

2026 Summer Reading/Coursework, Eng10 AP Prep**Mrs. Adams-Hoag****elizabethadams@tomah.education**

Class of 2029 AP Prep Students:

Your summer assignment is to read the short novel *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck, attach post-it annotations, read and analyze a poem and article, and determine your values. (See directions on the next page.) Please complete all of this in August so everything is fresh in your mind as you prepare to begin your sophomore year at THS.

We will begin our school year with literary analysis and then turn our focus toward argumentative writing. As such, we will discuss and write about the merits of *Of Mice and Men*. Should it be banned from schools? Is it derogatory? Does it have inappropriate themes? Does it encourage youth to mimic offensive words and actions? Your reading and understanding of the novel will help you in the beginning weeks of school to delve into critical thinking and analysis to answer these questions and more.

Content alert:

Due to the time period in which *Of Mice and Men* takes place, the words, attitudes, opinions, and actions of the characters are that of farm hands in California during the 1930s. This novel contains the “N” word, racism, segregation, traditional gender roles, profanity, and derogatory words and actions toward women, people with disabilities, and black Americans.

John Steinbeck

Known as one of America’s greatest novelists, Steinbeck is a Pulitzer Prize and Nobel Prize in Literature winner and known for using his life experiences as inspiration for his writing. While his novels contain a plot, characters, and themes, his depictive writing offers an explicit sharing of his love of the land while making social commentaries. In his prime, he was referred to as the conscience of America. A simple internet search will reveal a plethora of information about John Steinbeck and his accomplishments.

Movies & Broadway Play

Over the years, there have been several movie versions of the novel, in addition to a Broadway play. Should you want to watch a movie or two, please feel free to do so. Please ensure you also read the novel; you’ll be analyzing diction, syntax, and other writing techniques, so it is essential you are familiar with Steinbeck’s writing.

Assignments on back —>

Directions for August

All 2026 Summer Reading/Coursework due on the first day of school, August 24.
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1. Read *Of Mice and Men*

2. Annotate the following with post-its:

- Chapter summaries
- Meaningful and important conversations

3. Read and summarize each stanza of the poem "To a Mouse" by Robert Burns. There are translations on the internet, which you can use, but your assignment is to summarize stanzas, NOT translate line by line.

4. Read and annotate the article "How much was Nobel prize-winner John Steinbeck inspired by Robert Burns?"

5. Use the "List of Values" to evaluate and highlight/select 10-15 of your personal values. Do some deep thinking about your selections; go beyond the surface level to consider what you value most in others, what has been instilled in you throughout your childhood, what you need in your life, etc. You may add values that are not listed.



To a Mouse

BY ROBERT BURNS

On Turning her up in her Nest, with the Plough, November 1785.

Wee, sleeket, cowran, tim'rous beastie,
O, what a panic's in thy breastie!
Thou need na start awa sae hasty,
 Wi' bickerin brattle!
I wad be laith to rin an' chase thee
 Wi' murd'ring pattle!

I'm truly sorry Man's dominion
Has broken Nature's social union,
An' justifies that ill opinion,
 Which makes thee startle,
At me, thy poor, earth-born companion,
 An' fellow-mortal!

I doubt na, whyles, but thou may thieve;
What then? poor beastie, thou maun live!
A daimen-icker in a thrave
 'S a sma' request:
I'll get a blessin wi' the lave,
 An' never miss 't!

Thy wee-bit housie, too, in ruin!

It's silly wa's the win's are strewin!
An' naething, now, to big a new ane,
 O' foggage green!
An' bleak December's winds ensuin,
 Baith snell an' keen!

Thou saw the fields laid bare an' waste,
An' weary Winter comin fast,
An' cozie here, beneath the blast,
 Thou thought to dwell,
Till crash! the cruel coulter past
 Out thro' thy cell.

That wee-bit heap o' leaves an' stibble
Has cost thee monie a weary nibble!
Now thou's turn'd out, for a' thy trouble,
 But house or hald,
To thole the Winter's sleety dribble,
 An' cranreuch cauld!

But Mousie, thou art no thy-lane,
In proving foresight may be vain:
The best laid schemes o' Mice an' Men
 Gang aft agley,
An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain,
 For promis'd joy!

Still, thou art blest, compar'd wi' me!
The present only toucheth thee:
But Och! I backward cast my e'e,
 On prospects drear!
An' forward tho' I canna see,
 I guess an' fear!

Analysis

How much was Nobel prize-winner John Steinbeck inspired by Robert Burns?

