, Adam Trask, and Samuel Hamilton endure throughout the novel.

Cathy Ames’ evil and manipulating ways connect to the destructive winter season in the Salinas Valley. In the Salinas Valley, the winter season exudes a sense of danger, destructiveness, and desolation. During the winter, “The streams…swelled the river until sometimes it raged and boiled…then it was a destroyer” (Steinbeck 3). Steinbeck uses such imagery to represent Cathy when she is angry. In order for the streams to swell the river, a sudden rise in the water level must occur; usually, the cause of this would be a heavy downpour. In order for Cathy to become incredibly fatal, although she was very dangerous when sober, she must have alcohol in her system. Just as the heavy downpour is the antagonist for the swelling of the river, alcohol is the antagonist for Cathy’s fatal disposition. When the streams swelled the river, it became very dangerous; when Cathy
drank alcohol, she became an uncontrollable, threatening force. Also, the winter was very destructive; because the river overflowed, it destroyed farm lands, houses, barns and it also drowned animals. Cathy destroyed many lives such as those of her mother and father and Adam Trask and his two sons. The winter and spring are two very contrasting seasons as are Cathy and Adam Trask.

The transition from winter to spring is a slow, yet beautiful process; the spring stays trapped beneath the winter until it finally emerges to exhibit its beauty. Adam Trask stays trapped under Cathy’s grip for a long time until, slowly but surely, he escapes the spell she has cast and is able to express his admirable characteristics. In the transition from winter to spring, “The river drew in from its edges and the sand banks appeared” (Steinbeck 4). Adam is like the spring season in the Salinas Valley because he stays hidden under Cathy’s dangerous dominance until he finally becomes released from her destructive ways. Just as the river drew in from its edges, Adam drew in away from Cathy. Steinbeck uses the sand banks suddenly appearing to represent Adam’s sudden peak of detachment from Cathy and his happiness and realization that he does not need to be trapped under Cathy’s manipulative spell for the rest of his life. After Adam escapes Cathy’s tight, destructive grip, he becomes happier and is able to be the man he intended to be. Once the spring season is in full bloom and emerges from the dark, destructive ways of the winter, it is able to show off its beauty and delicacy. After spring, the Salinas Valley transitions to summer which is a dry, but strong and independent season.

Summer in the Salinas Valley is dry and rough at times, but it is independent in such a way that it continuously grows plants even though there is no rainfall to help it. Samuel Hamilton is a representation of summer because although he endures tough times
and hardships throughout his life, he makes the best out of every situation and never gives up, despite the odds. During the summer, “The river didn’t run at all above ground…the tules and grasses grew back, and willows straightened up with the flood debris in their upper branches” (Steinbeck 4). Steinbeck uses the debris in the willows branches to represent that although Samuel Hamilton was a good-hearted man, he still had some “debris” of his own that stayed with him throughout his life. Samuel Hamilton rose from having nothing to raising a family and having a functioning farm. The willow tree rose from the aftermath of the winter floods. Along the way, Samuel experienced tough times that stayed with him. Although the willow tree grew from literally nothing but the very little residue left by the flood, it still had debris in its branches that remained on them for a long time. Samuel Hamilton being compared to the summer represents how he persevered through the tough times but never forgot the hardships he had to endure in order to reach his happiness.

   Cathy Ames, Adam Trask, and Samuel Hamilton are all connected with the seasons in the Salinas Valley. Cathy’s personality parallels to the winter season in the Salinas Valley which connects to the spring season (Adam Trask). Adam, in the beginning, is manipulated by Cathy; the spring season is slow to emerge from the winter season, but once it is fully emerged, it is beautiful. Just as Adam realizes in Chapter 25, Part Three, he does not need her to be happy and can once and for all forget her. Once Adam emerges from Cathy’s manipulative ways, he is able to embrace life. Samuel and Adam are connected just as the spring and summer are connected because although Samuel is very gentle and sympathetic, he works very hard through tough times.
In John Steinbeck’s class novel, *East of Eden*, the winter, spring, and summer represent three contrasting characters. The winter represents Cathy who is a dangerous and destructive force. The spring represents Adam, who after being hidden under Cathy’s grip, emerges and exudes his true admirable characteristics. The summer represents Samuel who is content with everything he has in his life but to reach that contentedness, he had to suffer through many hardships. The Salinas Valley portrays three completely different characters who may seem either completely evil or completely pure, but also retain either a hidden evil or goodness.
Humanity revolves around perfection, yet this often leads to anguish and tragedies. *East of Eden* by John Steinbeck depicts characters that engulf themselves in their ideal worlds, causing them to become oblivious towards the realism of society. While alluding to the Bible and contrasting characters, Steinbeck emphasizes that perfection does not exist; pragmatic thinkers achieve greater success than perfectionists.

Cyrus Trask, a conniving thief, demonstrates that the need for perfection can negatively influence one’s morals. Attempting to develop a spotless military semblance, Cyrus exploits his power and commits several sins. As Cyrus’s children learn of his selfish deeds, they question his integrity. When the Trask kids ask, “‘Do you think it would be possible for our father to be—dishonest?’ ” (64), Steinbeck proves that Cyrus’ quest for perfection eventually backfires, causing his sons to doubt his honesty. By emphasizing the children’s distrust in Cyrus, Steinbeck proves that dishonorable prestige does not lead to a flawless life. Although Cyrus believes that superiority leads to success, his children’s lack of trust in him proves that the need for perfection strains relationships and causes depraved actions.
Through Adam Trask, Steinbeck evinces the unfortunate effects of the quest for perfection. As Adam endeavors to create an ideal world for his wicked wife, Cathy, he neglects reality and only focuses on her. His entire outlook on the world changes when he sees her, as “A kind of light spread out from her. And everything changed color” (168). Adam adapts his life to revolve around Cathy; although his devotion initially fuels his happiness, Adam’s obsession eventually leads to his downfall. Steinbeck portrays how love causes the desire for perfection, and when people do not achieve it, their world can shatter. Adam’s need for unconquerable perfection leads to profound anguish and depression.

While plunging into a coma of heartache, Adam finally experiences an epiphany, which causes him to realize that perfection does not equate to happiness. His despair transforms and “Out of the gray throbbing an ecstasy [arises]. He [feels] young and free and filled with a hungry gaiety” (324). Steinbeck portrays Adam’s revival as a symbol of freedom; he is liberated from his idea of perfection, which allows him to finally enjoy life and pursue happiness rather than flawlessness.

