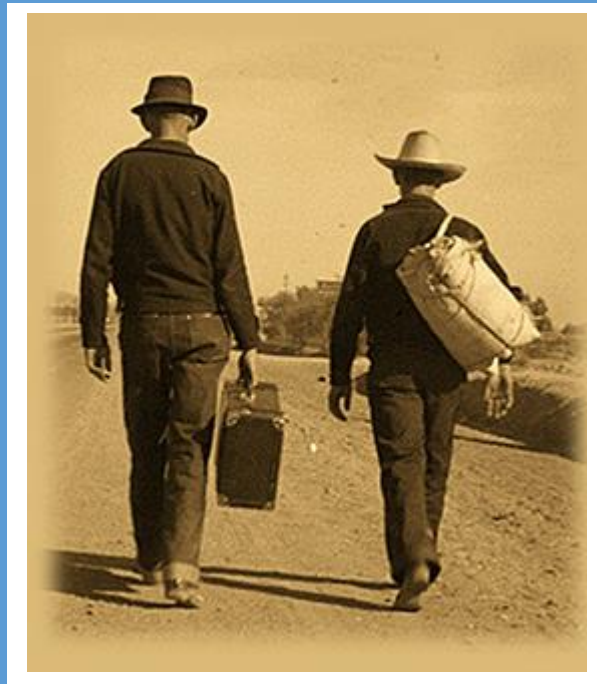


OF MICE AND MEN

Revision Guide



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English Literature Unit 1 Exam Overview and Guidance

Overview of the exam:

- ▶ 2 hours
- ▶ 1 hour Section A (Of Mice and Men)
- ▶ 1 hour Section B (Unseen Poetry Comparison)
- ▶ Read page references
- ▶ Don't forget to answer Section B!

SECTION A – Of Mice and Men

- ▶ Find the appropriate page numbers
- ▶ Remember – answer the extract question and only one essay question
- ▶ Extract – 20mins (10 marks)
- ▶ Essay – 40mins (20 marks)

For the extract question (10 marks – only 20mins and no more!):

- ▶ Only one extract (no choice)
- ▶ Read the question and find the focus
- ▶ Character or mood and atmosphere focus?
- ▶ Remember – mood and atmosphere = feelings
- ▶ Track through and find 8-10 points
- ▶ Opening sentence – why is the extract important? What part of the text is it from? Anything important just before/during/after the extract?

For the essay question (20 marks – 40mins only and then move on to Section B):

- ▶ Choice out of two essay questions
- ▶ Usually one on character and one on theme
- ▶ Foundation tier – use the bullet points to help (if provided)
- ▶ Identify the focus of the question – keep referring to the question for each new point in your essay
- ▶ Cover 8 key moments/points tracking your way through from start to finish (include at least one or two quotations for each point of your essay)
- ▶ Introduction – Make an overall comment on theme or character
- ▶ Conclusion – sum up overall ideas on theme or character

SECTION B – Unseen Poetry

- ▶ Don't forget to turn to Section B in the exam!
- ▶ Read the sentence above the poems that explains the linking theme – this is vital!
- ▶ Read each poem – highlight 8 points/quotations to analyse from each poem
- ▶ Use the STAMP approach to analyse each poem if you prefer
- ▶ Write about the first poem
- ▶ Write about the second poem and make your comparison points with the first – similarly to the first poem...on the other hand this demonstrates...this contrasts with the first poem because...

Part One

George Milton and Lennie Small, two itinerant farm labourers, are on their way to work on a ranch by the Salinas River in California. They stop for the night by a pool in the river. They talk about their life together and their dream for the future.

Comments on Part One

1. Steinbeck sets the scene as carefully as if he were giving directions to a scene painter. His description of the clearing by the pool in the river is vivid and almost poetic. The mood is one of harmony and the language lyrical: water twinkles and mountains flame with light.
2. The arrival of the two men disturbs the tranquil atmosphere. The rabbits hurry silently for cover and the heron flaps quickly away at the sound of the men's footsteps.
3. The two men are vividly described and strongly contrasted. George is small, quick, dark, sharp and restless. Lennie is large, heavy and ponderous. Lennie drags his feet "the way a bear drags his paws". He drinks water from the pool like an animal "snorting into the water like a horse".
4. George's guardianship over Lennie is quickly established as he tries to prevent him drinking the scummy water. George also takes care of Lennie's work card for him and provides him with his evening meal. As the novel progresses we learn more and more about what George has to do to protect Lennie from the consequences of his own actions.
5. When the two men begin to speak the style changes. The men speak in a down-to-earth, colloquial way, in keeping with their lifestyle. Their language is ungrammatical and slangy and the author's spelling recreates their speech patterns. But each man's language reflects his personality too. George's first words are spoken sharply, telling Lennie off for drinking dirty water. George's language is often sharp and commanding, not only to Lennie but to other characters too. His speech is logical, ordered and coherent, the product of an ordered mind. Lennie's first words are words of happy satisfaction as he quenches his thirst. Lennie's language is often disjointed as he struggles to remember things, or he repeats things over and over again in an effort to memorise them. When people talk to him, Crooks and Curley's wife, for example, his response shows that he hasn't been listening. He obviously lives in a world of his own, and he often talks aloud to himself.
6. Lennie is described in animal terms. He is happy when his physical appetites, for food and drink for example, are satisfied. He takes a child-like pleasure in dabbling "his big paw" in the water and in petting soft, furry animals. He cries like a baby when George throws away his dead mouse, but his brute strength makes him dangerous, as the fate of the mice shows. He looks up to George and imitates his actions. The author shows Lennie's good nature and gentleness by the words he uses to describe his actions. Lennie "smiled happily", "looked timidly", "said softly", "Lennie's face broke into a delighted smile", "Lennie grinned with relief".
7. By contrast with Lennie, George appears sullen and bad tempered, "George stared morosely", "He said angrily", George "jerked down the brim of his hat and scowled". He is angry because the bus driver dropped them off too soon and he curses first the bus driver and then Lennie. George swears a lot. His swearing could just be a feature of the language used by farm labourers, or it could be a sign of his frustration at constantly being on the move to keep Lennie out of trouble.

8. As George and Lennie's conversation progresses we begin to see how slow-witted Lennie is, and how much George has to do for him. We also get a hint of some trouble in their immediate past, in a place called Weed. Lennie stroked a girl's dress. She jerked back and Lennie held on. The girl yelled and George and Lennie were forced to leave town and hide in an irrigation ditch all day while the posse were looking for them. George tells Lennie to come back to the pool and hide in the bushes "....if you jus' happen to get in trouble like you always done before."
9. Lennie is upset because George is angry. He has enough human guile (some might say animal cunning) to make George feel sorry for him by offering to go and live on his own in a cave. The paradox here is that Lennie is the least able of the characters in the book to live alone and be self-sufficient. He relies totally on George. He seeks out the companionship of Crooks on the only occasion George leaves him on the ranch. He likes George to talk to him and re-tell the story of their dream for the future. Lennie is also very sensitive to people's moods and feelings, but he doesn't know how to react to them and is easily made afraid.
10. ".....somebody'd shoot you for a coyote if you was by yourself." George accepts totally his responsibility towards Lennie. It is ironic (but perhaps inevitable) that George ends up doing precisely what he fears for Lennie. This conversation at the beginning of the novel establishes the fact that Lennie could not survive alone and helps us to understand George's motives in shooting Lennie at the end.
11. "....because I got you to look after me, and you got me to look after you ". The relationship between George and Lennie is to some extent reciprocal. Lennie certainly couldn't survive without George but George also gains something from the relationship. He might derive a certain amount of protection from Lennie's enormous size and strength, but he also has companionship and a sense of purpose in life.
12. "An' live off the fatta the lan'." George and Lennie have a dream for the future, that they will one day have a little farm of their own and "live off the fat of the land" living comfortably with plenty to eat.

Vocabulary

Soledad	a small town on the Salinas River
the Salinas River	a river that flows through Southern California and into the Pacific Ocean
Gabilan Mountains	a range of mountains around Soledad
'coons	racoons, small furry animals a bit like badgers
bundle	roll of blankets bound with string
jungle-up	making camp
a stilted heron	a water bird with long legs (like stilts)
Murray and Ready's	a work agency. During the depression in America in the 1930's there were many unemployed men tramping about the country looking for work. Agencies were set up by the government to direct men to where workers were needed. The men were given work cards to identify them to their new employer.
Weed	a small town in California
bucking	hoisting, throwing - like a person being thrown off a horse
thrashin' machines	threshing machines which separate the grains of wheat from the stalks
bucks	dollars
cat-house	brothel
pool	a game similar to snooker
hot water	trouble
coyote	a type of wild dog
blow their stake	waste their money
poundin' their tail	working hard
blowin' in our jack	wasting our money
brush	bushes

Section A Getting to know the text

Make your answers as full as possible to help you with your revision.

1. Where and when do we first meet George and Lennie?
2. Describe George in your own words.
3. Describe Lennie in your own words.
4. Why does George tell Lennie not to drink so much water?
5. Why is George angry with the bus driver?
6. Where are George and Lennie going?
7. How did they get the jobs they are going to?
8. Why does George tell Lennie not to say anything when they get to the ranch?
9. Why does George decide they will spend the night out by the pool?
10. Describe what happens with the mouse. What does the incident show us about George and Lennie?
11. What happened in Weed?
12. Write about George and Lennie's plans for the future.

Section B

1. Begin character files on each of the two main characters.
2. We judge or form opinions about people by what they do and what they say, and also by the way in which they speak.
 - a) What do you deduce about the social status of George and Lennie from the way they speak? How does their spoken language differ from what we consider to be Standard English? Give examples from the text.
 - b) How does the author convey the idea that George is in a bad mood?
 - c) What does Lennie do and say that gives the reader the idea that he is simple minded?
 - d) How does the author make the reader sympathetic to Lennie?
3. Describe the relationship between George and Lennie. Explain what you think each of them gets out of it.

Remember to put all quotations inside quotation marks.

Part Two

George and Lennie arrive at the ranch. They are met by Candy, an old swamper who shows them into the bunk-house. The boss interviews them. They meet Curley the boss' son who takes dislike to Lennie. Curley's wife comes to the bunk-house door to talk to them. At dinner time the workmen return from the fields and George and Lennie meet Slim and Carlson. Carlson suggest that Candy's old dog should be put down and Slim should give Candy a pup to raise.

Comments on Part Two

1. All the action in Part Two takes place in the bunk-house. Again we see at the beginning of the scene how carefully Steinbeck describes the setting. The language used to describe the bunk-house is plain, functional, utilitarian, like the bunk-house itself. Steinbeck only waxes lyrical when describing natural phenomena, like the flies shooting through the bar of sunlight "like rushing stars" or "like sparks". Characters enter and leave the bunk-house like actor entering and leaving a stage.

