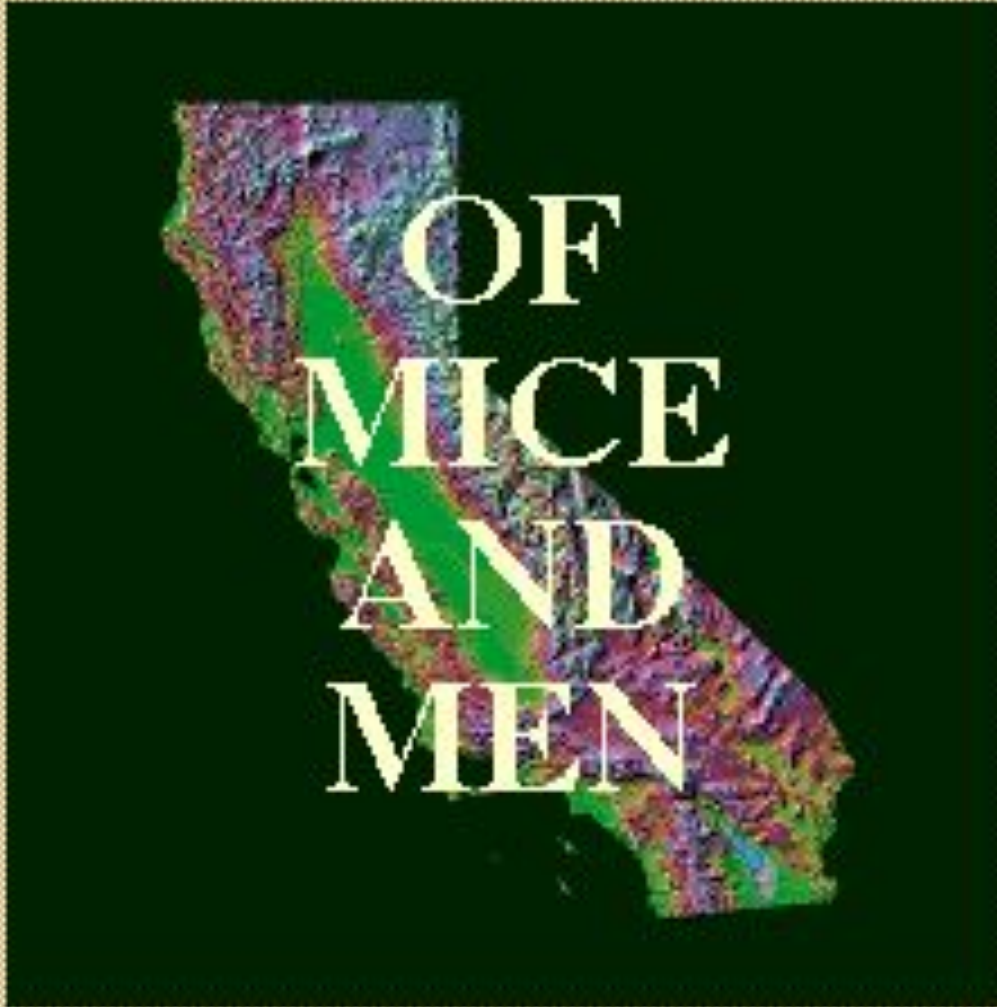


# STEINBECK

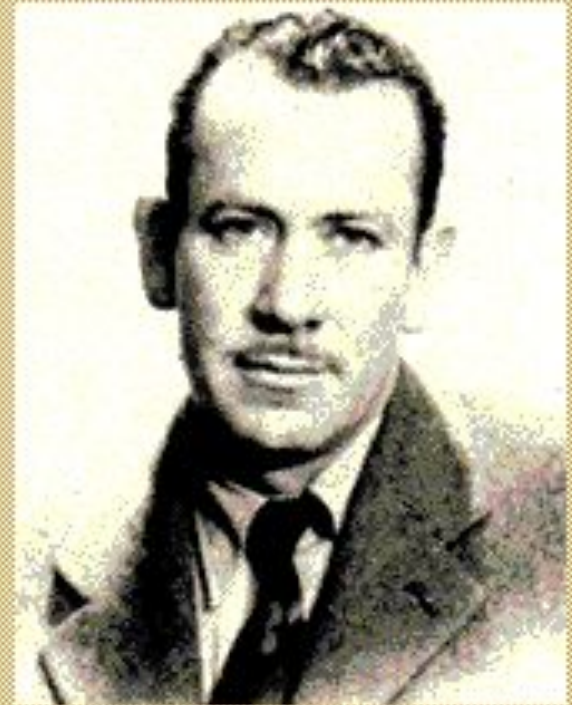


John  
Steinbeck  
wrote 'Of  
Mice and  
Men' in  
1937

# About the author

- John Steinbeck was born in 1902 in Salinas, California, a region that became the setting for much of his fiction, including *Of Mice and Men*.
- As a teenager, he spent his summers working as a hired hand on neighbouring ranches, where his experiences of rural California and its people impressed and impacted upon him deeply.

STEINBECK



# Historical Timeline

Banks, Factories  
close, farming  
collapses

The 'New Deal'  
- support for  
unemployment.

1929

1931

1933

1936

1937

Financial  
Crash

Franklin D.  
Roosevelt  
becomes  
president.

Of Mice and  
Men is  
published.

# THE GREAT DEPRESSION!

- On Black Tuesday, October 29, 1929, the stock market crashed, triggering the Great Depression, the worst economic collapse in the history of the modern industrial world.
- It spread from the United States to the rest of the world, lasting from the end of 1929 until the early 1940s. (Ironically, WW II saw the breaking of this depression.) With banks failing and businesses closing, more than 15 million Americans (one-quarter of the workforce) became unemployed.
- The depression also led to a drop in the market price of farm crops, which meant that farmers were forced to produce more goods in order to earn the same amount of money. At the same time, farm owners were embolden/ empowered to set their own conditions and in many ways, they were able to abuse the desperate drifters. Not only were the living conditions sparse and inadequate, but the wages set ensured that there would be no real escape from poverty.

# The Dust Bowl Plains

- The increase in farming activity across the Great Plains states caused the precious soil to erode.
- This erosion, coupled with a seven-year drought that began in 1931, turned once fertile grasslands into a 'desert like' region known as the Dust Bowl.



APR 1935



