

STM Knowledge Organiser

Year: 9

Subject: English

Unit: Of Mice and Men



Core Knowledge (Context of 1930s America)

- The novel is set during the American Great Depression, following the Wall Street Crash.
- Over a third of America's population were unemployed.
- A series of droughts in Southern states ruined crops and harvest. This left many farmers struggling to pay their debts.
- People travelled round trying to find any work they could. Steinbeck worked on ranches.
- The American Dream** was the belief that anyone regardless of background can achieve success through hard work.
- In the novel The American Dream is shown to be impossible to achieve.

Core Knowledge (Loneliness and Vulnerability)

- The novel explores the human need for companionship. Candy and his dog, George and Lennie, Crooks, Curley's wife all show this need.
- Loneliness is the tragedy caused by being vulnerable or an outcast. Curley's wife, Candy, Crooks, George and Lennie are all lonely and vulnerable.
- The novel is a lesson on the way society treats the dispossessed (those with no home or status)

Core Knowledge (Racism and Sexism)

- Crooks is a highly educated black man who works as a stable hand. He represents all black workers in the 1930s who were moved out of their jobs to make room for white workers during the depression. Crooks has been beaten up for being black and has to live away from the other men.
- Curley's wife has married a well off man to provide a secure future but she is restricted in her role as a wife and disrespected by the men on the ranch.

Key Vocabulary

Context	The set of circumstances or events that surround an event or situation.
Cyclical Structure	Conditions at the end of a story or section are in some way the same as they were at the beginning.
Symbolism	The use of specific things to signify or represent something
Isolation	Being completely separated from other people physically or
Atmosphere	Feeling, emotion, or mood that an author creates in a narrative
The American Dream	The ideal that opportunity is available to any American, allowing the highest aspirations and goals to be achieved.
The Great Depression.	Worldwide economic downturn that took place in the
Itinerant workers	<i>Labourers who travel to find work.</i>

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Core Knowledge (Key Characters)

George: Itinerant worker, frustrated with his life.

Lennie: Itinerant worker, childlike, physically strong.

Candy: An old man, one handed ranch worker, owns an old dog.

Curley: The boss's son, arrogant, short and a bully.

Curley's Wife: The only female on the ranch, vulnerable and lonely, nameless, she had dreams of being a film star.

Crooks: Educated, black, stable buck. Discriminated against, proud and isolated.

Slim: Well liked ranch worker, fair and wise.

Carlson: Insensitive ranch worker. He shoots Candy's dog.

Core Knowledge (Key Events)

Section 1: We meet George and Lennie in an idyllic, natural setting. They are heading to a ranch in Salinas to find work. They discuss their dream of self-sufficiency.

Section 2: They arrive at the ranch and the bunkhouse, where we meet Candy, the boss, Curley, Curley's Wife, Slim and Carlson.

Section 3: George tells Slim about his life with Lennie. Candy's dog is shot dead by Carlson. Candy tells George and Lennie that he can help finance the dream. Curley attacks Lennie.

Section 4: Set in Crooks' ramshackle shed. Lennie and Curley's wife visit him while the men are in town.

Section 5: In the barn. We learn about Curley's wife's dreams. She is accidentally killed by Lennie. Lennie flees.

Section 6: Back at the brush: George shoots Lennie to prevent Curley doing worse things to him.

