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| GCSE English Literature‘Of Mice and Men’ |



**AO1 -** Respond to texts critically and imaginatively; select and evaluate relevant textual detail to illustrate and support interpretations.

**AO2 -** Explain how language, structure and form contribute to writers’ presentation of ideas, themes and settings.

**Of Mice and Men -** The title of the book comes from a poem by the 18th century Scottish poet Robert Burns. It is about a mouse which carefully builds a winter nest in a wheat field, only for it to be destroyed by a ploughman. It is written in Scots dialect.

**‘The best laid schemes o' mice an' men Gang aft a-gley, An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain, For promised joy!’**

(The best laid schemes of mice and men. Often go wrong and leave us nothing but grief and pain, Instead of promised joy!)

The mouse had dreamed of a safe, warm winter and is now faced with the harsh reality of cold, loneliness and possible death. There is a parallel here with George and Lennie's joyful fantasy of a farm of their own, and its all-too-predictable destruction at the end of the story. Perhaps it is also meant to suggest to us how unpredictable our lives are, and how vulnerable to tragedy.

**To understand the *context* of John Steinbeck's book, you need to know a bit about Steinbeck himself, and a little about economic conditions in 1930's America.**

**John Steinbeck**



AO4 – CONTEXT – is not an assessment objective for this unit, however, if you know it, it would be helpful as it ties into AO1 – your understanding of the novel and show you communicate your answer across!!

* This is just taken from BBC bitesize!

John Steinbeck

John Steinbeck was born in Salinas, California in 1902. Although his family was wealthy, he was interested in the lives of the farm labourers and spent time working with them. He used his experiences as material for his writing.

He wrote a number of novels about poor people who worked on the land and dreamed of a better life, including *The Grapes of Wrath*, which is the heart-rending story of a family's struggle to escape the dust bowl of the West to reach California. Steinbeck was awarded the *Nobel Prize* for Literature in 1962, six years before his death in 1968.

**The Depression**

On October 29 1929, millions of dollars were wiped out in an event that became known as the Wall Street Crash. It led to the Depression in America which crippled the country from 1930 - 1936. People lost their life savings when firms and banks went bust, and 12 - 15 million men and women - one third of America's population - were unemployed.

There was then no dole to fall back on, so food was short and the unemployed in cities couldn't pay their rent. Some ended up in settlements called 'Hoovervilles' (after the US president of the time, Herbert C Hoover), in shanties made from old packing cases and corrugated iron.

A song about an unemployed man meeting an old friend he has fought alongside in the First World War and asking him for a dime (the price of a cup of coffee) summed up the national mood.

**Brother, can you spare a dime?**

Once in khaki suits,Gee we looked swell,Full of Yankee Doodle-de-dum.Half a millin boots went sloggin' through Hell,I was the kid with the drum.Say, don't you remember, they called me Al,It was Al all the time.Why don't you remember I'm your pal,Brother, can you spare a dime?

**Migrant farmers**

Added to the man-made financial problems were natural ones. A series of droughts in southern mid-western states like Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas led to failed harvests and dried-up land. Farmers were forced to move off their land: they couldn't repay the bank-loans which had helped buy the farms and had to sell what they owned to pay their debts.

Many economic migrants headed west to 'Golden' California, thinking there would be land going spare, but the Californians turned many back, fearing they would be over-run. The refuges had nowhere to go back to, so they set up home in huge camps in the California valleys - living in shacks of cardboard and old metal - and sought work as casual farmhands.

**Ranch hands**

Against this background, ranch hands like George and Lennie were lucky to have work. Ranch hands were grateful for at least a bunk-house to live in and to have food provided, even though the pay was low.

 - Farmworkers' buckhouses

Think about how the men agree to hush-up the fight between Curley and Lennie and claim that Curley got his hand caught in a machine: they know that Lennie and George would be fired if the boss came to hear of it, and then Lennie and George could be left with nothing

**Chapter 1**

George and Lennie camp in the brush by a pool, the night before starting new jobs as ranch hands. George finds Lennie stroking a dead mouse in his pocket. He complains that caring for Lennie prevents him from living a freer life. We find out that Lennie's innocent petting of a girl's dress led to them losing their last jobs in Weed. However, when they talk about their dream of getting a piece of land together, we know they really depend on each other.

**Analysis:**

* This first chapter gives the reader an understanding of the close relationship between the two main characters, George and Lennie. They are not relatives and how they became friends has yet to be explained. However, the men are closer than most brothers are. In many ways, they are like father and son. George takes care of Lennie, scolding him when he makes a mistake. Lennie obeys George and idolizes him the way a boy might idolize his father. This is demonstrated by the way Lennie tries to sit and wear his hat like George.
* George is the main protagonist[ hero] in the novel. He dreams of one day having his own ranch, but he cannot move forward with his plans because he takes care of Lennie. In fact, he cannot even live the normal life of a simple ranch-hand because Lennie is always getting them into trouble, forcing them to leave jobs. George resents the effort and care that simple-minded Lennie requires. In frustration, George often speaks to Lennie as an angry parent would speak to a misbehaving child. They share a bond that is seems characteristic of family members, and George often forgets to be careful of Lennie's feelings. He lashes out in exactly the same way a stressed parent would scream at a disobeying child. He also fantasises about how carefree and simple his life would be without Lennie, yet also like a parent, he would never really want to be free of Lennie. He clearly prefers the comfort and companionship their relationship provides. However, despite the parent-child relationship, George is not truly Lennie's father, and therefore must live with conflicting emotions. His feelings about Lennie constantly change from frustration to anger, and then to remorse, sadness and hope as he tries to figure out what their future holds.
* Lennie, the unsophisticated giant, plays the role of "son" by acting childishly. He cannot control his impulses to touch soft things and is incapable of understanding the consequences of his actions. For example, he continues to accidentally kill mice because he cannot resist the urge to pet them too firmly. He also has made George run from their job in Weed because he scared a girl by touching her soft dress.
* Lennie often tests George the way a child tests a parent. When George yells at Lennie, Lennie threatens to run away. He is not capable of caring for himself, yet he imagines living in a cave. These are the escape fantasies of a child. As the child, he has little to offer his father figure other than his devotion. Knowing that George loves him and would miss him, Lennie threatens to leave when they argue. This is Lennie's only way of asserting any type power in the relationship.
* Despite their vast differences, Lennie and George want the same things: the security of a plot of land and their own home. They dream about operating the farm together as a family. However, George wants the farm so he can finally have independence and the American dream. Lennie just wants to have unlimited access to petting rabbits.
* The novel's title provides immediate and ominous foreshadowing. Of Mice and Men is taken from a line of poetry from Robert Burns, who wrote, "The best laid schemes of mice and men often go awry." Therefore, before the story even gets fully underway, it is clear that George and Lennie's plans of having their own place in the world will go unfulfilled. The title also hints that George's plans of protecting Lennie are doomed to go awry.[wrong]
* Several events of first chapter foreshadow doom. George seems very worried that Lennie will not be able to remain quiet when they reach the ranch. He makes him repeat his vow of silence several times, which hints that Lennie will not remember and will likely get them into trouble by talking. George also instructs Lennie to hide in the brush if he needs to escape. It is clear Lennie has gotten them into predicaments before and may repeat his endangering behavior. Lennie is incapable of remembering simple instructions and he seems obsessed with touching soft things. All of his weaknesses foreshadow the trouble to come.

**Chapter 2**

When they arrive at the ranch in the morning, George and Lennie are shown around by old Candy. They meet their boss and, later, his son, Curley - George is suspicious of Curley's manner and warns Lennie to stay away from him. They see Curley's pretty and apparently flirtatious wife and meet some of their fellow workers, Slim and Carlson.

**Analysis:**

* Steinbeck starts Chapter 2 the same way he begins the first chapter. The first few paragraphs provide a detailed description of the setting. Each chapter has only one setting, with characters entering and exiting the action. In this way, the novel reads like a stage play. Several important characters are introduced in this chapter, including Candy, Curley, Slim and Curley's wife.
* Candy serves as a guide for George and Lennie. By explaining the various personalities they will encounter, he gives them some vital information they will need in order to survive on the ranch. Candy is old and weak, just like his beloved dog. Carlson wants Candy to kill his dog because it stinks. Carlson implies that the dog and its owner have outlived their usefulness. Both Candy and the dog are no longer capable of working and are forced to be mere observers on the ranch.
* Curley is the villain of the novel. He hates Lennie just because of his size. He is a small, cruel man who is threatened by men who are physically larger. His insecurity is also portrayed as he wears a glove as a method of bragging about his sexual activity with his wife. He rightfully suspects her interest in other men, which only furthers his inferiority complex. In this chapter, Curley's antagonism for Lennie, along with George's resulting hatred for him, foreshadows the inevitable confrontation between the men.
* The introduction of Curley's wife only further foreshadows the trouble to come. Lennie is immediately attracted to her. It has already been established that he has problems controlling his impulses. In Weed, he grabbed a woman, not letting let go, because he liked her dress. Now he is interested in Curley's wife because he thinks she is pretty.
* Throughout Chapter 2, George plays solitaire. It is important to note that he plays a game designed for just one person, even though he is never alone in the bunkhouse. Lennie would not be able to play cards because he lacks the mental capacity. However, George also plays alone while talking to Slim, who seems interested in George's game. The solitaire game symbolizes George's lot in life. He is usually in the company of another person, usually Lennie, yet he is entirely alone. The game also symbolises George's desire to be on his own and free of the responsibility of caring for Lennie. The game of solitaire foreshadows George's fate, when he will eventually have to choose to live without Lennie's companionship.
* George's conflicting feelings about his relationship with Lennie are further demonstrated when he lies to the boss about him and Lennie being cousins. Other men cannot accept a close relationship between men who are not related. George is often also confused by his attachment to Lennie. However, he feels compelled to care for Lennie, and he enjoys his companionship, even when Lennie does not seem useful. In this respect, George is determined to care for Lennie in the same way Candy will not part with his dog.