Aron Trask portrays the wreckage caused by the desire for sublimity. As Aron achieves a certain point of virtue, he becomes isolated from his loved ones. Aron cannot fathom the sins of the world and reaches “a point of passionate purity that [makes] everyone else foul” (447). Resembling Adam’s downfall, Aron cracks under the overwhelming pressure of the world. By displaying Aron’s inability to cope with realistic issues, Steinbeck demonstrates how the impractical goal of achieving spiritual perfection leads to self-destruction.

Aron’s brother, Caleb, understands the faults in humanity and is willing to adapt to the obstacles in the world. Although Cal is aware of his evil nature, he sees his fault as
motivation and aims to be as gracious as his brother. In this pursuit, he prays, “‘Dear lord…let me be like Aron. Don’t make me mean’” (377). Through Cal’s acceptance of his imperfections, Steinbeck proves that Cal is far more pragmatic than Aron. While Aron succumbs to the realism of society, Cal embraces his flaws and eventually proves to be more successful in the real world. By contrasting the personalities of Caleb and Aron, Steinbeck illustrates that realistic characters have more positive and sensible perspectives. While Aron sulks over the negative aspects of the world, Caleb’s acceptance of humanity’s imperfections allows him to live a more accomplished life.

Steinbeck’s characters and references to unattainable perfection always allude back to the title of the novel, *East of Eden*. Throughout the book, Steinbeck constantly parallels the Biblical story of Cain and Abel to his own characters. When Cain indulged in sin, he was banished “from the Lord’s presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden” (Genesis 4:16). Cain wandered in a land so close to flawlessness, yet he could never reach perfection. By referring to this biblical story, Steinbeck portrays the human inability to attain their ideal physical and mental state. Like Cain, people are meant for a real environment in which pragmatism is infinitely more important. Like Cain, Adam, Aron, and Cyrus are best suited for their surroundings, but they cannot achieve contentment because of their constant yearning for perfection. The title *East of Eden* conveys that the world will always have faults, and perfection will never come.

Characterizing individuals consumed in the chase for flawlessness, Steinbeck demonstrates that following the road to perfection is a lost cause, for it does not exist. By contrasting realistic characters with idealistic characters, Steinbeck proves that the need for perfection often causes people to neglect the real world and to only focus on their
impractical individual needs. Humanity chases after perfection, but we will always have 
faults, and we will always be “east of Eden” (Genesis 4:16).
Symbiotic Relations Between Good and Evil

In Steinbeck's novel, *East of Eden*, the characters are typically labeled as either good or evil. Because the characters in the novel are strictly classified as moralistic or malevolent, a constant struggle between good and evil is present. For example, Samuel, Adam, Aron and Mr. Edwards are typically identified as good whereas characters such as Cathy and Cal are commonly classified as evil. At one time or another, these moralistic characters will associate with those containing evil. Symbiosis is the term given to two opposite organisms living together in the same environment whether it is beneficial, mutual or harmful to one or the other. Through the usage of opposing characters, Steinbeck exhibits several examples to propose that good and evil live symbiotically with one another.

Cal is a character that is commonly caught using manipulation for his own advantage. As Cal presents his father with a "gift" of money; this tribute is a false act of kindness to disguise the fact that he is actually buying his father's love. In response to Cal's deceitful attempts for his father's affection, Adam refuses his offer by stating, "I don't want the money, Cal. It was a kind of game to see if I could get the lettuce there, and I lost. I don't want the money" (Steinbeck 543). Through his dismissal of Cal's offer, it represents his ability to rebuke the deceptive ways of evil. Cal proposes his father with a deceptive offer and Adam, filled with pure morals, is able to recognize this and reject it. Furthermore, Steinbeck uses this as an example to propose that people with pure hearts contain the ability to foresee and repel the misleading trickery of evil.
In contrast, the evil Cal delivers bears the ability to cause harm. Knowing the truth would be too much for his brother to handle, Cal intentionally reveals their mother's circumstance to Aron, causing him join the army. Cal comes home one day with a notification from Lee, "Your brother is dead...your father had had a stroke" (Steinbeck 594). The original cause of Cal's corruptive actions has progressed to the death of his brother and the cause of his father's stroke, providing evidence for evil's harmful effects. A contrast is present between Adam's reaction to Cal's evil versus Aron's. Adam was able to reject his evil, but Aron, on the contrary, allowed it to destroy him. Steinbeck uses this contrast to illustrate that just as evil can be opposed, it can also form a pathway ending in destruction.

Samuel, deviating from the course of evil, is commonly deciphering when evil is present and contains the ability to surpass its deceptions; this effects Cathy greatly. Cathy, a true representation of evil, expresses her warped feeling upon his death by affirming, "'I hated him,' She said. 'I would have killed him myself if I could... He looked--he looked into me" (Steinbeck 320). Cathy, is clearly pleased by the passing of Samuel Hamilton and exhibits pure hatred for him. In actuality, Cathy acquires a secluded fear of him because he is one of the few who can see her for what she truly is. This troubles her because the only force capable of preventing evil is one that can see past the false facade and into the true composition beneath the surface. It can be concluded that the only thing evil fears is one who can recognize it, and therefore, prevent it.

As mentioned previously, Cathy directly symbolizes evil and tends to deviate from expressing true emotions. One of her common forms of trickery are her false
personalities and feelings towards other people. As this takes place, it constantly makes us wonder whether Cathy is sincerely feeling these emotions or if they are merely more tricks used to deceive people. The closest Cathy has come to experiencing emotions is in her relationship with Faye, but that possibility is eliminated when she confirms that she, "...found she had no feeling about Faye. She neither liked nor disliked her or her memory" (Steinbeck 503). Cathy clearly states that she never feels any emotions for Faye, a woman who devoted her life to her. Cathy's lack of emotion, even towards a woman like Faye, further emphasizes her standing as evil itself. Like evil, she stands on her own, not letting anyone else in and preventing herself from feeling any emotions that may dismantle her motives. She is essentially on a mission to destroy and stands independent in herself. It can be concluded that evil cannot be warped by the ingestion or expression of emotional feelings, making it easier to mislead its victims.

To further extend on the motives of evil, Cathy is continually using innocent beings entirely for her self-benefit. Cathy constantly portrays a likeable image to obtain what is best for herself. As discussed previously, Cathy is an independent figure. At one point, as she uses Adam for her own self-gain, Cathy mentions, "She had not only made up her mind to marry Adam but she had so decided before he had asked her. She needed protection and money. And she could control him--she knew that" (Steinbeck 121). Cathy knows she has authority of the situation and plans on using it for her own advantage. One indication that proves her malevolence is her ability to reach all extremes to receive what she desires at that point in time. For example, Cathy dedicates herself to marrying Adam for the time being to acquire her necessities before she plans to take advantage elsewhere. She is like a parasite, using others for her own self-benefit. Everything she does is done
out of pure selfishness; it is for herself and only herself. It is evident that evil relies on selfishness alone to thrive through the usage of innocent beings.

