John Steinbeck

Born
in Salinas, California
February 27, 1902

Died
December 20, 1968

Genre
Fiction, Short Stories, Non-Fiction

John Ernest Steinbeck, Jr. was the author of 27 books, including 16 novels, six non-fiction books, and five collections of short stories. His works are widely read abroad and many of his works are considered classics of Western literature. Most of Steinbeck's work is set in southern and central California, particularly in the Salinas Valley and the California Coast Ranges region. His works frequently explored the themes of fate and injustice, especially as applied to downtrodden or everyman protagonists. Steinbeck served as a war correspondent during World War II, and was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1962. He died in New York City in 1968.

Selected Chronological Bibliography - Most Well-Known Works*

Tortilla Flat. – New York : Covici-Friede, 1935 - Adopting the structure and themes of the Arthurian legend, Steinbeck created a "Camelot" on a shabby hillside above the town of Monterey, California and peopled it with a colorful band of knights.

Of Mice and Men. – New York : Covici-Friede, 1937 - The compelling story of two outsiders striving to find their place in an unforgiving world. Drifters in search of work, George and his simple-minded friend Lennie have nothing in the world except each other and a dream—a dream that one day they will have some land of their own. Tackling universal themes such as the friendship of a shared vision, and giving voice to America’s lonely and dispossessed, Of Mice and Men has proved one of Steinbeck’s most popular works, achieving success as a novel, a Broadway play and three acclaimed films.


The Red Pony. – New York : Covici-Friede, 1937. – Enlarged edition, New York : Viking, 1945 - Raised on a ranch in northern California, Jody is well-schooled in the hard work and demands of a rancher's life. He is used to the way of horses, too; but nothing has prepared him for the special connection he will forge with Gabilan, a hot-tempered pony his father
gives him. But when Gabilan falls ill, Jody discovers there are still lessons he must learn about the ways of nature and, particularly, the ways of man.

_The Grapes of Wrath._ – _New York : Viking, 1939_ - First published in 1939, Steinbeck’s Pulitzer Prize winning epic of the Great Depression chronicles the Dust Bowl migration of the 1930s and tells the story of one Oklahoma farm family, the Joads, driven from their homestead and forced to travel west to the promised land of California. A portrait of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless, of one man’s fierce reaction to injustice, and of one woman’s stoical strength, the novel captures the horrors of the Great Depression and probes the very nature of equality and justice in America.

_Sea of Cortez : a Leisurely Journal of Travel and Research / by John Steinbeck and Edward F. Ricketts._ – _New York : Viking, 1941._ – _Republ. as The Log from the Sea of Cortez._ – _New York : Viking, 1951_ - In 1940 Steinbeck sailed in a sardine boat with his great friend the marine biologist, Ed Ricketts, to collect marine invertebrates from the beaches of the Gulf of California. The expedition was described by the two men in _Sea of Cortez, _published in 1941. The day-to-day story of the trip is told here in the Log, which combines science, philosophy and high-spirited adventure.

_Cannery Row._ – _New York : Viking, 1945_ - _Cannery Row _is a book without much of a plot. Rather, it is an attempt to capture the feeling and people of a place, the cannery district of Monterey, California, which is populated by a mix of those down on their luck and those who choose for other reasons not to live "up the hill" in the more respectable area of town.

_The Pearl._ – _New York : Viking, 1947_ - A story of classic simplicity, based on a Mexican folk tale, _The Pearl _explores the secrets of man’s nature, greed, the darkest depths of evil, and the luminous possibilities of love.

_East of Eden._ – _New York : Viking, 1952_ - _Set in the rich farmland of California’s Salinas Valley, this sprawling and often brutal novel follows the intertwined destinies of two families—the Trasks and the Hamiltons—whose generations helplessly reenact the fall of Adam and Eve and the poisonous rivalry of Cain and Abel. Here Steinbeck created some of his most memorable characters and explored his most enduring themes: the mystery of identity; the inexplicability of love; and the murderous consequences of love’s absence.

_The Winter of Our Discontent._ – _New York : Viking, 1961_ - Ethan Allen Hawley, the protagonist of Steinbeck’s last novel, works as a clerk in a grocery store that his family once owned. With Ethan no longer a member of Long Island’s aristocratic class, his wife is restless, and his teenage children are hungry for the tantalizing material comforts he cannot provide.
Then one day, in a moment of moral crisis, Ethan decides to take a holiday from his own scrupulous standards.

*Travels with Charley : In Search of America.* – *New York : Viking, 1962* - In September 1960, John Steinbeck embarked on a journey across America. He felt that he might have lost touch with the country, with its speech, the smell of its grass and trees, its color and quality of light, the pulse of its people. To reassure himself, he set out on a voyage of rediscovery of the American identity, accompanied by a distinguished French poodle named Charley; and riding in a three-quarter-ton pickup truck named Rocinante. Written during a time of upheaval and racial tension in the South—which Steinbeck witnessed firsthand—Travels with Charley is a stunning evocation of America on the eve of a tumultuous decade.

*Steinbeck : a Life in Letters / Ed. by Elaine Steinbeck and Robert Wallsten.* – *New York : Viking, 1975* - For John Steinbeck, who hated the telephone, letter-writing was a preparation for work and a natural way for him to communicate his thoughts on people he liked and hated; on marriage, women, and children; on the condition of the world; and on his progress in learning his craft. Opening with letters written during Steinbeck's early years in California, and closing with a 1968 note written in Sag Harbor, New York, Steinbeck: A Life in Letters reveals the inner thoughts and rough character of this American author as nothing else has and as nothing else ever will.

*All summaries based on synopses published on www.goodreads.com*