



The Short Novels of John Steinbeck

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Collected here for the first time in a deluxe paperback volume are six of John Steinbeck's most widely read and beloved novels. From the tale of commitment, loneliness and hope in *Of Mice and Men*, to the tough yet charming portrait of people on the margins of society in *Cannery Row*, to *The Pearl's* examination of the fallacy of the American dream, Steinbeck stories of realism, that were imbued with energy and resilience.

The Short Novels of John Steinbeck Details

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From Reader Review The Short Novels of John Steinbeck for online ebook

Susan says

The Moon is Down Review (9/02/12)

Gave 4 stars

Interesting novella that follows the story about a "silent" rebellious coastal townspeople who have recently been conquered by an invading army. While the townspeople do not outwardly or actively rebel or resist, they look on to the invading army with cruel, cold, and un-trusting eyes which kills some of the invading army's soldiers. The dialogue was really creative and the characters were well-crafted.

The Red Pony Review (9/01/12)

Gave 2 stars

To tell you the truth, I just felt like the story was a bit too depressing. To me, *The Red Pony* has an aimless plot with static characters. The read was interesting enough to get me to finish the book, but this isn't one of Steinbeck's best works. If you started out with this book thinking that Steinbeck is a mediocre writer, you really have to read his master pieces - like *The Grapes of Wrath*, *East of Eden*, and/or *Of Mice and Men*! Those are the works that truly exemplify Steinbeck's genius in literature.

Of Mice and Men Review (2/02/11)

Gave 4 stars

I recommend to all Steinbeck reader fans. The ending is extremely sad, but *Of Mice and Men* is a worthwhile read that cannot be ignored.

The friendship between George and Lennie is extremely complex, and they have a genuine companionship that is not parasitic-but rather mutual-istic. Lennie needs George for intellectual and emotional support, but George leans on Lennie for enthusiasm and hope. Once their dreams of someday owning a rabbit farm are shattered, George has to man up in order to save Lennie from a painful torture and death.

Cannery Row Review (8/29/12)

Gave 3 stars

This novel is not plot-driven, but the story focuses more on delineating the town and characters of Cannery Row. *Cannery Row* is a good book for a quick read. As he always does, Steinbeck implies important short lessons about life in his story about the struggling between the rich and the poor.

The Pearl Review (8/30/12)

Gave 4 stars

The novella is widely entertaining with great plot and characters, still, I was just really hoping that the infant, Coyotito, could have gained something. I was anticipating a happy ending. I was not hoping for Kino and Juana to become rich after they found the pearl (that would go against Steinbeck's message), but I was disappointed when Coyotito was killed off like that! Once Kino and Juana found the pearl, I was rooting for them the whole time and sharing that same enthusiasm with Kino-hoping that Coyotito would get an education. My wishes for a different ending is probably silly though. Killing off Coyotito, unfortunately, is

probably the only way for Kino to understand how corruptible the pearl became. Unlike Juana, Kino did not recognize the pearl's evil until very late (actually, too late) in the novel.

Either way, the techniques used to craft the novella were really clever. I liked Steinbeck's use of different characters and the balance between Kino's idealistic dreams and Juana's practicality. The story was focused primarily on the plot and characters, so it was not a dull read (not too much description on setting involved this time). The read is not too difficult or long, so I recommend to everyone! I read this in one sitting.

Stacy says

Excellent stuff

Suellen says

What can I say. Steinbeck is "THE MAN"! ??

Jen from Quebec :0) says

What can I say? It's Steinbeck, and he is amazing.

Amanda says

My favorite novels were The Red Pony and The Moon Is Down. These didn't blow me away like East of Eden. I listened to all on audiobook, which was quite enjoyable. Perhaps I'll get more out of these stories when I reread them.

Lesle says

Of Mice and Men is a quick and easy read. Steinbeck writes with beautiful and physical descriptions that for me, painted a detailed picture of every setting along the journey.

George and Lennie are a mismatched pair of migrant farm workers. George is small and has a knowledge from life not schooling. Lennie is mountainous (for lack of a better word) and childlike in mind. Lennie is so strong, he is unaware of this strength, when he connects with anyone from mice to men, he may unknowingly do them fatal harm, until it is too late.