**Chapter 3**

Later that evening, George tells Slim about why he and Lennie travel together and more about what happened in Weed. The men talk about Candy's ancient dog, which is tired and ill. Carlson shoots it, as an act of kindness. George tells Candy about their dream of getting a piece of land and Candy eagerly offers to join them - he has capital, so they could make it happen almost immediately. Curley provokes Lennie into a fight, which ends up with Lennie severely injuring Curley's hand.

**Analysis:**

* At dusk, Slim and George return to the bunkhouse. They are talking about the puppy Slim has given Lennie. Slim comments that Lennie is not bright, but he is a very good worker, affirming George's earlier statement. He says he has never seen anyone so strong. **Slim also comments on the unusual relationship between George and Lennie. George becomes defensive, but Slim does not mean any harm. He tells George that very few men travel together, and he calls Lennie cuckoo**. George defends Lennie and says he may not be smart, but he is not crazy. George explains how he and Lennie have known each other since they were children. When Lennie's Aunt Clara died, Lennie began traveling with George. George tells Slim that he used to play jokes on Lennie. It was easy because Lennie was too dumb to defend himself. Lennie was so strong that he could have crushed George, but instead Lennie never got mad.
* One day, George tried to impress a bunch of men by telling Lennie to jump in a river. **Lennie jumped in, but he could not swim and nearly drowned**. George and the men pulled him out. Lennie, forgetting George was the one who told him to jump in, thanked George for saving his life. George never tricked Lennie again. Slim agrees that Lennie is a nice man and says that one does not have to be smart to be a good person. George says he does not have family. He has seen the guys who travel to ranches alone; they eventually become mean and aggressive. George says Lennie is a nuisance most of the time, but he is used to the companionship. George confides in Slim and tells him what Lennie did in Weed. George explains that Lennie saw a girl in a red dress. He wanted to touch the dress, so he grabbed it. The girl became scared and screamed. When her screams confused Lennie, he reacted by holding on even tighter. George had to hit him over the head with a fence picket to make him release her. The girl told the authorities Lennie raped her. **The men in Weed sent out a group to lynch Lennie**. He and George hid in an irrigation ditch under water all day. When it got dark, they ran out of town.
* Lennie comes into the bunkhouse, hiding the puppy. He lies to George, telling him he does not have the puppy, but George makes him take the puppy back to the barn. He tells Lennie that the puppy needs to be with his mother. Lennie agrees to return the puppy as he leaves**. Slim says that Lennie is just like a kid, and George agrees.**
* Candy comes in with his old dog. A few moments later, Carson enters the room. He has been playing horseshoes with Crooks, the black ranch hand. Carlson smells Candy's dog and starts to complain about the odor. Candy apologizes, saying that he does not notice the smell. **Carlson tries to convince Candy to shoot the dog, saying that he is too old to be of any use and that the animal is suffering.** Candy does not want to kill his dog. He says he has had the dog since he was a pup. Carlson persists. When Candy says he cannot shoot his dog, Carlson offers to do it for him. **Slim tells Candy that he can have one of his new pups. He also tells Candy that Carlson is right. He hopes that if he becomes old and crippled, someone will shoot him.** The men change the topic and begin a new conversation, but Carlson will not stop talking about the stinking dog. Finally, Candy agrees that Carlson can shoot the animal. Carlson takes the old dog outside. Slim reminds him to take a shovel. Candy lies on his back, staring at the ceiling, not talking to the other men. Slim tells Candy that he can have any of the new puppies that he likes, but Candy does not answer. They hear a shot from outside. Everyone looks a Candy. He rolls over, facing the wall, and remains silent.
* Crooks pokes his head in the door and tells Slim that he has warmed up some tar for the mule's foot. He also tells Slim that Lennie is playing with the puppies. Slim says that it is all right. George tells Slim to make Lennie leave the barn if he is creating a problem, and Slim leaves.**Another ranch hand, Whit, and George play cards a**s they discuss Curley's wife. George says, "She's gonna make a mess. They's gonna be a bad mess about her. She's a jail bait all set on the trigger."
* **Whit invites George to go to a whorehouse the next night**. There are two whorehouses in town. Whit says he prefers old Susy's place to Clara's because Susy cracks jokes and lets the men hang around and drink. George says he will go look at the place, but he cannot afford to pay for sex, because he and Lennie are saving money. Lennie and Carlson enter together. Curley bursts into the room and asks the men if they have seen his wife. They say they have not seen her. Curley then asks where Slim is. George tells him that Slim is in the barn, and Curley runs out. Whit says he wants to see Curley and Slim fight because Curley used to be a good boxer.
* **Curley thinks Slim is having an affair with his wife.** George says he and Lennie do not want any trouble so they will stay in the bunkhouse. Whit and Carlson leave, hoping to see a fight in the barn. Lennie admits to George that Slim told him to not pet the puppies so much because they are too young. George reminds Lennie to stay out of fights, and Lennie agrees, saying he does not want trouble. **George mentions Curley's wife and says he prefers prostitutes to other women because he knows upfront how much it is going to cost him**. Lennie changes the subject again to the piece of property they want to have someday. George tells Lennie that he knows of a place they can buy when they have the money. He describes the place and assures Lennie that they can build hutches for rabbits.
* **George continues to add details to the fantasy.** He talks about the food they will grow and prepare. He also tells Lennie that they will only have to work for six or seven hours each day. Lennie, however, keeps interrupting, asking about the rabbits. George says they will have a few cats, but Lennie says if the cats hurt the rabbits, he will break their necks. Candy, who has been listening to the conversation, surprises them by asking if George really knows of a place to buy. George is guarded, but Candy asks more questions. George says he can purchase a place for six hundred in an accident on the ranch. He thinks he can get another hundred dollars as well. He dollars. **Candy says he received two hundred and fifty dollars when he lost his hand says if they let him put in his money and live with them, he will cook and tend the chickens.** George thinks it over. He concludes that they could get enough money in another month.
* The men fall silent in amazement. George **realizes his dream may be possible after all.** Candy says that he will be fired soon because he can no longer work hard. He says he will have no place to go and will not be able to get another job. If that happens, he hopes he is shot like his dog. George decides they will be able to buy the land if they combine their money. He is excited to think they will be able to go to a ball game or circus without asking permission. He says he will write to the people who own the land and tell them they will buy it. The men are excited, but George instructs Lennie and Candy not to tell anyone about their plan**. Candy says he wishes he had shot the dog himself. He regrets letting a stranger kill his dog.**
* Curley and Slim come in, followed by Whit and Carlson. Curley is apologizing, saying he did not mean to question Slim about his wife. Slim says he is getting sick of Curley questioning him. Carlson says Curley should forbid his wife from coming around the bunkhouse. The men gang up on Curley. Even Candy teases him about the glove full of Vaseline. Suddenly, Curley sees Lennie, who is still smiling over the plan to buy the property. **Curley's accusations of Lennie laughing at him confuse Lennie. Curley punches him several times, and Lennie begs him to stop. George yells to Lennie to defend himself. Lennie continues to take a beating until George again** tells him to fight back. **Lennie grabs Curley's hand and crushes it. He** refuses to let go until George slaps him. Lennie has broken every bone in Curley's hand. Slim tells Curley to say that he was injured in a machinery accident or they will tell everyone what really happened, and Curley agrees. George comforts Lennie, telling him that the fight was not his fault. Lennie asks if he can still tend the rabbits and George says yes he can.

**Chapter 4**

The following night, most men on the ranch go into town. Crooks is alone in his room when Lennie joins him. They talk about land - Crooks is sceptical, not believing that George and Lennie are going to do what so many other men he's known have failed to do, and get land of their own. Yet when Candy happens to come in as well, Crooks is convinced and asks to be in on it too. Curley's wife arrives. She threatens Crooks and an argument develops. Crooks realises he can never really be part of George, Lennie and Candy's plan.

