

Name: _____ Date: _____

9th Grade Reading Comprehension

Answer each question.

John Steinbeck

John Steinbeck was born into a family of modest means in 1902. His father worked various jobs to take care of his family. His mother was a former schoolteacher. Steinbeck had three sisters, and enjoyed a happy childhood. Though shy, he was very smart, and he became attached to California's Salinas Valley at a young age. Steinbeck decided at the age of 14 that he would become a writer, and spent a lot of his time writing poems and stories.

To please his parents, Steinbeck enrolled at Stanford University. Unsited to college life, he came and went for six years before finally abandoning college for good in 1925. After a short stint in New York City trying to be a freelance writer, he moved back to California and earned a living working as a manual laborer. Steinbeck was the author of 31 books, including some of the best known novels in American Literature: *Of Mice and Men* (1937), *Grapes of Wrath* (1939) and *East of Eden* (1952). Though he had been publishing since 1929, he first found success with *Tortilla Flat* (1935), a humorous novel about paisano life in the Monterey region of his native California. All of his books revolved around social issues, and Steinbeck believed it was a writer's job to "dredge up to the light our dark and dangerous dreams for the purpose of improvement."

Steinbeck won the Pulitzer Prize in 1940 for *The Grapes of Wrath*. Twenty-two years later, he received the Nobel Prize for Literature: "for his realistic and imaginative writings, combining as they do sympathetic humour and keen social perception."

Steinbeck was married three times, and his first wife provided him with financial support while he concentrated on his writing. They divorced in 1942. His second marriage lasted from 1943 until 1948, and produced two sons. Steinbeck married his third wife in 1950 and they remained married until Steinbeck died of heart disease in 1968.

Describe Steinbeck's childhood. _____

Steinbeck was married three times. What was unique about each of these marriages? ____

What literary honors did Steinbeck win? _____

What was Steinbeck's relationship with college? _____

With what novel did Steinbeck first achieve success? _____
