

Name _____

Focus Questions, *Of Mice and Men*

[Of Mice and Men Link](#)

Chapter One: (1-17)

- 1) What is the mood established from the imagery of the riverside at the beginning of the novel? List five words used that create this mood. Where is this place physically located?
- 2) Lennie is described as drinking “like a horse.” What does this simile tell you about him? Can you find other similes or metaphors that compare Lennie with animals?
- 3) Why does Lennie cling to the dead mouse? What might this mouse symbolize?
- 4) What did Lennie do in the town of Weed that made them have to leave? What might this foreshadow? List other types of discrimination that Lennie has faced.
- 5) Why does George put up with Lennie and take care of him?
- 6) What is the goal that George and Lennie share?
- 7) Where does George tell Lennie to meet him if he gets in trouble? Why does George feel that it’s necessary to have a secret meeting place?

Chapter Two: (17-37)

- 1) Begin to track the characters as they are introduced in the beginning of the story. Who are they? What are their conflicts in the story? What are their roles? (Separate sheet of paper.)
- 2) Describe potential *conflicts* that are introduced in this chapter. What does “jail bait” mean?
- 3) How does George explain his relationship with Lennie? What does he lie about and why? Comment on the way Steinbeck characterizes Slim on page 33.

Chapter Three: (38-65)

- 1) George explains his relationship with Lennie to Slim. What confessions does he make? Why is it important for George to care for Lennie? How do Solitaire and the name of the town, *Soledad*, say something about George?
- 2) How is Candy’s dog (and what happens to him) a metaphor for how Candy feels about his own life? Do you think it was wrong for Carlson to shoot the dog? Why does Candy feel this way about himself in this society?
- 3) Describe the house that Candy, Lennie, and George dream about. What do they treasure most about it? What does it symbolize for Candy? What part of the plot is this, when it seems they will almost get their dream?
- 4) Explain with evidence, how hope gives Lennie and George, and Candy strength. Give an example from your own lives: How can hope make you strong and keep you working towards your dreams?
- 5) Why doesn’t Lennie defend himself at first? Why is Curley afraid to tell the truth about his hand?

Chapter 4: (66-83)

- 1) What does Crooks have in common with Lennie? What can you tell about Crooks from his living quarters? What does Crooks tell us about his background? What kinds of conflicts does he have on the ranch?
- 2) Why does Crooks engage Lennie in a conversation? What does Crooks understand about George’s relationship with Lennie?
- 3) Why does Crooks want to be a part of the house that Candy, Lennie, and George want to buy? What might the farm symbolize to him? How does this dream give him and Candy strength when Curley’s wife comes in?
- 4) Why is Curley’s wife cruel to these men? What does she mean by saying she can have Crooks “strung up a tree.” What does this tell us about Crooks’ situation? Is he even allowed a dream? At the end of the chapter, why does he say he does *not* want to be a part of the dream farm?
- 5) What do Crooks, Lennie, Candy, and Curley’s Wife have in common? What do they all need? What do all of them symbolize, or represent, in this novel?

Chapter 5: (84-98)

- 1) Describe the imagery at the beginning of Chapter 5. What is the mood that Steinbeck establishes with this imagery? How does the mood correspond to the action and affect the drama of this chapter?
- 2) What happens to Lennie's puppy, and how is this an example of foreshadowing? What is another example? How do these parallel actions help us understand the motivations of characters or theme in this book?
- 3) Curley's wife says "tenement" for "tournament" and "pitcher" for "picture." She also uses the phrase, "If I'd went." What does her dialect say about her? How is this an example of characterization?
- 4) What does Curley's wife tell Lennie about her life, and her past? What might her experiences say about her? Why doesn't this character have a name?
- 5) Why do Crooks and Curley's wife both feel comfortable talking to Lennie? What do all three have in common?
- 6) Why does Lennie kill her? What do you think should be his punishment?
- 7) Read the paragraph that begins at the bottom of page 92 and describes Curley's wife, dead. Why do you think Steinbeck wrote this description of her? How is this an example of characterization? (How is irony used?)
- 8) Why doesn't George go ahead with the plan for the farm? What does this say about him and his relationship to Lennie?
- 9) Are Candy's accusations justified? What is he really angry at?
- 10) What is Curley's reaction to seeing his wife dead? Do you think that he really cared for her? Why or why not?
- 11) Why do you think Curley wants to kill Lennie?
- 12) Who do you think has taken Carlson's gun? Why? What is the result of this theft?
- 13) What is the last thing Candy does in this chapter? This action is a repetition of action from which previous scene? What does this say about his character?