2. By viewing the men's living quarters in this way we get some understanding of their way of life. George is angered but not unduly surprised, by the idea that the bunk-house beds might be infested with fleas and lice.
3. "Nigger" is an insulting term for Negro and today would only be used as a deliberate insult, but in the 1930s men of this type would use the term naturally and without thinking. In 1930s America black people were not seen as equals by many white people, and segregation, separate facilities for blacks and whites, was normal in many places. Crooks, the negro stable hand, does not live in the bunk-house with the other men. He has a room of his own out in the stables. At Christmas the men let Crooks into the bunk-house to celebrate Christmas with them and when one of the men, Smitty, picks a fight with Crooks, the men stop Smitty from using his feet because Crooks has got a crooked back. The men are on the whole insensitive to Crooks' feelings, but they also have their own code of conduct and ideas about what is fair.
4. ".....what the hell's he got on his shoulder?" Curley's attitude to Lennie is so aggressive that George wonders what kind of a chip he has on his shoulder. Candy replies that "Curley's like a lot of little guys. He hates big guys".
5. George's warning that "Lennie's strong and quick and Lennie don't know no rules" is prophetic. It is precisely these qualities in Lennie that make him a danger to society and lead inevitably to tragedy.
6. Curley's advertising the fact that he keeps his hand "soft for his wife", shows a lack of respect for his wife. George recognises this when he says, "that's a dirty thing to tell around". Curley is, in a way, boasting about the sexual nature of his relationship with his wife. He is constantly bringing her sexuality to the notice of the men on the ranch by the way he buzzes about the place looking for her all the time. At the same time he also makes himself look ridiculous because his suspicion so clearly springs from insecurity and lack of confidence in his own manhood. His lack of trust also shows that they don't really love each other, as his wife later reveals. This relationship is never explored in any depth by the author but the friction which it generates creates tension in the novel and leads ultimately to its dramatic climax.
7. We first learn about Curley's wife from Candy, and in his opinion she is "a tart". He claims to have seen her flirting with Slim and Carlson although she has only been married to Curley for two weeks. Her appearance seems to confirm the opinion. She is heavily made up and wears tarty, red shoes. She poses provocatively in the doorway of the bunk-house and is always aware that the men are looking at her. She speaks "playfully". "She smiled archly and twitched her body". George's verdict on her is ".....what a tramp". He warns Lennie about her. "I never seen no piece of jail-bait worse than her".
8. As each of the characters enter the bunk-house we get a brief, economical description of their physical appearance. Their other attributes, like Curley's pugnacity or his wife's flirtatiousness are conveyed by their body language or by what they say. Steinbeck moves away from this pattern in his description of Slim. Slim is something more than "a jerkline skinner". He moves with "majesty". He is "the prince of the ranch". He has the natural confidence and authority of a master craftsman, and the other men respect him for that. There is a contrast here with the boss and Curley who try to maintain their authority by bullying. Beyond this, however, Steinbeck seems to invest Slim with some sort of superhuman or spiritual dimension, ".....his slow speech had overtones not of thought, but of understanding beyond thought". There is a clashing incongruity, however, when he speaks. His opening observation to George and Lennie is coarse and down-to-earth.

9. George and Lennie were met with suspicion and hostility by the boss and his son Curley. Slim however, responds with friendliness. "He looked kindly" at them. "His voice was very gentle". "His tone was friendly". Slim has confidence in himself and his authority. He does not need to browbeat the newcomers. Slim proves himself to be a true friend to both George and Lennie several times in the few days the novel encompasses.
10. George says "This here ain't no set-up. I'm scared". His fear is caught by Lennie who wants to leave the ranch right away. What makes the ranch such a dangerous place? The men's lives are hard and sometimes violent. Both Candy and Crooks have been maimed by accident on the farm. The boss is a bit of a bully but he seems also to be a fair man. Curley is mean and aggressive and tries to prove his manhood by fighting. This aspect of his personality is made worse by his attractive, young wife flirting with the other men on the ranch. The other men seem to have taken a realistic view of her behaviour and learned to avoid her, but Lennie doesn't have enough sense to be able to handle the situation. Lennie only sees that she is pretty. Lennie is afraid of Curley, but George sees that it is Curley's wife that they need to be afraid of.

Vocabulary

burlap ticking	coarse material, like sacking, which covered the straw mattress.
vials	small glass jars and bottles
roaches	cockroaches
pants rabbits	lice, fleas etc.
swamper	cleaner
grey-backs	lice
my time	my pay for the time I have worked
tick	mattress cover
burned	angry
stable buck	the negro who looks after the stable
brang	brought
skinner	driver of a mule team (mule here means a type of horse)
took after	started a fight with
poop	energy
vest	waistcoat
Stetson	a cowboy hat
a bum steer	false or misleading information
buckers	loaders
rassel grain-bags	wrestle (lift and load) bags of grain
put up	lift
what you sellin?	what is your interest in this?
buck	load
flapper	mouth
handy	a good fighter
take after	pick a fight with
scraps	fight
punk	American slang meaning a worthless person
game	brave
slough	cast off skin (He'd skin me)
canned	sacked, dismissed
solitaire	a card game for one player
purty	pretty
she got the eye	she's a flirt
pant's is full of ants	restless, uncomfortable
jerkline skinner	driver who can control a team of mules with a single rein to the lead animal
no set up	not a desirable place to be
sock	punch, hit

the can	sacked, dismissed
plug himself up	make a reputation for himself
trace chains	chains on the traces which harness a team of mules together
let 'im have it	hit him hard
mules	backless, high-heeled shoes or slippers
bridled	lifted her head (she was aware of being looked at)
jail-bait	the sort of woman who could get a man sent to prison
take the rap	get the blame, suffer the consequences
two bits	a quarter, twenty five cents
in the poke	saved
pan gold	small nuggets of gold are sometimes found in river beds and can be washed out in shallow pans
a pocket	a vein of gold
the wheelers butt	the flank (rear end) of the lead animal
slang	gave birth to
in heat	ready for mating

Section A

Make your answers as full as possible to help you with your revision.

1. What time is it when George and Lennie reach the ranch?
2. Describe Candy, the old swamper.
3. What does George have in his bindle?
4. Why is the boss annoyed with George and Lennie?
5. What sort of person is the boss?
6. What do we learn about Crooks the stable buck?
7. Describe the boss.
8. Why is the boss suspicious of George?
9. Why does George get angry with Candy?
10. Describe Curley, the boss' son.
11. Why does Curley try to pick a quarrel with Lennie?
12. What does George tell Lennie to do if Curley hits him?
13. Describe Curley's wife.
14. Why does George warn Lennie about Curley's wife?
15. Write a description of Slim.
16. What is Slim's attitude to George and Lennie?
17. What does Carlson want Slim to do?
18. Why does Lennie get excited?

Section B

1. Add to your character files on George and Lennie.
2. Begin character files on Candy, Crooks, Slim, Curley and Curley's wife.

Part Three

George and Lennie spend the evening with the men on the ranch. Lennie plays with his pup in the barn while George talks with Slim in the bunk-house. Carlson takes Candy's old dog out to shoot him. Slim goes out to the barn to see to one of his mules. Candy overhears George and Lennie talking about their plans for a farm of their own and wants to join them. Later Slim returns to the bunk-house with Curley. Curley picks a fight with Lennie and Lennie crushes Curley's hand. Slim persuades Curley to say it was an accident, and that he had caught his hand in a machine on the farm.

Comments on Part Three

1. As in Part Two all the action takes place inside the bunk-house. Anything that happens outside the bunk-house is suggested by sounds, "noises off", or is reported by characters coming into the bunk-house. Even lighting effects are described in such a way as to suggest stage-directions.
2. George and Lennie's friendship seems strange because most of the men who wander from ranch to ranch working, do so alone. George explains their odd relationship to Slim by giving him a brief history of their life together. This is the longest speech George makes in the novel, and his tone of voice when talking to Slim differs from that which he normally uses. "George's voice was taking on the tone of confession." Steinbeck here puts Slim into the role of confessor or priest, a role which becomes important at the end of the novel when Slim absolves George of any guilt for the shooting of Lennie. (In the Catholic Church, and in some Anglican Churches, it is the practice for church members to confess or tell their sins to their priest. If they are truly sorry for what they have done, and are resolved not to do it again, the priest will grant them absolution or pardon)
3. George also tells Slim about what happened in Weed. Bits of this story have already been suggested to the reader in Parts One and Two. The incident in Weed has features which point ominously to what is to come. Lennie is attracted to the girl's pretty dress. When she screams he holds on tight. The reader is left in suspense. George and Slim might be reassured by the knowledge that Lennie "ain't mean", but we know that Lennie never meant to kill his pet mice, but they are dead none the less. Lennie might have all the innocence of a child, ".....he's jes' like a kid", but he also has a child's ignorance and inability to foresee the consequences of his actions. All this is coupled with extraordinary physical strength which he can't control, as the incident with Curley shows.
4. "I wisht somebody'd shoot me if I get old an' a cripple" Slim says about Candy's dog. But Candy's dog is like Candy himself. The men lead a hard life and there is no place in it for sentimentality. The old dog is shot. The newly-born pups are drowned. Candy knows that when he can't work anymore he will be turned away from the ranch. The men lead lonely lives and have nothing to look forward to at the end. Candy is upset at losing his oldest friend and companion. The men understand his feelings and are sympathetic but they know that Carlson is right. Carlson leads the dog out "gently". Slim reminds him to take a shovel to bury the dog so Candy won't be upset by seeing the body. The men are hard but they are basically decent.
5. "Ranch with a bunch of guys on it ain't no place for a girl, specially like her". George continues to brood and speculate upon Curley's wife as a possible source of trouble. But is she a problem because of who she is (remember she hasn't even got a name) or because of what she is? This is a world of men, the sort of men who rarely form stable relationships. Their contact with women seems to be restricted to brief encounters with the prostitutes in the brothel on Saturday nights. Here "A guy can go in an' get drunk and get everything outa his system all at once, an' no messes" It is little wonder then that Curley's wife is not seen as a person at all. She is simply a desirable sexual object, and one which Curley thinks he owns.
6. Curley's attack on Lennie is a reflection of the macho, male environment these men live in. Men must be seen to be hard and tough. Curley feels that because he is small he has to prove himself by taking on men bigger than himself, but as Candy has said earlier the big man is in a "no-win" situation. Added to this of course is the problem that Curley is suspicious that his wife is flirting with the men and he is afraid of looking a fool in the men's eyes. This is why he goes mad when he thinks Lennie is laughing at him. It is possible to say, as George does, that the trouble is caused by Curley's wife and the way she behaves, but she wouldn't be a problem if the men didn't have such possessive, chauvinistic attitudes. If we look at George's attitude to women generally in the novel it is difficult to escape the conclusion that he is a confirmed misogynist.