Mr. Edwards is one of many who fell into the deceptions of Cathy's evil ways but quickly came to realize it. Mr. Edwards fell madly in love with her, but due to his mortality, was able to recognize her deceptions. As a result, he beats her and Steinbeck states, "That he had not killed Catherine was an accident. Every blow had been intended to crush her" (99). As Mr. Edwards begins to realize her evil way of life, he instinctively strikes out and aims to kill her. Although he intends to kill her with every blow of his fist, she still survives the deadly experience. Symbolically, Mr. Edwards beating of Cathy represents the many who try to rid of evil in the world. Even though they may be close to victory, it always finds a way back into the universe. Steinbeck uses this example to exhibit that evil will always remain no matter how hard we try to extinguish it from our world.

In the novel *East of Eden*, Steinbeck proposes a symbiotic relationship between good and evil by portraying examples through contrasting characters. Characters like Adam, Aron, Mr. Edwards and Samuel tend to be pure in their morals and will eventually come in contact with characters such as Cathy and Cal who are characters with malevolent tendencies. Because the characters in the novel are either good or evil, it supports the proposition the author is trying to display. Steinbeck's symbiotic relations between good and evil can truly represent us and our world today.

SAMPLE #5

Mrs. Jones
Sealed With a State of Bliss

Is a letter written to its recipient, or simply to the writer himself? In John Steinbeck’s *East of Eden*, the authors of letters tend to write them to assure themselves of something or get their thoughts down on paper, not necessarily to communicate with the receiver. Letters show a question or an explanation through the character’s eyes, providing a unique chance for each individual character to speak in first person. Throughout the novel, Steinbeck uses letters between characters to show a view of the writer’s thoughts or feelings.

Charles expresses his sense of anxiety in his letters to Adam. In one letter, Charles remarks that “‘seems like to me there’s something not finished… Something didn’t get done. I shouldn’t be here’”(36). Steinbeck uses Charles’ spasmodic writing to indicate that Charles has a sense that his father intended to kill him the night he beat up Adam, and feels uneasy knowing how close he came to death. He is especially shaken over the feeling, knowing that the murder would have been dealt to him by his father’s hands. Charles writes letters in an attempt to find answers to the unanswered questions that surround him on the farm, innocent compared to Cathy’s intentions behind her letters.

Cathy uses letters for wicked manipulation. As she tells Adam, “‘if anything should happen to me – anything – one hundred letters, each one with a picture, would be dropped in the mail, and each letter will go where it will do the most harm’”(321). Cathy does not have anyone that she cares about to write letters to, so the only thing she is interested in using the postal system for is evil. Cathy’s passion is ruining lives, and she
revels in knowing that with a mere postage stamp she can do so to so many important men. Steinbeck uses Cathy’s destructive letters to show how heartless she truly is, never sending anything unless it is to ruin someone. Cathy’s only use for letters is to torture and humiliate the men that come to her brothel. Cathy writes letters guiltlessly, whereas Adam writes them to soothe his guilt.

After years without contact, Adam writes a letter to Charles to ease his contrition. At the end, he adds a post-script, scribbling, “'Charles, I never hated you no matter what. I always loved you because you were my brother'”(359). After being abandoned by Cathy, Adam understands how lonely Charles must have felt on the farm and feels deeply guilty. He wants to assure Charles, and himself, that he always loved him. He knows Charles probably thought Adam hated him because he was so brutish, and he wants to set the record straight that he could never have hated Charles. Adam writes this letter to Charles to alleviate his remorse over never writing Charles in so many years. Adam uses letter writing to comfort himself and subdue his guilt, similar to Tom Hamilton’s use of letters.

Tom writes to Will to avoid his mother’s disappointment after his suicide. He writes, “'No matter what you yourself may think – please help me now. For Mother’s sake – please. I was killed by a horse – thrown and kicked in the head – please!'”(407). Tom’s last words to his brother are words of pleading, begging him to help him at his weakest point. Tom knows his mother is strictly opposed to suicide and would be disgusted to find out Tom had taken his own life. For this reason, Tom wants her to believe he was killed by a horse, and needs Will’s help to deliver the message. Steinbeck uses this desperate and imploring letter to show that Tom was a chivalrous, caring man
who did not want to burden his mother with his suicide. Tom writes his letter to ask for help from his brother one last time, so that he will be able to die in peace with the knowledge that his mother will never know the true means of his untimely death. He writes with love to those he cares about, like Aron does at college.

While at Stanford, Aron writes yearning letters to Abra. Steinbeck states “his letters were drenched with lonesome longing for his girl. Together they were matter of fact, but from the university, ninety miles away, he made passionate love to her”(490). Steinbeck uses this metaphor to show that while Aron’s religious principles and shyness cause him to act demure in Abra’s presence, he truly loves her and wants to be with her. Aron’s letters show a side of Aron never shown in person, which makes it so important that these letters are included in the story. Aron uses letter writing to feel close to Abra in a time of lonesomeness, very different from his later use of letter writing to push others away.

After his disappearance, Aron sends his father a straightforward, concise letter that states, “‘Dear father, I’m in the army… I’ll be all right. Don’t worry about me. Aron’”(569). Steinbeck applies the lack of emotion in Aron’s letter to show the absence of love for his father. Aron does not think about how his decision will affect his father, and does not seem to care. Aron is so distraught by his pure, perfect world being shattered that he cannot go on living and caring as he once did. This depression is displayed through the sober tone of his letter. This letter from Aron is used merely to inform Adam of where he is, without much other thought being given to the letter.

Steinbeck’s use of letters in the novel offers an opportunity to see a character’s pure emotion written in their own words. Steinbeck uses letters to show that the
characters are never quite content with themselves, and strive to stabilize their emotions.
The novel’s characters write letters to ease themselves, more than to please the letter’s recipient. Steinbeck’s illumination of this habit makes one think: Is this tendency unique to the characters of East of Eden – or is the writer’s peace of mind the intention behind all letters?

SAMPLE #6

Mrs. Jones
Womanly Extremes

In the novel East of Eden, by John Steinbeck, women are portrayed in extremes of prostitution versus religion. The discord sewn through the widening spectrum is symbolic of Steinbeck’s contrasting ideals and beliefs that women cannot denote neutrality.

