Three Oklahoma Images

Compare how stories and sports shape views of a state.

OKH.C.8.6.C "Explain changing perceptions, both internal and external, of the state and its citizens, comparing the images from Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath, to the musical Oklahoma!, and the Oklahoma City Thunder."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one phrase in each paragraph that shows an outsider's view, circle one that shows a resident's view, and write 1, 2, or 3 beside each paragraph to show when its image reached audiences.

Who Gets to Picture Oklahoma?

1 In 1939, John Steinbeck published *The Grapes of Wrath*, a novel about the Joad family, who leave Oklahoma for California during the Great Depression. Drought, failed crops, and economic hardship had pushed many families west. In the novel, Californians sometimes call newcomers "Okies," treating them as unwanted outsiders rather than neighbors. The Joads, however, see themselves as workers trying to keep their family together. Steinbeck's story helped readers outside Oklahoma recognize migrants' suffering and resolve, but it also linked the state in the national imagination to poverty and flight. One novel cannot describe every Oklahoman's experience.

2 Four years later, the musical *Oklahoma!* opened on Broadway. Set in 1906, before Oklahoma became a state, it presents farm and ranch neighbors through songs, courtship, and arguments over land and community. Its upbeat title song calls attention to a hopeful future, an image far from the desperate road traveled by the Joads. Audiences elsewhere could imagine Oklahoma as a lively place to build a home instead of a place people had to leave. Some Oklahomans embraced that cheerful image as a source of pride. Yet a stage story about a few characters leaves out many residents, including Native people who already lived in the territory.

3 In 2008, the Oklahoma City Thunder began playing in the NBA after the Seattle SuperSonics franchise moved to Oklahoma City. Televised games and visiting teams put the city's name before fans across the country. Instead of picturing only farms or families heading west, some outsiders now picture a modern city and its packed arena. Local fans wearing Thunder colors may see the team as a shared symbol of pride and belonging. Still, not every Oklahoman follows basketball, and a sports broadcast cannot show the whole state. Together, these three images show how stories and public events can shape both outsiders' views and residents' views of Oklahoma.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How does the image of Oklahoma offered to outsiders by *Oklahoma!* differ from the image linked to *The Grapes of Wrath*?

2. How do the Joads' view of themselves and some Californians' view of the newcomers differ?

3. Compare how some Oklahomans responded to the musical's image with how local fans may view the Thunder.

4. How might the Thunder change an outsider's image of Oklahoma after seeing *Oklahoma!*, and what can neither image show fully?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a four-sentence museum label for an exhibit about Oklahoma's changing image. Choose which of the three images visitors should see first and explain why, compare all three images, distinguish an outsider's view from a resident's view, and identify one limit of an image.

ANSWER KEY

Three Oklahoma Images

HIGH SCHOOL · OKH.C.8.6.C

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one phrase in each paragraph that shows an outsider's view, circle one that shows a resident's view, and write 1, 2, or 3 beside each paragraph to show when its image reached audiences. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How does the image of Oklahoma offered to outsiders by *Oklahoma!* differ from the image linked to *The Grapes of Wrath*?	**The novel linked Oklahoma to poverty and families leaving, while the musical presented a hopeful place where people could build a home.**
2	How do the Joads' view of themselves and some Californians' view of the newcomers differ?	**The Joads see themselves as workers keeping their family together, while some Californians call newcomers "Okies" and treat them as unwanted outsiders.**
3	Compare how some Oklahomans responded to the musical's image with how local fans may view the Thunder.	**Some Oklahomans embraced the musical's cheerful image as a source of pride; local fans may see the Thunder as a shared symbol of pride and belonging.**
4	How might the Thunder change an outsider's image of Oklahoma after seeing *Oklahoma!*, and what can neither image show fully?	**The Thunder may add an image of a modern city to the musical's rural setting. Neither a stage story nor a sports broadcast can represent all Oklahoma residents.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

I would put *The Grapes of Wrath* first because the Joads' journey shows why outsiders once associated Oklahoma with hardship and departure. Beside it, *Oklahoma!* would show outsiders a hopeful rural community, while the Thunder would suggest a modern city with a national audience. Some residents might value the team's shared identity more than its television exposure, just as other residents might reject being defined by the Joads' struggles. The novel cannot show every family's experience, so the exhibit should treat each image as a viewpoint, not a complete portrait.

Accept other supported comparisons that distinguish outsiders' views from residents' views. Museum labels should justify the chosen opening image, compare all three, and identify a specific limit.