**Analysis:**

* In this chapter, **the complex relationship between George and Lennie is explained further. George tells Slim about the cruel tricks he played on Lennie in the past. One of those tricks almost led to Lennie drowning and George has never recovered from the guilt of almost killing his friend.** However, guilt is not the only thing that makes George protect Lennie. George needs Lennie's friendship to save him from the loneliness that he sees affecting so many other migrant workers. Their relationship also allows George to feel different from other workers. Unlike the others, Lennie allows George to believe he is working toward a happy future. Lennie makes George feel like a hero with a grand plan. Instead of feeling depressed by his lot in life, George can talk to Lennie about his fantasy farm.
* Lennie makes talking about the dream easy, because he is excited by the idea and he never questions the practicality of the plan. Lennie wholeheartedly believes he will get his rabbits simply because George has told him it will happen**. Like a child, Lennie has blind faith in his father figure and does not think about the obstacles that they must overcome to make the plan a reality**. However, when Candy makes the dream possible by offering George money, it becomes clear that George has never really thought owning property would be anything but a sweet daydream. For the first time in the story, George is at loss for words.
* **Candy and George are similar in that they both have cared for something other than themselves**. This compassion sets them apart from the other ranch hands. **George cares for the troublesome Lennie just as Candy tries in vain to keep his old dog.** However, Candy is old, and George is still young. George sees Candy's almost finished life and knows that he wants something different for himself. The old man has spent his whole life as a migrant worker and now has nothing to show for it. Even worse, he suspects he will soon lose his job and will have no means to support himself. This depressing situation is exactly what George hopes to escape by buying his own land.
* **George and Lennie provide a final hope for Candy**. He takes their daydreams seriously and thinks they will give him comfort in his final years. Without their help, he will end up like his dog. In fact, he says if he is fired, he hopes someone will shoot him as Carlson shot his dog. The dog's death symbolizes what happens to a ranch hand that can no longer work**. Both Candy and his dog are seen as outliving their usefulness. Because Lennie and the old dog are both burdens to their caretakers, the dog's death clearly foreshadows Lennie's fate.**
* This chapter **continues to provide foreshadowing of the terrible tragedy to come.** Despite his docile nature, Lennie is now shown to be capable of violence. Until now, he has only killed small animals by accident. **However, he becomes strangely aggressive when he says he would kill any cat that threatened his rabbits. Lennie also shows his dangerous strength when he crushes Curley's hand. He is unable to let go of Curley's hand until George slaps him.** This inability to stop his aggression or understand his actions will later prove deadly. George also predicts the trouble to come when he says Curley's wife is going to create a mess. He is proven right that same night, when Curley vents his anger over his marriage in a vicious, unprovoked attack on Lennie. However, the bigger "mess" Curley's wife will create is yet to come.
* **The men in this novel show contempt for women. Acknowledging that they need women for sexual release, the men see them mostly as troublemakers**. For instance, Lennie only grabbed the girl's dress in Weed, yet she accused him of rape. This false accusation almost led to Lennie being lynched. Curley's wife (who is never given a name) is repeatedly called a tart. Her flirtatious ways are seen as contributing to Curley's anger and violent behavior toward Lennie. When talking about women, George says he prefers the company of prostitutes because he knows what they will cost upfront and they do not cause trouble. He even blames a "tart" on landing a childhood friend in jail, without considering the friend's personal responsibility for his actions. The only woman seen as good or helpful in the novel is Lennie's Aunt Clara. However, even her name is sullied, when it is also the name used for a whorehouse madam. In novel where only three female names are used, it cannot be a coincidence that two out of three are named Clara.
* It is Saturday night as this chapter opens, and Crooks is sitting in his room. He lives in a small part of the harness room and sleeps in a straw filled box. **Unlike the others, Crooks is a permanent part of the ranch. Therefore, he has accumulated more possessions than the others have, but he keeps his room neat.** Crooks is rubbing liniment into his injured back. Lennie appears in the doorway and stands there, looking in.
* **At first, the uninvited visitor angers Crooks.** Lennie is only trying to be friendly. He says he was looking at his puppy and he saw Crooks' light on. Crooks tell him to leave**. The older man says he is not allowed in the bunkhouse because he is black**. Therefore, he will not let others in his room. He tells Lennie that the other men play cards, but he is not allowed to play because of his race. The white men say he stinks. Lennie tells Crooks that everyone else has gone into town.
* As they talk, Crooks tells Lennie several times to get out of his room, but Lennie keeps forgetting and stepping inside**. Finally, Crooks is swayed by Lennie's smile,** telling him to come inside and sit down. Lennie tells Crooks that Candy is figuring out a plan for the rabbits, but Crooks just calls him crazy. Crooks tells Lennie that he knows Lennie does not understand George when he talks to him. Lennie admits that this is true. Crooks then tells Lennie that his father once owned a chicken ranch. They were the only black family for miles. Now, he is the only black person on the ranch and no one listens to him.
* **Crooks becomes excited to finally be able to talk to someone, even though Lennie does not understand what he is saying.** Crooks repeats that George can tell Lennie anything, and it does not matter if Lennie does not understand. It is just important to be with another guy. Crooks then teases Lennie, suggesting that George will not come back. Lennie becomes upset and walks toward Crooks. Crooks sees that he is in danger and tells Lennie he was only guessing about George. He assures Lennie that George is fine and will return.
* **Crooks talks more about being lonely**."S'pose you didn't have nobody. S'pose you couldn't go into the bunkhouse and play rummy 'cause you was black. How'd you like that? S'pose you had to sit out here an' read books. Sure you could play horseshoes till it got dark, but then you got to read books. Books ain't no good. A guy needs somebody-to be near him. A guy goes nuts if he ain't got nobody. Don't make no difference who the guy is, long's he's with you. I tell ya, I tell ya a guy gets too lonely an' he gets sick."
* Lennie once again brings up the rabbits. Crooks scoffs at him, saying that every migrant worker dreams of owning a ranch, but it never happens. Candy comes in, and although Crooks pretends to be angry at another intrusion, he is actually pleased to have company for the first time. Candy compliments Crooks on his room. Crooks continues to criticise their plan but Candy is adamant that they will have their land in one month. Crooks says that if they really buy the property he would like to work for them.
* **Curley's wife enters the room wearing heavy makeup**. She remarks that only the weak ones are left at the ranch, **directly insulting Lennie, Candy and Crooks**. She also says that she knows what the other men are doing in town. Lennie is mesmerised by her appearance, but Candy and Crooks are short with her. She says that she can talk to any of the men when they are alone, but they are too scared to talk to her when they are in groups. **When Candy tells her to leave, she becomes angry. She says she is unhappy with Curley and so lonely that she is even happy to be talking to "bindle bums" because she has no friends.** Candy tells her that they do not want her around and that they have plans for their own ranch. She laughs at him, making him even angrier. **She then tries to flirt with Lennie*.* Crooks has had enough. He tells her to get out of his room. She turns on Crooks and tells him that she can have him strung from a tree.** He quickly backs down, defeated. She and Candy exchange more words, continuing the heated discussion. As she leaves, she tells Lennie that she is glad he beat up Curley.
* George returns and yells at Candy for talking about their plan. As Candy and Lennie leave, Crooks tells Candy that he does not really want to work for them because it is a foolish plan. The men walk out and Crooks is once again alone, rubbing liniment into his injured back.
* For the first time, Crook's character is developed. **Crooks is proud and stays away from the other men. However, under his aloof exterior, he is hiding extreme pain and loneliness.** Crooks is **a smart man,** but he is considered inferior because of his race. He is not allowed in the other men's quarters to play cards and is insulted by accusations that he stinks. While the boss, Slim and Curley have questioned the relationship between George and Lennie, Crooks is the only one with the insight to understand George's reasons for staying with Lennie. He knows that George needs someone with whom to speak. It does not matter if Lennie understands him or not. It is only important that a man not be alone. Crooks is the first character to verbalise that "a guy needs somebody-to be near him. A guy goes nuts if he ain't got nobody. Don't make no difference who the guy is, long's he's with you."
* **Crooks knows that George, Lennie, and Candy's plan to buy land will never come to fruition. He has seen countless other men with the same dream, but they have all failed. However, he is so tempted by the idea of escaping loneliness, that he asks Candy if he can join them.** After being humiliated by Curley's wife, he **resigns to being treated as inferior to whites**. Brought back to his harsh reality, he tells Candy to forget his offer. He realizes he will never be treated as an equal. Perhaps he also rejects the idea of joining them out of pride. Curley's wife has called them weak. Crooks likely does not want to be compared to the crippled old man and the mentally deficient Lennie, as a matter of pride.
* **Candy and Crooks hate Curley's wife, but ironically, they have something in common with her. They are all desperately lonely.** For the first time, Curley's wife is seen as isolated and miserable. **She has no friends on the ranch and cannot even receive comfort from her husband.** She and Crooks are especially similar. They are both perceptive and immediately realize that Candy and Lennie's plans will never become a reality. Both of them are also minorities on the ranch, and they are treated as less than human, as a result. They are quick to display rudeness and hostility towards others as way of covering up their pain. Although they are victims, they are also aggressors who actively exploit the weaknesses of others. **Crooks uses his superior intelligence to scare Lennie by suggesting that George will not return. Curley's wife uses her race as a weapon against Crooks by threatening him with lynching. Crooks and Curley's wife are both suffering from the same heartache, but instead of commiserating and offering support, they only have contempt for each other.**

**Chapter 5**

Next afternoon, Lennie accidentally kills the puppy that Slim had given him by petting it too much. He's sad. Curley's wife finds him and starts talking very openly about her feelings. She invites Lennie to stroke her soft hair, but he does it so strongly she panics and he ends up killing her too. He runs away to hide, as George had told him. Candy finds the body and tells George. They tell the other men - Curley wants revenge.

**Analysis:**

* This chapter opens with Lennie looking at the puppy that he has accidentally killed. The dog and the mouse in the first chapter have foreshadowed the extreme violence that followed. Lennie has established a pattern of killing soft things. **Once Curley's wife allows Lennie to touch her hair, the reader knows that Curley will not be able to stop with a simple stroke.** The story comes to a climax when he is unable to let go and accidentally kills her.
* **The deaths of the mouse, the dog and Curley's wife symbolise the death of Lennie and George's dream of having their own place in the world.** The woman's death also translates to disaster for Candy, who will now have no one to protect him in his advanced age.
* George constantly tells people that Lennie is not cruel. However, Lennie is incapable of feeling remorse or understanding the consequences of his actions, so he continues to kill. After Lennie kills the puppy and Curley's wife, **he is not sorry that they are dead. He is only worried that George will not let him take care of the rabbits.** In fact, he becomes angry at both the puppy and Curley's wife for getting him into trouble.
* **Candy feels no empathy for others**. When Curley's wife is found dead, he also becomes angry with her for ruining his plans. He does not feel sorry for her. While he expresses some concern for Lennie, he mostly focuses on his own loss.
* This chapter provides a deeper understanding of Curley's wife. She explains that she married Curley only because she was mad at her mother. She alternates between being flirtatious and lashing out at the men, which makes her an unsympathetic character**. However, her faults are explained as it becomes clear that she shares something in common with the men who hate her. Like George and Lennie, she hopes for a better life.** She wants to be a famous actress and still thinks she could make it. Although she scoffs at George and Lennie's plan, her own dream seems even more unrealistic. By the end of the chapter, it is clear that everyone's hopes will remain unfulfilled. Curley's wife dies without ever finding the companionship and attention she so desperately craved.
* The chapter ends with **important foreshadowing**. When **Carlson discovers his gun is missing, the group surmises that Lennie must have stolen it. Yet, the reader knows Lennie would not have the planning skills necessary to steal a gun before running away. That leaves only George, since he is the only character who has gone back to the bunkhouse.** The missing gun provides an important clue about what will happen in the next chapter.

