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Abstract

John Steinbeck is considered to be one of the quintessential American writers of the early 20th century. His characters and narratives are known for their accessibility and relatability, and the religious and political allegories found in his works have captured the imaginations of millions for nearly a hundred years. This is especially true in the case of the masterpiece *East of Eden*. Stories of nature versus nurture, agriculture versus industry, and, ultimately, good versus evil are all present in this account of flawed individuals living in a society obsessed with duality. The analysis of one of these dualistic frameworks, that of capitalism versus its alternatives, is used to explain why certain characters in Salinas Valley interact with the free market in the way they do, and what their interactions say about their own morality. Cathy, Adam, and Cal all enter the market for different reasons to achieve different aims, and the market is used to facilitate these goals, regardless of their lawfulness, intentions, or ethical qualms. I have used these specific characters and their actions to create three categories of market participant archetypes, demonstrating that the market is nothing more than what we make of it.

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