To try and help Lennie stay in line George retells a dream of having their own land, working the little farm and raising animals. Lennie, in this dream farm, takes care of the rabbits, but from experience I know Lennie would only kill them in the end. Lennie does not want to make George mad so, George retells the story to Lennie of the farm and the rabbits as a way of getting good behavior out of Lennie.

Lennie as George's partner, makes employment hard to keep. Not allowing stakes to be set for any length of time. George continues to care for, travel with, and does his best to protect Lennie.

The love and kindness George shows for Lennie even happens in the end. Lennie would not understand the 'why' of what was happening to him. George does what he thinks is the most honorable thing to do for Lennie and again protect him.

Absolutely one of the saddest stories I have read. Without a doubt will pull at your heart...tragic

The second read from this book was The Red Pony.

"The Red Pony" left me feeling as if the story was incomplete. All of the 4 stories have no happy ending. Jody does not learn anything but heartache and pain from his experiences. Steinbeck shows that responsibility, not always, has lessons of value and in the end Jody is angry with his Dad and spiteful.

My third read is Cannery Row.

About a small fishing town in California, where not a lot takes place but what does is striking. The story has some unique individuals who are all poor but are great pals. Chong the grocery store owner who does the same thing everyday, Henri the painter, Doc the marine biologist/doctor and a group of guys known as Mack and the boys (bums). There are many others you meet along the way where not one is the same as the other.

The tale follows Doc and Mack and the boys on their adventures (troubles) of everyday life. They rent (rent they do not pay) from Lee Chong a fish meal house. Doc is so admired by Mack and the boys they decide to throw him a party, without him and it turns out horrible. Nothing goes the way they want it to 'stuff happens' and Doc finds love.

No real plot to speak of but there is plenty of kindness between them. I found the read to be full of charm and many different comical personalities among all of the individuals. In the beginning the descriptions are very detailed of the characters and the prescription of 'Beer Milkshakes' makes this a must read and fun book.

I am beginning to be very enchanted with John Steinbeck's way with words and the way he weaves a story of life for his characters, who tend to have layers of realism about them.

Vanessa Jones says

I can see why John Steinbeck is a celebrated author. He catches human emotion and pain, in a raw, honest light.

Anny says

A splendid collection of stories, however I especially enjoyed the Red Pony.

Vince says

A great collection that includes many of the best stories that Steinbeck ever wrote. Unforgettable characters, prose of infinite beauty, and some of the best storytelling of the 20th century. His love for the least among us is heartfelt and genuine. You can feel it in every phrase and can't help but be inspired. A literary legacy that transcends time. I have so much more appreciation of his work reading it again later in life and what he has to say fits so perfectly well in today's world.

Jeff says

I liked "Of Mice and Men" and "Cannery Row". I've read both of them before. I don't think I've read the other ones before. I also liked "The Red Pony". I think "Tortilla Flat" and "Cannery Row" focus too much on drinking, but I guess that's kind of the nature of how many of Steinbeck's characters. I thought "The Pearl" started off good but ended up being very dark. There is a certain depressing style to the way Steinbeck writes. Of course my all time favorite is "Grapes of Wrath". I love the book and the movie.

Katie says

Tortilla Flat 2.5/5 stars

Synopsis:

Tortilla Flat was written by John Steinbeck and published in 1935. This short novel is about a group of Paisanos (Native Californians who are a mixture of Spanish, Mexican and Native American) in the area around Monterey, California in the years following World War 1. The story centers on a man named Danny, his group of friends and his house that they all live in. This novel takes inspiration from the legends of King Arthur and his knights of the round table, but with a group of rascal men. These men spend their days jobless, drinking wine and having adventures. Yet, these men have good intentions at heart and have a strong sense of brotherhood.

Storyline:

There wasn't really a plot to this novel, it was more a bunch of anecdotes about this group of friends. The story was amusing at times, but also held a little bit of darkness under the surface as well. The inspiration from the legends of King Arthur was clever and I appreciated that. I just didn't really love this story. At first I didn't get the point at all. I just saw a bunch of purposeless guys who drank way too much wine. After awhile I appreciated the story more, but it still just didn't appeal to me. Once I saw this crazy group's good intentions and friendship I felt for them more. It was also an interesting portrait of a group of outsiders in this period of American history when jobs and money were hard to come by. Yet, this still was not one of Steinbeck's greatest pieces of fiction in my opinion.

