Beyond One Image

Migration, contributions, and changing views of Oklahoma

OKH.C.8.6 "Examine recent contributions by Oklahomans to the public's quality of life. Describe migrations of recent cultural and ethnic groups to Oklahoma and their impact on the social and economic transformation of the modern state..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline one way migration has changed Oklahoma, circle one contribution in the arts and one in sports, and number the three different images of Oklahoma presented by the novel, musical, and basketball team.

Who Gets to Represent Oklahoma?

1 In 1939, John Steinbeck's novel *The Grapes of Wrath* followed an Oklahoma family leaving during the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression. Its portrait of hunger and displacement made hardship central to many outsiders' image of the state, though it did not describe every Oklahoman. The 1943 musical *Oklahoma!* offered a very different image: a cheerful frontier community in the years before statehood. Its songs helped audiences imagine promise and belonging, but its picture gave little attention to Indigenous people already living there. Both works shaped public perceptions, yet each left important lives outside the frame.

2 Since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, Vietnamese refugees and their families have made homes in Oklahoma, including in Oklahoma City and Tulsa. Some opened restaurants and markets, adding jobs and new choices for shoppers and diners. Migration from Mexico and Central America has also brought families to the state for varied reasons, including work and safety. New residents have shaped neighborhoods through businesses, languages, and community events. These changes affect more than the economy: they expand whose stories neighbors hear and whose traditions they share. No single arrival story describes every family.

3 Other Oklahomans have changed what people hear about the state. Joy Harjo, a Muscogee writer born in Tulsa, became the first Native American U.S. poet laureate in 2019. Her poetry brings Indigenous memory and present-day experience into national conversations, challenging the musical's narrow picture of who belongs. Professional basketball offers another public image: the Oklahoma City Thunder began playing in the city in 2008. Its nationally televised games connect Oklahoma City with a modern sports audience. For residents, the team can be a source of shared pride; for outsiders, it may replace an older Dust Bowl stereotype. Sports visibility, however, cannot tell the whole state's story.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How do *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Oklahoma!* give audiences different images of the state? Name one limit of either image.

2. Choose one migration described in the passage. Explain one economic change and one social change connected to it.

3. How does Joy Harjo's work challenge the image of Oklahoma presented in the musical?

4. How might the Thunder affect residents' and outsiders' views of Oklahoma differently? Why is the team still an incomplete image of the state?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Write a 70 to 90 word label for a new Oklahoma welcome exhibit. Address a visitor who knows only *The Grapes of Wrath* or *Oklahoma!*; use one migration example and one contribution from an Oklahoman to build a fuller picture of the state.

ANSWER KEY

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HIGH SCHOOL · OKH.C.8.6

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline one way migration has changed Oklahoma, circle one contribution in the arts and one in sports, and number the three different images of Oklahoma presented by the novel, musical, and basketball team. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How do *The Grapes of Wrath* and *Oklahoma!* give audiences different images of the state? Name one limit of either image.	**The novel emphasizes hunger and displacement, while the musical presents a cheerful community. The novel does not represent every Oklahoman, and the musical gives little attention to Indigenous people.**
2	Choose one migration described in the passage. Explain one economic change and one social change connected to it.	**Vietnamese refugees and their families opened restaurants and markets, adding jobs and shopping choices. New residents also shaped neighborhoods through languages, traditions, and community events.**
3	How does Joy Harjo's work challenge the image of Oklahoma presented in the musical?	**Harjo's poetry brings Indigenous memory and present-day experience to national audiences, making visible people the musical largely leaves out.**
4	How might the Thunder affect residents' and outsiders' views of Oklahoma differently? Why is the team still an incomplete image of the state?	**Residents may feel shared pride, while outsiders may see a modern sports city instead of a Dust Bowl stereotype. A basketball team cannot represent all the state's people and stories.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

If your picture of Oklahoma comes only from *Oklahoma!*, you might miss people whose stories its cheerful frontier scenes left out. Vietnamese refugees and their families built lives here after 1975, opening markets and restaurants that changed local choices and work opportunities. Tulsa-born Muscogee poet Joy Harjo brings Indigenous memory and present-day experience to readers across the country. Together, these stories show Oklahoma as a place shaped by both newcomers and Native people, not just the community shown on a musical stage.

Accept other passage-supported migration examples and contributions when students explain their effects. The exhibit label should use both required examples to revise a limited image, not merely list facts.