**Chapter 6**

Lennie hides in the brush by the pool. He dreams of his Aunt Clara and the rabbits he will tend when he and George get their land. George finds Lennie and talks reassuringly to him about the little place they will have together - then shoots him with Carlson's gun. When the other men find George, they assume he shot Lennie in self-defence. Only Slim understands what George did and why.

**Analysis:**

* ***Of Mice and Men* ends along the same river where the novel began**. The bond between George and Lennie that was obvious at the start of the story is reinforced in this chapter as Lennie sits, embracing his knees, the same way George sat along the river. He still idolizes George, even if he cannot always follow his orders.
* Until now, Lennie has been portrayed as slow-witted. George has repeatedly stated that Lennie may not be bright, but he is not crazy. **However, now Lennie does appear mentally ill. He hallucinates, believing that he is having conversations with his** **deceased Aunt Clara and a giant rabbit**. This behaviour is a sharp contrast to his prior state of mind. Either he has been driven mad by killing Curley's wife or he has always suffered from hallucinations that he somehow managed to hide from George. **Both Aunt Clara and the rabbit are manifestations of Lennie's worst fears**. He has become a burden to George. Even in his insanity, he knows that his pattern of criminal activity can no longer continue. Lennie, unable to devise a real plan, continues to resort to the fantasy that he would be able to survive alone in the woods.
* George now knows that he cannot continue to keep Lennie out of trouble. Despite his innocent motives, Lennie has become a killer, and they can no longer escape the consequences of his behaviour. The murder has made it impossible for them to survive as they have in the past, by moving from ranch to ranch. In his last conversation with Lennie, Lennie asks him to repeat the story of how he would be better off alone. Yet, George's words are forced, and the reader knows that he no longer believes he will be better off without Lennie.
* **Without his friend, he will not have his own farm and he will become just like the other lonely, hardened ranch hands.** The depth of George's love for Lennie is clear in his last words to him, as he tells Lennie he was never angry. **George kills Lennie out of mercy, not revenge, anger, or even for justice. He wants to spare his friend from being killed by Curley, which would mean Lennie's last moments would be spent fearfully and in pain.** George also knows that even if Lennie survived Curley, he would have to live in a small prison cell. He would never have the chance to tend rabbits, which is his greatest dream.
* **Lennie dies happily. He is with his best friend and giggling because he thinks they are about to realise their dream.** George, however, is once again left to deal with the aftermath of Lennie's actions. When Lennie killed Curley's wife, he destroyed George's plans for the future. Ironically, George always talked about how easy his life would be without Lennie. By killing Lennie, he is now relieved of an enormous burden from his life. Yet, without Lennie he faces an even bigger problem. He must return to work alone and without a dream. It now appears his life will become like Candy's. George will grow old, never knowing anything but the sad, hopeless life of a ranch hand. Slim tries to comfort George by telling him he had no choice. George had to kill his best friend and dream in order to survive.
* Once George has killed Lennie, **only Slim can understand why he is so upset**. The other men see the killing as justified and expect George to feel satisfied by the shooting. Once again, they fail to realise the bond the two men shared. They have dismissed what they could never understand.

**NOTE!!!!**

**The tragedy in *Of Mice and Men* is not found in the death of Curley's wife or the killing of Lennie. IT IS THE LOSS OF DREAMS AND OF PLANS GONE AWRY**. The main characters in the novel want to escape their current lives. They are desperately hoping for some change or a connection with others that will relieve them of their loneliness. Their aspirations are different, yet the isolation they feel is the same.

**By the end of the novel, it is clear that no one will find peace, except for Lennie. Curley's wife dies without ever finding happiness. Candy's job at the ranch is threatened, and he will probably die with no one to care for him. Crooks will remain oppressed because of his race, without ever having a real friend. George is resourceful, making the reader believe he will physically survive, but his heart is now broken and his bleak future as a migrant worker seems certain. Even Slim, the most emotionally grounded character, is only content because he never seems to have had a dream in the first place. He may be respected by the ranch hands, but like them, he has nothing to call his own and no solid future prospects. Slim's will never be disappointed in his future, because he has no plans for that future which could go awry.** Therefore, Steinbeck delivers the ultimate tragedy and condemnation of the American Dream. He leaves the reader questioning whether it is worth dreaming at all. If even the best plans often go awry, then there may as well be no point in making plans at all. Perhaps it is better to live one day at a time with no hopes of a better tomorrow. **Perhaps it is better to never have a dream than to have a dream that will never become a reality.**

**Not many people had real friends in the American West in the 1930s - it was a case of every man for himself. That is one of the reasons why the story of George and Lennie's unusual friendship is so poignant. They have each other. No one else in the novel is so lucky.**

**George Milton**

* He is a small man, but has brains and a quick wit.
* He has been a good friend to Lennie, ever since he promised Lennie's Aunt Clara that he would care for him. He looks after all Lennie's affairs, such as carrying his work card, and tries to steer him out of potential trouble.
* He needs Lennie as a friend, not only because Lennie's strength helps to get them both jobs, but so as not to be lonely. His threats to leave Lennie are not really serious. He is genuinely proud of Lennie.
* He shares a dream with Lennie to own a piece of land and is prepared to work hard to build up the money needed to buy it.
* "...with us it ain't like that. We got a future. We got somebody to talk to that gives a damn about us. We don't have to sit in no bar room blowin' in our jack 'jus because we got no place else to go. If them other guys gets in jail they can rot for all anybody gives a damn. But not us."
* He is honest with people he trusts. For example, he tells Slim that he used to play tricks on Lennie when they were young, but now feels guilty about it as Lennie nearly drowned.

George is described as physically small with very sharp features, an opposite to [Lennie Small](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study_guide/literature/of-mice-and-men/character-analysis/lennie-small.html). Milton is the last name of the author of one of [Steinbeck](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study_guide/literature/of-mice-and-men/john-steinbeck-biography.html)'s favorite works, *Paradise Lost*. In that epic poem, Adam and Eve fall from grace in the Garden of Eden. Because of their fall, mankind is doomed to be alone and walk the earth as a lonely being. Some critics believe George represents that doomed man who longs to return to Eden. His one chance to avoid that fate is his relationship with Lennie, which makes them different from the other lonely men. But despite this companionship, at the end of the book, George is fated to be once again alone.

George's personality often reflects both anger and understanding. Of the two men, he is the one who thinks things through and considers how their goals can be reached. Once [Candy](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study_guide/literature/of-mice-and-men/character-analysis/candy.html) makes the stake possible, George comes up with the details: where they will get the ranch, how long they must work to pay for it, and how they will have to keep a low profile in order to work for the next month. George also foresees possible complications and gives Lennie advice about what he must do in order to help their future. While George can be very rational and thoughtful, he also gets frustrated and angry with Lennie because the big man cannot control his strength or actions. George repeatedly gets angry, so much so that Lennie knows by heart what it means when George "gives him hell." But George's anger quickly fades when he remembers Lennie's innocence and his inability to remember or think clearly.

George, unlike other men, has a companion and friend in Lennie. Because of this, Lennie makes George feel special. They are different from all the other guys, and George realizes only too well that they have a special bond. At the ranch, George often plays solitaire, a game for one. Without Lennie, George would be a loner. Even though George gets frustrated by Lennie's mental weakness, he also feels compassion for his friend. Lennie offers George the opportunity to lay plans, give advice, and, in general, be in charge. Without Lennie, George would be just like the other hands, but with Lennie, George has a strong sense of responsibility. In the end, he even takes responsibility for Lennie's death. George also understands that Lennie does not have an adult's sense of guilt and does not understand death or murder beyond it being a "bad thing." George makes it possible for Lennie — sometimes — to understand at least partial consequences of his actions. Unfortunately, George does not realize how dangerous Lennie can be, and this lack of foresight adds to the downfall of their dream.

Their dream also sets George apart from the others because it means he and Lennie have a future and something to anticipate. Unlike Lennie, George does not see their dream in terms of rabbits; instead, he sees it in a practical way. Their farm will be one where they can be independent and safe and where he will not have to worry about keeping track of Lennie's mistakes. They can be secure and in charge of their own lives. However, Lennie is the one who adds the enthusiasm because George never really believed they could swing this farm of their own. He mostly uses the story to give Lennie something to believe in for their future. Only when Candy offers the stake does George actually begin to see that this dream could come true. But, realist that he is, George tells Candy over the lifeless body of [Curley's wife](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study_guide/literature/of-mice-and-men/character-analysis/curleys-wife.html), "I think I knowed from the very first. I think I know'd we'd never do her. He usta like to hear about it so much I got to thinking maybe we would [be able to have the farm.]" In the end, George Milton is man alone once again.

