

The Chrysanthemums

1.What is the central theme of the story regarding gender roles?

The central theme is the frustration of female confinement in a patriarchal society. (女性在父权社会中被束缚的挫败感) Elisa Allen is intelligent, capable, and passionate, but her world is limited to her garden and domestic life, while her husband manages the business and engages with the outside world.

2.What is distinctive about Steinbeck's writing style in this story?

Steinbeck writes in a very clear and direct way. He describes things exactly as they are—what you can see, hear, and smell. He does not tell you what the characters are thinking. Instead, he shows you their actions and words, and you have to guess their feelings yourself.

3.What is the function of the tinker's wagon as a symbol?

The wagon stands for freedom and the outside world. It moves from place to place, which is the opposite of Elisa's quiet, stuck life. She sees the wagon and wishes she could travel and do exciting things, but she cannot.

4. How does Steinbeck use the setting to establish mood and theme?

The weather and place match Elisa's feelings. At the start, it is foggy and gray, which feels sad and closed off. Later, when Elisa feels happy for a short time, the sun comes out. At the end, the fog returns, which shows she is sad again.

5.What is the significance of the chrysanthemum flowers as a metaphor?

The flowers are like Elisa herself. They are beautiful and strong, but they can only grow in one small garden. Like the flowers, Elisa has great potential, but she is kept in a limited place. When the tinker throws the flowers away, it is like he throws away her true self.

6.How does the title reflect Elisa's transformation throughout the story?

The title shows her emotional journey. First, she takes good care of the flowers (hope). Then, she gives them to the tinker, thinking they will travel far (dreams). Finally, she sees them thrown away on the road (disappointment). So the flowers tell the whole story of her hopes and sadness.