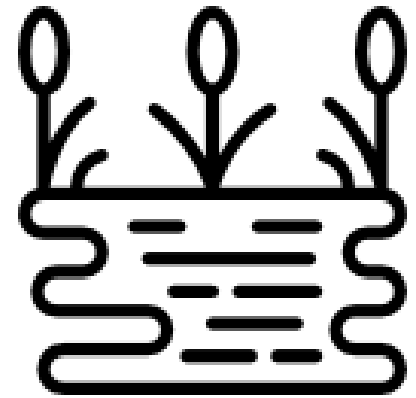
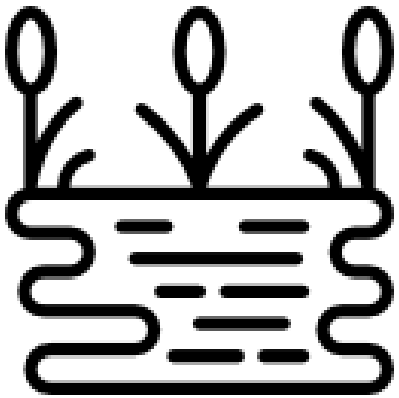


Of Mice and Men – Steinbeck



NAME: _____

CLASS TEACHER: _____

YEAR: _____

Chapter 1 – George and Lennie are by the brush

PLOT



The story opens in a wooded area around the Salinas River in California. Two men approach: George and Lennie. It becomes clear that Lennie has a mild mental disability, and that George looks out for him.



George catches Lennie petting a dead mouse and takes it off him, angrily. Lennie swears that he didn't kill it, although it becomes clear that Lennie's enormous strength means that he kills things unintentionally.



George reminds Lennie that they are going to work on a ranch and he needs to behave. The two eat beans for dinner, with George losing his temper with Lennie for persistently asking for ketchup.



He states that he would get along much better without Lennie. He then feels guilty about getting angry at Lennie.



George reminds Lennie of their dream: one day, they are going to own their own farm. George instructs Lennie to return to the pool if something bad happens. They then settle for the night.

KEY QUOTES

"They had walked in single file down the path, and even in the open one stayed behind the other."

"I wasn't doin' nothing bad with it, George. Jus' strokin' it."

(Lennie to George)

"You can't keep a job and you lose me ever' job I get."

(George to Lennie)

"His anger left him suddenly. He looked across the fire at Lennie's anguished face."

"I want you to come right here an' hide in the brush."

Chapter 2 – Meeting everyone at the ranch

PLOT



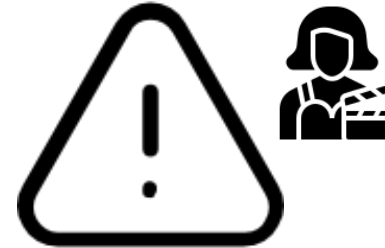
The chapter starts with a description of bunkhouse. This is where the men that work at the ranch stay. They have few material possessions.



The two men arrive at the ranch and meet Candy. He warns them that the 'boss' is cross with them. After being scolded by their new boss, are assigned to a picking team led by Slim.



They also Curley, who immediately becomes aggressive towards Lennie. After he leaves, Lennie tells George to stay away from Curley.



Curley's Wife then appears at the bunk, who Lennie finds 'purty' and who flirts with them. George has to tell Lennie to stay away from her.



Slim then enters, who is clearly admired by all. He stokes up a friendship with George and Lennie.

KEY QUOTES

"The bunkhouse was a long, rectangular building. Inside, the walls were whitewashed and the floor unpainted."

"The boss stepped into the room with the short, quick steps of a fat-legged man."

"Curley lashed his body around."

"She had full, rouged lips and wide-spaced eyes, heavily made up. Her fingernails were red."

"he moved with a majesty achieved only by royalty and master craftsmen."

Chapter 3 – Lennie vs Curley

PLOT



Slim gives one of his new pups to Lennie. George tells Slim of how they got chased out of the last town – Lennie grabbed hold of a girl's red dress, and wouldn't let go.



Carlson begs Candy to let him shoot his old, stinking dog, to which Candy reluctantly agrees. After an awkward silence, the gunshot is heard.



Curley comes in, asking where his wife is. When he learns that she is not there, and neither is Slim, he storms out. The others follow, hoping to see a fight.



Thinking they are left alone, George discusses the dream again to Lennie. Candy overhears, and swears to devote his life savings to it if he can be in.



The other men return, Curley apologising to Slim for false accusations. Curley turns his attention on Lennie, beating him. Lennie only fights back when George tells him to, severely crushing Curley's hand.