**Lennie Small**

* He is a big man, in contrast to his name.
* He has limited intelligence, so he relies on George to look after him. He copies George in everything George does and trusts George completely.
* "Behind him (George) walked his opposite, a huge man, shapeless of face, with large, pale eyes, with wide, sloping shoulders; and he walked heavily, dragging his feet a little, the way a bear drags his paws. His arms did not swing at his sides, but hung loosely."
* He shares a dream with George to own a piece of land. Lennie's special job would be to tend the rabbits.
* He likes to pet soft things, like puppies and dead mice. We know this got him into trouble in Weed when he tried to feel a girl's soft red dress: she thought he was going to attack her.
* He can be forgetful - George continually has to remind him about important things.
* He is very gentle and kind, and would never harm anyone or anything deliberately.
* He is extremely strong: he can work as well as two men at bucking barley.
* He is often described as a child or an animal - he drinks from the pool like a horse and his huge hands are described as paws.

Lennie Small is huge and lumbering and, in many ways, the opposite of [George Milton](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study_guide/literature/of-mice-and-men/character-analysis/george-milton.html). Where George has sharp features and definite lines, Lennie is "shapeless." Often he is described in terms of animals. He lumbers like a bear and has the strength of a bear, but his actions are often described like those of a dog.

Lennie's personality is like that of a child. He is innocent and mentally handicapped with no ability to understand abstract concepts like death. While he acts with great loyalty to George, he has no comprehension of the idea of "loyalty." For that reason, he often does not mean to do the things that get him into trouble, and once he does get into trouble, he has no conscience to define his actions in terms of guilt. Lennie only defines them in terms of consequences: "George is going to give me hell" or "George won't let me tend the rabbits." He is devoted to George like a dog is devoted to its master, and he tries to follow George's commands. There is a childlike wonder in Lennie that can be seen when he first sees the pool of water and slurps down huge gulps of water like a horse.

Lennie's greatest feeling of security comes from petting soft things. When the rest of the world gets complicated and scary, petting soft things helps Lennie feel safe. In petting dead mice, Lennie is doing something that makes him feel safe. Society as a whole would disapprove of what he is doing, but Lennie sees nothing wrong in his actions. When they have their farm, as George tells him at the end, Lennie will not need to be scared of bad things any more, and he can tend the rabbits and pet them.

Lennie's prodigious strength combined with his lack of intelligence and conscience make him dangerous, and he needs George to keep him out of trouble. George takes care of Lennie and makes the decisions for him. George also gives him advice and helps Lennie when overwhelming forces, like [Curley](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study_guide/literature/of-mice-and-men/character-analysis/curley.html), scare him. George keeps the dream out in front of the huge man as a goal: Their farm is a place where they can live together, have animals, grow their own crops and, in general, feel safe. Lennie has little memory, but the story of their dream is one he knows by heart. While George never really believes in this farm, Lennie embraces it with childlike enthusiasm. Every time he makes George tell their story, his enthusiasm excites George, too. Lennie's innocence keeps the dream alive, but his human imperfection makes the dream impossible to realize.

**Slim**

* Slim is the *jerkline skinner* (lead mule-team driver) at the ranch. He is excellent at his job.
* He is the natural leader at the ranch. Everyone respects his views and looks up to him.
* He has a quiet dignity: he doesn't need to assert himself to have authority.
* "there was a gravity in his manner and a quiet so profound that all talked stopped when he spoke. His authority was so great that his word was taken on any subject, be it politics or love."
* He understands the relationship between George and Lennie. He helps George at the end and reassures George that he did the right thing.
* We know little else about him, which gives him a slightly mysterious quality. Do you think he is too good to be true?

Slim is described always in terms of dignity and majesty. When he first comes into the bunkhouse, he moves "with a majesty achieved only by royalty and master craftsmen. He was a jerk-line skinner, the prince of the ranch, capable of driving ten, sixteen, even twenty mules with a single line to the leaders." Slim is tall, ageless, and an expert in his job. His voice is the voice of rationalism. When Carlson suggests killing [Candy](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study_guide/literature/of-mice-and-men/character-analysis/candy.html)'s dog, Candy appeals to Slim as the final authority.

Slim is so respected and admired on the ranch that even [Curley](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study_guide/literature/of-mice-and-men/character-analysis/curley.html) listens to him. When [Lennie](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study_guide/literature/of-mice-and-men/character-analysis/lennie-small.html) smashes Curley's hand, Slim is the one who intercedes and tells Curley he will not have [George](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study_guide/literature/of-mice-and-men/character-analysis/george-milton.html) and Lennie fired. Slim understands Curley's fear of ridicule, and he uses that fear to help George and Lennie. Slim also inspires confidences because he is not judgmental. When George first meets Slim, George tells him about Lennie's troubles in Weed. George senses in Slim a person of intelligence and empathy who will not be mean to Lennie, make fun of him, or take advantage of him.

Slim is the only one on the ranch who appreciates the difficulty of George's position. He understands the constant oversight George must exercise in watching Lennie and keeping him out of trouble. It is Slim, in the end, who suggests that George did the right thing in killing Lennie mercifully. He explains the alternative: "An s'pose they lock him up an' strap him down and put him in a cage. That ain't no good, George."

Slim is present at every crucial juncture in the story: the death of Candy's dog, the smashing of Curley's hand, finding the body of [Curley's wife](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study_guide/literature/of-mice-and-men/character-analysis/curleys-wife.html), at the pool after George has shot Lennie. In each case, there is violence or the threat of it. Each time Slim helps make the assessment to do what is merciful or what is right.

**Curley**

* Curley is the boss's son, so he doesn't need to work like the ordinary ranch hands, and he has time to kill.
* He's little - so he hates big guys.
* He is a prize-fighter and looks for opportunities for a fight.
* "He glanced coldly at George and then at Lennie. His arms gradually bent at the elbows and his hands closed into fists. He stiffened and went into a slight crouch. His glance was at once calculating and pugnacious."
* He is newly-married and is very possessive of his wife - but he still visits brothels.
* There is a rumour that he wears a glove filled with Vaseline to keep his hand soft for his wife.

Curley, the boss' son, is an evil character in [Steinbeck](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study_guide/literature/of-mice-and-men/john-steinbeck-biography.html)'s world. Even [Lennie](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study_guide/literature/of-mice-and-men/character-analysis/lennie-small.html) feels the sense of menace when Curley first comes into the bunkhouse. Curley is a "thin young man with a brown face, with brown eyes and a head of tightly curled hair." According to [Candy](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study_guide/literature/of-mice-and-men/character-analysis/candy.html), Curley is an amateur boxer and is always picking fights, especially with guys who are bigger than he is.

Curley tries to prove his masculinity by picking fights. Another way to prove himself is by marrying a physically attractive woman. His wife is never given a name, but by calling her "[Curley's wife](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study_guide/literature/of-mice-and-men/character-analysis/curleys-wife.html)," Steinbeck indicates she is his possession. Curley refuses to let her talk to anyone on the ranch, isolating her from everyone and setting the stage for trouble. He makes a big show of keeping his hand soft to caress her, yet patronizes the local whorehouse on Saturday night. While he may strut around the ranch because of his position as the boss' son, he obviously cannot satisfy his wife and is mean to her. Curley beats up any man who dares to talk to her; the only one he listens to and seems to respect is [Slim](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study_guide/literature/of-mice-and-men/character-analysis/slim.html).

When Curley picks the fight with Lennie, he does not realize the danger he is in. Once [George](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study_guide/literature/of-mice-and-men/character-analysis/george-milton.html) allows Lennie to fight back, Lennie smashes Curley's hand, breaking every bone. Curley whimpers like a baby and cries helplessly with the pain. When Lennie kills Curley's wife, Curley sees this as his opportunity for revenge. In his meanness, he tells Carlson to aim for Lennie's gut so that Lennie will suffer. This, in turn, causes George to make the decision to kill Lennie mercifully.

**The other characters are lonely deu to their economic situation (having to move around). This is not the case for Curley. With this in mind, how does the reader react to Curly?**

**What do you think Curly and his wife’s relationship is really like?**

**Curley's wife**

* She is newly married to Curley.
* We never know her name - she is merely Curley's 'property' with no individual identity.
* She is young, pretty, wears attractive clothes and curls her hair.
* She seems flirtatious and is always hanging around the bunk-house.
* She is lonely - there are no other women to talk to and Curley is not really interested in her.
* "What kinda harm am I doin' to you? Seems like they ain't none of them cares how I gotta live. I tell you I ain't used to livin' like this. I coulda made somethin' of myself."
* She doesn't like Curley - she tells Lennie that she only married him when she didn't receive a letter she'd been promised to get into Hollywood.
* She is naive.

Curley's wife, like the other players in the drama, is simply a character type and the only woman in the plot. She is defined by her role: Curley's wife or possession. [George](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study_guide/literature/of-mice-and-men/character-analysis/george-milton.html) and [Candy](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study_guide/literature/of-mice-and-men/character-analysis/candy.html) call her by other names such as "jailbait" or "tart." She wears too much makeup and dresses like a "whore" with red fingernails and red shoes with ostrich feathers. [Lennie](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study_guide/literature/of-mice-and-men/character-analysis/lennie-small.html) is fascinated by her and cannot take his eyes off her. He keeps repeating "she's purty." George, realizing Lennie's fascination, warns him to stay away from her.

Curley's wife knows her beauty is her power, and she uses it to flirt with the ranch hands and make her husband jealous. She is utterly alone on the ranch, and her husband has seen to it that no one will talk to her without fearing a beating.

