The following review appeared in the March 2014 issue of CHOICE:

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One in the "Political Companions to Great American Authors" series, this edited volume presents John Steinbeck in his many guises and contexts. Readers learn of his childhood in Salinas, his investigative journalism for the San Francisco News, and his goal as a protest writer to remake the nation. Steinbeck is presented in his own time as the author of the best-selling and frequently banned Grapes of Wrath, as the political playwright who sought to turn audiences into activists, and as the (small "o") communist leading the 1930s labor movement in deeply divided California. Steinbeck's place in contemporary American life is also analyzed: he is an inspiration to rock artists such as Bruce Springsteen, his East of Eden was selected by Oprah's Book Club, and his realist portraits of exploitative capitalism are fresh and relevant in light of the 2008 financial collapse. Other essays cover Steinbeck's "phalanx theory" of human nature, his simultaneous disdain for Stalinism and unfettered individualism, and his Jeffersonian agrarianism (complete with racist and patriarchal assumptions). A final series of essays addresses Steinbeck's "ambivalent American" patriotism. The collection is well conceived and well executed. It deserves a place in every city and university library in the US. Summing Up: Highly recommended. All readership levels. – J. Simeone, Illinois Wesleyan University