Setting:

This novel is set in a place called Tortilla Flat in Monterey, California. I liked this setting and liked the way Steinbeck described this place. I've always admired Steinbeck's descriptions of place. He doesn't always spend tons of time on it, but what he does share is always done well. I was born in California and have lived here all my life, so I always enjoy Steinbeck's novels set in California.

Characters:

I liked and disliked the characters all at the same time. On one hand they were a lovable band of outsiders and I could see their good intentions and friendship. On another hand I didn't like their drunkenness and their views towards women. All the portrayals of women were not really that great and there were quite a few racial slurs as well to be honest. Yes, a product of it's time, but kind of hard to not be bothered by in this book. I liked how the characters were based on the myths and legends of King Arthur though. Danny was obviously meant to be King Arthur and he was always at the center of everyone's deeds, yet remained

elusive. Just like King Arthur does in *Le Morte D'Arthur* by Sir Thomas Mallory. My favorite character was The Pirate. He was so lovable and sweet. He had a pack of dogs that he loved and they seemed to be his entire world. He also had a very pure idea of friendship as well. He was the only character who truly tugged on my heartstrings.

Did I Like it?:

This was the fifth book of John Steinbeck's that I have read and to be honest it was my least favorite. While I came away with more of an appreciation than I had at the beginning, this just wasn't my kind of book. I will be continuing with my Steinbeck journey though and I hope some of his other books will be more my cup of tea.

Do I Recommend This?:

If you have not read any Steinbeck I highly urge you to pick up *East of Eden* as a starting point. *Of Mice and Men* or *The Grapes of Wrath* would be good starting places as well. If you are already a John Steinbeck fan and this appeals to you, go ahead and pick it up. Perhaps it may be someone else's cup of tea. I just don't recommend it as a starting point.

The Red Pony 4/5 stars

Synopsis:

The Red Pony was written by John Steinbeck and published in 1937. This novella is about a boy named Jody growing up on a ranch in California. His experience with a red pony awakens him to the facts of life.

Storyline:

Going into *The Red Pony* I didn't really know what to expect. I knew it would be about a boy and his beloved pet and that it probably was going to have a sad twist. What I didn't expect was how much depth there was to this novella. I felt this was similar to the structure of *Of Mice and Men* in the way that every event and moment seems deliberate and important. Nothing extraneous. In this novella Jody begins to grow up. Through his experiences at the ranch he realizes death, birth, sex, and old age are all part of life. He gets this magnificent view of the cycles of life, which was a theme that I loved. It's mostly through the horses that Jody witnesses these things, which was quite interesting.

Setting:

The Red Pony is set on a ranch near Salinas, California probably sometime in the early 20th century. Being a native Californian I like all Steinbeck's California settings. Steinbeck's descriptions of his settings and of nature are always so on point even if he doesn't always spend a lot of time dwelling on them.

Characters:

Now I know a lot of the significant meaning in this book centers around the horses. The characters are interesting too though. There are only a few and they seem significant. Through our characters we have innocence and youth juxtaposed with old age and harshness. Jody, our main character, is just ten years old and we witness his coming of age as he witnesses the cycles of life. As he becomes a man he has various male figures to take example from. In fact, as an exploration of different types of males this book was quite interesting. In Jody we have a sweet innocent boy. In his father we have the classic example of the tough, hardened male. At times he is even a bit cruel. In Billy Buck the hired man, we see a man toughened by working on ranches all his life, but he tries to do his best for Jody to make up for his father's harshness. Through Jody's grandfather we see a man who is stuck in the past, his glory days of settling the west are over. Jody gets to look at these men as examples for how he's going to be when he reaches full maturity. Some of these types of masculinity are sadly lacking and we see how Jody will have to navigate that in his

adult life. Something else we are shown through the characters are various outsiders and how society treats them. The grandfather is one of them and this old Paisano man is another. Now that their glory days are over and their families are gone there is nothing really left for them to do and Jody's father rejects them. I feel like one thing Steinbeck always explores really well are the people who are outsiders and rejected by other parts of society.