Vocabulary

horseshoe game	a game where horseshoes are thrown at a short stake in the ground with the object of encircling it.
fifty and found	fifty dollars wages and "all found" meaning food and lodging
cuckoo	a "crazy" person, an idiot
Auburn	a small town in California
people	family
fence picket	fencing post
Airedale	a type of dog
pulp magazine	a cheap magazine produced on poor quality paper
dime	ten cents
Luger	an old German pistol
euchre	an American card game
turning his hand	doing any work
roll up a stake	save some money
looloo	a good looking woman, or, a whore
yella-jackets in his drawers	wasps in his pants (restless with suspicion)
set you back	cost
a shot	a short drink
a flop	sexual intercourse (with one of the prostitutes in the brothel)
kewpie doll	a baby doll with wings (like a cherub)
phonograph	gramophone, record player
gettin' burned	catching a disease
goo-goos	the meaning is obscure. It could mean "do-gooders" or cheap whore or Negroes.
hoosegow	prison
San Quentin	a maximum security prison in America
'cots	apricots
alfalfa	Lucerne, a crop grown for feeding cattle
Jap cook	Japanese cook-the implication being that ranches employed cheap immigrant labour as cooks.
flat bust	broke, haven't got any money
kick off	die
on the county	on welfare or social security
We'll do her	we will do it
yella	yellow, coward
welter	welter-weight boxer
candy wagon	a light wagon or buggy
lit intil	lit into, attacked

Section A

Make your answers as full as possible to help you with your revision.

1. Why does Slim think George and Lennie's friendship is unusual?
2. Explain briefly in your own words, how George and Lennie came to be friends.
3. Explain briefly, in your own words, what happened in Weed.
4. How does Carlson persuade Candy to let him shoot his old dog?
5. What does Slim add to the argument?
6. How do the men in the bunk-house react when Carlson takes the dog out?
7. What does Whit say about Curley's wife?
8. Where do the men go on Saturday nights?
9. Write about George and Lennie's dream for the future.

10. Why does Candy want to join George and Lennie?
11. What does George decide to do?
12. Write about Curley's attack on Lennie, in your own words.
13. What happens to Curley?
14. How does Slim persuade Curley to say it was an accident?

Section B

1. Add to your character files on all major characters.
2. Write two or three paragraphs about the sort of life the ranch hands live.
3. Write about the incident in Weed in one of the following ways:
 - a) Draw out Wanted posters for the two men giving descriptions of the fugitives and the crime they are wanted for.
 - b) Write a newspaper article about the incident for the local newspaper. Remember to interview the victim and any witnesses.
 - c) Turn the incident into a short story told from the victim's point of view.

Part Four

On Saturday evening most of the men from the ranch go into town. Crooks is in his room in the barn when first Lennie and then Candy come in to talk to him. As they are talking Curley's wife comes in to talk. The men get upset when she asks about Curley's hand and tell her to go. She goes when the men get back from town and George comes in looking for Lennie.

Comments on Part Four

1. All the action in Part Four takes place in Crooks' room, the harness room attached to the barn. Again the author describes the scene in minute detail, right down to "a drippy can of tar", and a well used copy of an out-of-date law book.
2. Crooks obviously resents the fact that he isn't wanted in the bunk-house. He gets lonely being alone so much and understands why George puts up with Lennie because even the company of somebody as dumb as Lennie is better than having nobody to talk to.
3. "I ain't a southern negro". Crooks was born in California and hasn't been used to the sort of segregation still practised in the South in the 1930s. Steinbeck himself recalls (in *Travels with Charley*) that there was only one Negro family in Salinas where he grew up. The family were well respected and the three boys of that family went to school with the white children. In the south at this time there were separate schools for black and white children, and black people were treated as second class citizens. It is significant that it is the lower class workers who shun Crooks. The only people who have been in his room prior to Lennie's visit are Slim and the boss.
4. "They'll take you to the booby hatch. They'll tie ya up with a collar, like a dog". Crooks is just being nasty and trying to frighten Lennie, but there is a grain of truth in what he says. It is the thought that this might indeed happen to Lennie that causes George to shoot him. This links the shooting of Candy's dog with the shooting of Lennie. The dog was old and crippled physically, Lennie is crippled mentally.

5. "Lennie's eyes centred and grew quiet and mad" Lennie senses danger and whenever he feels threatened he becomes dangerous.
6. ".....every damn one of 'em's got a little piece of land in his head. An' never a god-damn one of 'em ever gets it". George and Lennie's dream is obviously shared by thousands of these migrant workers who wander from farm to farm working for other people. Crooks knows that in reality none of them ever succeed, but just for a moment he suspends his disbelief long enough to wish to share the dream.
7. "They left all the weak ones here," Curley's wife says. It's Saturday night and the men have gone into town to the whore-house. Even Curley has gone. They left behind the old cripple, the Negro, the half-wit and the woman. These are the outsiders. They are excluded from the 'macho' male society of the ranch hands. But how healthy and how 'normal' is that society? These men live strange, isolated lives. They seem to have broken any family ties. They are alienated from the wider society, and even from each other. "You're all scared of each other," Curley's wife says. They move from place to place and "never seem to give a damn about nobody." (Slim says in Part Three) They spend any money they earn on gambling, drink and prostitutes, and they end up with nothing.
8. "I could get you strung up on a tree so easy it ain't even funny." Prejudice against Negroes was such at this time that a black man would be lynched at the mere suggestion that he had laid a hand on a white woman. Bear in mind, however, that Lennie narrowly escaped a similar fate in Weed.

Vocabulary

hame	a piece of carved wood or metal forming part of the collar of a draught horse or mule
nail-keg	a small wooden barrel for holding nails
took a powder	went away
booby hatch	lunatic asylum, mental home
rummy	a card game
blackjack	a card game
baloney	nonsense
bindle bums	tramps
pitchers	pictures, movies
bindle stiffs	worthless tramps
dum-dum	idiot
floosy idears	wrong ideas. A floosy is a tart
corn	whisky
doped out	figured out, worked out

Section A

Make your answers as full as possible to help you with your revision.

1. Where does Crooks, the stable buck live?
2. Why does Crooks have more personal possessions than the other men?
3. Write a description of Crooks, in your own words.
4. What was Crooks doing when Lennie came to his room?
5. Why does Crooks tell Lennie to get out of his room?
6. Why has Lennie come out to talk to Crooks?
7. What does Crooks say that upsets Lennie?

8. Why is Crooks surprised to see Candy in the doorway?
9. What does Crooks say about Slim?
10. What does Crooks think about George and Lennie and Candy getting their own place?
11. Why does Curley's wife come to talk to them?
12. What does she say about Curley as a husband?
13. Why is Candy suddenly not afraid of getting the sack?
14. What does Curley's wife say to Crooks to reduce him to nothing?
15. Why do you think Candy and Crooks were so antagonistic to Curley's wife?
16. Why is George annoyed to find Lennie and Candy in Crooks' room?

Section B

1. Add to your character files on all main characters.

Part Five

It is Sunday afternoon. All the men on the ranch are outside playing in a horse-shoe tournament. Lennie is in the barn with his dead puppy. Curley's wife comes in to talk to him. During the conversation she invites him to stroke her hair. When Lennie starts stroking her hair with his heavy hand she gets annoyed and then she gets scared. She screams and struggles to escape. Lennie panics. He has one hand on her head and the other round her mouth. He shakes her and breaks her neck. Lennie sneaks out of the barn to go and hide in the bushes where George told him to. Candy comes into the barn and sees the body of Curley's wife. He goes out and brings George in. George goes to the bunk-house to get Carlson's gun while Candy goes to get the other men. They send Whit into Soledad to get the sheriff. The men arm themselves with shotguns and go out after Lennie. Candy is left in the barn with the body.

Comments on Part Five

1. The action in Part Five takes place in the barn. The scene is set with precision. The atmosphere of a warm, lazy Sunday afternoon is suggested by the sunshine slicing in through the cracks between the plank walls of the barn and the horses resting quietly in their stalls. The action outside the barn is made clear by the shouts of the men and the clang of horse-shoes on the playing peg.
2. Lennie has been portrayed as a gentle giant. The other characters say he is "a nice fella" (Crooks in Part Four) and that "he ain't mean" (Slim in Part Three.) But like an animal or a small child he lacks the ability to make moral judgements. His only criteria for judging when he has done "a bad thing" is whether or not George is going to punish him for it. His sudden thought that George might punish him by not letting him tend the rabbits produces a violent angry reaction as he hurls the dead puppy from him. Lennie twice asks "Why do you got to get killed?" as if he himself had no personal responsibility in the killing.
3. The entrance of Curley's wife at this point is ominous. Lennie has progressed from killing soft, furry mice to killing soft, furry puppies. He is huge and strong. He likes petting soft things. He pets them to death. From this point on the reader knows what will happen. The suspense is in not knowing exactly when or how.
4. Curley's wife is pleased that Lennie beat Curley. She is impressed by Lennie's size and strength. She doesn't seem to realise the extent of Lennie's mental disability, possibly because she is not very bright herself. Curley's wife confides in Lennie in the same way that Crooks does. Lennie is an undemanding audience. He doesn't listen particularly to what is said to him and he doesn't often respond. He is just somebody to talk to. She tells Lennie about her own dream of being in the movies and in doing so reveals to the reader just how simple-minded and gullible she is.

She is taken aback for a moment by the intensity of Lennie's feelings about petting soft things, but then concedes that this is something she likes doing too. Then, fatally, she draws Lennie's attention to her own soft hair, and invites him to feel how soft it is. Is this just vanity or is it a sexual invitation? She is certainly vain and silly, but is she really a tart?

5. Lennie's big, heavy hand stroked harder. The sensuousness of the action certainly has sexual overtones and Lennie is in the grip of a powerful emotion he doesn't understand and can't control. Curley's wife began to panic and struggle. When she screamed Lennie began to panic and held her tighter. He shook her and "her body flopped like a fish". This is the same image as that used for Curley when he was in Lennie's grip. Man is part of nature. He has the same natural cycle. The death throes of a man, or woman, are the same as those of any other creature. "And then she was still, for Lennie had broken her neck." Death is sudden and final at the end of a violent struggle to survive. Lennie doesn't seem to feel any compassion for the things he kills. The only guilt he feels is that of disobeying George. He knows he has done "a bad thing" because he knows it is something George will punish him for. He thinks he can lessen the crime in George's eyes by taking away the dead puppy.
6. When Lennie leaves an atmosphere of peace and quiet descends on the barn. The moments before death were desperate and violent but death itself is quiet and peaceful. Slim's dog senses the presence of death and settles in among her puppies. Time seems to stand still about the dead girl. "And the meanness and the plannings and the discontent and the ache for attention were all gone from her face". In death nature has restored to Curley's wife her essential simplicity and innocence, things which the struggle to live and make "somethin' of myself" had taken away.
7. With the arrival of Candy the barn is alive again with the stamping and snorting of horses; life quickly reasserts itself in the presence of death.
8. "I ain't gonna let 'em hurt Lennie". George has considered what could happen to Lennie now and he has made his decision about what he has to do. He goes to the bunk-house to get Carlson's gun while Candy goes to tell the men what has happened. When he gets back to the barn George sends the men off in the wrong direction so he can get to Lennie first.
9. Candy realises that the end of Lennie means the end of the dream. Without Lennie, George hasn't got the heart to go on. Candy blames Curley's dead wife for destroying his hope of a future.
10. Curley reacts to his wife's death in the way that we would expect. He is angry and wants revenge. He sees this as an opportunity for getting his own back on Lennie for his crushed hand.
11. It is ironic that in taking Carlson's gun to protect Lennie, George ensures that the men will shoot him on sight because they think Lennie has the gun.

