Context: Background and setting

## John Steinbeck’s Background:

## Born on 27th February 1902 in Salinas, California, USA. The Salinas River is mentioned in the first line of *Of Mice and Men*, with the whole novel centred on the landscape around Salinas.

* Steinbeck’s parents owned some land, and his mother was a schoolteacher who encouraged him to read.
* Steinbeck’s family wasn’t particularly rich or poor. They just wanted him to have a ‘respectable’ career. Steinbeck, however, wanted to be a writer.
* Steinbeck studied Marine Biology at University, but had to take long periods of time out to earn money. During this time he worked as a clerk, shop assistant, waiter, labourer and farmhand (he may have drawn upon this experience when writing *Of Mice and Men*).
* Steinbeck took a variety of jobs to support himself during the ten years he was struggling to become a published writer.
* Steinbeck finally became successful and acknowledged as a great writer- he won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1962. He gave a percentage of the prize money to his publishers, McIntosh and Otis, who he felt supported him when he did not at first appear to be very successful.
* Steinbeck found real success when he published *Tortilla Flat* (1935) and *Of Mice and Men* (1937).
* *Of Mice and Men* was dramatised in both play and film.
* Steinbeck was married three times.
* He died in 1968 of heart disease and was buried in Salinas, California- the setting of *Of Mice and Men*.