The religiousness and judgmental superiority of Liza Hamilton underscore female extremity. Throughout the novel, Liza’s strict interpretation of boundaries exhibits Steinbeck’s preferred adherence to gender role normality. Fervent application of respected tenderness combined with an unwavering background of Biblical decisiveness emphasize her apparent goodness. As detailed renderings revealed, she exuded assertiveness and was a “...good plain cook, and her house- it was always her house- was brushed and pummeled and washed... Liza had a finely developed sense of sin,” (11). Contextual support suggests Liza to be the masculine figure of the household, adopting and teaching correct livelihood with aided suggestion of the Bible. Prominent family status molds a typical figure of perfection who avoids misinterpretation of doctrine and enhances her family through placement at the narrow, sinless end of the spectrum.

Mrs. Trask displays a hungry obsession for spirituality. As seen repeatedly throughout East of Eden, the lack of middle grounds extrapolates into a furthering perspective of deemed esteem tinged with crazed abnormality. The holy wife of Cyrus Trask becomes disgusted with her family’s lack of otherworldly respect and commits suicide, revealing the majority of flawed philosophically inclined women throughout the novel. Her stereotypically redefined denouement and nonchalance before suicide display
her aggressive embodiment of religion in contrast to other more well-balanced female characters, such as Liza Hamilton or Olive. Contracting the supposed spirit Himself, Trask’s wife’s “god of communication became a god of vengeance- to her the most satisfactory deity she had devised so far- and as it turned out, the last,” (15). When women opposed traditional values, the character’s ungodly imperfection caused trails of derisive confusion. Cyrus’ wife also does not earn her own title in the book, furthering the relationship between godliness and respect.

Throughout the novel, prostitutes like Cathy (Kate) are used to show the vulgar opposite of “flawless” wives such as Liza. While most of the females in the book are based somewhat of equivocally ambiguous characterization, she stands immediately for a whoring disassociation from the “correct” path. Her utter enjoyment of prostitution is seen through eyes of revulsion and disgust, showing that the stray from deemed perfection is viewed as shameful. After being employed at a whorehouse, the sheriffs discuss how, “...This kid looks like a runaway girl except she’s a goddamn good whore. She knows all the answers and all the tricks,” (212). After being fervently scrutinized by the officers, Cathy’s atypical appearance in contrast to her talent for supposed evil is excused from the path of correct womanly behavior, because embracing her newfound pleasure gathered through sexual fulfillment is something primarily men do throughout the novel. By exacting differentiation, she is looked down upon and although she indeed does not value morals, the judgment men categorize her into is both stereotypical to the era and the book in particular.

Olive is a perfect mother, she never fails to astound; like most devoutly religious women in the book, her embodiment of pristine correctness is esteemed and valued highly.
Shown through holy portrayal of childbirth and justified livelihood, Olive is another solidified mold of perfection and honor. With a courageous morale based on prior knowledge and a fruitful, educational front, she denotes Steinbeck’s preferred interpretation of goodness and compassion. While Cathy and other prostitutes shamelessly meandered through life, denying themselves the joys of wholesomeness, Olive promotes self-respect and justification of good deeds. Olive’s occupation as a schoolteacher offended many men because most longed for a woman of simplicity and for, “…his children to read, to figure, and that was enough. More might make them dissatisfied and flighty,” (148). In the novel, the sexist sovereignty of the male species is prone to group women into divisions of fundamental traditionality. Olive’s supreme intellect makes the men uncomfortable, emphasizing the extremity of women and how anything less than a solid foundation of normality and Biblicality was unacceptable.

Faye, the owner of a whorehouse, is another stereotypically portrayed version of marital and religious correctness. Faye wholeheartedly embraces a life of sordid prostitution; her exonerated differentiation from the correct female path is deemed to be impure and unethical. Straying from the exhibition of typical standards and ideally confirmed motives, Faye “became the refuge of young men puling in puberty, mourning over lost virtue, and aching to lose some more. Faye was the reassurer of misbegotten husbands. Her house took up the slack for frigid wives,” (220). Constant perfection seemed to bore men in the novel and Faye’s motherly tenderness and preoccupation with necessity and familiar comfort intrigued and aroused men. Promoting the fruitful abundance of sexuality women used by Steinbeck illustrate, man’s inherent hungering desire is evidentially contrasted with the decisive choice women are supposedly given.
Founded upon slightly more positive grounds than those of prostitution, Dessie is a fundamentally scandalous woman because her dressmaking business deviates from the normality of a typical “good” wife. Men look upon Dessie with dismal confusion because her abnormal embodiment of normality is fodder for shock and misinterpretation. Seeing as individualism was overruled as more masculine than feminine, women possessing similar characteristics that instigated necessity for independence and assertiveness were downtrodden with disgust and somewhat exiled from normality. Dessie’s bubbliness and, “laughter infectious as the chickenpox, and gaiety that colored a day and spread to people so that they carried it away with them,” (386) was prized by females but ridiculed to an extent by males. Although the 1860s and such were known to host a variety of resentments against womankind, the gist of gender inequality can be summed up in the believed correct actions required of each sex. Men were allowed to exhibit an extravagance of exuberance regardless of technicality while women were circumstantially required to display contentment in situations deemed appropriate.

By John Steinbeck, the novel, East of Eden, portrays females as either holy beings of goodness or crazed prostitutes with malicious intent. The extraneous opposition in which women exist is a cultured combination, both symbolic to the rampant sexism of the era and evident to the believed supremacy of mankind.

SAMPLE #7

Mrs. Jones
Monsters

Monsters are not always recognized as the creatures hiding in the shadows of the dark night. In the novel *East of Eden* by John Steinbeck, Steinbeck believes that “…there are monsters born in the world to human parents… Monsters are variations from the accepted normal to a greater or a less degree” (Steinbeck 72). To Steinbeck, a monster is a person who possesses abnormal characteristics. Many characters in *East of Eden* obtain atypical qualities. Steinbeck creates certain characters as monsters to symbolize the impact contrasting characters have on the relationships and the plot of *East of Eden*.