Vocabulary

tenement	tournament
mutt	dog
movies	moving pictures, the cinema
previews	screening of films for a celebrity audience before they are released to the general public
a natural	a natural actress or star
made a ringer	threw the horseshoe onto the peg
muss it up	mess it up, make it untidy

Section A

Make your answers as full as possible to help with your revision.

1. What are the men on the farm doing on Sunday afternoon?
2. What is Lennie doing in the barn?
3. Why is Lennie angry with the dead puppy?
4. Why does Curley's wife want to talk to Lennie?
5. What does Curley's wife talk about?
6. Why did she marry Curley?
7. What does Curley's wife daydream about?
8. What do Lennie and Curley's wife find they have in common?
9. Why do you think Curley's wife invites Lennie to stroke her hair?
10. Why does Lennie panic when she jerks her head away?
11. Do you think the death of Curley's wife was an accident? Give your reasons.
12. Where does Lennie go when he realises Curley's wife is dead?
13. Why does Curley call George to the barn on his own?
14. Why does George go to the bunk-house?
15. Why do the men think Lennie has a gun?
16. What does Curley tell the men to do?

Section B

1. Add to your character files on the major characters.
2. "Maybe they'll lock 'im up an' be nice to 'im." How realistic an option do you think this is? What do you think would happen to Lennie if he was caught? What does Slim have to say about it?
3. "You done it, didn't you?.....Ever'body knowed you'd mess things up." Candy blames Curley's wife for what happened. What do you think? George says "I should of knew,.....I guess maybe back in my head I did." Do you think George has any responsibility for what happened? Is Lennie to blame at all? What should society do about people like Lennie?

Part Six

Lennie is beside the pool by the Salinas River. He is feeling guilty about letting George down and he is worried that George might leave him. When George appears Lennie wants to be reassured by George telling him off like he has always done before when Lennie did anything wrong. George tells Lennie to sit down and look across the river while he tells him about their dream farm. Whilst he is talking George hears the men searching for Lennie getting nearer. George shoots Lennie in the back of the head. When the other men arrive they assume that George got the gun off Lennie and shot him. Slim seems to understand how George is feeling and attempts to comfort him.

Comments on Part Six

1. Part Six returns to the scene by the pool in the Salinas River. As in Part One it is late afternoon/ early evening and the valley is in shade as the sun lights up the tops of the mountains. (The timescale of the novel is from Thursday evening to Sunday evening.) The setting is idyllic, but death is there waiting to strike, as silent and swift as a heron plucking out a watersnake.

2. Lennie appears "as silently as a creeping bear moves." This image of Lennie, as a bear with his huge paws, has occurred several times throughout the novel. This time Lennie approaches the pool and drinks cautiously, like a hunted animal.
3. The conversations Lennie has with his dead Aunt Clara and the gigantic rabbit are Steinbeck's attempt to explore Lennie's mind. He hasn't done this with any other character and you will have to make up your own mind about how effective it is. Aunt Clara might be seen as representing Lennie's conscience, castigating him for letting George down yet again. The giant rabbit represents Lennie's suppressed fear that George will give up on him and leave him. Steinbeck shows here that despite Lennie's outward appearance, he is not an animal but a thinking, feeling human being who would suffer cruelly if taken away from George and locked up.
4. George tells Lennie to look across the river as he describes their dream farm. He makes it sound like heaven "Ain't gonna be no more trouble. Nobody gonna hurt nobody nor steal from 'em," and Lennie begs to go there. The implication here is clear; Lennie is going to die and he will go to heaven because he is innocent.
5. George uses the same gun to shoot Lennie as Carlson did to shoot Candy's old dog. He shoots him in the back of the head, just as the old dog was shot.
6. As soon as the other men come upon George and Lennie, Slim realises what has happened and how George feels about it. He goes to comfort George and absolves him of his guilt by assuring him "You hadda, George. I swear you hadda".

Vocabulary

bull's eye glasses	spectacles with thick glass that looks almost white with a dark centre.
Min' George	listen to George, pay attention to what he says
gingham	cotton fabric woven into a pattern of small coloured squares
stew the b'Jesus outa	make life difficult for, cause trouble for
jack you outa the sewer	keep you out of trouble
fambly	family

Section A

Make your answers as full as possible to help you with your revision.

1. What does Lennie think about while he's waiting for George?
2. What is Lennie most afraid of?
3. Why does George talk to Lennie about their dream farm?
4. Why does George shoot Lennie?
5. How can you tell George didn't want to shoot Lennie?
6. What does Slim do when the men reach George and Lennie?
7. What does Carlson suggest happened?
8. Do you think George was right to shoot Lennie? Give reasons.

Section B

1. Add to your character files on major characters.
2. Write about what you think might happen to George now.

ANGER AND VIOLENCE

Anger and violence are common features in Steinbeck's writing. Possibly because he writes mostly about men, men who are struggling to survive and to make a living in a hostile world. Sometimes it is nature who is the enemy, as in periods of drought. In *To A God Unknown* the farmer sacrifices himself to his god in an attempt to end a severe drought. Sometimes the enemy is his fellow man, as in *The Grapes Of Wrath* where the migrant workers are ruthlessly exploited by the land owners they come to work for.

In drama, as in life, anger produces tension between characters and anger often explodes into violence. Consider each of the six parts of the novel in turn. Which characters display anger? How is it displayed? What is the cause? What are the consequences? Which scenes explode into violence? What causes the violence? Why is violence dramatic?

Part One - The pool by the Salinas river

1. Why is George angry?
2. What does George do to make Lennie cry?
3. What is the significance of the dead mice?
4. Do we get any warning in this part about what might happen with Lennie?

Part Two - George & Lennie arrive at the ranch

The lives the men lead are hard and dangerous.

1. What has happened to Candy?
2. What has happened to Crooks?
3. Why is Curley so aggressive?
4. What does George say that warns us about what is going to happen?
5. What other incidents of casual violence are mentioned in this part?

Part Three - The fight in the bunk-house

1. What happens to Candy's dog?
2. What is the significance of this killing to what happens later?
3. Why is Curley so angry?
4. Why does Curley attack Lennie?
5. How does Lennie respond?
6. Why is this attack so dramatic?
7. How do the other men respond?
8. Why do people find violence exciting?

Part Four - Saturday night

1. Why does Crooks make Lennie angry?
2. Why does Crooks feel threatened when Lennie gets angry?
3. Why is Curley's wife so nasty when she comes to Crooks' room?
4. Why are the men so nasty to her?
5. What does she say that reduces Crooks to nothing?
6. Why is George angry when he finds Lennie and Candy in Crooks' room?

Part Five - The death of Curley's wife

1. How does this scene open?
2. Why does Lennie get angry with the dead puppy?
3. What do you think or feel at this point?
4. How does the scene with Lennie and Curley's wife suddenly change from a pleasant chat to fear, anger and violence?
5. Why is it suddenly quiet and peaceful when Curley's wife is dead?
6. How does Curley react to the death of his wife?
7. How do the other men react?
8. What makes this scene so dramatic?

Part Six - The death of Lennie

1. What is Lennie most afraid of?
2. How can you tell that George is upset about having to kill Lennie?
3. Why does the killing of Lennie seem less dramatic than the killing of Curley's wife?
4. What similarities are there between the shooting of Lennie and the shooting of Candy's dog?
5. What effect does the arrival of Curley and the other men have on this scene?

About the author

Steinbeck was born in Salinas, California in 1902. His family owned land in the area, but they were not rich. As a youth he loved the outdoors and nature, but he also read widely. He attended Salinas High School until 1919 when he went to Stanford University to study marine biology. He took a number of jobs to help him pay his way through university, including a job on a ranch near King City in the Salinas valley. He left university in 1925 without taking a degree, determined to be a writer. He had a number of jobs before his first novel, *Cup of Gold*, about the 17th century pirate Henry Morgan, was published in 1929.

Most of his early work is set in Southern California and describes the life of people working on the land. *The Pastures of Heaven* (1932), *To a God Unknown* (1933), *Tortilla Flat* (1935), *In Dubious Battle* (1936), *Of Mice and Men* (1937), *The Long Valley* (1938) and *The Red Pony* (1938) are all set in this area and portray realistically the lives of working men and women. The natural world he portrays is beautiful, but it is also wild and can be cruel and savage. His characters are often poor and oppressed, caught up in a battle for survival against nature or against their fellow men. Steinbeck's best known work, *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), is an account of a family from the impoverished Oklahoma dust bowl migrating to California during the economic depression of the 1930s. It was accepted not only as realistic fiction, but also as a moving document of social protest against the way such migrant workers were exploited.

The world Steinbeck portrays in his early novels and short stories is essentially a world of men, and violence is a common occurrence. His female characters are often peripheral to the action and briefly sketched in. There are no deep psychological insights into his characters and relationships are rarely explored. Relationships between men and women, in particular, are characterised by a lack of communication and so of incomprehension. Men and women rarely understand each other in Steinbeck's novels. Men's horses and dogs seem to be a more natural part of their lives than their women do.

During the war years Steinbeck worked for the American government and in 1943 he went to Europe as a war correspondent for the *New York Herald Tribune*. His later works include *The Moon is Down* (1942), *Cannery Row* (1944), *The Wayward Bus* (1947), *East of Eden* (1952), *The Winter of Our Discontent* (1961), and *America and Americans* (1968). In 1962 he wrote *Travels with Charley*, an autobiographical account of a trip across America with his pet poodle Charley. He lived the latter part of his life in New York City where he died in 1968.

Context overview

Written by American author John Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men* was first published in 1937. The novel is set in a place called Soledad, (a Spanish word meaning solitude or loneliness) in California.

The novel is set during the Great Depression, a period of significant poverty and unemployment across the USA following the Wall Street Crash in 1929.

John Steinbeck was born in Salinas, California in 1902. Although his family was not poor, when he was a teenager he spent time working on ranches near his home and this had a big impact on his writing. His experience of working with farm labourers and his interest in their lives is clearly evident in *Of Mice and Men*, as well as in some of his other books, like *The Grapes of Wrath*.