KEY QUOTES

"I would of had to drowned most of 'em anyways. No need to thank me about that."

(Slim to George about the pups)

"Carlson said, "The way I'd shoot him, he wouldn't feel nothing."

(Carlson to Candy about his dog)

"Curley burst into the room excitedly. "Any you guys seen my wife?" he demanded."

"George, how long's it gonna be till we get that little place an' live on the fatta the lan'- an' rabbits?"

(Lennie to George)

"The next minute Curley was flopping like a fish on a line, and his closed fist was lost in Lennie's big hand."

Chapter 4 – The outcasts

PLOT



Crooks sits in his room alone. We learn that Crooks is educated. Lennie soon wanders in, lonely as the other men have gone out to town.



Crooks initially tells him to go away, saying that he (as a black man) is not allowed in the others' bunk, and so they should not be allowed in his. Lennie persists; Crooks lets him in.



Lennie begins to talk about his and George's dream. Crooks speaks of his own loneliness; he taunts Lennie by suggesting that George might never return. Candy enters and begins to speak of their dream.



Curley's Wife interrupts, and taunts the men about being 'the weak ones' left behind. She speaks of her own loneliness.



Crooks asks her to leave, but she threatens that she could easily have him lynched if he says too much more. The other men then return and Curley's Wife leaves.

KEY QUOTES

"his bunk in the harness room; a little shed that leaned off the wall of the barn."

"'Cause I'm black. They play cards in there, but I can't play because I'm black. They say I stink."

(Crooks to Lennie)

"You guys is just kiddin' yourself. You'll talk about it a hell of a lot, but you won't get no land."

(Crooks to Lennie and Candy)

"Lennie watched her, fascinated; but Candy and Crooks were scowling down away from her eyes."

"I could get you strung up on a tree so easy it ain't even funny."

(Curley's Wife to Crooks)

Chapter 5 – Lennie does a bad thing

PLOT



Lennie sits in the barn, stroking his dead puppy, questioning why it died. He decides to try and hide the puppy but then gets angry with it for dying and hurls it across the room.



Curley's Wife enters, reassuring him that it is safe to talk to her. She speaks of her loneliness, and her past dreams. She explains that she doesn't like Curley.



She asks Lennie to stroke her hair, but he quickly becomes too excited and holds on too tight. When she cries out, he tries to silence her, and accidentally breaks her neck.



He runs away, towards the clearing that he and George were in at the beginning of the story. Candy finds the body and informs George – they immediately know what has happened.



George asks Candy to pretend that George hasn't seen it, so he can't be implicated. He calls the other guys in. Curley instantly asks for his shotgun, to track down Lennie.

KEY QUOTES

"Why do you got to get killed? You ain't so little as mice. I didn't bounce you hard."

"Why can't I talk to you? I never get to talk to nobody. I get awful lonely."

"he shook her; and her body flopped like a fish."

"I done a real bad thing," he said. "I shouldn't of did that. George'll be mad."

"I'm gonna shoot the guts outa that big bastard myself, even if I only got one hand."

Chapter 6 – Hiding in the brush

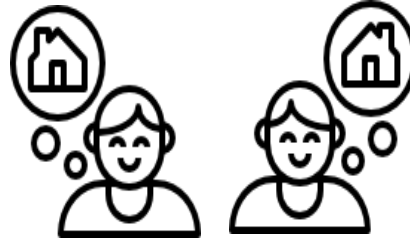
PLOT



Lennie appears by the riverside from the start of the novella. He is anxious, but also proud that he has remembered the place that he should come to if he finds himself in trouble.



He has two visions: of his Aunt Clara scolding him for getting into trouble, and a giant rabbit telling him that George will leave him.



George appears, seeming unusually quiet. George tells Lennie that he is not made at him, comforting Lennie. Lennie asks him to talk about the dream again, which George does.



Lennie sits, listening to the story, looking out over the stream, George pulls Carlson's gun from his jacket and shoots Lennie in the back of the head. Lennie immediately dies.



Carlson questions what happens, and George lies that he had to wrestle the gun from Lennie and shoot him with it. Only Slim understands what has truly happened. They walk away.

KEY QUOTES

"Already the sun had left the valley to go climbing up the slopes of the Gabilan Mountains"

"She stood in front of Lennie and put her hands on her hips, and she frowned disapprovingly at him."

"George came quietly out of the brush and the rabbit scuttled back into Lennie's brain."

"The hand shook violently, but his face set and his hand steadied. He pulled the trigger."

"Slim came directly to George and sat down beside him, sat very close to him."