22nd January 2022

By John MacKenzie, Glasgow University



To provide some background to Burns's popularity in America, it is important to understand how the poet was viewed in that emerging nation. An edition of his poems was published in a Philadelphia newspaper shortly after the publication in Scotland of his *Poems, Chiefly In The Scottish Dialect* (popularly known as the Kilmarnock Edition) in 1786. A New York edition of his work followed soon after and his fame spread across America. It is clear that many prominent figures in America's history were inspired by the poet's work, in particular his themes of liberty and democracy. Many 19th-century politicians, writers and abolitionists, for example, were admirers.

Abraham Lincoln regularly quoted the poet and was known to give toasts at Burns Night celebrations. On the opposite side of the Civil War divide, the president of the Confederacy, Jefferson Davis, even visited the cottage in Alloway in which Burns was born. American writers including Mark Twain, Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman greatly admired Burns. John Greenleaf Whittier, the "Quaker Poet" of Massachusetts, went so far as to adopt Scots as a poetic language. The depiction of Burns as a "democratic poet" was attractive to those in the fledgling United States. Thus, Burns was popular among well-known abolitionists such as Gerrit Smith, Henry Ward Beecher and William Lloyd Garrison. The most prominent abolitionist of the period, Frederick Douglass (below), visited Alloway and met the poet's sister, Isabella Burns Begg.



The popularity of Burns in America continued into the 20th century. On a scholarly level, a man who, in his obituary, was referred to as "the foremost 20th-century authority on Robert Burns" was the American John DeLancey Ferguson. In popular culture, too, the popularity of Burns in American life was evident. By 1933, there were 19 Burns clubs across the US and numerous statues coast to coast. Prominent 20th-century writers such as William Faulkner, Willa Cather and Arthur Miller were deeply influenced by Burns. The poet Robert Frost, whose mother was Scottish,

was introduced to Burns's works as a child and became fascinated with the Scots poet. Frost spent a long career as a teacher and reportedly had his students memorise and recite Burns's poems. Burns's image was also regularly seen in newspapers nationwide, advertising "Robert Burns cigars" or Harris tweed. His words are quoted proverbially, suggesting widespread knowledge and awareness of his poetry. Newspapers, for instance, make regular reference to "the best laid schemes o' mice an' men".

Therefore, the Scots poet was an influence on a great many important figures, undoubtedly more than was previously thought. The transatlantic importance of Burns is an area of research that has become more prominent in the past 10 years or so. The "best laid schemes o' mice an' men" leads me to the influence of

Burns on the American writer John Steinbeck (below).



There has been a tendency, both culturally and academically, to presume an influence of Burns on Steinbeck given the latter's use of Burns's phrase from *To A Mouse* for the title of his 1937 novella, *Of Mice And Men*. But more often than not, those who refer to this link do not delve deeper into Steinbeck's reasons for his use of Burns's words. With Burns's work being ubiquitous in the America in which Steinbeck grew up, he was certainly exposed to the Scots poet. Growing up and developing his writing career in the early 20th century, Steinbeck was part of a wider culture which had an abiding interest in Burns, and a particular view of him as a man and a poet. Burns's appeal due to his support for American democracy is very much evident in popular magazines of the day, magazines to which Steinbeck's family subscribed and which the young John read enthusiastically. Steinbeck had been exposed to the work of Burns as a youngster. Although there is no direct influence of Steinbeck

mentioning the influence of Burns, he was undoubtedly aware of his works and had a good knowledge of the themes about which Burns wrote. For instance, he was, in the case of *To A Mouse*, acquainted enough to understand the novella he would call *Of Mice And Men* was concerned with similar themes, including the ultimate futility of preparing for a future over which you have no control, whether mouse or itinerant worker.

There were similarities in political ideology between Burns and Steinbeck even though the worlds in which they lived were very different. The two writers shared "fundamental human values". Both wrote compassionately about common people and were concerned with accurately portraying the speech of ordinary folk. The politics of both were tied to the landscape – they shared a passion for the land and of small farming communities. It could be argued that the pastoral element to Steinbeck's work was influenced by his knowledge of Burns, and of poems such as *The Cotter's Saturday Night*.