Chapter 6: (99-107)

- 1) Describe the imagery and mood at the beginning of this chapter. Where does it take place? How does the description of the snake and the bird foreshadow what will come?
- 2) What is the simile Steinbeck uses to describe Lennie on p. 100? What does this say about Lennie's personality?
- 3) Describe each of Lennie's visions. Whose words do they speak?
- 4) George said, "Guys like us got no fambly.
They make a little stake an' then they blow
it in. They ain't got nobody in the worl' that
gives a hoot in hell about 'em----"

What does this quote say about why George needs Lennie?

- 5) What is on Lennie's mind before George kills him?
- 6) Is George justified in killing Lennie? Why does he feel he has to do it? List at least three reasons. How will this affect the rest of his life?
- 7) How does leaving George's characterization vague achieve something in this scene? Is it easier for the reader to step into George's shoes? How does this help Steinbeck reveal his theme? Why is it better for him to have *this* ending, rather than an ending where Curley kills Lennie?
- 8) What does this ending say about Steinbeck's view of humanity, and the biases that people have? What is his message, or theme?

Readings in Class:

| | |
|------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 Setting | 63 Fight |
| 13 Farm dream | 66 Crooks' bunk |
| 33 Slim | 78-80 What Curley's wife says |
| 40 Confessional | 91-93 Curley's wife |
| 47 Dog | 97 Slim's logic |
| 57 Farm in full | 102-End |
| 60 Candy's dream | |

Name _____

Of Mice and Men

Characterization Chart

| Characters | Descriptions: Use actions, words or facts to illustrate your points |
|---|--|
| George Who is he? What kind of person is he? What is his conflict in the story? How does he try to solve his conflict? What is his goal? Why is this goal important? | |
| Lennie Who is he? What kind of person is he? What is his conflict in the story? How does he try to solve his conflict? What is his goal? Why is this goal important? | |
| Candy Who is he? What kind of person is he? What is his conflict in the story? How does he try to solve his conflict? What is his goal? Why is this goal important? | |

| Characters | Descriptions: Use actions, words or facts to illustrate your points. |
|--|---|
| <p>Crooks</p> <p>Who is he?</p> <p>What kind of person is he?</p> <p>What is his conflict in the story?</p> <p>How does he try to solve his conflict?</p> <p>What is his goal?</p> <p>Why is this goal important?</p> | |
| <p>Curley's Wife</p> <p>Who is she?</p> <p>What kind of person is she?</p> <p>What is her conflict in the story?</p> <p>How does she try to solve her conflict?</p> <p>What is her goal?</p> <p>Why is this goal important?</p> | |
| <p>Curley</p> <p>Who is he?</p> <p>What kind of person is he?</p> <p>What role does he play in the story?</p> | |
| <p>Slim</p> <p>Who is he?</p> <p>What kind of person is he?</p> <p>What role does he play in the story?</p> | |

Name _____

“(A writer) is charged with exposing our many grievous faults and failures, with dredging up to the light our dark and dangerous dreams for the purpose of improvement.”
—John Steinbeck, Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech 1962

Essay Question: How does John Steinbeck use characters in his novel, Of Mice and Men to present his view of prejudice and bias? How are the characters denied even dreams to keep them strong? Considering the bleak way the novel ends, what do you think Steinbeck is saying about a society that allows injustice, hatred and oppression? Explain how the novel reflects Steinbeck’s quote, above.

| | |
|---|---|
| Introduction Paragraph: Answer the prompt. Include the name of the author and the name of the novel. Include the quote. | NOTE: Story details throughout are specific things that the characters say or do. Paraphrase rather than use direct quotes. |
| Body Paragraph One: Candy Give story details that help to shape this character. | Facts: Who is Candy? Why does he suffer? What does the dream farm mean to him? Why does his character in this novel illustrate a need for improvement in our society? |
| Body Paragraph Two: Curley’s Wife Give story details that help to shape this character. | Facts: Who is Curley’s Wife? How is she denied dreams? Why does her character in this novel illustrate a need for improvement in our society? |
| Body Paragraph Three: Crooks Give story details that help to shape this character. | Facts: Who is Crooks? Why does he suffer? What does the dream farm mean to him? Why does his character in this novel illustrate a need for improvement in our society? |

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>Body Paragraph Four: Lennie and George</p> <p>Give story details that help to shape this character.</p> <p>Be sure to include the most dramatic moments of the story in your analysis. And, you need to get to the end of the story, where the story's message is reinforced by how the characters end.</p> | <p>Facts: Who is Lennie?</p> <p>Why does he suffer?</p> <p>What does the dream farm mean to him?</p> <p>Why does his character in this novel illustrate a need for improvement in our society?</p> <p>Describe George. Is he also a member of a minority? Explain. Explain why racism and bias cause him to suffer as well. What does this say about society as a whole?</p> |
| <p>Conclusion:</p> <p>Explain how Steinbeck's novel reveals the "grievous failures" of society by creating characters who are suffering.</p> | <p>Perhaps include a quote from the biblical passage we read, or Langston Hughes' poem "Dreams".</p> |