

Literary Analysis Sheet

• title

Of Mice And Men

• author

John Steinbeck

• genre

fiction (tragedy)

• date of publication

1937

• literary era

modern

• information about the era
(historical, philosophical, etc.)

The stock market crashed in 1929

Crop prices dropped after World War I.

John Steinbeck's novels portrayed the struggle of migrant workers in California during the Great Depression

• setting

mid-1930s; on a ranch south of Soledad, in Central California

1) by a pond

2) in the bunkhouse

3) in Crooks' room

(explain the significance of the setting)

"If you get into trouble, I want you to come right here and hide in the brush." This quote shows how important the pond was in the plot of the novella. Also, the bunkhouse seemed to be a very public place. While Crooks' room seemed a very private place. In reality, the bunkhouse drove people to isolate themselves, and in the scene in Crooks' room, all of the characters just walked in - in a public way.

• important details about the author
(style, philosophies, criticism, etc.)

Steinbeck is known for his characterization in his novels. Readers can identify with the characters. He often uses his native California as a backdrop for his novels. He started his professional life as a reporter who followed migrant workers. This led to a deep sympathy for their causes.

• plot bullets

- 1) George and Lenny look for the ranch on which they intend to work. They stop at a pond.
- 2) It is revealed that Lenny got in trouble at the last place they worked.
- 3) They get to the ranch and meet the men, including Curly, the antagonist of the novella.
- 4) George warns Lenny to stay away from Curly's wife.
- 5) Lenny defends himself against Curly and crushes Curly's hand.
- 6) Lenny kills his puppy and tries to hide the puppy.
- 7) Lenny kills Curly's wife.
- 8) The men hunt for Lenny to kill him.
- 9) George kills Lenny.

• literary techniques

(identify and define three literary techniques found in the work)

- 1) **Foreshadowing** - when the author gives verbal hints that suggest what is to come later.
- 2) **Imagery** - a word or phrase that addresses the senses, suggesting mental pictures of sights, sounds, smells, tastes, feelings, or actions.
- 3) **Dialect** - the language of a particular place, class, or group of persons.

(quote one example of each - with page number or line number, then explain your choice)

- 1) Candy said, "I ought to have shot that dog myself, George. I shouldn't ought to of let no stranger shoot my dog," (pg 60). This directly translates to George and Lennie, signifying that if anyone ever has to kill Lennie, George will be the one to do it.
- 2) "... and he walked heavily, dragging his feet a little, the way a bear drags his paws." (pg 4) When he describes him walking like this you picture him slow with poor posture - you can actually picture a bear.
- 3) "Just thought I'd tell ya," said Crooks. "He's takin' 'em outa the nest and handlin' them. That won't do them no good." (pg 33) Steinbeck used this technique to show that Crooks probably did not have a high level of education.

• important quotes

(quote three important passages found in the work - with page number or line number)

- 1) "Guys like us, that work on ranches, are the loneliest guys in the world. They got no family. They don't belong no place... With us it ain't like that. We got a future." (pg 9)
- 2) I seen hundreds of men come by on the road an' on the ranches, with their bindles on their back an' that same damn thing in their heads ... every damn one of 'em's got a little piece of land in his head. (pg 4B)
- 3) A water snake glided smoothly up the pool and it swam the length of the pool and came to the legs of a motionless heron that stood in the shallows. A silent head and beak lanced down and plucked it out by the head, and the beak swallowed the little snake while its tail waved frantically. (Pg 64)

(explain the significance of each, or explain how it relates to the text as a whole)

- 1) George and Lennie's friendship form the heart of the novella. Steinbeck idealizes male friendships, suggesting that they are the most satisfying way to overcome loneliness.
- 2) After Lennie shares with Crooks his plan to buy a farm with George and raise rabbits, Crooks tries to deflate Lennie's hopes. He injects the scene with a sense of reality, reminding the reader that the dream of a farm is, after all, only a dream.
- 3) The images of the valley and mountains, the climbing sun, and the shaded pool suggest a natural paradise, like the Garden of Eden. This paradise, however, is lost. The snake that glides through the waters without harm at the beginning of the story is now unsuspectingly snatched from the world of the living.

• character name	• relationship to others	• brief description	• purpose in the text
1) Lennie	main character, best friend of George	large, lumbering, childlike, completely depends on George	is a static character, achieves sympathy through helplessness
2) George	main character, best friend of Lennie	small, wiry, quick witted, devoted to Lennie	is a dynamic character, achieves sympathy through love and devotion
3) Candy	the bunkhouse "swamper", later friend of George and Lennie	aging farm hand, missing a hand from a farm accident	represented the aging population
4) Curley	boss' son, former boxer, runs the day-to-day on the ranch	confrontational, mean spirited, aggressive, young	embodied conflict and unrest, also represents youth
5) Curley's Wife	Curley's wife, small town girl, only woman on the ranch	dresses "fancy", only woman in the story	represents temptation
6) Crooks	black farmhand who lives in the barn, friend to no one	crooked back but broken in other ways too, skeptical	represents marginalized population
7) Slim	"jack line skinner", drives the horsecart, the true authority figure on the ranch	seems at peace, highly skilled	represented calm, moral center
8) Carlson	a ranch hand who shoots Candy's dog	complains a lot	acted as an acolyte of Slim
9) The Boss	the man who is in charge of the ranch, appears only once	sticky, well dressed, fair minded, gives freely at Christmas time	acted as a foil to his son
10) Aunt Clara	Lennie's aunt who cared for him until her death	kind, patient, gave Lennie mice to pet	filled George's role before he came on the scene

• identify and explain key symbols, metaphors, and motifs

George and Lennie's Farm - it seduces both the characters and the readers with a desire for the possibility of the freedom it promises

Lennie's Puppy - Lennie will soon meet a fate similar to that of his small puppy. Like an innocent animal, Lennie is unaware of the vicious powers around him.

Candy's Dog - Candy's dog represents the fate awaiting anyone who has outlived his or her purpose.

• identify and explain possible theme(s) in the text

Dreams, Hopes and Plans - They are the very foundation of what makes life worth living, but they are also double-edged. The closer one comes to fulfilling a dream, the closer one comes to potentially being disappointed.

Freedom and Confinement - Though the men on the ranch work outside, socialize with each other, and are free to leave whenever they please, they still feel locked into their lives.

• describe the opening scene and explain its significance

The clearing into which Lennie and George wander evokes Eden in its serenity and beauty. Steinbeck wisely opens the novella with this idyllic scene, for it creates a background for the idealized friendship between the men.

• describe the closing scene and explain its significance

Back at the pond from chapter one, George shoots Lennie. The grim note on which the story closes suggests that dreams have no place in a world filled with such injustice and adversity.

• describe the major conflict in the text

man vs. society - neither men have the abilities or means to achieve the dreams they have in the society in which they live

• point of view

third-person omniscient - A narrator who can access the point of view of any character as required by the story

• explain how this compares to another piece of literature you have read in this past

Of Mice And Men reminds me of some of Steinbeck's other work, especially The Grapes Of Wrath. They were both about migrants in 1930s California. They also both dealt with similar themes like loyalty and freindship. It also reminded me of the the book (and film) No Country For Old Men. The setting was essentially the same and they were both, in many ways, about isolation.

• create three potential essay prompts

- 1) Does the dream farm mean the same thing to Lennie as it does to George? What does it mean to each of them?
- 2) Are there some circumstances under which it's simply better to be alone? Does George have to learn this lesson the hard way?
- 3) Crooks has his own room. Is this space representative of freedom, or of confinement?