

# The Winter of Our Discontent

*By John Steinbeck*



# Life

- Born **February 27, 1902** in Salinas California
- **Parents** - Olive Hamilton and John Ernest Steinbeck
- Wrote for his high school newspaper and knew by **age 14** he wanted to be a writer
- **1919** Enrolled at **Stanford University** and became interested in Biology
- **1925** Left Stanford after 6 years with no degree and moved to NY City to take a job **a laborer and journalist**
- **1929** Moved back to California and **settled in Lake Tahoe.**

# Life

- **1943** - served as a **World War II war correspondent** for the New York Herald Tribune
- **1947-** made the first of many **trips to the Soviet Union**
- **December 20, 1968,** - died in New York City on of heart disease.

# Works

- **1929** – First book - **Cup of Gold**
- **1935** - First commercial and critical success with  
**Tortilla Flat.**
- **1936- 1939** - Wrote 3 novels devoted to labor issues  
**In Dubois Battle Of Mice and Men**  
**The Grapes of Wrath**
- **1943 - 1945** - Writing focus turns to the war  
**The Moon Is Down**  
**Cannery Row**
- **1945-1951** - Several of his novels are turned into  
screen plays
- **1966** - Final novel - **The Winter of Our Discontent**

# Major works

- **16 novels, collection of short stories, 4 screen plays, 3 travel narratives, a translation and 2 published journals**
- Focused on group behavior earlier and then focused on individual moral responsibility to one's self and community
- Believed that characters must be seen in relation to their environment
- Opened people's eyes to the harsh realities of life in rural America
- Wrote two War novels to encourage patriotism

# Major works

- ❑ “In Dubious Battle”
- ❑ “Of Mice and Men”
- ❑ “The Grapes of Wrath”
- ❑ “East of Eden”
- ❑ “Travels with Charley”

# Awards

- National Book Award, “The Grapes of Wrath” (1940)
- Pulitzer Prize for fiction, “The Grapes of Wrath” (1940)
  - King Haakon VII Liberty Cross (1946)
- Member of American Academy of Arts and Letters (1948)
- Nobel Prize for Literature for his realistic and imaginative writing, combining as it does sympathetic humor and keen social perception; (1962)
- Trustee of the John F. Kennedy Memorial Library (1964)
  - United States Medal of Freedom (1964)
    - Press Medal of Freedom (1964)
  - Member of the National Arts Council (1966)
    - California Hall of Fame (2007)

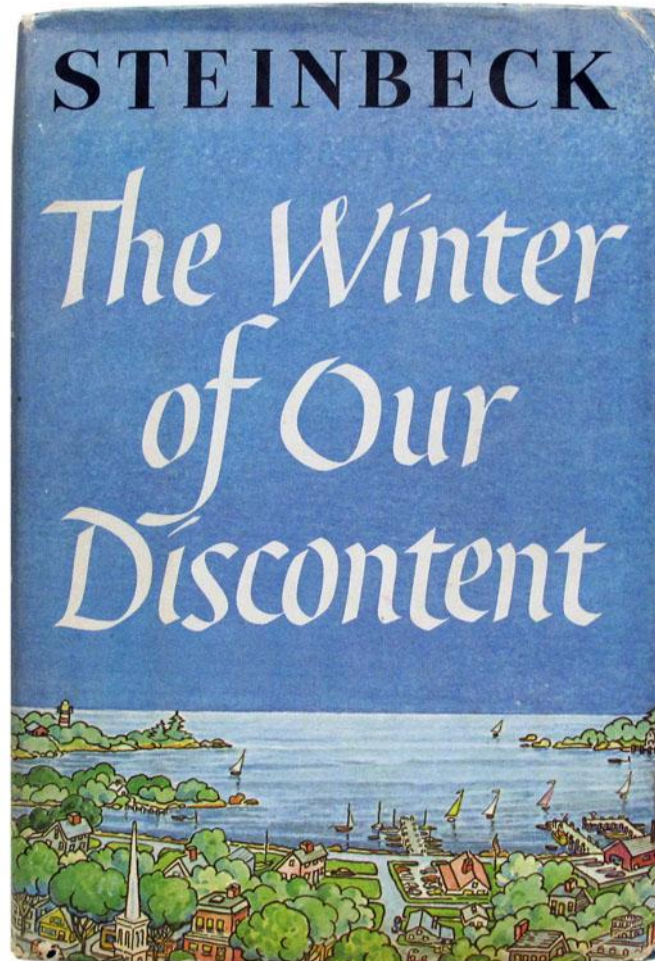


# Characters of the works

*Steinbeck - a poet of the dispossessed*

- victims of the elements, selfishness, environment and property
- defective, physically and mentally inferior characters

# The Winter of Our Discontent



# Type of narration

- omniscient narrator (Chapter 11part);
- Free Indirect Discourse from multiple points of view (Chapters 1,2,11,12);
- and first person narrative from a single point of view (the rest of the book).

# Main characters

- **Ethan Allen Hawley** - a grocery clerk (the story's protagonist)
- **Mary Hawley** - Ethan's wife
- **Allen and Ellen Hawley** - his adolescent children
- **Danny Taylor** - Ethan's childhood friend and town drunk
- **Joey Morphy** - bank teller and town playboy
- **Margie Young-Hunt** - middle- aged seductress
- **Mr. Baker** - town accountant, owner of the town's bank
- **Alfio Marullo** - Italian immigrant owner of grocery store

# The central conflict

= the internal conflict experienced by Ethan Allen Hawley, the protagonist of this novel, as he seeks to be successful in a world where seemingly the only way of gaining that success is to engage in illegal acts.

# The Title

*“ ... now is the winter of our  
discontent made glorious by the  
sun of York”*

Richard III  
(William Shakespeare)

# Style peculiarities

- It only develops one character(narrator) to the full extent and shows us the world around him.
- The other characters in the story are drawn very lightly, offering a limited view of their feelings.
- One of the main stylistic features of the novel is immense reference to Shakespeare.
- The net of symbols helps the author highlight different peculiarities of characters and scenes:

• MATTIE'S RED SCARF AND RED RIBBON •

# Genre peculiarities

*“The winter of our discontent”* is

...

... an **ironic novel** with complex moral and **psychological problems**.

... a **response** to the growing atmosphere of **social, spiritual and moral degradation**



# Major themes

- Importance of Family
- Integrity
- Defining the American  
Dream

**“We can shoot rockets  
into space but we can’t  
cure anger or discontent”**

*-- John Steinbeck  
The Winter of Our Discontent*