[Steinbeck](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study_guide/literature/of-mice-and-men/john-steinbeck-biography.html)'s initial portrayal of Curley's wife shows her to be a mean and seductive temptress. Alive, she is connected to Eve in the Garden of Eden. She brings evil into mens' lives by tempting them in a way they cannot resist. Eventually, she brings about the end of the dream of Eden, the little farm where George and Lennie can live off the fat of the land. Her death at Lennie's hands means the end of George and Lennie's companionship and their dream. She is portrayed, like the girl in Weed, as a liar and manipulator of men. In the scene in [Crooks](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study_guide/literature/of-mice-and-men/character-analysis/crooks.html)' room, she reminds Crooks of his place and threatens to have him lynched if he doesn't show her the proper respect as the wife of the boss' son and a white woman. All of these appearances cause the reader to dislike her and see her as the downfall of the men in the story.

In the barn scene, however, Steinbeck softens the reader's reaction to Curley's wife by exploring her dreams. Her "best laid plans" involved a stint in the movies with all the benefits, money, and pleasure that would provide. Her beauty is such that perhaps that dream might have come true. Her dreams make her more human and vulnerable. Steinbeck reiterates this impression by portraying her innocence in death:

Curley's wife lay with a half-covering of yellow hay. And the meanness and the plannings and the discontent and the ache for attention were all gone from her face. She was very pretty and simple, and her face was sweet and young. Now her rouged cheeks and her reddened lips made her seem alive and sleeping very lightly. The curls, tiny little sausages, were spread on the hay behind her head, and her lips were parted.

Steinbeck seems to show, through Curley's wife, that even the worst of us have our humanity.

**Why is Curly’s wife’s name never revealed to the reader?**

**When do we see Curley and his wife together? What is the significance of this?**

**Crooks**

* Crooks is the black stable hand or *buck*.
* He is the only permanent employee at the ranch, since he injured his back in an accident. His back gives him constant pain.
* He is the only black man around and is made to be isolated by his colour - he can't go into the bunk-house or socialise with the men.
* He is always called the 'nigger' by the men, which shows how racism is taken for granted. The men don't mean to insult Crooks every time they call him this, but they never think to use his name
* All this has made him proud and aloof.
* He is lonely.
* "S'pose you didn't have nobody. S'pose you couldn't go into the bunk house and play rummy 'cause you were black... A guy needs somebody - to be near him... I tell ya a guy gets too lonely an' he gets sick."
* The only time he mixes with the ranch hands socially is when they pitch horseshoes - and then he beats everyone!
* He has his own room near the stables and has a few possessions. He has books, which show he is intelligent and an old copy of the California Civil Code, which suggests he is concerned about his rights.
* He has seen many men come and go, all dreaming of buying a piece of land, but is now cynical, as no one has ever achieved it.

Crooks is so named because of a crooked back caused by a kick from a horse. Crooks is the stable hand who takes care of the horses and lives by himself because he is the only black man on the ranch. Along with [Candy](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study_guide/literature/of-mice-and-men/character-analysis/candy.html), Crooks is a character used by [Steinbeck](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study_guide/literature/of-mice-and-men/john-steinbeck-biography.html) to show the effects of discrimination. This time the discrimination is based on race, and Crooks is not allowed in the bunkhouse with the white ranch hands. He has his own place in the barn with the ranch animals. Candy realizes he has never been in Crooks' room, and [George](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study_guide/literature/of-mice-and-men/character-analysis/george-milton.html)'s reaction to Crooks being involved in their dream is enough to cause Crooks to withdraw his request to be part of the dream. Racial discrimination is part of the microcosm Steinbeck describes in his story. It reaches its height in the novel when [Curley's wife](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study_guide/literature/of-mice-and-men/character-analysis/curleys-wife.html) puts Crooks "in his place" by telling him that a word from her will have him lynched. Interestingly, only [Lennie](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study_guide/literature/of-mice-and-men/character-analysis/lennie-small.html), the flawed human, does not see the color of Crooks' skin.

Crooks also has pride. He is not the descendent of slaves, he tells Lennie, but of landowners. In several places in the story, Steinbeck shows Crook's dignity and pride when he draws himself up and will not "accept charity" from anyone. Crooks also displays this "terrible dignity" when Curley's wife begins to tear away at his hope for the dream farm.

Crooks is not without his faults, however. He scares Lennie and makes up the story of George leaving him. Prejudice isn't simply a characteristic of the white ranch hands or the daughter-in-law of the boss; it is a human characteristic, and Crooks needs to feel superior to someone also.

That he becomes part of the dream farm is an indication of Crooks' loneliness and insecurity. He, like Candy, realizes that once he is no longer useful he will be "thrown out." Where, then, can he find some security for his future? The dream farm of Lennie's seems to be the place. Crooks promises to work for nothing as long as he can live his life out there without the fear of being put out. Like all the others, he wants a place where he can be independent and have some security. But there is no security for anyone in a prejudiced world, least of all a black stable hand with a crooked back.

**What is the Significance of Crooks in the novel?**

**What are key moments that reveal something about Crooks’ character?**

**Candy**

* Candy is the oldest ranch hand. He lost his right hand in an accident at work.
* He is the 'swamper' - the man who cleans the bunkhouse. He knows he will be thrown out and put 'on the county' when he is too old to work.
* Because of this, he accepts what goes on and doesn't challenge anything: he can't afford to lose his job.
* He has a very old dog, which he has had from a pup. It is his only friend and companion.
* "The old man came slowly into the room. He had his broom in his hand. And at his heels there walked a drag-footed sheep dog, gray of muzzle, and with pale, blind old eyes."
* Carlson insists on shooting the dog because he claims it is too old and ill to be of any use. Candy is devastated.
* He is lonely and isolated, but makes friends with George and Lennie and offers his compensation money to help them all to buy a ranch together and achieve their dream.
* When he finds Curley's wife dead, he is furious, as he knows instantly that Lennie was involved and that they have lost their chance of achieving their dream.

Candy is "a tall, stoop-shouldered old man … . He was dressed in blue jeans and carried a big push-broom in his left hand." His right hand is simply a stump because he lost his hand in a ranch accident. Now the owners of the ranch keep him on as long as he can "swamp" out or clean the bunkhouse. Candy gives [Steinbeck](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study_guide/literature/of-mice-and-men/john-steinbeck-biography.html) an opportunity to discuss social discrimination based on age and handicaps. Candy represents what happens to everyone who gets old in American society: They are let go, canned, thrown out, used up. Candy's greatest fear is that once he is no longer able to help with the cleaning he will be "disposed of." Like his old dog, he has lived beyond his usefulness.

Candy and his dog parallel the relationship of [George](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study_guide/literature/of-mice-and-men/character-analysis/george-milton.html) and [Lennie](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study_guide/literature/of-mice-and-men/character-analysis/lennie-small.html). Like Candy's dog, Lennie depends on George to take care of him and show him what to do. Candy, like George, is different from the other ranch hands because he has his dog as a constant companion, someone devoted and loyal to him. When the unfeeling Carlson suggests that Candy's dog be put out of its misery, Candy abdicates the responsibility to Carlson. He tells George later that he should have shot his dog himself, foreshadowing George's decision to take responsibility for Lennie's death and "be his brother's keeper."

Candy also plays a significant role in the dream, providing the money needed to make the down payment. Because of Candy, the dream almost becomes real. Candy's down payment causes George to believe that, perhaps, the dream can be realized. But none of them count on the tragic meeting between [Curley's wife](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study_guide/literature/of-mice-and-men/character-analysis/curleys-wife.html) and Lennie in the barn. Even then Candy still thinks he can have his safe haven, a place where no one will throw him out when he is too old. The dream is so strong in him that he pleads with George, to no avail, to have their farm despite Lennie's death.

**What is the Significance of Candy in the novel?**

**What are key moments that reveal something about Candy’s character?**

**THEMES**

 **A theme is an idea that runs through a *text*. A text may have one theme or many. Understanding the themes makes the text more than 'just' a text - it becomes something more significant, because we're encouraged to think more deeply about the text, to work out what lies beneath its surface.**

**Idealism vs. Reality**

*Of Mice and Men* tells the story of two simple men who **try to escape homelessness, economic poverty, and emotional and psychological corruption**. Otherwise, the fate of those who do not abandon the lives they lead as Itinerant workers is bleak and dehumanizing. As George tells Slim, the mule driver "I seen the guys that go around on the ranches alone. That ain't no good. They don't have no fun. After a long time they get mean." George and Lennie dream of owning a farm, but by the end of the novel the dream has failed. Their plan is doomed because human fellowship cannot survive in their world and also because their image of the farm is overly idealized. It is likely that even if they had obtained the farm, their lives would not have been as comfortable as they had imagined; they would not have enjoyed the fraternal harmony that is part of theIr dream. In fact, their dream of contentment in the modern world is impractical and does not accurately reflect the human condition.

Crooks, the black stablehand, expresses his doubts about the dream. "Nobody never gets to heaven, and nobody gets no land. It's just in their head. They're all the time talkie' about it, but it's jus' in their head." Crooks is referring not only to literal ownership but to the dream of contentment about which these simple men fantasize. Implicit in the theme is the ironic idea that maturity involves the destruction of one's dreams. George "matures" by killing Lennie, thus destroying the dream that could not survive in modern civilization. George survives because he leaves behind his unrealistic dreams. Dreaming, however, is humanity's only defense against an indifferent world. The title of the novel itself implies that people are at the mercy of external forces beyond their control. Steinbeck writes with sincere compassion for the victims of these chaotic forces.