The Great Depression

The Great Depression took place following the Wall Street Crash in October 1929 and affected the world's economy. Wall Street is a street in New York City, where many financial firms are based, and the term Wall Street is used to describe the American sector, even though not all American finance companies are actually based there. The Wall Street Crash happened as a result of the following factors:

- many normal Americans had started investing in the stock exchange and borrowing money to do so
- stock prices rose unsustainably
- in October 1929, investors began to sell their shares en masse, with 12.9 million shares sold on Black Thursday (24th October 1929) and 16 million shares sold on Black Tuesday (29th October 1929)

There were other circumstances that contributed to the depression in the USA as well:

- too many goods were being made and not enough were being bought
- food prices were dropping, affecting farmers' incomes
- there were too many small banks, which did not have the funds to manage when masses of customers withdrew savings in the autumn of 1929. Following the Wall Street Crash, the USA recalled the huge loans that it had made to several European countries, meaning that the European economy was also affected by the Great Depression

The Great Depression lasted for ten years worldwide, and for the USA it did not fully end until 1941 when the country became involved in World War Two. The depression got increasingly worse between 1929 and 1932. At the peak of the Great Depression, it is thought that between 13 million and 15 million people in the USA were unemployed. Industrial production in the country dropped by almost half and house building decreased by 80%. Many people across America suffered from poverty, hunger and disease as a result of the depression. Benefits that we are used to having access to today, like Jobseekers' Allowance, did not exist in America at this time, so people who lost their jobs could also lose their homes and found it very difficult to buy food.

Itinerant Workers

Farmers were usually less affected than the rest of the population during depressions because they were able to grow their own food; however, during the Great Depression, there was also the Dust Bowl – drought and dust storms swept across several states in mid-west America. This resulted in

crops being very poor in these areas, which was coupled with falling prices for food. Small farmers were affected particularly badly by these conditions. Many small farmers were in debt because they would borrow money from banks to buy seeds and then pay back the loans when the crops came in; during the Dust Bowl, farmers could not pay back these loans and could also not afford to feed themselves and their families. In worst case scenarios, this led to banks repossessing farms, making the farmers and their families homeless.

As a result, many farmers migrated to California to look for work, as this state was perceived to have spare land and a lot of work. However, because so many people moved to California (an estimated 1.3 million), work was not so easy to find. Ranch workers like George and Lennie often moved from one place to another looking for work, as jobs on ranches would be temporary and seasonal. Wages for men like these were low and jobs were scarce, so the lifestyle that they lived was very insecure. Without work, people would have no way of supporting themselves. This is why the dream is so important to George and Lennie: it would give them a sense of safety and independence.

African Americans in the 1930s

Although all Americans were affected by the Great Depression, African Americans were hit the hardest. It is thought that by the end of 1932, 50% of black Americans were unemployed. In some cities in the northern states, white people called for black people to be fired from their jobs due to unemployment in the white communities. African-Americans received less aid than their white counterparts and were sometimes even not allowed to use charity soup kitchens.

Racism increased during the Great Depression and racial violence, which had been decreasing, rose again during the economic downturn. Although Crooks has a stable job, his character reflects the discrimination that many black Americans had to endure during this period in the USA.

The Book's title

The title of the book *Of Mice and Men* comes from a poem by Scottish poet Robbie Burns in the 18th century. The poem is written in Scots dialect:

To a Mouse

by Robbie Burns

The best laid schemes o' mice an' men

Gang aft a-gley,

An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain,

For promised joy!

The poem is about a mouse who builds a nest in a wheat field ready for the winter, but this is destroyed by a ploughman. The lines above mean The best laid plans of mice and men/Often go wrong/And leave us with nothing but grief and pain/Instead of the joy that was promised. This is linked to the events of *Of Mice and Men* because George and Lennie's plan for happiness and safety is also destroyed, leading to pain and suffering at the end of the novel.

Context: John Steinbeck was born in Salinas, California in 1902. Although his family was wealthy, he was interested in the lives of the farm labourers and spent time working with them. He used his experiences as material for his writing. He wrote a number of novels about poor people who worked on the land and dreamed of a better life. Added to the man-made financial problems were natural ones. A series of droughts in southern mid-western states like Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas led to failed harvests and dried-up land. Farmers were forced to move off their land: they couldn't repay the bank-loans which had helped buy the farms and had to sell what they owned to pay their debts.

Many economic migrants headed west to 'Golden' California, thinking there would be land going spare, but the Californians turned many back, fearing they would be over-run. The refugees had nowhere to go back to, so they set up home in huge camps in the California valleys - living in shacks of cardboard and old metal - and sought work as casual farmhands. Against this background, ranch hands like George and Lennie were lucky to have work. Ranch hands were grateful for at least a bunk-house to live in and to have food provided, even though the pay was low. Itinerant workers like George and Lennie had difficult lives. They would have to travel from ranch to ranch to find work. Agricultural work was also physically demanding, so they would have to be strong and fit. They would have to work long hours in the field with only Sunday as their day of rest. The work is also dangerous (Candy and Crooks have been maimed in work). The living accommodation is sparse and they must all live in a bunk-house that is little more than a shed.

Language: The men speak in a down-to-earth, colloquial way, in keeping with their lifestyle. Their language is ungrammatical and they use slang. Steinbeck's use of spelling reflects the speech patterns of the characters. But each man's language reflects his personality too. George's first words are spoken sharply, telling Lennie off for drinking dirty water. George's language is often sharp and commanding, not only to Lennie but other characters too. His speech is ordered and logical, the product of an ordered mind. Lennie's first words are words of happy satisfaction as he quenches his thirst. Lennie's language is often disjointed as he struggles to remember things, or he repeats things over and over again in an effort to memorise them. When Crooks and Curley's wife talk to him, his responses show that he hasn't been listening. He obviously lives in a world of his own, and he often talks aloud to himself. Steinbeck shows Lennie's good nature and gentleness by the words he uses to describe his actions. George swears a lot which simply be a feature of the language used by farm labourers, or it could be a sign of his frustration at constantly being on the move to keep Lennie out of trouble. Sumptuous descriptions of the setting provide a contrast to the harsher, more colloquial language of the characters. The language in the novel is emotive without being sentimental. The reader feels Candy's pain as his dog is taken from him. Steinbeck uses a lot of animal imagery to describe Lennie (a horse, a bear and a bull). Lennie is also shot in the back of the head, just like Candy's dog. Steinbeck uses racist terms that would shock modern readers, to make the text seem more realistic. Steinbeck uses his novel to criticise many aspects of society, racism being one of them. For many characters, the chance to gossip is a great source of pleasure. When the opportunity to talk is withheld, this causes distress. This is clearly demonstrated by the desperation Curley's wife shows when trying to find someone to talk to. George instructs Lennie to be silent when they first meet the boss and forbids him from speaking to Curley's wife in an effort to prevent trouble. Much of the language is aggressive—many of the characters swear and blaspheme and they can be sarcastic and cutting in their remarks.

Structure: The division of the novel into six clear sections bears comparison with the separate scenes of a play because each scene has a clearly identified setting and the plot progresses chronologically. The story commences on a Thursday evening and its climax is reached on the following Sunday afternoon. The novel begins and ends in the brush, which shows that is cyclical in nature. George and Lennie are stuck in a pattern. At the end of the novel, George realises that things will not change, which is one of the reasons why he shoots Lennie. George cannot shake off the underlying presence of doom, which is why he makes contingency plans. Steinbeck structures the novel carefully, so the pervasive sense of death and destruction builds gradually. The first death is only a mouse, then Candy's dog is shot, then Curley's hand is broken in a fight. Next, Lennie kills the puppy before Curley's wife and then finally George is compelled to shoot Lennie. With each event, the reader's tension is increased by the carefully structured series of events.

Characters

Lennie

- He is a big man, in contrast to his name.
 - He has limited intelligence, so he relies on George to look after him. He copies George in everything George does and trusts George completely.
 - "Behind him(George)walked his opposite, a huge man, shapeless of face, with large, pale eyes, with wide, sloping shoulders; and he walked heavily, dragging his feet a little, the way a bear drags his paws. His arms did not swing at his sides, but hung loosely."
 - He shares a dream with George to own a piece of land. Lennie's special job would be to tend the rabbits
 - He likes to pet soft things, like puppies and dead mice. We know this got him into trouble in Weed when he tried to feel a girl's soft red dress: she thought he was going to attack her.
 - He can be forgetful - George continually has to remind him about important things.
 - He is very gentle and kind, and would never harm anyone or anything deliberately.
 - He is extremely strong: he can work as well as two men at bucking barley.
 - He is often described as a child or an animal - he drinks from the pool like a horse and his huge hands are described as paws.
1. Lennie is introduced. He drinks from the pool without thinking. He is frustrated by the lack of ketchup for his beans. He threatens to leave when George gets angry with him. Steinbeck established his child-like qualities, his lack of responsibility and his inability to learn from his mistakes. This all helps to foreshadow a cycle of events that will lead to tragedy. "Snorting into the water like a horse." Metaphors and similes comparing him with animals are used throughout – uncontrollable strength and a weak mind. "I like beans with ketchup." Hides the dead mouse "an elaborate pantomime of innocence". "Run outta Weed."
 2. Lennie wants George to talk about their dream. American dream – a simple dream of independence that is made impossible by the economic climate of the Depression in the 1930s. Made more difficult to achieve by his learning difficulties. "... and live off the fatta the lan'" "a house and chickens.."
 3. Lennie has to defend himself against Curley. Lennie is a victim of his learning difficulties. The tough environment of the 1930s is unsympathetic to people like Lennie. This is shown through Curley's character, who takes pleasure in showing power over him – "slugging" at his face. Lennie fights back until Curley is "flopping like a fish". There is always the fear of getting canned or being thrown in the "booby hatch". Even Crooks, socially the lowest man on the ranch can turn on Lennie and be cruel, telling him, "say George don't come back no more." George has to protect him when they first meet the boss and look after his work card.
 4. Lennie and death. Lennie's own fate seems inevitable – there is no place for him in this unforgiving society. He kills a mouse, then the puppy, then Curley's wife. The

incidents become increasingly serious. “done another bad thing” “Why do you got to get killed?” “Lennie was in a panic” “Lennie had broken her neck”

5. With Lennie’s death is the death of the dream. The novel is cyclical – we end up back at the clearing. The structure shows that Lennie is unable to learn from his mistakes, so we end up back where we started. He is killed by George to avoid suffering at the hands of the lynch mob. He dies talking about the dream.