# The Dust Bowl



# The History of Migrant Farmers in California and the American Dream

During the Great Depression, economic and ecological forces (the Dust Bowl) brought many rural poor and migrant agricultural workers from the Great Plains states, such as Oklahoma, Texas, and Kansas, to California.

Hundreds of thousands of farmers packed up their families and few belongings, and headed for California, which, for numerous reasons, seemed like a promised land.

The state's mild climate promised a longer growing season and, with soil favourable to a wider range of crops, it offered more opportunities to harvest.

20492



137

—KOUVA



... is shattered!!

- Despite these promises, though, very few found the dream that they longed for: a land of opportunity and plenty.



# So Why The Title *Of Mice and Men*?

- **Inspired by a poem written by Robert Burns:-**
- **From the poem:** The best-laid schemes o' mice an 'men / Gang aft agley
- **Meaning:** No matter how hard or well we plan for something, our plans can often fail to become reality...or worse, they can end up going terribly wrong.

# Fiction based on reality

- Although *Of Mice and Men* is a fictional story it is deeply rooted in historical fact.
- The high unemployment resulted in many people travelling to find work.
- They could be hired and fired at the boss's will (farm owners were very powerful).
- The story looks at the more vulnerable in society and exposes the terrible conditions with which they had to cope with. It looks at the loneliness, discrimination and persecution that the aged, coloured, illiterate and ignorant faced and reveals their fears and need for support and understanding (which was often lacking).
- It exposes a Darwinian nightmare where only the strong (and often selfish) survive.
- It is an allegory that exposes some of the more unpleasant aspects of human behaviour with a view to encourage social reform.
- Ultimately, it is a bleak portrayal of society and reveals how hardships rather than resulting in compassion and community, results instead in fear, selfishness and hopelessness.