**Alienation and Loneliness**

**Loneliness is a recurrent theme in the novel**. "Guys like us," George says, "that work on the ranches, are the loneliest guys in the world. They got no family. They don't belong no place." Lennie replies: "But not us. And why. Because ... because I got you to look after me, and you got me to look after you, and that's why." The alternative to the companionship that George and Lennie share is loneliness. George frequently affirms the fraternity between them. "He's my... cousin," George tells the ranch boss. "I told his old lady I'd take care of him " The boss is suspicious of the bond between George and Lennie, and the other characters in turn also question this friendship: they have simply never seen anything like it. In their world, isolation is the norm Even Slim, who is usually sympathetic and understanding, expresses surprise. "Ain't many guys travel around together. I don't know why. Maybe ever' body in the whole damned world is scared of each other." Distrust is the quality of the modern world in which people live in alienation from one another. Later, the theme of loneliness is further explored in the solitude borne by Crooks and Curley's wife, who dies as a result of seeking human companionship. Both these characters crave company and, as Curley's wife says, "someone to talk to."

Despite everyone's suspicion, the friendship between George and Lennie remains solid. In fact, Candy becomes part of their dream to buy the little farm, and later Crooks also expresses his desire to become part of the expanding fellowship. This is the high point of optimism in regard to the theme of overcoming loneliness in the modern world, when it seems most likely that alienation and loneliness will be overcome. After this point, however, the dream of fellowship on the farm begins to lose its promise, and at the moment that George and Candy discover the body of Curley's wife, they both realize that the dream is lost; their partnership dissolves. Actually, the dream was doomed from the start, because fraternal living cannot survive in a world ruled by loneliness, homelessness, and poverty.

This outcome also suggests that loneliness is an essential part of humanity's nature. This theme of loneliness has been implied from the beginning of the novel, when the author establishes the setting as "a few miles south of Soledad." Soledad is the name of a town in central California, but it is also the Spanish word for solitude Yet Steinbeck's emphasis is on the greatness of his characters' attempt to live as brothers. Although the dream is doomed, the characters devote themselves to pursuing human fellowship.

**Race and Racism**

Somewhat **related to the theme of loneliness is racism,** which also results in personal Isolation. Crooks, the old black man on the ranch, lives alone, ostracized by the ranch hands because of his race. The barrier of racial prejudice is briefly broken, however, when Crooks becomes an ally in the dream to buy a farm. Crooks has a bitter dignity and honesty that illustrate Steinbeck's own criticism of American society's failures in the Depression era of the 1930s.

**Class Conflict**

Although George and Lennie have their dream, they are not in a position to attain it. In addition to their own personal limitations, **they are also limited by their position in society.** Their idealistic dream is eventually destroyed by an unfeeling, materialistic, modern society. The tensions between the characters are inherent in the nature of American capitalism and its class system. Curley, the son of the ranch owner, is arrogant and always looking for a fight. This is not merely a personality trait. His position in society has encouraged tins behavior; his real strength lies not in his fighting ability but in his power to fire any worker. Similarly, Carlson, the only skilled worker among the ranch hands, is arrogant and lacks compassion. Carlson would be difficult to replace in his job as a mechanic; therefore, he feels secure enough in his status to treat the other workers sadistically. This trait is seen when he orders Candy's dog to be shot and when he picks on Lennie. The other workers go along with Carlson because they are old or afraid of losing their jobs. Lennie's mental retardation also symbolizes the helplessness of people in a capitalistic, commercial, competitive society. In this way, Steinbeck Illustrates the confusion and hopelessness of the Depression era. The poor were a class of people who suddenly had captured the imagination of American Writers in the 1930s. This was an example of the shift in attitudes that occurred during the Depression. Previously, American fiction had been concerned with the problems of middleclass people Steinbeck's novel was a sympathetic portrayal of the lives of the poorest class of working people, while exposing society's injustices and economic inequalities in the hope of improving their situation.

**Mental Disability**

**Lennie's mental limitations also serve to illustrate another way in which people separate themselves from one another. Because of his handicap, Lennie is rejected by everyone at the ranch except George.** The ranch hands are suspicious of Lennie and fear him when they recognize his physical strength and his inability to control himself. For example, when Crooks maliciously teases Lennie that George might decide to abandon his friend and that Lennie would then end up in "the booby hatch," Lennie becomes enraged. Eventually, Crooks backs off in fear of what Lennie could do to hurt him. Despite Lennie's potential for hurting people, however, Steinbeck makes it clear that it is the malice, fear, and anger in other people that are to blame for Lennie's violent actions (Crooks torments Lennie out of his own frustration for being rejected because he is black). When Curly starts to hit Lennie for supposedly laughing at him, Lennie at first retreats and allows his face to become bloodied until George tells him he should fight back; and when Lennie accidentally kills Curly's wife, it is a direct result of her inappropriate advances toward him. Steinbeck's portrayal of Lennie's handicap is therefore completely sympathetic; the other characters have only themselves to blame for provoking Lennie, who is merely a child in a world of selfish adults. That Lennie has to die at the novel's conclusion is a poignant commentary on the inability of the innocent to survive in modem society.

**Loyalty**

**George is steadfastly loyal throughout the novel, honoring his commitment to take care of the retarded Lennie. After Lennie accidentally kills Curley's wife, Curley forms a posse to lynch Lennie. George then steals a pistol and goes to the spot where he has told Lennie to hide in case there is trouble: the same spot where the novel begins. George then kills Lennie himself before the mob can find him so he can save Lennie from a lynching.** Together the two men recite the dream of their farm for the last time. George mercifully kills Lennie with a shot to the head while Lennie is chanting the dream, unaware of what is about to happen to him. George, with all his personal limitations, is a man who has committed himself in a compassionate relationship. The grief he feels over the necessity of killing Lennie is also evidence of George's essential decency. Although the dream perishes, the theme of commitment achieves its strongest point in the novel's conclusion Unlike Candy, who earlier abandoned responsibility for his old dog and allows Carlson to shoot the animal, George remains his brother's keeper. In his acceptance of complete responsibility for Lennie, George demonstrates the commitment necessary to join the ranks of Steinbeck's heroes.

**Friendship**

**The one ingredient essential for the fulfillment of George's and Lennie's dream is friendship**. And because the dream is so remarkable, that friendship must be special. There are other friendships in the novel: Slim and Carlson, Candy and Crooks, but these are ordinary friendships. The bond between George and Lennie, which goes back many years, is different. Lennie cannot survive on his own, and he needs George to guide and protect him. Without George, Lennie would live in a cave in the hills, as he sometimes threatens to do, or he would be institutionalized. George, for his part, complains regularly about having to take care of Lennie His tolerance of Lennie also gives him a sense of superiority. At the same time, George feels a genuine affection for Lennie that he will not openly admit. Most importantly, without this friendship, neither George nor Lennie alone could sustain the dream, much less see it become a reality. The friendship lends hope to the dream, but the reality of their brutal life destroys the dream and the friendship. Although George is a survivor at the end, he is doomed to be alone.

**Loneliness and Dreams**

The two main themes in 'Of Mice and Men' - foreshadowed by the reference to Burns' mouse - are loneliness and dreams. They interlock: people who are lonely have most need of dreams to help them through.

Study the table below, showing both the loneliness and the dreams of each of the main characters. You could use a table like this as the basis for an exam answer about *themes* in *Of Mice and Men.*

**Loneliness and Dreams in Of Mice and Men**

|  | **Loneliness** | **Dream** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| George | George is not lonely during the novel, as he has Lennie. He will be lonely afterwards, without his best friend. | George and Lennie share a dream - to own a little patch of land and live on it in freedom. He is so set on the idea that he even knows of some land that he thinks they could buy. |
| Lennie | Lennie is the only character who is innocent enough not to fear loneliness, but he is angry when Crooks suggests George won't come back to him. | George and Lennie share a dream - to own a little patch of land and live on it in freedom. Lennie's main desire is to tend the soft-haired rabbits they will keep. |
| Curley's wife | She is married to a man she doesn't love and who doesn't love her. There are no other women on the ranch and she has nothing to do. She tries to befriend the men by hanging round the bunkhouse. | She dreams of being a movie star. Her hopes were raised by a man who claimed he would take her to Hollywood, but when she didn't receive a letter from him, she married Curley. |
| Candy | When Candy's ancient, ill dog was shot, Candy has nothing left. He delayed killing the dog, even though he knew deep down that it was the best thing, as he dreaded losing his long-time companion. | Candy joins George and Lennie's plan of owning a piece of land. His savings make the dream actually possible to achieve. |
| Crooks | Crooks lives in enforced solitude, away from the other men. He is bitter about being a back-busted nigger. He is thrilled when Lennie and Candy come into his room and are his companions for a night. | Crooks dreams of being seen as equal to everyone else. He knows his civil rights. He remembers fondly his childhood, when he played with white children who came to his family's chicken ranch, and longs for a similar relationship with white people again. |

**Additionally**, you should make brief notes on the following:

* Outsiders
* Sympathy
* Power/Money/Poverty
* Violence/death
* The Present v The Future
* Life on the Ranch
* Discrimination
* Animals/Nature

**Structure**

Steinbeck wrote *Of Mice and Men* in a play format, using a circular pattern of locales, condensed narration, minimal action descriptions, dramatic lighting, and foreshadowing to connect his plot. Some readers feel that *Of Mice and Men* is so balanced and thoughtful in structure that the novel is a work of art. Other readers feel that the structure makes the book predictable, taking away from the reader's interest.

Nevertheless, Steinbeck's novel easily translated to the stage, almost intact, because of his thoughtful craftsmanship. The locales are perfectly balanced in a circular pattern. There are six scenes in groups of two, producing three "acts." The first and last scene take place near the bank of the river so that the plot comes full circle. In the middle are two scenes in the bunkhouse, and two scenes in the barn, the latter including [Crooks](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study_guide/literature/of-mice-and-men/character-analysis/crooks.html)' room which is in the barn.