George

- He is a small man, but has brains and a quick wit.
 - He has been a good friend to Lennie, ever since he promised Lennie's Aunt Clara that he would care for him. He looks after all Lennie's affairs, such as carrying his work card, and tries to steer him out of potential trouble.
 - He needs Lennie as a friend, not only because Lennie's strength helps to get them both jobs, but so as not to be lonely. His threats to leave Lennie are not really serious. He is genuinely proud of Lennie.
 - He shares a dream with Lennie to own a piece of land and is prepared to work hard to build up the money needed to buy it.
 - "...with us it ain't like that. We got a future. We got somebody to talk to that gives a damn about us. We don't have to sit in no bar room blowin' in our jack 'jus because we got no place else to go. If them other guys gets in jail they can rot for all anybody gives a damn. But not us."
 - He is honest with people he trusts. For example, he tells Slim that he used to play tricks on Lennie when they were young, but now feels guilty about it as Lennie nearly drowned.
1. We are introduced to George. A carer, friend and guide to Lennie. Lennie’s role-model and father-figure. He is responsible and looks after Lennie in the absence of his Aunt Clara but is sometimes frustrated and longs for a different sort of life. “Lennie for God’s sakes don’t drink so much.” “I could live so easy and maybe have a girl.”
 2. George faces a daily struggle to secure work. We see the challenges faced by the itinerant workers of Depression hit 1930s America through George. His problems are made worse by Lennie. “What you gonna say when the boss asks you questions?” “Run outta Weed”. He opens up to Slim, letting him know about those struggles. “George’s voice was taking on the tone of a confessor.” “It ain’t so funny him an’ me goin’ round together.”
 3. George has a dream. George shares a dream with many other Americans – of independence and security. “live off the fatta the land”. The dream becomes more of a reality when Candy offers his savings, giving George hope. “We got a future. We got somebody to talk to that gives a damn about us.” They share a dream and a friendship that sets them apart from other lonely and isolated ranch workers.

4. George tries to teach Lennie. He tells him how to check the water is running before drinking it. He tells him how to care for the pup. He warns him to stay away from Curley's wife, who is "jailbait". He encourages Lennie to fight back against Curley, "Get him Lennie! Don't let him do it!" He also understands that Lennie is unable to learn and survive on his own.
5. George reacts to Curley's wife's death. George says, "I should of knew... I guess maybe way back in my head I did." George has been trying to ignore the harsh truth that dreams are pointless and that Lennie will never be able to survive in this world. At the end he gives in to the inevitable – that he will become like all the other ranch workers – lonely and spending his fifty bucks in a cathouse. Shooting Lennie is an act of kindness, to save him from the mob, but in doing so he faces isolation himself. "The hand shook violently, but his face set and his hand steadied. He pulled the trigger." They are talking about the dream, a dream that dies with Lennie. George's future is now bleak. The novel is cyclical to symbolise the pointlessness of having a dream that will never be realised. George ends up back at the pool – where he started the novel.

Slim

- He is the jerkline skinner (lead mule-team driver) at the ranch. He is excellent at his job.
 - He is the natural leader at the ranch. Everyone respects his views and looks up to him.
 - He has a quiet dignity: he doesn't need to assert himself to have authority.
 - "there was a gravity in his manner and a quiet so profound that all talked stopped when he spoke. His authority was so great that his word was taken on any subject, be it politics or love."
 - He understands the relationship between George and Lennie.
 - He helps George at the end and reassures George that he did the right thing.
 - We know little else about him, which gives him a slightly mysterious quality. Do you think he is too good to be true?
-
- "Prince of the ranch" – metaphor comparing him with royalty – "moves with majesty". Elevated in status above the other ranch workers. Superior. Inhabit all aspects of his personality.
 - "Looked through George and beyond him" – has the ability to read people. A perceptive and wise character. He takes the time to really notice people.
 - "All talk stopped when he spoke" - his word is accepted on "any subject". He is respected, not just for his skills as a jerkline skinner but as a man to look up to. A role model. Trusted.
 - "Capable of killing a fly" with his bull-whip. An accuracy and precision to his work. A skilled man.

- Candy says he “doesn’t need no high heeled boots”. He commands respect and status without having to ask for it. He is also modest – doesn’t need to demonstrate/show off his superiority over the other workers.
- “invited confidence” – the men naturally and easily trust him. Others relax in his company. “His tone was friendly”
- “Maybe everybody in the world damn world is scared of each other.” Recognises the difficulties faced by itinerant workers as a result of the Depression.
- Gives Lennie a pup. Slim does not display the same negative attitudes towards Lennie’s learning difficulties as others. Generous.
- However, he drowns 4 pups straight after birth. He understands that this is a tough world – the strongest survive and he does what’s necessary.
- He has the final say over the death of Candy’s dog. “Slim’s opinions were law.” Natural authority.
- He doesn’t engage in the racist behaviour of other ranch workers – he has crossed the line into Crooks’ room.
- Not afraid to stand up to Curley, although he is the boss’ son. He is confident.
- When Curley fights Lennie, he wants to step in as he realises it’s not a fair fight when Curley is “slugging” Lennie against a wall. Slim has a clear sense of fairness and will stand up for what’s right. He puts pressure on Curley to agree that he got his hand “caught in a machine” because he thinks it would be unfair for Lennie to get “canned” as Curley started the fight. Slim risks his own position to stand up for what’s right.
- Finding Curley’s Wife – compassionate. “And s’pose they lock him up an’ strap him down and put him in a cage. That ain’t no good, George.” “Curley – maybe you better stay here with your wife.”
- Cares for George. “Slim came directly to George” “A guy got to sometimes.” He is one of the only characters in the novel who doesn’t bother with the American dream. He seems to accept his life for what it is, which makes him the most settled character. He seems to be wise enough to appreciate that dreams inevitably don’t come true, which is shown through his acceptance of Lennie’s death.



The character of Slim, unlike the others doesn't have any real ambition; he has nowhere to go and no American Dream. I think that Slim even with his wisdom and perfect like characteristics still, has nothing to call his own and will, by every indication, remain a migrant worker until his death. Slim differs from the others in the fact that he does not seem to want something outside of what he has, he is not fooled by a dream, and he has not laid any plans like the others. I personally think that Slim still has ideas and a dream inside but one that he has control over unlike the others. Slim just seems to have somehow reached the sad conclusion that dreams rarely work in a world full of obstacles.

Slim is a source of moral authority in the novella. He correctly sees that Lennie “ain’t mean,” and later the reader learns that he is one of the only men to ignore the racist prohibition against entering Crooks’s room. Slim is also the only one to rightly understand that George kills Lennie out of mercy, and comforts George in his resulting misery. The contrast between Slim and Curley serves to suggest that the economic power of Curley and his father is artificial, a violation of the natural order in which Slim ought to rank highest.

Crooks

- He is the black stable hand or buck.
- He is the only permanent employee at the ranch, since he injured his back in an accident. His back gives him constant pain.
- He is the only black man around and is made to be isolated by his colour - he can't go into the bunk-house or socialise with the men.
- He is always called the 'nigger' by the men, which shows how racism is taken for granted. The men don't mean to insult Crooks every time they call him this, but they never think to use his name
- All this has made him proud and aloof.
- He is lonely "S'pose you didn't have nobody. S'pose you couldn't go into the bunk house and play rummy 'cause you were black...A guy needs somebody-to be near him....I tell ya a guy gets too lonely an' he gets sick."
- The only time he mixes with the ranch hands socially is when they pitch horseshoes - and then he beats everyone!
- He has his own room near the stables and has a few possessions. He has books, which show he is intelligent and an old copy of the California Civil Code, which suggests he is concerned about his rights.
- He has seen many men come and go, all dreaming of buying a piece of land, but is now cynical, as no one has ever achieved it.

1. First introduced by Candy. The use of direct speech immediately makes clear the racist voice of society. "The stable buck's a nigger". He takes pleasure in recounting how the boss always gives the stable buck "hell" and how he is forced to fight for the enjoyment of the other men at Christmas, despite his disability.
2. He is a man with no name – simply "Crooks", which symbolises his low status. He's not important enough to be referred to by his real name. He appears mostly in chapter 4. His absence from much of the novel also shows his low status.

The omniscient narrator is more sympathetic – describes him as "Crooks the negro stable buck". He addresses Slim as "Mr Slim", which is respectful, but also reflects his inferior status.

3. He's a wasted talent – beats the guys at horseshoes "he don't give nobody else a chance to win", reads books. In his room is mostly equipment for working with horses. He is treated like an animal, with his segregated quarters and his bed of straw.
4. Chapter 4: Crooks is defensive – he doesn't want Lennie to enter his room, but Lennie has no boundaries and doesn't understand social codes. "You got no right to come in my room" "I can't play because I'm black. They say I stink."
5. Crooks reminisces about his childhood home. "The white kids used to come and play at our place."

6. Crooks torments Lennie, taking pleasure in gaining power over another for a change. He is bitter and cruel. "S'pose George don't come back no more." "some kind of private victory"
7. Crooks dismisses the notion of the American dream but soon tries to be a part of it. "Nobody never gets to heaven, and nobody gets no land." "If you... guys would want a hand to work for nothing – just his keep, why I'd come and lend a hand."
8. Curley's wife mocks and threatens Crooks. "Crooks had retired into the terrible protective dignity of the negro" "I could get you strung up on a tree so easy it ain't even funny." "Crooks had reduced himself to nothing."
9. He ends the chapter by once again becoming isolated and dismissing the dream. "I wouldn't want to go to no place like that."

Candy

- He is the oldest ranch hand. He lost his right hand in an accident at work.
 - He is the 'swamper' - the man who cleans the bunkhouse. He knows he will be thrown out and put 'on the county' when he is too old to work.
 - Because of this, he accepts what goes on and doesn't challenge anything: he can't afford to lose his job.
 - He has a very old dog, which he has had from a pup. It is his only friend and companion.
 - "The old man came slowly into the room. He had his broom in his hand. And at his heels there walked a drag-footed sheep dog, gray of muzzle, and with pale, blind old eyes."
 - Carlson insists on shooting the dog because he claims it is too old and ill to be of any use. Candy is devastated.
 - He is lonely and isolated, but makes friends with George and Lennie and offers his compensation money to help them all to buy a ranch together and achieve their dream.
 - When he finds Curley's wife dead, he is furious, as he knows instantly that Lennie was involved and that they have lost their chance of achieving their dream
1. "a tall, stoop-shouldered old man came in" – the first description of Candy draws attention to his age (fore-grounding) and his stoop-shoulders. "a round stick-like wrist and no hand" – he has a disability. This makes him vulnerable. This is a society that lacks compassion and care for the weak and infirm.
 2. He meets George and Lennie and introduces them to ranch life. "Ya see the stable buck's a nigger" – Candy is part of the ugly and casual racism of the ranch. It seems normal to him. He seems pleased that there is someone lower in the hierarchy than

himself – Crooks. “He paused in relish of the memory” – He enjoys remembering the violence of the fight that took place after drinking a gallon of whisky provided by the boss at Christmas. He engages in the masculine, tough environment of the ranch, even though he “ain’t got the poop no more” because of his age. “Curley’s pretty handy” – he shares information about the other people at the ranch because he is lonely and wants friendship. He tries to gain the confidence of George and Lennie. “That glove’s fulla Vaseline” and “I think Curley’s married... a tart.” The ugly language continues as he gossips about Curley’s wife. He takes pleasure in gossiping about others.