Steinbeck distinguishes Lee as a monster because he is a foreigner. Originally from China, Lee is marginalized by society, so he pretends to speak pidgin to achieve the standard education of a Chinese man. Lee’s uncommon development of pidgin helps establish himself as a monster to other characters, and it forms strong relationships with other characters in the story. Lee uses pidgin to test the loyalty of others. When Lee trusts someone, he ceases the use of pidgin, and he reverts to speaking sophisticated English. This creates trusting relationships with other characters. For example, after Lee stops speaking pidgin to Adam, Samuel tells Adam that “[Lee] trusts you know. He has a gift of resigned loyalty without hope of reward. He’s maybe a much better man than either of us could dream of being” (Steinbeck 265). When Lee establishes a strong relationship between himself and Adam, it impacts the plot. Lee’s personal connection with Adam helps Adam become a better parent. By trusting Adam, Lee develops a relationship with Cal Trask, and he helps Cal develop a deeper understanding of “timshel” to help him conquer his internal evil conflicts. As a result, Cal becomes a more confident person and
a better brother. Lee’s adopted characteristic based on the judgment of society forms stronger bonds with characters to impact the course of the story.

Steinbeck also portrays Samuel as a monster. Samuel is considered a monster because he is a foreigner. As a foreigner from Ireland, Samuel distinguishes himself among the people of the Salinas Valley because of his uncommon characteristics and ideas. His abnormal characteristics and ideas prove Samuel is a monster to the people of the Salinas Valley. Steinbeck emphasizes the importance of Samuel’s abnormal characteristics. Steinbeck states that “Samuel kept always a foreignness. Perhaps it was in the cadence of his speech, and this had the effect of making men, and women too, tell him things they would not tell to relatives or close friends. His slight strangeness set him apart and made him safe as a repository” (Steinbeck 11). Steinbeck emphasizes that Samuel’s strangeness creates strong relationships with the people of the Salinas Valley. Because of his strong relationships, Samuel gains respect from others. As a result, people approach Samuel as a leader, so he becomes a mentor to many characters in the novel. Samuel as a mentor impacts the plot because Samuel helps many characters overcome their struggles. For example, Samuel gives wise advice to Adam to “act” out his life as if it were a play. Samuel’s unique advice helps Adam overcome his grief over Cathy, and he becomes a better father. Steinbeck creates Samuel as a monster to emphasize the significance his strangeness had on his relationships with others and the course of the novel.

Cal is a monster to Kate because Cal abnormally defies her power and evilness. When he discovers Kate is his mother, Cal initially thinks he inherits her wicked thoughts. Cal tells Kate that “I was afraid I had you in me” (Steinbeck 466). Later, his
perspective evolves, and he defiantly tells Kate, “No, I haven’t. I’m my own. I don’t have to be you” (Steinbeck 466). Cal oddly disregards Kate’s evilness, so it proves he is a monster. This creates a new relationship between Kate and Cal. She fears him because Cal does not accept her authority and evilness. When Cal stands up to Kate, it also impacts the plot. By conquering his emotions, he makes wise and good-natured choices in the novel. In *East of Eden*, Cal is a monster to Kate because Cal fights with his internal conflicts, and as a result, it impacts his relationship with Kate.

Steinbeck characterizes Cathy as a monster because she is abnormally different than her classmates. He says that “[Cathy] was not like other people, never was from birth” (Steinbeck 72). When she distinguishes herself as unique among her classmates in school, Cathy’s classmates are nervous because they feel insecure without unity. Steinbeck states that unity to kids is “… a protective coloration children utilize for their safety” (Steinbeck 74). The lack of unity Cathy creates proves her monster-like qualities develop fear in her peers. When she is an adult, she continues to expose her odd characteristics and develop fearful relationships. Steinbeck emphasizes that Mr. Edwards’s fear of Cathy impacts the plot significantly. It impacts the plot because Mr. Edwards’s fear leads him to challenge Cathy’s power. As a result, she crawls to the doorstep of Adam and Charles, which is a significant event in the story. People fear Cathy as a monster, which impacts both the relationships and plot development in *East of Eden*.

One last character who Steinbeck emphasizes greatly as a monster is Joe Hamilton. Joe is a monster to his family because he has contrasting characteristics compared to his family. Joe’s characteristics contrast the Hamilton family because every
member is self-sufficient and hard working. Unlike his brothers, he fails at every job. Steinbeck further emphasizes Joe’s uniqueness because Joe contradicts the faith his mother believes in. Joe is an atheist, but his mother believes in Christianity and devotes herself to the Bible. To his mother, Joe is a monster because of his different belief. Joe’s unique religion in the family creates a stronger relationship between Samuel and Joe. Samuel tells Joe that “I would be disappointed if you had not become an atheist, and I read pleasantly that you have, in your age and wisdom…” (Steinbeck 253). Samuel respects Joe for being unique. This impacts the plot because Samuel learns to trust Joe more with his maturity. Steinbeck shows Joe as a monster, and it greatly impacts his relationship with Samuel in the novel.

To Steinbeck, monsters are abnormal characters that impact the relationships and the plot in the novel. Among all the characters Steinbeck creates as monsters, these characters demonstrate the benefits and consequences of being abnormal. Their differentiation impacts the relationships with others in the novel positively and negatively, so it affects the course of the novel. This is supported through the actions many characters take in the story. The judgment of characters creates new boundaries of acceptance for other characters. This develops monsters that ultimately impact the relationships and the plot of East of Eden. In closing, Steinbeck’s focus in the novel is the perspective of normal, and he says that “you must not forget that a monster is only a variation, and that to a monster the norm is monstrous” (Steinbeck 72).

SAMPLE #8

Mrs. Jones

English 2Honors
"One moment he was dedicated and pure and devoted; the next he wallowed in filth; and
the next he groveled in shame and emerged rededicated"(Steinbeck 446).

The novel, *East of Eden*, by John Steinbeck, introduces the notion of decision. The Hebrew word Timshel displays this meaningful power of choice and emphasizes how one may or may not succumb to evil. Throughout the novel, Caleb Trask encounters multiple internal conflicts; the author uses Cal's battles to enhance Timshel's meaning and introduce how an evil character can symbolize hope. Steinbeck associates the power of choice with Cal's struggles; this emphasizes how the barrier between purely good and purely evil can be corroded.