In each of these scenes, Steinbeck develops an interesting pattern of general to specific. For example, in the first scene by the river, Steinbeck begins with a "camera shot" of the entire scene so the reader can take in the mountains, the sun, the river, and all of nature in the vicinity. Then he focuses in on a path and then — still more — on two men walking down that path. At the end of the first scene the author does just the opposite. The focus is on the two men settling down for the night and then the "camera" pulls out and expands the scene to include the night, the fire, and hills. A close examination of each scene will bring the reader to the conclusion that Steinbeck has produced a well balanced pattern that beautifully supports his plot and [themes](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study_guide/literature/of-mice-and-men/critical-essays/major-themes.html).

Two other stage conventions include the entrances and exits by characters and, at the beginning of each scene, the setting descriptions. In each scene are entrances and exits by the characters. For example, when Chapter 4 opens, Crooks is sitting in his room applying liniment to his back. Next, [Lennie](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study_guide/literature/of-mice-and-men/character-analysis/lennie-small.html) appears in the open doorway, waiting to be asked in. Eventually, other characters make entrances: [Candy](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study_guide/literature/of-mice-and-men/character-analysis/candy.html) and [Curley's wife](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study_guide/literature/of-mice-and-men/character-analysis/curleys-wife.html). Then Curley's wife exits, [George](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study_guide/literature/of-mice-and-men/character-analysis/george-milton.html) enters, and the three men exit, leaving Crooks alone once again.

A dramatic format is used also for the beginning of scenes. Each starts with a sparse description of the setting, much like a playwright would do at the beginning of a play scene. The first and last scenes have descriptions of nature and set the atmosphere for the action. In between these scenes are brief setting descriptions of the bunkhouse and Crooks' room in the barn and the barn itself.

The whole novel contains very little narration. Instead, Steinbeck relies heavily on the words and actions of his characters. A careful study of each chapter reveals that, after the initial description of the setting, most pages contain almost all dialogue with very short introductory phrases. Steinbeck wants readers to draw their own conclusions about the characters and the themes from the action and words of the people, rather than from Steinbeck's opinions. Thus Steinbeck uses a technique that helps his novel translate easily to a staged production.

Within each scene is a pattern of rising and falling action. In the second scene, for example, the bunkhouse and inhabitants are introduced, suspicion falls on the two men's relationship, [Curley](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study_guide/literature/of-mice-and-men/character-analysis/curley.html) and his wife inject an ominous tone (which Lennie repeats with his instinctive reaction to them), [Slim](http://www.cliffsnotes.com/study_guide/literature/of-mice-and-men/character-analysis/slim.html) soothes the scene, and then they go to dinner. Again, each scene is balanced with this theatrical structure.

The lighting could also be attributed to theatrical technique. The first and last scenes use the light in nature for the focus of the lighting in the scenes. In the third chapter, the bunkhouse is dark, and it is evening. When George and Slim come in, Slim turns on the electric light over the card table. The focus is on the conversation at the card table with the darkness all around. From that darkness, come the voices of Lennie and Candy, but the main focus of the scene is in the middle of the room at the card table where the light is used to draw the reader's attention to the main arena of action. Light and darkness work through the novel to focus the reader's attention, much like light and darkness on the stage accomplish a similar purpose.

A final structural technique is the use of foreshadowing, or transitional connections or signals, to connect and make ideas more fluid. Throughout Steinbeck's novel, there is so much foreshadowing that some critics feel he has over used the technique. As an example, Candy's dog and the circumstances surrounding its death are later repeated in the death of Lennie. The same technique is used when George warns Lennie very early to go back to the bushes by the pool if anything bad happens. This advice is repeated several times in other scenes, including Lennie's thoughts in the barn and later at the pool while waiting for George.

Overall, Steinbeck's novel is tightly structured and intentionally written in an arrangement that uses theatre conventions to produce unity and convey a message.

**Key Terms**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Terms** | **Definition** | **How does it fit into ‘Of Mice and Men’?** |
| **Alliteration** |  | "The water is warm too, for it has slipped twinkling over the yellow sands in the sunlight before reaching the narrow pool." |
| **Allusion** |  |  |
| **Auditory Imagery** |  |  |
| **Colloquial** |  | Informal, chatty language.  |
| **Conflict** |  |  |
| **Connotation** |  |  |
| **Diction** |  |  |
| **Didactic** |  | Designed to teach a lesson.  |
| **Gustatory Imagery**  |  |  |
| **Hyperbole** |  |  |
| **Innuendo** |  |  |
| **Irony** |  | The major irony in Of Mice and Men is that George kills Lennie because of their friendship. George kills Lennie to spare him from a worse death. George complained about Lennie and his defects, but realizes his importance only after his death. Once Lennie is dead, George loses the weight of responsibility Lennie caused him, but he is also lonely. Also, Lennie and George's dream to own their own farm that is carried out throughout the novel dissapears with Lennie's death. Lennie's retardation causes irony in the novel. Despite the fact that Lennie is fundamentally good, a grown child, he harms those that surround him. This can be seen when he kills the mouse because he stroked it too hard. Yet, the killing of the mouse was caused by his affection for it. |
| **Juxtaposition** |  | A statement which seems contradictory or absurd but which contains truth |
| **Metaphor** |  |  |
| **Olfactory Imagery**  |  |  |
| **Oxymoron** |  | Curley's wife indulges a different fantasy, far less likely of fulfilment. As many young women do, she aspires to stardom in films. She knows she is pretty, and, believing too readily the man who says she is “a natural”, thinks her talent is merely waiting for an opportunity and that her mother has stolen the letter which represents her chance for fame. Steinbeck describes precisely “the small grand gesture” (an oxymoron or contradiction in terms) with which she demonstrates to Lennie her supposed talent. |
| **Paradox** |  |  |
| **Personification** |  |  |
| **Pathos** |  | Moments which provoke strong feelings of pity and sorrow. |
| **Simile** |  |  |
| **Symbol** |  |  |
| **Tactile Imagery** |  |  |
| **Visual Imagery** |  |  |

**Foreshadowing**

**Foreshadowing, where events subtly hint at things to come, serves to heighten suspense in the novel**. Lennie's rough handling of the mice and the puppy, the shooting of Candy's old dog, the crushing of Curley's hand, and the frequent appearances of Curley's wife all foretell future violence. Steinbeck tells the reader about the mice and puppy, as well as the scene in which Lennie breaks the bones in Curley's hand, so that when Lennie kills Curley's wife it is completely believable and convincing—and seemingly inevitable—that this could happen. Also, at the very beginning of the book, the reader learns that George and Lennie had to leave Weed because Lennie got into trouble when he tried to touch a girl's dress. The incident in which Candy's dog is shot also foreshadows George's shooting of Lennie, an ironic comparison of the value placed on the life of a dog and a man.

**CCEA ‘Of Mice and Men’ Past Paper Questions**

Analysis of past papers:  *(Those highlighted in* ***bold*** *indicate an extract has been used.)*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **(A)** | **(B)** |
| 2001 | **George** | Hopelessness |
| 2002 | **Killing** | Crooks |
| 2003 | **Life** | Slim |
| 2004 | **‘The Fight’** | Curley’s Wife |
| 2005 | Power | Crooks |
| 2006 | Candy | Loneliness |
| 2007 | Lennie | Reactions to Curley’s wife’s death |
| 2008 | George | Dreams |
| 2009 | Candy | The future |
| 2010 | Slim | Friendship |
| 2011 | **Curley** | Life on the ranch |
| 2012 | Friendship | **Curley’s wife’s dreams** |
| 2013 |  |  |

**Writing an essay on CHARACTER**

1. **Introduction**
* State what Steinbeck’s intention/purpose is with this character and what impact they make in the novel as a whole – link to the question asked.
* State what effect they have on the reader.
* Link your character to relevant context.
1. **Main body of Essay: Writer’s characterisation/Methods used to present the character (AO1)**
2. **Points to include:**
* Ensure you use quotes to back up your points.
* Keep analysing – look at how Steinbeck uses techniques (dialogue, description etc.) to make a point about the character.
* Analyse intentions and what the effect is on the reader.
* Acknowledge how the structure of the novel allows for your opinion of the character to change. Why does Steinbeck want your opinion to change? What is your lasting opinion on the character (which is the most important as you take this away with you at the end of the novel)?
* Use phrases like: Steinbeck **depicts, implies, suggests, infers, shows, illustrates, presents, portrays, and conveys, intention, purpose, aim…**
1. **Conclusion:**
* Directly answer the question.
* Refer to what Steinbeck’s intentions are with this character and what the reader is meant to think of them.
* Acknowledge their role in the plot, relating back to the question.

**Writing an essay on THEMES**

1. **Introduction**
* State what Steinbeck’s intention/purpose is with this theme and what impact it makes to the novel as a whole – link to the question asked.
* State what effect the theme has on the reader.
* Link your analysis to context.
1. **Main body of Essay:**
2. **Points to include:**
* Ensure you use quotes to back up your points.
* Keep analysing – look at how Steinbeck uses techniques (dialogue, description etc.) to make a point about the character.
* Analyse intentions and what the effect is on the reader.
* Look at how the themes overlap – why?
* Acknowledge how the structure of the novel allows for your opinion of the theme to change. Why does Steinbeck want your opinion to change? What is your lasting opinion on the character (which is the most important as you take this away with you at the end of the novel)?
* Use phrases like: Steinbeck **depicts, implies, suggests, infers, shows, illustrates, presents, portrays, and conveys, intention, purpose, aim…**
1. **Conclusion:**
* Directly answer the question.
* Refer to what Steinbeck’s intentions are with this character and what the reader is meant to think of them.
* Acknowledge the theme’s role in the plot, relating back to the question.