3. Candy meekly tries to defend his dog but Slim allows Carlson to shoot it. “They’ll can me purty soon. Jus’ as soon as I can’t swamp out no bunk houses they’ll put me on the county.” Candy knows that, like his dog, when he’s no longer useful he will be alone, with limited support due to the lack of a welfare state. Symbolism of the death of the dog foreshadows the tragic fate of the weak and vulnerable characters in the novel.
4. Candy overhears George and Lennie discussing the dream and wants to be a part of it. “Tha’s three hundred an’ fifty bucks I’d put in.” He is so concerned and desperate for security in his old age that he will share his life savings with strangers to buy a home. Candy shares their American dream to be self-sufficient and to improve his life. “I could cook and tend the chickens.”
5. Candy visits Crooks’ room. There is a sense of friendship and ranch workers joining together. It is short lived.
6. Candy discovers Curley’s wife’s body. “Oh, Jesus Christ!” “I should have knew.” Her death signifies the end of Candy’s dream to escape the life of a ranch worker and become independent. The end of the novel holds only bitterness and anger for Candy, who turns on Curley’s wife, blaming her. “You lousy tart.”

Curley

- He is the boss's son, so he doesn't need to work like the ordinary ranch hands, and he has time to kill.
- He's little - so he hates big guys.
- He is a prize-fighter and looks for opportunities for a fight.
- "He glanced coldly at George and then at Lennie. His arms gradually bent at the elbows and his hands closed into fists. He stiffened and went into a slight crouch. His glance was at once calculating and pugnacious."
- He is newly- married and is very possessive of his wife - but he still visits brothels.
- There is a rumour that he wears a glove filled with Vaseline to keep his hand soft for his wife.

1. He is introduced by Candy. "hates big guys" – feels jealous and threatened by others – particularly physically bigger and stronger men.
"Keeping his hand soft for his wife" – Show off his relationship with his wife to cause jealousy among the itinerant workers who are unable to settle down. Crude and disrespectful towards his wife – she is objectified by him.
"ain't giving nobody a chance" – will gain the upper hand over others, no matter what the cost. Competitive.
2. He takes an immediate dislike to Lennie. "hands closed into fists" – seems to be always looking for a fight. Curley enjoys the atmosphere of violence and suspicion on the ranch and fuels it. "done quite a bit in the ring" – a lightweight boxer. Enjoys fighting/causing harm to others. "calculating and pugnacious" – not to be trusted/manipulative. Foreshadows later events.
3. He enjoys his status and position over the itinerant workers. "high-heeled boots" – shows off his status and position as the boss' son
4. Curley starts a fight with Lennie. "Curley stepped over to Lennie like a terrier". The simile shows the size difference between Lennie and Curley. Curley enjoys starting fights with bigger men to prove himself. The lack of empathy for those with disabilities at the time is clear in Curley's character, as he enjoys victimising others. "I'll show ya who's yella." Curley is angered by the fact that he has been called a coward Carlson. Curley has backed away from fighting Slim and Carlson but turns on Lennie instead because he thinks he can beat him. Curley is relentless and cruel when he starts beating Lennie. He enjoys the violence. "The big face was covered in blood." "slugging him in the face".
5. Curley learns a hard lesson when Lennie crushes his hand. "Curley was flopping like a fish on a line." The simile shows Curley was in pain and was helpless against Lennie's strength and power. Agrees that his "hand was caught in a machine" as he doesn't want to be publicly mocked for losing a fight.
6. Curley finds his wife dead in the barn but shows no compassion – he wants to kill Lennie. "I'll kill the big son of a bitch myself." Wants to start a lynching – in this tough world, justice is handed out by the strongest and most violent. He wants to "shoot him in the guts", causing a painful death. This is his chance for revenge. He is pleased when he finds that Lennie is dead.

Curley's Wife

- She is newly married to Curley.
- We never know her name - she is merely Curley's 'property' with no individual identity.
- She is young, pretty, wears attractive clothes and curls her hair.
- She seems flirtatious and is always hanging around the bunk-house.
- She is lonely - there are no other women to talk to and Curley is not really interested in her.
- "What kinda harm am I doin' to you? Seems like they ain't none of them cares how I gotta live. I tell you I ain't used to livin' like this. I coulda made somethin' of myself."
- She doesn't like Curley - she tells Lennie that she only married him when she didn't receive a letter she'd been promised to get into Hollywood.
- She is naïve

1. Candy gossips about Curley's wife and her relationship with her husband

"Curley's married... a tart". Gender roles in the 1930s dictate that she should remain in the house as a dutiful and loyal housewife. Women were polarised as 'good housewives' or 'tarts'. "Glove fulla Vaseline" shows how she is objectified by Curley. He doesn't respect her.

2. Curley's wife arrives at the bunk house, saying she is looking for Curley

"She smiled archly and twitched her body." She speaks "Playfully". Symbolic use of the colour red – red lips, red ostrich feathers. Over-dressed for the ranch. She uses her sexuality to attract the other men but doesn't realise that this is a weakness, not a strength. She is more vulnerable than she knows – still "a girl" and not a woman.

3. Curley's wife mocks Candy, Lennie and Crooks in Crooks' room.

"Nigger, I could get you strung up on a tree so fast it ain't even funny." She has low status in comparison with some of the other characters, but when she's asked to leave Crooks' room, she uses the small power she has to threaten Crooks and be unkind to the others. "a nigger, a dum-dum and a lousy ol' sheep." She is jealous of their friendship so resorts to anger and bitterness. She is also hurt because it's Saturday night and Curley has gone to a cat house.

4. Curley's wife talks to Lennie in the barn about her life and dreams. "Coulda been in the movies and had nice clothes". "I never got that letter. I always thought my old girl stole it." Her dreams are unrealistic but she is too naïve to see it. She seems to have been used. She seems obsessed with materialistic wealth, and her decision to marry Curley was rash and she regrets it. "Curley ain't a nice fella."

5. Steinbeck shows that Curley's wife seems to find peace in death. "The meanness and the planning and the discontent and the ache for attention were all gone from her face." Steinbeck reminds us once again that she is a "girl". We are invited to pity the loss of her young, unfulfilled life. The moment when she is at last allowed to express her feelings is also her most vulnerable moment – Lennie kills her.

Past Paper Essay Questions – 40 minutes

May 2018

Write about George and what he shows us about society in America in the 1930s.

Think about: his relationship with Lennie, his relationships with others on the ranch, the way he speaks and behaves at different points in the novel.

Or,

'Of Mice and Men shows that in America in the 1930s it was difficult for people to form important relationships.' Write about one or two of the characters in the novel who you think show that this is true.

Jan 2018

Some readers think that Curley's wife brings all her troubles on herself. What do you think? Remember to refer to the social, historical and cultural context of the novel in your answer. Think about: What you learn about her past, her position on the ranch, her relationships with others on the ranch, the way she speaks and behaves at different points in the novel.

Or,

The ranch in Of Mice and Men is a difficult place for weak or vulnerable people. Write about some of the characters in the novel who show that this is true. Remember to refer to the social, historical and cultural context of the novel in your answer.

May 2017

Write about the relationship between George and Lennie in Of Mice and Men. Remember to refer to events in the novel and its social, cultural and historical context in your answer.

Think about: What you learn about their past, their experiences on the ranch, the way they speak and behave at different points in the novel.

Or,

'Dreams in Of Mice and Men only offer the characters false hope.' Write about some of the characters in the novel who have dreams that give them false hope. Remember to refer to the events in the novel and its social, cultural and historical context in your answer.

Jan 2017

Write about Crooks and what he shows us about America in the 1930s.

Think about: What you learn about his past, his life on the ranch, his relationships with other characters on the ranch, anything else you think important.

Or,

Write about some of the times when violence or the threat of violence is important in *Of Mice and Men*. Remember to support your answer with reference to the novel and to comment on its social, historical and cultural context.

June 2016

Show how John Steinbeck uses the **character of Lennie** to highlight some aspects of American society in the 1930s.

'Real **friendship** is impossible in the grim world John Steinbeck creates in *Of Mice and Men*.' To what extent do you agree with this statement? Remember to refer to the social, historical and cultural context of the novel in your answer.

Jan 2016

Show how John Steinbeck uses the character of **Curley** to highlight some aspects of American society in the 1930s.

Or, '**There are no heroes in *Of Mice and Men***.' How far do you agree with this statement? Remember to refer to the novel's social, cultural and historical context in your answer.

June 2015

How does John Steinbeck use the character of **Candy** to highlight some aspects of American society in the 1930s?

Or, How does John Steinbeck present **the harsh world of the ranch** in *Of Mice and Men*? Remember to support your answer with reference to the novel and to comment on its social, historical and cultural context.

Jan 2015

How does John Steinbeck use the character of **Curley's wife** to highlight some aspects of American society in the 1930s?

Or, '*Of Mice and Men* is Steinbeck's protest against the **unfairness of American society** in the 1930s.' To what extent do you agree with this statement?

Exemplar essay 1 – Curley’s Wife

This response was written by a student working under exam conditions. Errors not corrected.

How does John Steinbeck use the character of Curley’s wife to highlight some aspects of American society in the 1930s?

Curley’s wife can be seen as a character that portrays and encompasses what it was like to be a victim of society during this dark period of the Great Depression (1930’s) whereby how you looked like, who you were and how wealthy you were determined your quality of life. In this patriarchal society isolation and loneliness from the outside world was not at all uncommon and many suffered greatly because of discrimination in this dark age. Loneliness and discrimination is at the heart of this novel and Curley’s wife seems to display this through her lonely character. links between character and context Curley’s wife seems to be a character who is isolated and marginalised throughout the novel. Steinbeck writes: "A girl was standing there looking in." The above metaphor shows how Curley’s wife seems to never quite fit in and can imply that she is always on the sidelines never quite being allowed to participate with normal activities with the everyone else. Furthermore the noun ‘girl’ can tell us that Curley’s wife is simply a naïve and simply minded girl who is unable to participate on account of her immature personality. On the other hand, the noun ‘girl’ can further indicate that Curley’s wife is simply infantilised and not given the chance to take part in her life. Or being the only ‘girl’ on the ranch means that she can never truly be accepted due to the time at which women were seen as inferior to men and simply not ‘capable’ to be a part of anything.

Curley’s wife seems to be care about her appearance a lot despite living on a dirty ranch. Steinbeck writes: “She has fully rouged lips... Her fingernails were red”. The overuse and repetition of the colour red can foreshadow a great event in the novel. The colour red has many connotations for example that of prostitution, love, danger, anger and blood. This colour that Steinbeck has chosen to mention repeatedly is no coincidence and could be used to warn and foreshadow the end of the novel whereby Curley’s wife can be seen to start a series of events that subsequently end Lennie and George’s dream. On the other hand, the girl in weed who made George and Lennie run away was also wearing a red dress which can further indicate that the colour red symbolises a bad omen and catastrophe in the novel. To link to the question Curley’s wife mistreatment by society and her own husband has lead her to become an ‘attention seeker’ – (the colour red stands out) and consequently to ruin other people’s chances at happiness. Due to the extreme sexism of a patriarchal society of the 1930s Curley’s wife seems to be trapped in her own body and unable to have the freedom of a happy life. Steinbeck writes: “ostrich feathers”. Curley’s wife is said to be wearing shoes trimmed with ostrich feathers. ostrich (unlike) other birds is a flightless bird which cannot have the freedom to control many aspects of its life. This can symbolise Curley’s wife’s similar imprisonment on the ranch and of her own body.

