https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3iyikm-fg
Born in 1902 in Salinas, California...
... in the California Central Valley, one of the most productive agricultural areas in the world, where half of U.S. fruits, nuts, and vegetables are grown.
Steinbeck worked summers in the fields; this setting and the migrant farm workers he came to know deeply influenced most of his later written work.
The California farm laboring class, the migrant workers, and later the midwesterners displaced by the Dust bowl years of the 1930s became his cause and his focus.
Considered by most to be his most important work, *The Grapes of Wrath* was controversial and often banned because of its negative portrayal of aspects of capitalism and his sympathy for the plight of workers, for which he was accused of being a communist.

Nevertheless, it was the best selling novel of 1939, and won for him the National Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize for fiction.
Of Mice and Men also came from this tradition, as well as The Harvest Gypsies, a collection of articles from a series for the “San Francisco News” about the plight of the migrant worker.
The factory workers from the nearby coastal towns of the Monterrey Bay peninsula also provided Steinbeck with settings and characters.
Another important influence was Steinbeck’s friend Ed Ricketts, a marine biologist with a laboratory in Monterrey, with whom he took many marine collecting trips and expeditions, and co-wrote articles and books.

Ricketts became the model for “Doc” in Steinbeck’s books about Monterrey. Ecological themes became prominent in Steinbeck’s work as a result of this relationship.
During WWII, Steinbeck served as a war correspondent, from which came several collections of essays and a novel.
After the war, Steinbeck began to write for the movies, and wrote *The Pearl* and *Viva Zapata!* and adapted them into scripts to be filmed.
In 1952, he published his longest novel, *East of Eden*. He considered it his greatest work. It is an epic family multi-generational saga of good and evil.

He collaborated on the film version, which starred James Dean in his debut role.
In 1962, Steinbeck was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, for his “realistic and imaginative writing, combining as it does sympathetic humor and keen social perception.”
In 1964, President Lyndon Johnson awarded Steinbeck the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Steinbeck died of heart disease in 1968, and was buried in Salinas in the family cemetery.
His family home in Salinas is now a museum.
“I can’t think of another American writer, with the possible exception of Mark Twain, who so deeply penetrated the political life of the country.”

Arthur Miller
1. Abandon the idea that you are ever going to finish. Lose track of the 400 pages and write just one page for each day; it helps. Then when it gets finished, you are always surprised.

2. Write freely and as rapidly as possible and throw the whole thing on paper. Never correct or rewrite until the whole thing is down. Rewrite in process is usually found to be an excuse for not going on. It also interferes with flow and rhythm which can only come from a kind of unconscious association with the material.

3. Forget your generalized audience. In the first place, the nameless, faceless audience will scare you to death and in the second place, unlike the theater, it doesn’t exist. In writing, your audience is one single reader. I have found that sometimes it helps to pick out one person—a real person you know, or an imagined person and write to that one.

4. If a scene or a section gets the better of you and you still think you want it—bypass it and go on. When you have finished the whole you can come back to it and then you may find that the reason it gave trouble is because it didn’t belong there.

5. Beware of a scene that becomes too dear to you, dearer than the rest. It will usually be found that it is out of drawing.

6. If you are using dialogue—say it aloud as you write it. Only then will it have the sound of speech.
Themes

- The working man, specifically migrant and otherwise disenfranchised laborers
- The natural world, especially marine science
- Family dynamics
- The effects of capitalism on the labor force
- The importance of community
Style and literary characteristics

• Use of humor to suggest society’s flaws
• Intercalary chapters
• Vivid characters whose numerous shortcomings serve to endear them to the reader
• Sense of place; vivid depictions of California’s great central valley and the California coast
Modernist Ideas (Causes)
- Pessimism & despair
- Moral & cultural relativism
- Futility & apathy
- Chaos, confusion, disorder
- Fluctuating states of being
- Loss of faith
- Confused identity

Literary Characteristics (Effects)
- Rejection of conventional social structures
- Challenge to society’s institutions
- Urban and industrial settings
- Non-linear narratives
- Changing POV
- Lack of “fixed” morality
- Use of satire to challenge convention
- Non-conventional, non-fixed narrators
- Multiple connotative meanings
- Ambiguous endings