

Of Mice and Men: The American Dream

EXAMPLE THEME SHEET

Use the table below to explore the themes of the text.

- You may want to use your notes from class to help you do this.
- Don't feel like you have to complete this table in order. You can start with any of the boxes and develop your ideas from there.

<p>T</p> <p>Theme</p>	<p>Identify a key theme in the text. <i>What main ideas do you keep seeing repeated? What is the text trying to say about this?</i></p>	<p>Hopes & Dreams / The American Dream</p> <p>The text presents the American Dream as being a fallacy. It can be read that the text is able to inform readers that they should not buy into an ideology which tells the working class that they can climb the social ladder by working hard, despite oppressive structures which maintain such class distinctions.</p>
<p>H</p> <p>How</p>	<p>Describe the presentation of the theme. <i>What literary elements are being used to depict the theme?</i></p>	<p>Weaker characters often share their dreams which never come to fruition. Notable examples are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • George & Lennie dream to become self-reliant and “live off the fatta the lan” (a symbol of the American Dream). • Curley’s wife dreamt of becoming an actress and having certain freedoms. • Crooks dreamt of more freedom and dignity. • Candy dreamt of feeling relevant and valued.

<p>E</p> <p>Evolve</p>	<p>Describe how the theme changes or remains the same throughout the text.</p> <p><i>How does this theme change over the course of the text?</i></p> <p><i>How do the characters, symbols, or settings connected to this theme change?</i></p>	<p>All of these dreamers die, or are threatened. In both cases, their dreams die, signifying that they are pipe dreams in an era which oppressed weaker members of society. Examples are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curley's wife's dream was told to Lennie just before she was murdered. In expressing hope for her dream, she was killed. • Crooks was threatened with lynching and death immediately after he tells his dream of more dignity. He deflates, highlighting how such dreams lead only to a false sense of hope and can leave us feeling weaker when systems stop them happening. • George and Lennie's dream dies with Lennie. George accepts his reality as he goes to spend his wages in a bar, like the other men who do not dream, which he and Lennie often mocked. • Candy's dream dies after Lennie kills Curley's wife and is subsequently killed. His lack of agency of achieving dreams, which die as a result of the actions of others, signify the helplessness of weak characters.
<p>M</p> <p>Mood</p>	<p>Describe the feelings that are associated with the theme.</p> <p><i>What is the atmosphere around this theme?</i></p> <p><i>How do you, as a reader, feel about this theme?</i></p> <p><i>What is the text's tone toward this theme?</i></p>	<p>Steinbeck uses a matter-of-fact and simple tone when discussing the actions and dreams of characters in the novel. This adds to the realism of the text, but also creates a sympathetic mood.</p>
<p>E</p> <p>Extend</p>	<p>Connect the theme to things outside of the text.</p> <p><i>Can you connect the theme to broader contexts, such as history, other works of literature, or modern global issues?</i></p>	<p>Steinbeck said of the American Dream: because of this belief in it, the working class do not see themselves as "exploited proletariat, but as temporarily embarrassed millionaires." In other words, Steinbeck sees the dream as an ideological tool by the upper classes which results in the poor not gaining class consciousness. When they're poor, they do not see themselves as poor, just not rich YET.</p>

		<p><i>Of Mice and Men</i> was written during the Depression-era. 25% unemployment with higher levels of inequality (wealth, race, gender).</p> <p>Today, less see the American Dream as possible. Inequality is higher than ever and wages have not inflated nearly as much as house prices.</p>
Relevance Quotes	<p>FIND LOTS OF QUOTES!!!!</p> <p>I have not included these as I do not wish to give too much away...</p>	