Both Steinbeck and Burns were sentimental, and sometimes their sentimentality has been portrayed negatively by critics. However, this aspect of their respective outputs was genuine, honest and very much representative of the ideology of both. The humble and rustic folk about which Steinbeck affectionately wrote, for example, can be seen in the paisanos of *Tortilla Flat* or the characters in his *Dustbowl Trilogy* of *In Dubious Battle*, *Of Mice And Men* and *The Grapes Of Wrath*. Burns, as recognised and admired by William Wordsworth, wrote with affection for ordinary folk, from specific characters such as Souter Johnnie and Tam o' Shanter to his more general call for universal brotherhood in *A Man's A Man For A' That*. Both Steinbeck and Burns also wrote of the relationship between all living things, represented by the breaking of "Nature's social union" for Burns.

The lives of both are linked further by their more radical politics. Inspired by revolution in America and France, and by figures such as Thomas Muir in Scotland, Burns faced significant risk to his position and livelihood by supporting the cause of liberty, a seditious act at the time. Was Steinbeck influenced by Burns's radical views? Probably not, but it is an interesting exercise to compare the similar reactions the authorities had in response to their respective radical viewpoints and to contrast the responses of Burns and Steinbeck to the censorship they faced. Throughout much of his career, Steinbeck was in conflict with authority and suspected of being a Communist by the FBI. Steinbeck's radicalism cooled somewhat after his great novels of social conscience of the 1930s and, it could be argued, his commitment to the cause of radicalism was not as deep-seated as that of Burns. However, Steinbeck retained a democratic ideology all his life and, like Burns, believed in equality and opposed prejudice.

Many of Steinbeck's contemporaries were familiar with the work of Burns. In addition, artists within his own circle of friends, such as Woody Guthrie, were influenced by the Scots poet and were undoubtedly at least an indirect influence on Steinbeck. Guthrie openly admired Burns. His songs about Dustbowl America and the struggles of ordinary folk inspired others including Bob Dylan. In the 1930s, Steinbeck and Guthrie had the same friends and attended the same parties during this period of Steinbeck's flirtation with Communism. It is likely that Guthrie's enthusiasm for Burns had an effect on the novelist at a time when Steinbeck was writing about democratic ideals and the trials of the common man.

It should also be noted that Steinbeck had a more general awareness of Scotland and its politics. In response to a letter he had received from Jacqueline Kennedy, in which she spoke about her late husband, John F Kennedy, and the subject of lost causes, Steinbeck responded to a particular point she had proposed: "I have been thinking about what you said regarding lost causes. And it is such a strange subject. It seems to me that the only truly lost causes are those which win. Only then do they break up into mean little fragments. You talked of Scotland as a lost cause and that is not true. Scotland is an unwon cause."

Whether Steinbeck's interest in Scotland and the cause of national self-determination came from a knowledge of Burns, or via another source, he was certainly of the opinion that Scotland's **independence** was there to be taken.

John MacKenzie is a researcher at Glasgow University who is studying the links between Burns and Steinbeck. His full thesis can be found at: theses.gla.ac.uk/82549

MacKenzie, John. "How much was Nobel prize-winner John Steinbeck inspired by Robert Burns?" *The National*, 22 Jan. 2022.

<https://www.thenational.scot/news/19868017.much-nobel-prize-winner-john-steinbeck-inspired-robert-burns/>



List of VALUES

Accountability
Achievement
Adaptability
Adventure
Altruism
Ambition
Authenticity
Balance
Beauty
Being the best
Belonging
Career
Caring
Collaboration
Commitment
Community
Compassion
Competence
Confidence
Connection
Contentment
Contribution
Cooperation
Courage
Creativity
Curiosity
Dignity
Diversity
Environment
Efficiency
Equality

Ethics
Excellence
Fairness
Faith
Family
Financial stability
Forgiveness
Freedom
Friendship
Fun
Future generations
Generosity
Giving back
Grace
Gratitude
Growth
Harmony
Health
Home
Honesty
Hope
Humility
Humor
Inclusion
Independence
Initiative
Integrity
Intuition
Job security
Joy
Justice

Kindness
Knowledge
Leadership
Learning
Legacy
Leisure
Love
Loyalty
Making a difference
Nature
Openness
Optimism
Order
Parenting
Patience
Patriotism
Peace
Perseverance
Personal fulfillment
Power
Pride
Recognition
Reliability
Resourcefulness
Respect
Responsibility
Risk-taking
Safety
Security
Self-discipline
Self-expression

Self-respect
Serenity
Service
Simplicity
Spirituality
Sportsmanship
Stewardship
Success
Teamwork
Thrift
Time
Tradition
Travel
Trust
Truth
Understanding
Uniqueness
Usefulness
Vision
Vulnerability
Wealth
Well-being
Wholeheartedness
Wisdom

Write your own:
