



# Of Mice and Men



BY John Steinbeck



The film of 'Of Mice and Men' is excellent and it will help you to understand what life on the ranch was like for the itinerant workers like George and Lennie.

Remember though that you are taking a GCSE in English Literature, not film studies! In places, the film is a bit different to the book so be careful! Oh, by the way - make sure you refer to the text as a **novel!**

MOVIE



TIME

JOHN  
MALKOVICH

GARY  
SINISE

# O F MICE AND MEN



We have a dream.  
Someday we'll have a little house and a couple of acres.  
A place to call home.



# What do you need to revise?

- Background and setting
- Characters
- Themes
- Author's style and language
- The structure of the novel
- Planning essays
- Quotations

# Where to find information to help you revise

- **There is a Power Point presentation ‘Of Mice and Men’ on the shared area. You will find more notes about the characters, themes, style and language and the background to the novel.**
- **Make sure that you have a good knowledge of what happens in the novel – you must re-read ‘Of Mice and Men’ carefully before the exam as part of your revision.**
- **THIS POWER POINT WILL FOCUS ON HOW TO ANSWER THE QUESTIONS IN THE EXAMINATION.**

# The Great Depression

**The 29th October 1929 was known as ‘Black Tuesday’ in America. The huge crash of the stock market sounded a final death knell to the prosperity that had characterised the United States throughout the 1920s, and signalled the start of ‘the Great Depression’.**

**Unemployment rose from around 3% in 1929 to over 26% by 1934. Many of the poorest members of American society suffered badly, and at one point it was estimated that 34 million men, women and children had no income at all. This crisis in the American economy forms the background to many of Steinbeck’s novels.**



**THIS IS A SUMMARY OF THE PLOT:**



**1. George and Lennie spend the night by the Salinas River** and reflect on their escape from Weed and their new job  
At the ranch.

**2. George and Lennie arrive at the ranch on Friday Morning.** They meet most of the characters and George is worried about Curley and his wife.

**3. Saturday afternoon.** George and Lennie learn about Curley's wife and share their dream with Candy. Candy offers some of savings and the dream of the farm becomes possible. Candy's dog is shot. Curley picks a fight with Lennie who is told by George to fight back. Lennie breaks Curley's hand.

**4. Saturday night in the barn.** George and the men have gone into town, leaving Lennie, Crooks and Candy behind. Lennie joins Crooks in his room and tells him of the dream farm. Candy joins them. Curley's wife appears, insults Crooks and takes an interest in Lennie. She threatens Crooks.

**5. Sunday afternoon in the barn.** Lennie has killed his puppy. Curley's wife appears and tells him of her dream. When she asks Lennie to pet her hair, he panics and kills her. Lennie runs away, back to Salinas river. Candy finds the body and George begins to search for Lennie.

**6. Late Sunday afternoon.** Lennie arrives back at the pool at the Salinas River and has two visions. George finds Lennie and tells him about the dream farm and shoots him in the back of the head.

## CHARACTERS

In this section you will find a series of bullet points for each of the characters. These bullet points indicate the key features of each character. Look at them carefully and then take each bullet point, develop it for yourself finding evidence from the text to support the point and then use the information to write a full character study for each of the characters.



# George

- Described as being quick-witted and intelligent
- He has a good working knowledge of farming and ranching
- He enjoys the quiet of the countryside
- He is keen to break out of the monotony of their everyday life
- He has taken on responsibility for Lennie
- George understands that Lennie can be both a burden as well as an advantage to him but his feelings for Lennie are genuine but never become sentimental
- In some ways, George ignores the danger signals that result in Lennie getting into trouble at the ranch
- He has the strength of mind and character to carry out the compassionate killing of Lennie at the end of the story



# Lennie

- **He is very childlike**
- **He becomes frightened very quickly although he is a man of great strength**
- **He is often described in terms of an animal suggesting not only his bear like tendency but also a kind of animal innocence.**
- **Lennie has no awareness of values such as good and bad**
- **His obsession for petting small things shows that he has a deep rooted emotional need, which he does not fully understand himself but needs to satisfy.**
- **The terrible progression of the fulfilment of this need leads from the dead mouse to the dead puppy to the dead girl.**
- **Think about how far he is responsible for his own end.**



## Candy

- **He is realistic**
- **Given hope and comfort by Lennie and George's dream**
- **Lost his hand – end of useful life**
- **Old man**
- **Little to look forward to**
- **Loses dog – only companionship he ever had**
- **Lonely**
- **Compares himself to the dog – what will happen to him?**



## Crooks

- **Crippled black man who looks after the horses on the ranch**
- **Literate and intelligent**
- **Reserved and aloof**
- **Very lonely**
- **Intelligent awareness of life**
- **Rejects friendship and companionship**
- **Becomes caught up in George and Lennie's dream**
- **Has known better times**
- **Downtrodden**
- **Believes himself unworthy of sharing the dream at the end of Chapter 4**
- **Highlights the theme of racial prejudice in the novel**
- **Humiliated by Curley's wife**



## Curley's wife



- **Never given a name in the novel**
- **'Curley's wife' makes her sound like one of Curley's possessions**
- **Not treated as an individual**
- **Conscious of the effect she has on men**
- **Anxious to avoid her husband**
- **Has dreams of a better life**
- **Insecure lonely and isolated**
- **Changes from seductress to innocent victim when killed**
- **Has dreams like the others**
- **Flaunts herself in seductive clothing – men call her 'jailbait'**