As humans, we are often driven by our cravings to surrender to any iniquity. Often, our yearnings lead us into a web of good and evil. Throughout the novel, Cal Trask is caught between his choices and what he wishes to gain; intermittently his urge to dominate over others drives him to accept an evil outcome. Cal's internal conflict between choosing his right of way or gaining his dominance is emphasized by Steinbeck. The author describes Caleb's character by relating Cal's struggles to his own thoughts; "humans are caught -in their lives... in a net of good and evil... and it occurs to me that evil must constantly re-spawn, while virtue is immortal"(Steinbeck 413). While evaluating the notion of evil, Steinbeck specifies that wickedness and purity are outcasts of each other. However, Cal's malicious judgments are abruptly overthrown each time he chooses to rebel against evil. By acting against wickedness and his cruel decisions, Cal begins to dissemble Steinbeck's barrier between good and evil. Because the author strongly emphasizes the differences between depravity and purity, it is foreseen in the
novel that all of Steinbeck's characters are either all evil or all good. Caleb Trask is placed in between the two groups as a symbol to prove that one can be evil but can still believe he can obtain purity through good decisions. As Cal progresses through his struggles, he faces difficult choices, and must believe in himself to become the angelic person he wishes to be.

Caleb begins to realize the importance of staying true to himself; he finds difficulty in rebelling against his mothers ways and making appropriate decisions. Because he was born from a devilish woman, Cal believes he is bred to be wicked. While discussing the cruelty of Kate with Lee, Cal shouts, “It’s like you said about knowing people, I hate her because I know why she left. I know because I got her in me”(Steinbeck 445). Crushing Cal's faith, the truth of his mother discourages his hope that he'll ever become accepted as innocent and celestial. Confronting Kate, Cal realizes that his true personality was not set in stone by his mother. When Cal's mom argues of his true malady, he denies her by proclaiming," No I haven’t... I'm my own. I don't have to be you... If I am mean, it is my own mean"(Steinbeck 462). By associating Cal’s opinions towards evil with Kate’s, Steinbeck contrasts the notion of good versus the notion of evil. Realizing that he encompasses the ability of choice, Cal refutes Steinbeck's separation of wickedness and purity. He proposes to himself the power of decision, in which anticipates that he has the ability to overcome any of his cruelty with angelic nature. He proves that he is his own person, no matter his mother’s personality. Cal emphasizes that a person can inhabit both evilness and purity and therefore joins the repelling concepts of demonic and celestial people together.
Cal gravitated towards feeling superior over the ones he loved most. Because of his selfishness, Steinbeck can associate Cal with the other derogatory characters in the novel. Although Caleb Trask committed hurtful actions towards others, often he regretted harming people and begged for forgiveness. Trying to obtain superiority over his father, “Cal crept quietly down the dark hall and edged into the room where he and his brother slept…in the dark Aron whispered ‘What did father say’…Cal lay still trying to control his breathing…and in his mind he cried, ‘Don’t let me be mean’”(Steinbeck 377).

Knowing his father has something he is hiding, Cal decides to eavesdrop on Adam's conversation in order his secret out, therefore disobeying his father's orders and cruelly disowning Adam. Unlike the other maleficent characters in the novel, Cal displays regret when he prays to be forgiven and wishes to become someone with a consistent, admirable conscience. Steinbeck writes of Caleb’s lament to evaluate the change that has occurred in the novel. Cal becomes the only evil character who yearns to become self sacrificing through his choices. Therefore, Cal’s changing character symbolizes the impact of Timshel and acts as a turning point throughout the novel, further emphasizing that any man isn't predestined to be evil. Steinbeck’s pure and evil characters are connected through Caleb’s choices to overcome his cruelty.

Although Cal constantly is at war with himself in the novel, he proves himself neither innocent nor evil when he asks for his father’s blessing. Not only does Cal wish to approve of himself, he longs for the acceptance of his father as well. Acquiring his father's approval proves difficult when Cal defies his conscience and sacrifices his brother to the wicked awakening that he has a mother. Cal shatters the thin line of Timshel when he acts on his jealousy. When Cal's actions of selfishness affect his father,
Lee confronts Adam by saying, “Your son is marked with guilt out of himself…almost more than he can bear. Don’t crush him with rejection…give him your blessing…Adam looked up with sick weariness…His whispered word seemed to hang in the air: ‘Timshel’” (Steinbeck 601). Presenting Cal with the word Timshel symbolically recognizes his character to be both evil and pure. The author allows Adam to grant Caleb with the conception of choice to accentuate a turning point in the novel. Because Caleb becomes the character of Timshel through the forgiveness of his evil deed, Steinbeck’s wall between purely good and purely evil is cast away. No longer does Cal connect with the other evil characters around him; he now symbolizes a ray of hope for those who inhabit immorality. The author brings the concepts of good and evil together to highlight the power of choice and to portray the true power of the word Timshel and its important impact on evil.

Caleb Trask supports the novel, East of Eden, by connecting the wicked with the innocent by using his power of decision. Throughout the novel, Steinbeck symbolizes the concept of Timshel through Cal’s hasty decisions and regrets. Cal’s battle through jealousy and domination proves that no matter your personality, your choices lead you to who you will become.

SAMPLE #9

Mrs. Jones
In the prologue to his novel *East of Eden*, John Steinbeck describes himself and his characters as having “a lumbering soul but trying to fly”. Throughout the book it becomes vividly clear which character he is referring to. Caleb, the character most likely inspired by Steinbeck’s true persona, is shown as this lumbering soul as he battles for and against those around him, to become the most virtuous character in the book. Caleb’s numerous relationships give him the human characteristics that the others lack. Steinbeck depicts Caleb as the most relatable character in *East of Eden* to illustrate mankind’s ability to become virtuous from both auspicious and unscrupulous connections to others.

Steinbeck connects Caleb with Cyrus, his grandfather, by paralleling their inability to face death. “Cyrus Trask mourned for his wife with a keg of whisky and three old army friends” (16) and Caleb did nearly the same after the death of his brother; “Cal had never drunk before, he had never needed to…in spite of revulsion and nausea, he forced the whisky into himself” (564). After losing the one person that they love, both Cyrus and Cal wish to end their lives too. This is where Steinbeck’s theme of timshel affects Cal the most. Instead of becoming withdrawn and destructive like Cyrus, Cal chooses a new life for himself. He uses Aaron’s death as motivation to find the love in his father. This further supports the theme by letting Caleb choose to find the good in the situation, in a way that Cyrus was unable to. Although he benefited from his unfortunate affiliation with Cyrus, not all of Caleb’s relationships were easy to overcome.
Throughout the book Steinbeck continually references Caleb and Cathy’s hands. “Cal’s hands were very small for the size of the rest of him…Cal protected his hands. There were few things that could make him cry, but a cut finger was one of them”(333). From the time of Cal’s birth, Steinbeck stressed the weakness in his hands. However, the meaning behind Cal’s hands is not revealed until Cathy comes crashing into his life. “She was almost glad when she learned that the pain in her hands was developing arthritis. An evil voice had whispered that it might be a punishment”(469). Holding true to her first instinct, Steinbeck does use Cathy and Cal’s hands as punishment and refers back to it when either character is being sinister. This illustrates Cal’s growth into a respectable character as his hands are mentioned less and less as the story progresses, unlike Cathy who ultimately has too much pain in her hands to even live. Additionally, this contrasts Cal’s original connection to Cathy in which their hands were both holding them back and compelling them to continue their twisted ways. As proven by his ability to separate his traits from Cathy’s, Caleb can positively distinguish himself from even the most threatening people in the book; however this is tested when he is compared to Charles.

