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## Lesson Eight

### FOCUS: The Plot Unfolds

The author artfully builds a plot structure to create expectations, increase suspense, and inform character development. The timing of events, from beginning, to middle, to end, can make a novel predictable or riveting. A plot, propelled by a crisis, will reach a climax and close with a resolution (sometimes called denouement). Foreshadowing and flashbacks allow the author to defy time while telling the story. A successful author will keep a reader entranced by clever pacing built into the story, sometimes confounding a simple plot by telling stories within stories.

There are many moments in the novel that can be seen as turning points: the bank's eviction of the tenant farmers, the deaths of Grampa and Granma, Noah's and Connie's desertions, the revival of hope when the Joads arrive at the government camp, and the scuffle with the deputies.

### Discussion Activities

Use the homework assignment from the last lesson to have students present the most important turning points in the novel. Ask them to refer to key passages from the novel, explaining why this moment is significant. What consequences does this turning point have for our main characters—Tom, Ma, or Casy?

Have students read “The Novel at the Movies” on pages 12-13 in the Reader's Guide. Then have them imagine they are making a movie of the novel. Tell them they have to cut certain scenes from the novel because of limited running time. Divide the class into groups and have each suggest two scenes that could be dropped. How does cutting the scene change the structure? Does it improve the story? Have students explain the reasons for their choices.

### Writing Exercise

Ask students to anticipate the novel's ending. Have them write several paragraphs describing what could become of the Joad family if they stay in the government camp. Ask them to consider whether the Joads at this point seem likelier to be doomed or saved.

### Homework

Have students read Chapters 25-26 (pp. 346-405). Will the novel end on a tragic or comic note? Can they predict any particular tragedy or triumph for a main character?