CHARACTERS

George



- George is one of the two lead protagonists.
- Although he is occasionally short-tempered with Lennie, he is a loyal and caring friend. George could be described as an idealist, as he harbours dreams of one day owning his own farm and land.
- George is relatively smart, thinking and acting sharply in difficult situations.

Critical Vocabulary

1. **Idealist:** unrealistic
2. **Intelligent:** knowledgeable; being clever.
3. **Frustrated:** expressing distress and annoyance

Lennie



- Lennie is a kind and simple character, who possesses enormous physical strength.
- He likes to pet soft things.
- He is totally devoted to George.
- He is an unintentional threat to both himself and others.
- Lennie dreams of tending the rabbits on his and George's own farm.

Critical Vocabulary

1. **Naive:** showing a lack of experience, wisdom, or judgement.
2. **Dependent :** requiring someone or something for financial or other support.
3. **Innocent :** not guilty of a crime or offence.

Candy



- Candy is an old odd-job worker who lives on the farm, who only has one hand after an accident.
- Candy worries that one day the boss will declare him unfit to work and he will be cast aside, left to die in poverty.
- His old, smelly dog (that is shot by the other ranch workers) is a harsh reinforcement of this belief.

Critical Vocabulary

1. **Judgemental:** having or displaying an overly critical point of view.
2. **Frail :** weak and delicate
3. **Hopeful:** feeling or inspiring optimism about a future event.

CHARACTERS

Crooks



- Crooks is the lively and quick-witted stable-buck, who is named so because of his crooked back.
- Crooks openly admits that he is lonely – however in his case this is caused by the racial discrimination and separation that he suffers.

Critical Vocabulary

1. **Ostracised**: exclude from a society or group.
2. **Bitter** : feeling or showing anger, hurt, or resentment because of bad experiences or a sense of unjust treatment.
3. **Nervous** : anxious or apprehensive.

Curley's Wife



- Curley's Wife is initially introduced to the reader as a 'tramp', a 'rat-trap' and a 'tart', such are the views towards women on the farm.
- She reveals that she is disappointed with her life, that 'Curley ain't a nice fella' and that she is lonely.
- Eventually her longing for attention becomes her downfall..

Critical Vocabulary

1. **Secluded** : not seen or visited by many people; sheltered and private.
2. **Solitary** : existing alone.
3. **Promiscuous**: demonstrating or implying an unselective approach; casual.

Curley



- Curley is the boss's son, and is perhaps the chief antagonist throughout the novella.
- He is confrontational, mean-spirited and violent, and to back up his threats he is rumored to be a former prizefighter.
- Curley tries to compensate for this small stature by picking fights with larger men – such as Lennie.

Critical Vocabulary

1. **Controlling** : maintaining authority over others.
2. **Belligerent** : hostile and aggressive.
3. **Malicious**: intending or intended to do harm.

THEMES



Dreams

Each character in the text has their own dreams that they live and work for:

- George, Lennie, and Candy share in the dream of owning their own place.
- Curley's dream is to be respected by others, whilst Curley's Wife's dream is to be a famous actress.
- Crooks simply longs to be accepted and treated equally.

None of the characters make their dream, showing the impossibility of the American Dream

Loneliness



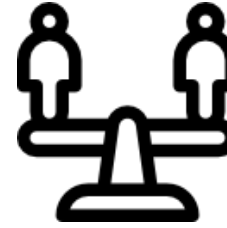
All of the characters, in some sense, experience loneliness, except for Lennie (who has George).

- Curley's Wife (isolated because she is a woman)
- Crooks (isolated due to his colour)
- all of the other men on the ranches live solitary lives as farm-hands, without families.

Loneliness appears to be part of human nature – it is something the characters can't escape.

The nearby town is called 'Soledad' – it means 'loneliness' in Spanish.

Inequality



Of Mice and Men was set in a time in which the laws favoured white people, and men held far more rights than women. This is evident through the characters of Crooks and Curley's Wife.

Similarly, life at the time could be deemed more selfish and predatory, as the strong do not care for (and many actively attack) the weak. Other characters' behaviour towards Candy and Lennie is evidence of this.

Destiny



Characters fate seem to be doomed from the start of the novel. Throughout the novel, Steinbeck shows how men and women are not in control of their destinies:

- George seems in control, but he isn't as he controlled by his duty to Lennie and his lack of wealth.
- Curley's Wife is trapped in her marriage.
- Slim maybe described as 'majestic' and godlike, however he still holds little power when controlling significant events.

Context – *Of Mice and Men* was written by John Steinbeck in 1937.



John Steinbeck

John Steinbeck was an American author, who lived between 1902 and 1968.

His works frequently explore the themes of fate and injustice, as experienced by everyman characters.

Many take place in the Salinas Valley of California.