Did I Like It?:

I really liked this novella! It was pretty brutal at times, but I found a lot of depth in this story. While this may not be my favorite Steinbeck, (my favorite will probably always be *East of Eden*) I recognized the Steinbeck that I love in this book.

Do I Recommend This?:

Yes! Beware if are an animal lover though. You will be able to understand certain feelings, but then you may also get your heart broken. I am a huge animal lover and I was able to handle it, although it was definitely intense at times. If you are new to Steinbeck I recommend *East of Eden*, *The Grapes of Wrath* or *Of Mice and Men* as starting places. If you have already ventured into the world of Steinbeck, I think you should check out this powerful little novella.

The Moon is Down 4/5 stars

Synopsis:

The Moon is Down was written by John Steinbeck and published in 1942. This book is about a small town during World War II that gets conquered and occupied by it's enemy.

This piece of propaganda shows how unprepared people are for war and how you cannot suppress free people.

Storyline:

I'm not usually one for war fiction, so I was surprised at how much I actually liked this story. It's simple and not filled with action packed scenes, but it packs a punch. In this simple story we are not shown the grandiose parts of war and it's larger purpose, we are shown the little details. Details that give us clues to the whole of what is going on though. We see how unprepared soldiers are for war. We are shown that no matter whose side people are on, the devastation of war is never easy. For those that are not hardhearted, they really don't want to do what must be done in terms of killing and whatnot. We see the hopelessness of some government leaders, but the power of people who band together. I think Steinbeck's biggest purpose in writing this book was to give strength to suppressed people. To tell them that people who were once free and are now suppressed can be more powerful than people who are just under orders from a leader.

Setting:

The Moon is Down is obviously set during World War II, but we are not told where exactly. There are many hints that the occupied town is in Scandinavia and that the soldiers who are occupying the town are from Germany. I did like though that Steinbeck didn't tell us exactly where this was set because it made it more about the ideas, than it was about taking sides. His descriptions of the snowy setting were lovely and atmospheric. I've always loved the way Steinbeck describes his settings.

Characters:

This wasn't a book about in depth character study, but I did like how the characters were used to show us certain ideas and concepts. The soldiers who occupy this town we see as unfit and unprepared for war. There was one chapter in the book where some of the soldiers are described and you see that they really don't understand what war is about and they want to go home as badly as the people in the town want to be free.

You see the soldiers miss their homes, their families and women. I like how even though the main message is for free people to fight against suppression, this book doesn't really take sides very easily. It shows human beings who happen to be enemies, fighting in a war that is more destructive than they originally imagined and who don't really like this place in history they find themselves in.

Did I Like It?:

Yes! I really liked it. I found this short book to be quite powerful in its message. While I don't think it's the best of Steinbeck's work, I am very glad I read this one.

Do I Recommend This?:

Yes! Now as usual, if you are new to Steinbeck I recommend *East of Eden* as a place to start. *Grapes of Wrath* and *Of Mice and Men* are also good places to start. If you have already ventured into Steinbeck and this one sounds interesting to you, then I definitely recommend it! If you have particular interest in World War II fiction, then of course this is something you should check out as well.

Cannery Row 5/5 stars

* I reviewed this for Taylor Magazine Check it out here:

<http://www.taylormagazine.com/review-...>

The Pearl 4/5 stars

Synopsis:

The Pearl was written by John Steinbeck and published in 1947. This novella is about a native man named Kino and his family living in the Gulf of California. They live in a community of brush houses and Kino is a pearl diver. After their baby is stung by a scorpion, Kino finds an extremely large pearl that he thinks will solve all of their problems.

Storyline:

This novella is told in a parable type format, which Steinbeck even explains to us in the beginning. As a parable, this story was profound and important. It was mostly a parable about greed and what money does to people. This is a theme I have seen woven a little bit into Steinbeck's other fiction, but he fills this entire novella with that concept. I found his storytelling to be concise. In this short novella he gives us the story he needs to in order to get his point across.