The stories of Caleb and Charles parallel one another for the majority of East of Eden. However, Cathy’s comparison marks the downfall of this connection as Cal tries to learn from the past. “The smart one-the dark one-bothered her. He was like Charles. She had respected Charles-and Charles would probably have killed her if he could”(509). Although Caleb and Charles faced the same conflicts, they each dealt with them differently. At the beginning of their lives both Cal and Charles would resort to violence, exemplifying their inability to choose. Opposing this, after Caleb “kills” his brother he is not angry towards his father for bringing him to this horrible conclusion. Caleb displays the free will
that the previous personalities of him and Charles were unable to take advantage of. Without even knowing Charles, Caleb benefited from their similarities; this contrasts the symbiotic relationship he had with Will Hamilton.

As the self-proclaimed outsiders of their families, Caleb and Will Hamilton form a mutually beneficial connection with one another. Will realizes that Caleb’s true intention in life is to be happy with himself. “Cal was as close to his own soul as it is possible to get ‘My father is good…I want to make it up to him because I am not good’ Will…knew how safe Cal was in his stripped honesty…‘would it cross your mind that you were trying to buy his love”(477). Both Cal and Will gain acceptance from their relationship. Though it is neither approval nor tenderness from their real families, Cal and Will use their lack of love to find friendship in one another. Cal uses his friendship to find the good in himself and eventually show his newly found righteousness to his father. This virtue is later reinforced in Caleb’s connection with Lee.

Since Lee and Caleb are portrayed as opposites for nearly all of their lives, their internal comparison at the end of the novel shows Caleb’s final transformation into an honorable character. “We’re a violent people, Cal. Does it seem strange to you that I include myself? Maybe it’s true that we are all descended from the restless, the nervous, the criminals…but also the brave and independent and generous”(568). By admitting their flaws, Cal and Lee see that there is a positive to every negative. Although neither of them had flawless adolescent lives, they have the choice to become benevolent adults. Lee and Cal help each other find their inner balance between the ruthless ways they grew up and the morality that their relationships have brought out in them.
Throughout the course of *East of Eden*, Caleb Trask transforms into a new character with the help of those around him. Cal goes from being unloved and unloving to finding admiration in himself and his family where it had seemed impossible. Although he came from pernicious and stonehearted roots, Caleb chose to use his relationships with people both respectable and cruel to become the most honorable character Steinbeck’s novel.
The amount of wealth owned by a person affects his or her overall happiness in life. In the novel *East of Eden* by John Steinbeck, the characters’ financial statuses play a major role in the plot of the story. Steinbeck uses the characters’ internal conflicts to portray the harmful effects of wealth and the underlying benefits of poverty.

Sudden accumulation of wealth can cause one to feel unsure of how to proceed with his or her new riches. Charles and Adam Trask inherit their father’s stolen fortune, and their wealth ultimately brings misery upon them. After Charles takes his share of his father’s money, “he became rich without pleasure and respected without friends” (133). Instead of indulging in his exorbitant amount of money, Charles forces himself to continue his routine of hard labor. In addition, Charles’ wealth gains him respect, but his large inheritance did not earn him the personal satisfaction of building relationships with other people. Charles feels paranoid and guilty because he knows that he inherited a dishonest fortune; as a result, he spends the rest of his life in an unstable relationship with his brother and avoids contact with anyone outside of his farm. By portraying Charles’ miserable isolation due to his excessive wealth, Steinbeck demonstrates that a luxurious amount of money cannot replace human interaction.

When money becomes a higher priority than loved ones, relationships are often destroyed. Because Adam is determined to spend his money on land in California, Cathy “said she did not want to go to California and he did not listen” (133). Blinded by his ability to afford a profitable plot of land, Adam is unable to recognize that his wife is unhappy. Cathy’s sudden departure comes as a surprise to Adam because of his
disregard of her needs amidst his pursuit of additional wealth; as a result, he falls into a state of shock while grieving the loss of his beloved wife and neglecting his children. Adam ultimately causes his own pain by devoting all of his time and energy to his future prosperity instead of tending to his wife, who he cares for deeply. Steinbeck uses Adam’s calamitous error to show that preoccupation with money distracts people from focusing on their relationships with others.

Those who must work hard for their belongings acquire intellectual wealth that is more valuable than money. An owner of barren land in the Salinas Valley, Samuel Hamilton “was forever inventing a new way of doing an old thing and doing it better and quicker, but he never in his whole life had any talent for making money” (9). Despite his lack of profitable land, Samuel displays resourcefulness and optimism throughout the novel, which gains him the respect of other men. Because Samuel has to work for the little money that he has to support his family, he achieves a deeper appreciation for his life and a profound understanding of human nature. In contrast to many of the other characters in the novel, Steinbeck uses Samuel to show that overcoming poverty rewards one with wisdom and insightfulness that can only be earned through experience.

Cal’s failure to buy forgiveness from his father shows that money cannot solve all problems. When Adam does not accept the money that Cal attempts to give him in compensation for what Adam lost in business, he tells Cal, “I would have been so happy if you could have given me—well, what your brother has—pride in the thing he’s doing... Money, even clean money, doesn’t stack up with that” (544). Desperately trying to please his father, Cal acts on his misconception that material possessions are more valuable than upholding integrity. Adam’s reaction to Cal’s efforts is a brutal realization
for Cal because he longs for praise from his father; furthermore, Cal painfully learns that he cannot simply buy his father’s approval because it has to be earned. By illustrating Cal’s internal conflict, Steinbeck presented the theme of attempting to receive redemption in exchange for money.

Acquiring money by dishonest means not only damages one’s reputation, but also puts stress on his or her family. After discovering that her father stole money from his company, Abra confides in Cal, “My father’s in trouble... I think he’s taken some money from his company... Now I’m afraid” (592). By committing a crime, Abra’s father causes her to feel as though she cannot control her own actions because she believes that she has inherited her father’s sinfulness; however, Abra is capable of making decisions based on her own set of morals. The idea that sin is inherited from one’s ancestors heavily impacts many of the characters’ lives because they choose to succumb to evil, believing that it is inevitable. Through Abra’s conflict regarding her father’s crime involving money, Steinbeck presents the theme of good versus evil and the negative effects of ancestral sin on one’s life.

