Student Name: _____
Mrs. Willhardt
English 10
Trimester 1

Possible Essay Topics for *Of Mice and Men*

Choose **ONE** of the essay topics below. Type a 5 paragraph essay on the topic using standard English conventions (correct quotation formatting, essay outline, capitals, periods, italic titles, and more).

1. **Dreams**…..Steinbeck's novel *Of Mice and Men* makes the world seem like a cruel place where dreams can't come true. Write a response that discusses three of the characters' experiences in a cruel world where dreams do not come true.

2. **Discrimination**….Look at the various examples of discrimination in *Of Mice and Men.* How does discrimination affect different characters? How do characters respond to discrimination, and how does it affect their lives, and the outcome of the story?

3. **Friendship**…. How does Steinbeck portray friendship in *Of Mice and Men?* How does its presence or absence affect different characters, in their actions and in their relationships? What does it require of people, and what does it offer them in return?

4. **Loneliness**….Many characters in Steinbeck's novel *Of Mice and Men* are plagued by loneliness and alienation and are searching for friendship and acceptance. Write a response that explains how three of the characters are plagued by loneliness and alienation and are searching for friendship and acceptance.

5. **Innocents**….Innocent characters (people and animals) suffer in John Steinbeck's novel *Of Mice and Men.* Write a response that explains which characters are innocent victims and suffer in the novel.

6. **Females**….Analyze Steinbeck's portrayal of Curley's wife as the lone female on the all-male ranch. What ways does Curley's wife exercise power over others and in what ways is she subject to the power of others? What impression does he create of women? Use direct quotations and specific examples to support your views.

Final Essay Requirements
Five paragraphs (introduction, three body paragraphs, conclusion)
- Clear thesis
- Three distinct supporting ideas
- At least TWO direct quotations per body paragraph (SIX total)
- Accurate parenthetical citations
- Explanation after each quotation
- Correct grammar and formatting

Essay Outline

Introduction:

Hook: Not a question

Background: Introduces title, author, and short summary not from the internet

Background: Introduces your topic- define the topic (probably the bold word in the prompt)

Thesis: Statement about what you are trying to prove

Body Paragraphs (3):



R — Restate/Respond: Begin with the distinct idea this paragraph will explain.

A — Answer: Develop that idea and its connection to your thesis.

C — Cite evidence: Set the scene, introduce a relevant direct quotation, and cite it accurately.

E — Explain: Analyze what the quotation reveals; go beyond plot summary and connect it to your thesis.

C + E — Repeat with a SECOND quotation and explanation.

S — Sum it up: End with a confident statement that wraps up the paragraph.

Body paragraph pattern: R → A → C → E → C → E →S

Conclusion:

Restate thesis: Use different words, must be arguable

Connect to world: How can this apply outside this specific novel

Call to Action: What can the reader of this essay do

Standards-Based Grading Rubric

HP = Highly Proficient • P = Proficient • AP = Approaching Proficient • LP = Limited Proficiency • NE = No Evidence

Standard	HP	P	AP	LP	NE
RL.1 Textual Evidence & Analysis	Purposeful, compelling quotations; insightful, thorough analysis that reveals deeper meaning.	At least two relevant quotations per body paragraph; explains how each supports the interpretation.	Some evidence, but it may be insufficient or weak; explanation often becomes summary.	Little relevant evidence or explanation.	No usable textual evidence or analysis.
W.2 Explanatory Writing	Insightful, focused thesis; fully develops a thoughtful literary interpretation with precise explanation.	Clear thesis responding to the chosen prompt; develops three distinct supporting ideas with explanations.	Thesis or ideas are unclear, repetitive, or insufficiently developed.	Unclear focus; minimal explanation or mostly plot retelling.	No identifiable focus or meaningful explanation.
W.4 Organization & Coherence	Exceptionally coherent and purposeful; introduction, RACES paragraphs, and conclusion work together smoothly.	Organized five-paragraph essay with introduction, three RACES body paragraphs, and conclusion; logical progression.	Recognizable structure, but paragraphs or transitions may be incomplete or disconnected.	Major components missing or organization difficult to follow.	Insufficient writing to assess organization.
L.1 Grammar & Usage	Consistent, independent command of grammar, usage, and sentence structure; polished writing.	Generally correct grammar, usage, and sentence structure; errors do not obscure meaning.	Inconsistent control; errors sometimes distract from meaning.	Frequent errors interfere with clarity.	Pervasive errors or insufficient writing prevent assessment.

Grading note: HP reflects depth and independence—not simply more quotations or a longer essay. Literary analysis should explain significance rather than merely summarize events.

Quotation punctuation, page-number citations, and document formatting are assignment requirements; L.1 specifically assesses grammar and usage.