Setting:

The Pearl is set in the Gulf of California specifically in La Paz. As usual, Steinbeck did a wonderful job with the setting and descriptions of the surrounding nature.

Characters:

This novella was really about the messages it contained. The characters in here are means to that end, but not Steinbeck's most fleshed out lovable characters. Steinbeck says in the beginning that because this is a parable, things are very black and white. It's more the concepts that remain. Through Kino, Juana and their protection of their baby Coyotito, we see the importance of family. We see what lengths people will go to in order to protect their 'perfect' family life. We also see the effects wealth has both on the people who have obtained the wealth and the people around them. Again Steinbeck explores with his characters those that are outsiders or marginalized in society. This is a character exploration that I have seen in every book of his that I have read so far.

Did I Like It?:

Yes I did. This was actually my second time reading *The Pearl*. I first read it as required reading when I was 13. I didn't understand or appreciate it much at the time, but I'm happy to say that I did appreciate it this time around. It's a short little book that doesn't contain too much, but it has an important message that it really drives home.

Do I Recommend It?:

Not as a starting place for Steinbeck. I usually recommend *East of Eden*, *The Grapes of Wrath* or *Of Mice and Men* as starting places. If you already have delved into Steinbeck though, I do recommend checking this out if it appeals to you.

Kerry says

I've decided to start a tradition of reading several novels from my favorite author, John Steinbeck, every summer. This summer I chose a collection of Steinbeck's short novels, and although I had read all but "*Cannery Row*" and "*The Moon Is Down*" before, I hadn't read "*The Pearl*" or "*The Red Pony*" in about 15 years. I've really enjoyed returning to these classics after so many years, and I found like that I liked "*The Pearl*" a lot more than I remembered it and I liked "*The Red Pony*" a lot less. "*The Moon Is Down*" was more like Ibsen than Steinbeck, and I found it refreshing. At first glance, "*Cannery Row*" seemed like a latter-day version of "*Tortilla Flat*," but it idealized poverty less and provided a more balanced perspective of the Monterey, CA classes. I am about to start re-reading "*Of Mice And Men*," which I remember loving when I read it in college. I'll re-read "*Tortilla Flat*" if I have time before my library due date arrives, but I just read it two summers ago, so I feel like I've given it a fair recent re-read.

ROBERT LARRY FAIRCLOTH says

to refresh my knowledge of the human being..the choice of good or bad.. the results of these choices..and the struggle of doing good and avoiding the bad...and learning..

Theresa Powers says

I read *The Red Pony* today. It is such a sad, coming of age story. Life lessons come up constantly in this book. I particularly enjoy the setting of the book on a ranch in California. It paints a clear picture of farm life. I gain an appreciation for the harshness of the land and hard work. The boy, Jody, learns how to be a man in this rudimentary environment. Although his father models a man with little emotion, the boy goes through a myriad of emotions. I found myself crying at certain points because of the intensity in which Steinbeck wrote his books.

Andrew says

ok, so I haven't read all of the stories yet. Still, I wanted to post my review on the copy that I own.

The first story I read in this collection was the *Red Pony*. It is easily a four star read. Too start with, some of

the imagery in the book is stunning. Steinbeck is an approachable writer but he can craft a powerful image. A birthing scene in the barn stands out in my mind. The character, a farm-hand, in a violent but powerful scene is able to come through. And Steinbeck does a great job of setting the importance of the scene to all the characters involved.

I really enjoy the era that Steinbeck rights in. It is foreign to my own childhood but reminds me a lot of the stories my father told me of his childhood. It was a less complex but certainly more demanding time. And Steinbeck, for me, does a great job of capturing (what I presume is) the feeling of that era. I also enjoy the characters that he creates. The main character, a child, is a moving character. He can be sweet natured without being too cloying. The book is full of well developed characters like this. Although a quick read he does a good job of capturing the essence of a character in only few passages.

Steinbeck also does a great job, I think, of capturing the duality of human nature. A good example of this is the father of the main character. He can be tough and awkward but also capable of love and generosity in his own confused way. And characters like this are interesting to me. As no person is every any one thing or of any one mindset. People are complicated. But what I most appreciate, as said above, is Steinbeck's efficient ability to paint these characters.