Money is a driving force behind many of Kate’s malicious deeds throughout the story. Kate pretends to care about Faye so that Faye will treat Kate as her own daughter, leaving the whorehouse and all of her money to Kate in her will. Many years after Kate meticulously plans Faye’s death, “she found she had no feeling about Faye... there had been a time during her dying when the noise and the smell of her had made anger rise in Kate so that she considered killing her quickly to get it over” (503). Kate’s lack of guilt over Faye’s death supports that she killed Faye to inherit her fortune. Because Kate pursues wealth in order to gain power, she displays behavior that characterizes her as
conniving and cynical. Avoiding genuine relationships with the people in her life due to her immoral motives, Kate emotionally detaches herself from others so that she can manipulate them to get what she wants without feeling guilty. Kate’s lack of a conscience combined with the absence of a role model in her life result in her ultimate misery, which Steinbeck uses to demonstrate how one’s lust for money can induce iniquitous behavior that leads to his or her own anguish.

Steinbeck demonstrates how money can negatively or positively influence one’s life through the development of characters that make critical decisions based on their amount of wealth. Internal conflicts faced by characters throughout the novel portray that a strong desire for money distracts one from maintaining integrity and focusing on his or her priorities.
Love serves as a motivation and a key to happiness, but it can also be a man’s greatest downfall. In the novel *East of Eden* by John Steinbeck, the author emphasizes the impact love has on several of the characters. Steinbeck includes several instances to portray that although love acts as a driving force behind a number of the characters, it causes them to perceive only what they want to see and be oblivious to reality.

Adam’s desire for Cathy prevents him from realizing her evil nature. Steinbeck reveals, “Whatever Cathy may have been, she set off the glory in Adam. . . Perhaps Adam did not see Cathy at all, so lighted was she by his eyes. Burned in his mind was an image of beauty and tenderness, a sweet and holy girl, precious beyond thinking, clean and loving, and that image was Cathy to her husband, and nothing Cathy did or said could warp Adam’s Cathy” (133). Adam is extremely narrow-minded when it comes to Cathy. He views her as a perfect human being despite her many flaws that are visible to the rest of society. Steinbeck mainly portrays Cathy’s viciousness when she manipulates Adam and takes advantage of his wealth just to betray him in the end. Adam refuses to accept reality and continues to feel that a part of his life is missing. Adam’s strong love for Cathy causes his denial of the truth.

Cyrus also demonstrates the idea of blind love when he remains ignorant to Charles’ feelings due to his favoritism towards Adam. Charles explains his frustration, “I took six bits and I bought him a knife made in Germany- three blades and a corkscrew, pearl-handled. Where’s that knife? Do you ever see him use it?. . . ‘thanks,’ he said, like that. And that’s the last I heard of a pearl-handled German knife that cost six bits” (29). Cyrus
makes it clear to his boys that he feels a stronger connection to Adam, and his devotion for Adam eliminates any possible emotional connections with Charles. Steinbeck includes this example of favoritism to expose a repeating theme that love narrows an individual’s mind. Cyrus’ actions cause more than simply jealousy from Charles. His preferential treatment towards Adam creates a harsh relationship between the brothers that paves the way for both of their lives. Charles lives on as a pugnacious man, and Adam becomes resistant to violence through disagreement. Cyrus’ fondness towards one of his boys greatly affects the plot and exemplifies the power of love.

Cathy’s affection towards Faye causes her to momentarily disregard her beastly impulses because of Faye’s optimism. Cathy honestly explains, “‘I’m trying to hold on, Mother. I didn’t know anyone could be so good. I’m afraid if I say anything too quickly or come too close to you, I’ll break to pieces’” (233). While Cathy and Faye become attached, Faye’s sweet and innocent personality rubs off on Cathy. Cathy forgets her evil motives and becomes extremely close to having good intentions; Cathy’s love for Faye inspires her to become a better person until she recalls her main goal in life: destruction. It is not until Faye’s death that Cathy regains her immorality. By choosing these characters with specific personalities, Steinbeck illustrates that Cathy’s admiration for Faye temporarily purifies her.

Aron’s hopeful thoughts towards his mother cause him to be skeptical of her impurity. When Cal and Adam discuss Aron’s naivety to the outcome of his mother, Cal asserts, “‘I don’t think he would believe it, sir. I think he would lick whoever told him and think it was a lie’” (459). Aron is obsessed with the pure image in his mind of his mother. Since Cal is aware of Aron’s innocence, he neglects telling him that their mother is a whore.
Aron’s oblivion to his mother’s immoral actions affects a bulk of the plot; it leads to Aron’s revelation from discovering the truth about his mother which drives him to enroll in the army and hurt his family members. If Aron had known all along about his mother’s whereabouts, he would have accepted the fact and been able to cope with it. Aron’s concern for his mother results in astonishment when he finds out what she has done; this idea relates to Adam and Cyrus as well. Adam refuses to believe that his father would steal money because he loves his father and naturally defends him. In both situations, love causes the child to view his parent based on a perfect image from his mind.

Aron’s enrollment in the army catches Adam by surprise. Adam reads the letter once, then forgets what he read. He comments to Lee, “‘Thought I read it. I must have read it’. . . And Lee read, ‘Dear Father, I’m in the army. I told them I was eighteen. I’ll be all right. Don’t worry about me. Aron.’ ‘Funny,’ said Adam. ‘Seems like I read it. But I guess I didn’t.’ He rubbed his hand” (571). Steinbeck creates confusion and curiosity in the reader by repeating Adam’s words when he thinks that he read the letter. This perplexity represents Adam’s feelings and emphasizes his state of denying his son’s fate. Adam is extremely concerned about Aron’s safety; not only does he have to think twice about reality, but he neglects his other son’s feelings. Cal feels that he is the cause for Aron’s death, but Adam only mourns, causing himself illness. Adam does not ease Cal’s worries until directly before his death, when he blesses Cal. Adam’s love for Aron prevents him from realizing anything could go wrong.

Steinbeck reveals through example that love has a huge impact on the characters in *East of Eden*. It can lead to rash actions as well as oblivion to the outside world. Without
love, people would have little to no motivation. Steinbeck demonstrates that reality hits hard on those who have a driving force behind their actions caused by love.