

The Grapes of Wrath

Dialogue Analysis

Silvia BT

“How about us? Is that the truth for us?”

This dialogue is between Pa Joad, Tom Joad and Casy. Previously in this scene the Joad family stops for the night and meets a group of men who have just come from the farms. The Joad family is very content and excited about going to find work because they believe there are enough jobs for everyone. Their ‘proof’ is a handbill requesting the work of 800 people. What this group of men point out to the Joads is that most probably more than 800 people saw the handbill, creating a situation in which there are too many workers for the number of jobs. This fact definitely upsets and unsettles Pa Joad, as well as the rest of the crew. Most of them now start to doubt what before they had taken for granted.

This dialogue is taken from the very last part of the scene. The group of men has gone to bed and Pa, Tom and Casy remain to reflect about what they have been told. By reading their conversation, it might appear as a normal and ordinary one. By further examining the content and depth of their words, as well as the situation in which they find themselves I discovered new meanings.

The words that most captivated me were the ones Tom speaks: ‘Is that the truth for us?’ During this period of time there were many uncertainties and it was hard to remain positive in a circumstance such as theirs. Up until now, though, the Joads were outstandingly happy. That is, until this scene. Here reality begins to catch up with them and the peaceful green heaven they imagined begins to turn into the real California. I believe that in these words there is an intense emotion and significance: nobody could take anything for granted, and not always was the truth equal for everyone.

“Brother, I don't know. If I did I'd tell you. But I just don't know who's to blame!”

This short piece of dialogue is taken from one of the first scenes of the movie. Here Tom and Casy are speaking with Muley, in Tom's now abandoned house. Muley is explaining what happened to his own family, and John Ford begins the use of flashback. The scene shows a sunny spring day. A car drives into Muley's yard. Muley and the driver begin to converse, even though it is more of a brawl than a conversation. The man warns Muley that the government will take his house soon. Muley, filled with fury and rage, wants to know whom he can shoot, to take his revenge. The man, though, doesn't satisfy Muley, telling him that there's no way of knowing whose fault it is.

Therefore the man speaks to Muley the line I chose. I think that the man speaks these words also for himself, almost as a complaint. What the man says represents what everyone during those times was wondering: who is to blame? The problem

was: nobody knew. Everybody was always very mad at each other and I suspect it was because they didn't know whom else to be angry at. I believe this dialogue expresses the feelings of those people, and John Ford was able to send the message across to each and every one of the viewers of his movie.

That's my part--that an' keepin' the fambly together.

Ma Joad spoke these words. The family has set up a tent and the two women are now talking. Rosasharn asks Ma if she is ever scared. Ma answers that she can't be scared because she has to feed the family and keep it together. This shows the exceptional importance of Ma Joad, and other wives and women as well, in the family. In those situations there had to be at least one 'Ma Joad' to prevent the family from falling apart. Sometimes the fundamentality of Ma's presence and her job is underestimated, but without her nobody would ever get along and survive. These words also show the courage and determination of Ma because, even though she might get scared at times, she has to be strong for the family. She understands her importance and knows where she stands.

I admire John Ford for stressing her strength and her tenacious personality because, on my account, she is one of the most powerful characters. She never complains and she always tries to help. It is clear to me that she is the glue that keeps everything (and everyone) from falling apart because, thanks to Ma, together they stand.

They ain't enough. All you gonna get is jus' a taste but--I can't help it, I can't keep it from you.

In this scene the Joad family has just reached a camp where they can park their car and set up a tent for the night. They are all tired and hungry after their long trip. Here Ma Joad is preparing a pot of stew when a group of children begin to gather around her. There are about fifteen children of all ages, standing in front of old Ma Joad. They are dressed in old and ragged clothes, and their eyes are focused only on the stew. After some time they begin to ask Ma if they can have some, explaining that they have no food at home and that they are starving.

Ma Joad knows that if she were to give some stew to the children, there wouldn't be enough to go around her family members but, with her sweet and honest soul, she doesn't have the heart to send those children away. I believe that this gesture of hers is a grand one because her own family, including herself, are hungry but she is able to share what she has with the people who really need it, even though she doesn't own much. This shows great compassion. It also shows that, even though many people were facing the hardest periods of their lives, they remained true and honest people, ready to help others.

You be careful, Tommy. Don't you be stickin' your nose in anything.

The Joads have settled in a camp and after a hard day of working they can finally enjoy a meal, even though it's not a feast. After they have finished eating Tom announces that he is going for a walk and Ma warns him not get into any trouble.

To any person viewing this movie it might seem as a normal and regular thing for a mother to say. In reality, expect from being that, it is also a foreshadowing. Ma Joad knows that Tom gets into trouble easily and her remark is a clue to what might happen next. As a matter of fact, in the following scene Tom meets Casy, and then many unpromising events happen. Foreshadowings such as these aren't easily spotted because only the people who are the most attentive to the details can understand them. I believe this is a good way to keep the viewers interested and intrigued in the story and events of the movie. For me, at least, it was very catching and entertaining.

When I saw the film I thought of several different misadventures Tom might get himself involved into. I thought he might get caught by the police and taken away for some sort or another. I also wondered if he might run away, to somewhere far where he could earn money and then save his family. I even thought that he might get into a fight with a neighbor, creating numerous problems for the Joads. What I never would have expected to happen was for him to meet Casy. It was very much surprising and captivating to have something so unexpected come up. I enjoy the use of foreshadowing and I most certainly believe that John Ford was very successful in applying it to this situation.