fruit pickers, and laborers on farms and ranches. These were the people he mingled with when he had worked summer jobs during his high school days, or when he had worked on ranches, farms, etc. to find ways to pay for his college education.

Steinbeck was also a scholar of Anglo-Saxon literature, including Beowulf. The Anglo-Saxon “comitatus” clearly influenced some of his writing. The essential belief of the comitatus is that everyone protects the king at all costs, even if it means a warrior has to give up his own life. If a king is killed, his warriors must avenge his death, or they can no longer serve as warriors for the next king. Steinbeck was also fascinated with Arthurian legends, especially Sir Thomas Malory’s Le Morte d’Arthur. Steinbeck’s interest in the comitatus and the Arthurian legends would become apparent later in works including Of Mice and Men.

George, the novel’s protagonist, is “a type of knight errant,” a poor man’s Galahad, who journeys abroad with his vassal, Lennie, a simple-minded giant. The two share a common dream of a little spread or garden - a Camelot. The loyalty these two share is a cross between the comitatus in Beowulf and the chivalric fealty seen in the tales of King Arthur and his knights.

In 1925, Steinbeck went to New York, trying to establish himself as a freelance writer. He was fired from one newspaper because his writing was “too