

CHAPTER 22 / Describing Montana

In 1960, the American author John Steinbeck took a road trip throughout the United States, visiting almost 40 states in about four months. His traveling companion was his dog, Charley. He then wrote a book about his trip called *Travels with Charley*. John Steinbeck was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1962. Read the excerpt below in which he describes his reaction to visiting Montana. Then, on a separate sheet of paper, write your own description of, or feelings about, Montana.

"I am in love with Montana. For other states I have admiration, respect, recognition, even some affection, but with Montana it is love and it's difficult to analyze love when you're in it. . . . It seems to me that Montana is a great splash of grandeur. The scale is huge, but not overpowering. The land is rich with grass and color and the mountains are the kind I would create if mountains were put on my agenda. Montana seems to me what a small boy would think Texas is like from hearing Texans. Here for the first time I heard a definite regional accent unaffected by TV-ese, a slow-paced warm speech. It seemed to me that the frantic bustle of America was not in Montana. Its people did not seem afraid of shadows. . . . The calm of the mountains and the rolling grasslands had got into the inhabitants. It was hunting season when I drove through the state. The men I talked to seemed to me not moved by a riot of seasonal slaughter but simply to be going out to kill edible meat. . . . It seemed to me that the towns were places to live rather than nervous hives. People had time to pause in their occupations to undertake the passing art of neighborliness.

I found I did not rush through the towns to get them over with. I even found things I had to buy to make myself linger. . . . Montana has a spell on me. It is grandeur and warmth."