John Steinbeck

Of Mice and Men
John Steinbeck

- Born in Salinas on February 27, 1902.
- Steinbeck was a naturalist and a regionalist; his novels are based on first-hand research.
- His father was a manager at a flour mill, and his mother was a school teacher who taught him to read when he was only three years old.
- He lived in the Salinas Valley in Central California and by the Monterey Coast, and many of his novels are based there.
- He believed that life in the country is superior to that in the city.
- In high school, knew he wanted to be a writer.
John Steinbeck

- Graduated from Salinas High School.
- Attended Stanford University but never finished.
- Attempted some creative writing while in college and submitted it to magazines but was rejected.
- His first novel *Cup of Gold* was published in 1929, but it was not financially rewarding.
- His second novel, *The Red Pony*, was published in two parts in a magazine in 1930.
John Steinbeck

- His first three novels were unsuccessful, but in 1962, he was the 6th American author to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature.
- In 1968, he died of heart disease while living in Manhattan.
John Steinbeck
John Steinbeck

• Chief works:
  – Tortilla Flat
  – In Dubious Battle
  – Of Mice and Men
  – The Red Pony
  – The Grapes of Wrath
  – Canary Row
  – East of Eden
  – The Pearl
John Steinbeck

• His writing technique is largely based on dialogue, connected together with brief, descriptive passages.
• Character histories are explained through conversation rather than by the author.
• Due to this, his novels were easily made into films.
John Steinbeck

• Steinbeck’s characters revolve around: the have-nots, the misfits, the racial minorities unjustly deprived of their civil and economic rights, the simple, the poor, and the oppressed.
• His characters swear because that is the way that they talk.
• His characters are always hard-working and good-hearted but inclined to drink and argue.
• His characters are rural heroes who are illiterate and sometimes weak but nevertheless noble.
John Steinbeck

• Was a regionalist; he was careful to portray local settings and local speech accurately.
• He was concerned with the problems of the poor and oppressed, the “mice” in society.
• His characters achieve a simple, tragic nobility of their own, and their problems have universal applications.
• He believed: that all people must have a place in nature and learn to understand its power, that all people must require relationships with other human beings, and that all people share a need for a dream, goal, and vision for the future.
Motif - Mice

• A motif differs from a theme in that a theme is an idea set forth by a text, where a motif is a recurring element which symbolizes that idea. The motif can also be more like the central idea behind the theme, such as courage or loyalty. In “Of Mice and Men” the recurring motif of the small mouse, little dog and “little Guy” symbolise the downtrodden in society.
John Steinbeck

- In preparation for writing his novels, Steinbeck would often live, work, and be with the people about whom he was to write.
- In preparation for *The Grapes of Wrath*, he joined a migrant camp and rode with them to California.
- For *The Pearl*, he traveled to the Gulf of Mexico.
Migrant Workers
JOBLESS MEN KEEP GOING
WE CAN'T TAKE CARE OF OUR OWN
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
The Depression 1930’s America

- http://www.besthistorysites.net/USHistory_GreatDepression.shtml
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ACAwe3kSqbY
- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f4rG5nB7wB0
Of Mice and Men

- *Of Mice and Men* is considered a “naturalistic tragedy”
- It deals with the lives of migrant farm workers during the Great Depression.
- The characters in the novel are the down trodden, misfits, and outcasts, disabled in some way, mentally, physically, economically, or emotionally.
Of Mice and Men

• Themes
  – Friendship
  – Loneliness
  – The need to belong
  – Light and dark
  – Humanity and disability
  – Responsibility