1925, without a degree.

**Early Career**

Following Stanford, Steinbeck tried to make a go of it as a freelance writer. He briefly moved to New York City, where he found work as a construction worker and a newspaper reporter, but then scurried back to California, where he took a job as a caretaker in Lake Tahoe. It was during this time that Steinbeck wrote his first novel, Cup of Gold (1929), and met and married his first wife, Carol Henning. Over the following decade, with Carol's support and paycheck, he continued to pour himself into his writing.

Steinbeck's follow-up novels, The Pastures of Heaven (1932) and To a God Unknown (1933), received tepid reviews. It wasn't until Tortilla Flat (1935), a humorous novel about paisano life in the Monterey region, was released that the writer achieved real success. Steinbeck struck a more serious tone with In Dubious Battle (1936), Of Mice and Men (1937) and The Long Valley (1938), a collection of short stories.

Widely considered Steinbeck's finest and most ambitious novel, The Grapes of Wrath was published in 1939. Telling the story of a dispossessed Oklahoma family and their struggle to carve out a new life in California at the height of the Great Depression, the book captured the mood and angst of the nation during this time period. At the height of its popularity, The Grapes of Wrath sold 10,000 copies per week. The work eventually earned Steinbeck a Pulitzer Prize in 1940.

**Later Life**

Following that great success, John Steinbeck served as a war correspondent for the New York Herald Tribune during World War II. Around this same time, he traveled to Mexico to collect marine life with friend Edward F. Ricketts, a marine biologist. Their collaboration resulted in the book Sea of Cortez (1941), which describes marine life in the Gulf of California.

Steinbeck continued to write in his later years, with credits including Cannery Row (1945), Burning Bright (1950), East of Eden (1952), The Winter of Our Discontent (1961) and Travels with Charley: In Search of America (1962). Also in 1962, the author received the Nobel Prize for Literature—"for his realistic and imaginative writings, combining as they do sympathetic humour and keen social perception"

Steinbeck died of heart disease on December 20, 1968, at his home in New York City.