Of Mice and Men
John Steinbeck (1902-1968)

- Born & raised in Salinas, California.
- Published nearly 30 novels.
- His novels often deal with the simple aspects of life.
- Of Mice and Men was first published in 1937.
Setting

- Takes place in southern California in the areas of Salinas and Soledad.
  - *Soledad* means solitude and loneliness in Spanish.
- During the Great Depression
- Nearing the end of the Dust Bowl.
The Dust Bowl

○ Time Period
  ● Began early 1930’s
  ● Great Depression
  ● WWII Approaching

○ Why it Happened…
  ● Poor weather
  ● Drought
  ● Wind erosion of land
  ● Over-farming
  ● Introduction of the tractor
Images from The Dust Bowl

Photographs by Dorothea Lange
Dust approaching Spearman, Texas
A dust storm approaching Stratford, TX.
Dust Storm in Liberal, Kansas
Farm Near Dalhart, Texas
Dust Storm in Cimmaron, Oklahoma
Window Stuffed with Rags
Oklahoma Farmer Irrigating the Land
Oklahoma residents in San Fernando, California.
Roadside Camp in California
Squatters in Bakersfield, California.
Home of a Dust Bowl Survivor in California
No Solution

○ People abandoned land.

○ Rumors of work in California.
  ● Handbills
    ○ Distributed in affected areas
    ○ Advertised jobs
    ○ Promises of good pay

○ California became a “promised land.”
Migrant Farm Workers

- Jobs were scarce.
- Migrant farm workers roamed throughout the country looking for odd jobs on farms.
- Our two main characters, George and Lennie, are migrant farm workers.
Life in the 1930’s

○ Popular Entertainment
  - Radio
  - Seeing a movie
  - Playing cards
  - Reading comic books

○ Food
  - Bread – 9 cents
  - Milk – 14 cents/qt.
  - Round steak – 42 cents/lb.

○ Life
  - Average life expectancy:
    - Man – 58.1 years
    - Woman – 61.6
  - Yearly Earnings
    - About $2,300
    - However, the average income dropped to $1,500.
  - 25% of the nation’s work force is unemployed.
Plot and Characters

- The events surrounding the complicated relationship between two friends, George and Lennie, who are migrant farm workers.

- George and Lennie are both dependent on each other, but in different ways.
Literary Devices

○ Imagery – the use of vivid or figurative language to represent objects, actions, or ideas.
○ Animal Imagery (This is especially important to the character description of Lennie.)
○ Foreshadowing
○ Symbols
Literary Devices

○ Themes
  - Solitude and Loneliness
  - The American Dream
  - Friendship

○ Motifs – recurring structures, contrasts, or literary devices that can help to develop major themes
  - The Corrupting Power of Women
  - Discrimination
  - George’s solitaire game
  - The Predatory Nature of Human Existence
Use of Language – *Idioms*

- Regional speech or dialect. A specialized vocabulary used by a group of people, jargon: legal idiom.

- **blow their stake**
  - Lose and/or spend all their money

- **blowin' in our jack**
  - losing, spending, or gambling away all our money

- **bustin' a gut**
  - Your *gut* is your stomach area. To **bust a gut** is to engage in very hard physical labor -- so hard that you ache all over -- even in your **gut**.
More Idioms

- bum steer
  - bum, in this instance, means false or erroneous. A bum steer is false information or directions.

- canned
- fired

- jail bait
  - girl below the legal age of consent for sex; an underage girl who tempts a man to sexual intimacy which is punishable by imprisonment
Even More Idioms

- **poop**
- **energy; desire**

- **rattrap**
- **a hopeless situation; one that no good can come from.**

- **Hoosegow**
- **jail**
STILL Even More Idioms!!!

- looloo
  - a sexy woman

- roll up a stake
  - save up some money

- wing-ding
  - a terrific person; someone to be admired

- booby hatch
  - insane asylum; a place designed to house people who are mentally unstable
Things to Consider

- The **style** in which the novel is written.
  - Note that each chapter begins with a detailed description of the local setting, much like a scene in a play.
Essential Questions

○ What are the benefits of having relationships?

○ Are all relationships equal?

○ How do relationships support our lives?

○ What are the trade-offs in relationships?
Essential Questions

○ What determines the relationships we have?

○ How do class, religion, race, and culture determine our relationships?

○ What role does empathy play in mutual relationships?

○ What place does a dream/vision have in one’s life and relationships?
Answer the following questions on your note card using complete sentences. You will be turning the note card in as you exit the classroom.

- What do relationships mean to you?
- What kind of relationships do you observe in your life?
- Why are relationships important or not important to you?