## Carlson

- **Practical and unsentimental**
- **Stands up to Curley**
- **Usually see him in aggressive situations**
- **Constantly complains about Candy's dog and eventually shoots it**
- **Takes pride in his gun and the ability to use it**
- **Shows no sympathy or understanding about the feelings of George and Slim after Lennie's death**
- **At the end he is totally with Curley about the plans to kill Lennie**
- **Unsentimental, rough, thoughtless**

## Slim

- **Dignified, respected**
- **Has natural authority**
- **Is gentle, friendly and sympathetic**
- **Is tolerant of others**
- **Shows intelligence**
- **Has a firm sense of justice**
- **When there is trouble other ranchers turn to him**
- **Described as God-like**
- **He shows sympathy for George at the end unlike other characters**
- **Understands George's relationship with Lennie**



## The Boss

- **Appears only once**
- **Is described as ‘pretty good’ by George and ‘a nice fella’ by Candy although he isn’t very pleasant to either of them**
- **Manner is aggressive**
- **He represents the social divide between himself and other ranchers**
- **Appears only once**
- **Curley’s father – are they similar?**



## **Planning an Essay**

- **Planning will help you to focus on answering the question in the exam**
- **There are different techniques you can use to plan your essay responses**

**1. Spider Diagrams**

**2. Tables – useful for comparison essays**

**3. Bullet points**

**Don't spend more than 5 minutes planning.**

## **Essay Plan Checklist**

- 1. Read the question carefully at least twice**
- 2. Identify the key words and make sure you understand what the question is asking you to do**
- 3. Brainstorm as many ideas as you can**
- 4. Find at least five quotes**
- 5. Structure your argument – Point Evidence Analysis**
- 6. Check your plan makes sense**
- 7. Use your plan to write your essay!**

## EXAMPLE ESSAY RESPONSES

QUESTION: *Explore the significance of the character of Crooks.*

**Look at the two sample extracts from two students essays.**

**Can you decide which essay got the highest grade?**

### Essay 1

We get a description of Crooks in the second section where Steinbeck describes him as having a “crooked back where a horse kicked him. The Boss gives him hell when he’s mad.” So this already shows that the other ranchers are not very nice to him and treat him disrespectfully. He is the target for when the boss is angry. They also call him a nigger, “Ya see the stable buck’s a nigger.” Steinbeck shows that the men are racist and discriminate. But we know that this was a common view at the time. Crooks adds to the theme of loneliness.

## Essay 2

Central to Steinbeck's novel is man's need for companionship to protect against the isolation that George recognises will lead to "meanness". Friendship is rare for itinerant workers in 1930's America and Steinbeck believed that the inability to put down roots led men into loneliness and isolation. At the core of the novel is the friendship between George and Lennie and Crook's role in the novel is to highlight how someone who has been isolated for most of his adult life can be restored through friendship. Steinbeck's creation of Crooks is the most extreme example of loneliness and epitomises the isolation of man as a result of prejudice.

# **Yes YOU were RIGHT!**

**The girl who wrote ESSAY 1 got a C**

**The girl who wrote ESSAY 2 got an A**

**These are some of the comments the examiner made about both of these introductions:**

## **Essay 1**

**“This is a good response on the whole but the vocabulary is a little limited and points need to be developed more fully to show a better understanding of the themes in the novel.”**

## **Essay 2**

**“This candidate shows a sensitive and engaged response to the text and writes with knowledge and understanding of the 1930’s context.”**

## Exam questions

These fall broadly into three categories; they will be based on either:

- Characters
- Themes
- Author's style and structure

No matter what question you choose, though, the examiner will expect you to refer closely to the text and to show an understanding of the novel as a whole.

Remember to use the **point evidence analysis** structure

## **Character**

-  
How does the writer influence the reader's opinion of Curley's wife?  
What is your own view of her?

In your opinion, does Steinbeck present George as a hero, or not? Give reasons for your opinion.

## **Theme**

How does the writer present the theme of loneliness in 'Of Mice and Men?'

How and why does Steinbeck make friendship an important theme in the novel?

## Style and structure

‘Of Mice and Men’ has been said to have a dramatic quality. Discuss the techniques Steinbeck uses to achieve this effect.

“ I ain’t takin’ it away jus’ for meanness. That mouse ain’t fresh, Lennie, and besides, you broke it pettin’ it, ” says George. How does Steinbeck use the device of foreshadowing throughout ‘Of Mice and Men’ to alert the reader to the tragedy at the end of the novel?

(In case you were wondering.....**foreshadowing** means dropping big hints that an event will happen later on.)

**Practise planning your responses for at least 2 of these essays.**  
**Have a go at writing the introduction for the essay. Time yourself.**



## *Of Mice and Men* QUIZ TIME!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

1. Name an animal that Lennie is described as.
2. Name five characters in the novel whose names begin with C.
3. Describe the dream which Curley's wife has.
4. Give one example of George's kindness to Lennie.
5. Why does Carlson want to shoot Candy's dog?
6. What is George and Lennie's dream?
7. Do you think George is a pessimist or an optimist?
8. Why do you think George looks after Lennie?
9. Do you think Lennie is a bad person?
10. Where does the novel begin and end?