The American Dream



The American Dream is a national ethos of the United States, which declares that freedoms, prosperity, success, and social mobility, can all be achieved through hard work.

It implies that society has few barriers preventing anyone from achieving their dreams, should they be willing to put in enough effort.

Racism



Life was tough for black people living in America in the 1930s; there were not yet laws ruling against racial discrimination.

White and black people were segregated at the time, and black people were considered 2nd class citizens.

Black people often had to work harder for less money.

The Jim Crow laws of post-1876 strongly reinforced racism.

The Wall Street Crash and The Great Depression :



In the 1920s, the USA had been an enormously prosperous nation. However, in October 1929 millions of dollars were wiped out in an event that became known as the Wall Street Crash.

This triggered the Great Depression: 12 and 15 million (one third of the population at the time) became unemployed, many people lost their life savings as banks went bust.

There was social support system, many families were left to face poverty.

STEINBECK'S USE OF METHODS ...

Irony: where words are used in such a way that their intended meaning is different from the actual meaning of the words.

Pathetic Fallacy: a literary term for the attribution of human emotion and conduct to things found in nature that are not human.

Simile: a stated comparison using 'like' or 'as'.

Charactonym: a name given to a literary character that is descriptive of a quality or trait of that character.

Cyclical narrative: where ideas/events are repeated at the start and the end of piece of writing.

Personification: the attribution of the qualities of a human being to inanimate objects.

Parallelism: repetition of words, or phrases that are similar in structure.

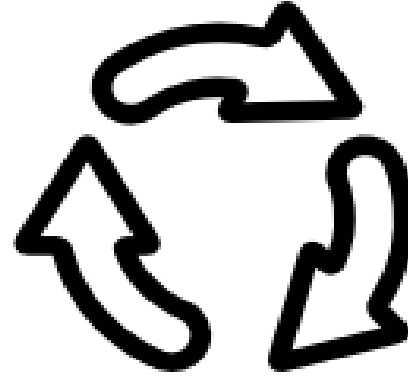
Foil: a character that shows qualities that are in contrast with the qualities of another character.

Antithesis: an opposition of ideas expressed by parallelism of phrases or words that are the opposite of each other.

Foreshadowing: a warning or indication of a future event.

Flashback: a scene set in an earlier time than the main story.

Structure:



Steinbeck uses a cyclical structure in 'Of Mice and Men' as Lennie and George return to the riverside. Steinbeck could have done this to emphasise:

- The fact that all characters can't escape their gloomy and lonely destinies.
- That inequality will never be achieved.
- There is no hope for the working class/minority groups because they are always easily exploited by those in power.

Repetition:



Light and dark imagery is repeated throughout the novel to symbolise hope and despair. Each chapter begins with a reference to the sun going down.




The repeated use of **animals** is there to symbolise the cruelty of life in the 1930s. Steinbeck shows the cruel treatment of animal and uses animal imagery.



Steinbeck describes the **horses' halter chains** rattling several times in the novel. This could be to symbolise how all the characters are trapped.


A good literature response:

Discuss the writer



Steinbeck uses the character of Crooks to convey the idea that racism was an important issue in the 1930s America. Steinbeck depicts how Crooks experiences prejudice and persecution on the ranch even from other characters that are considered to be minor. However, Steinbeck presents a well rounded and educated man breaking the stereotypes of the time.

Zoom in on key words



The use of the noun 'dictionary' emphasises Crooks intellect and resilience in a world that would otherwise choose to not educate him. This contrasts with the insulting term to refer to him and shows that the behaviour of the other men is immoral in that they are mistreating a 'nice', good person that wishes to better himself.

“ ”



Include quotations/evidence

Crooks is described as a 'nice fella' that owns a 'tattered dictionary' but the other men in the farm refer to him as the 'nigger'.

Engage with readers and context

The reader is left feeling sympathetic towards Crooks and angered by the way that he is treated. Crooks desire to learn and improve himself shows that he is a good person and that his treatment is unjustified. His bitterness and resentment towards Lennie is instantly forgiven. Furthermore, when Curley's Wife threatens to get him lynched, as a reader we are shown the cruelty of the Jim Crows laws where black people would be hung for petty or unproven crimes, believing a white person over a black person.




What's the writer used or done?

Why?

... the use of the derogative and racist term of 'nigger' shows how Crooks is seen as a second class citizen because of the colour of his skin. He is ostracised and segregated from the rest because he is black.

What lessons do we learn?



Steinbeck teaches us about the unfairness of 1930s America. He highlights the cruelty of life at this time and forces us to consider our own attitudes to race and other minority groups – especially where racism is ingrained and readily accepted.