

***Travels With Charley***  
***By John Steinbeck***

*Grade 7*

In this lesson, students will read an excerpt from the novel *Travels With Charley* by John Steinbeck. The novel is about a man who takes a road trip with his dog.

The sample activity below is focused on the second paragraph of the excerpt and illustrates strategies for answering guiding questions with students.

**EXCERPT**

Charley likes to get up early, and he likes me to get up early, too. And why shouldn't he? Right after his breakfast he goes back to sleep. Over the years he has developed a number of innocent-appearing ways to get me up. He can shake himself and his collar loud enough to wake the dead. If that doesn't work he gets a sneezing fit. But perhaps his most irritating method is to sit quietly beside the bed and stare into my face with a sweet and forgiving look on his face; I come out of deep sleep with the feeling of being looked at. But I have learned to keep my eyes tight shut. If I even blink he sneezes and stretches, and that night's sleep is over for me. Often the war of wills goes on for quite a time, I squinching my eyes shut and he forgiving me, but he nearly always wins. He likes traveling so much he wanted to get started early, and early for Charley is the first tempering of darkness with the dawn.

I soon discovered that if a wayfaring stranger wishes to eavesdrop on a local population the places for him to slip in and hold his peace are bars and churches. But some New England towns don't have bars, and church is only on Sunday. A good alternative is the roadside restaurant where men gather for breakfast before going to work or going hunting. To find these places inhabited one must get up very early. And there is a drawback even to this. Early-rising men not only do not talk much to strangers, they barely talk to one another. Breakfast conversation is limited to a series of laconic grunts. The natural New England taciturnity reaches its glorious perfection at breakfast.

I fed Charley, gave him a limited promenade, and hit the road. An icy mist covered the hills and froze on my windshield. I am not normally a breakfast eater, but here I had to be or I wouldn't see anybody unless I stopped for gas. At the first lighted roadside restaurant I pulled in and took my seat at a counter. The customers were folded over their coffee cups like ferns.

## **STANDARDS AND OBJECTIVES**

This list highlights the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts featured in this lesson, as well as a lesson objective and a version of the objective written in student-friendly language.

### **Reading (Literature)**

**Standard:** Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text. (RL.7.2)

**Lesson Objective:** Students will determine the central theme of the excerpts and will be able to provide supporting details from the text.

**Student Objective:** I will determine, or find out the central idea of the text. I will find details (pieces of information) in the text that support the central idea.

### **Speaking & Listening**

**Standard:** Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly. (SL.7.1)

**Lesson Objective:** Students will discuss the text in pairs, and with the whole class, building on others' ideas.

**Student Objective:** I will be able to discuss the text with a partner, with a small group, and with the whole class. I will express my own ideas clearly, I will listen to what others say, and I will build on their ideas.

### **Language**

**Standard:** Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases. (L.7.6)

**Lesson Objective:** Students will acquire and use accurately words that are key to understanding the text.

**Student Objective:** I will acquire, or learn and use new words from the text.

## ACTIVITY: ANSWERING GUIDING QUESTIONS

### GUIDING QUESTION:

The narrator says he wants to ‘**eavesdrop**’ on a local population. What does this mean? What clues in the text help you understand what the author means? (RI.7.4)

I soon discovered that if a **wayfaring** stranger wishes to **eavesdrop** on a local population the places for him to **slip in** and **hold his peace** are bars and churches. But some New England towns don’t have bars, and church is only on Sunday. A good alternative is the roadside restaurant where men **gather** for breakfast before going to work or going hunting. To find these places **inhabited** one must get up very early. And there is a **drawback** even to this. Early-rising men not only do not talk much to strangers, they barely talk to one another. Breakfast conversation is limited to a series of **laconic grunts**. The natural New England **taciturnity** reaches its **glorious** perfection at breakfast.

**wayfaring** – traveling from place to place

**eavesdrop** – to listen secretly to what other people are saying

**slip in** – enter quietly

**hold his peace** – to keep silent

**gather** – come together

**inhabited** – full of people

**drawback** – something that causes problems

**laconic** – using few words

**grunts** – a low sound from the throat

**taciturnity** – to be quiet; not speaking a lot

**glorious** - wonderful

### WORD BANK:

local population

bars

churches

slip in

hold his peace

**SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS:**

1. What does “**eavesdrop**” mean? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Whom does the narrator want to “**eavesdrop**” on? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Which places does the narrator prefer to “**eavesdrop**” in? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. How does the narrator enter new places? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What does the narrator do when he enters a new place? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**GUIDING QUESTION RE-VISITED:**

The narrator says he wants to ‘**eavesdrop**’ on a local population. What does this mean? What clues in the text help you understand what the author means?

**RESPONSE TO GUIDING QUESTION:**

The narrator prefers to eavesdrop in \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. When he enters new places, the narrator \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ so that he can learn more about the \_\_\_\_\_.