Additionally, Curley’s wife’s lack of control and inferiority to the other men on the ranch can be seen through Steinbeck’s clever use of the apostrophe to symbolise that Curley’s wife is a possession of her husband; simply a sex object meant for Curley’s own impure desires and intentions. She is simply a trophy wife only there to be shown off by Curley. Furthermore, Curley’s wife is not given a name which shows how women at that time of the 1930’s weren’t equal to men and sometimes even basic human rights weren’t given to them because of their belief in a male dominated society. As a

consequence of the constant neglect, bullying and harassment of Curley's wife for example being called names such as a 'tart', a 'whore' and 'jail bait', Curley's wife causes her hurt and anger to hurt and break the only other person on the ranch that is lower than her on the social hierarchy; Crooks. Steinbeck writes: "I could get you strung up on a tree so easy, it ain't even funny." The fact that Curley's wife ultimately resorts to using racism to bully Crooks shows her mean character, however by hurting Crooks Curley's wife is able to feel more significant and powerful enough to decide someone's fate. This boosts her self-esteem and self-worth. Curley's wife only seems to be happy when she is dead. Steinbeck writes: "all the meanness and discontent all gone... sweet and young." The fact that Curley's wife's true innocence is only shown when she is dead shows just how society had corrupted her mind into believing that she was worthless and useless. Although at the end Curley's wife is also described to look young and fragile, it is not in an infantilising and patronising way and displays her purity and how by simply being of the opposite gender her quality of life is significantly decreased. She is shown as being one of the many victims in the novel but also ultimately she is seen as a racist and although this is extremely wrong she is simply attempting to see herself as more important and significant than society has given her credit for, because of the negative light that women were seen in.

Examiner comment: Strong focus on question, clear understanding of how context affects character. Thorough discussion. Mark: 16. Grade: A

Exemplar Essay 2

'Real friendship is impossible in the grim world John Steinbeck creates in Of Mice and Men'. To what extent do you agree with this statement?

In *Of Mice and Men*, Steinbeck creates a harsh world of loneliness and isolation. He wants to reflect the true life of the men he saw around him during the Great Depression of the 1930s.

At first, George and Lennie provide a contrast to this statement. They have a strong relationship which shows their true friendship. George is Lennie's parental figure, he is always caring for Lennie. They have each other 'to give a hoot in hell about us.'

Both George and Lennie gain from this friendship. George gains power over Lennie yet also realizes he has a responsibility too, after what happened at the 'Sacramento River'. Lennie gains a friend who guides him in a world he doesn't understand and a father figure who watches out for him.

However, even their strong relationship dies in the harsh world of the ranch. George sacrifices the friendship in itself, yet then condemns himself to the lonely existence of the other men 'I'll work my month an' I'll take my fifty bucks an' sit all night in a cat house'. Ironically this was what he told Lennie he could do if he didn't have to look after him 'If I didn't have you, I could live so easy'. Their friendship is ultimately destroyed by the harsh

world. This is because Steinbeck wanted to reflect the harsh reality he saw around him in 1930s America where friendships were destroyed by uncaring circumstances.

As well as George and Lennie, John Steinbeck shows that the other characters are unable to form friendships and are isolated. Crooks is unable to form any friendships because he is isolated from everyone by his colour. He lives in the 'barn' because he 'ain't allowed in the bunk house'. This portrayal of the racism which was present in society means that he cannot form any friendship with the other men on the ranch. 'A guy gets lonely and he gets sick' shows us that a lack of friendships in the harsh world of the ranch mean that all the men are suspicious of each other and can have no trust, as we see with George and the 'greybacks'. People are 'crazy with loneliness' yet the mood of fear means they have no-one to trust.

Another example is Curly's wife. She cannot form any friendships with any of the men on the ranch because they see her as 'trouble'. She is able to see that all the men are unable to trust one another 'why when I catch one man on his own.... on each other'. She is unable to break free of the narrow view the men have over her which means she is unable to connect with anybody other than Lennie which ultimately leads to her death. 'Everyone in the whole damn world is scared of each other' highlights the harsh, untrusting world of the ranch that Steinbeck creates. He uses this atmosphere of fear to show how uncaring and grim America was during the Great Depression.

To conclude, Steinbeck creates an untrusting fearful atmosphere on the ranch in *Of Mice and Men* to highlight how even the strongest friendships are inevitable crushed by the uncaring society of 1930s America.

Exemplar Essay 3 - Lennie

The character of Lennie is created to show how people in America at the 1930's with learning difficulties were treated because at that time people who were seen as different were discriminated against. Lennie is seen as a "normal" man because of his race and nationality,, however he is discriminated against because of intelligence and his size.

The entire novel *'Of Mice and Men'* focuses on the character of Lennie Small, a person who has grown up with learning difficulties. He is seen to travel California with his friend George. Lennie is so reliant on George and George is reliant on Lennie. Because of Lennie's strength he is a valuable friend to George. The relationship is shown to be strong from the start where Lennie says, "because I go you and you got me." This shows their trust in each other - that one mustn't abandon the other.

We see that these two people, George and Lennie, have a life long dream to own a piece of land to call their own. This is a big deal because in the 1930's everyone knew about the 'American Dream' – to be independent and improve your place in society.

Lennie, because of his learning difficulties, doesn't know much about the real world, but he does have one thing that entertains him, and that one thing is touching soft things. That's what Lennie really wants to do, but because of his immense strength, he strokes things a bit too hard, killing them. This is shown by his treatment of mice and dogs, which foreshadows his later treatment of people – Curley's Wife.

We see Lennie being victimised by different people in the novel. These people include George, Curley and Crooks. He is victimised by George whenever he does something silly. However this is not to really be cruel, he instead just says these things to make Lennie see how he is wrong. This is shown when George says "crazy bastard" and "idiot". However, at the end we see George admits that he isn't mad at Lennie and he never was. The other person to victimise Lennie is Curley, who, in their first encounter, is "hands closed into fist and bent at the elbow". This shows a fighting stance. Curley eventually does start a fight with Lennie. This is purely because of his size not because of his intellect. Curley wants to prove he can beat anyone. A quote to show Curley's hate for Lennie is, "No big son of a bitch is gonna laugh at me". This shows him giving a meaningless reason to fight Lennie. The last person who is seen to victimise Lennie is Crooks the "stable buck". Crooks is very obviously discriminated against because of his race and how he is a cripple. We see this hate for Lennie when Lennie goes to make conversation with him, but instead Crooks made Lennie feel discriminated against because of his intellect. Crooks says, "say George didn't come back no more". This makes Lennie think hard and makes him think about George leaving him. The reason Crooks does this is because he has been discriminated against himself because of his race. At last he has the upper hand for once.

Through the character Lennie we see how the smallest thing, such as killing a pup, can lead to a bigger things, such as a person's death. There is a cycle of events in the novel. A part of the novel that shows this is when Lennie is in the barn petting his pup and all of a sudden he's dead, which makes him put the pup in the hay. Unexpectedly we see Curley's wife pop in. She ends up dead because she wanted to be nice and let Lennie stroke her hair. At the end, when Lennie is seen to be next to lake where the novel began, we see George with Carlson's luger, ready to kill Lennie as an act of mercy to avoid the lynch mob. The novel has come full circle, which is why we are back at the lake. Lennie can't survive in this cruel world, so the ending is inevitable. George must get Lennie to look away and he does this by telling Lennie about the dream. As Lennie dies, so does their dream.

What the examiner thought:

'Clear discussion of character and context, relevant details and events selected, strong focus on the question. 17 marks.

A Grade

Extract Question: 20 Minutes

Foundation: What do you think of the way Curley's wife speaks and behaves here? Give reasons for what you say, and remember to support your answer with words and phrases from the extract.

Higher: Look closely at the way Curley's wife speaks and behaves here. What does it reveal about her character?

'Any you boys seen Curley?'

They swung their heads toward the door. Looking in was Curley's wife. Her face was heavily made up. Her lips were slightly parted. She breathed strongly, as though she had been running.

'Curley ain't been here,' Candy said sourly.

She stood still in the doorway, smiling a little at them, rubbing the nails of one hand with the thumb and forefinger of the other. And her eyes traveled from one face to another. 'They left all the weak ones here,' she said finally. 'Think I don't know where they all went? Even Curley. I know where they all went.'

Lennie watched her, fascinated; but Candy and Crooks were scowling down away from her eyes. Candy said, 'Then if you know, why you want to ast us where Curley is at?'

She regarded them amusedly. 'Funny thing,' she said. 'If I catch any one man, and he's alone, I get along fine with him. But just let two of the guys get together an' you won't talk. Jus' nothing but mad.' She dropped her fingers and put her hands on her hips. 'You're all scared of each other, that's what. Ever' one of you's scared the rest is goin' to get something on you.'

After a pause Crooks said, 'Maybe you better go along to your own house now. We don't want no trouble.'

'Well, I ain't giving you no trouble. Think I don't like to talk to somebody ever' once in a while? Think I like to stick in that house alla time?'

Candy laid the stump of his wrist on his knee and rubbed it gently with his hand. He said accusingly, 'You gotta husban'. You got no call foolin' aroun' with other guys, causin' trouble.'

The girl flared up. 'Sure I gotta husban'. You all seen him. Swell guy, ain't he? Spends all his time sayin' what he's gonna do to guys he don't like, and he don't like nobody. Think I'm gonna stay in that two-by-four house and listen how Curley's gonna lead with his left twice, and then bring in the ol' right cross? "One-two," he says. "Jus' the ol' one-two an' he'll go down." ' She paused and her face lost its sullenness and grew interested. 'Say – what happened to Curley's han'?'

There was an embarrassed silence. Candy stole a look at Lennie. Then he coughed. 'Why ... Curley ... he got his han' caught in a machine, ma'am. Bust his han'.'

She watched for a moment, and then she laughed. 'Baloney! What you think you're sellin' me? Curley started som'pin' he didn' finish. Caught in a machine – baloney! Why, he ain't give nobody the good ol' one-two since he got his han' bust. Who bust him?'

Candy repeated sullenly, 'Got it caught in a machine.'

'Awright,' she said contemptuously. 'Awright, cover 'im up if ya wanta. Whatta I care? You bindle bums think you're so damn good. Whatta ya think I am, a kid? I tell ya I could of went with shows. Not jus' one, neither. An' a guy tol' me he could put me in pitchers ...' She was breathless with indignation. '– Sat'iday night. Ever'body out doin' som'pin'. Ever'body! An' what am I doin'? Standin' here talkin' to a bunch of bindle stiffs – a nigger an' a dum-dum and a lousy ol' sheep – an' likin' it because they ain't nobody else.'

Foundation: What do you think of the way Crooks speaks and behaves here? Give reasons for what you say, and remember to support your answer with words and phrases from the extract.

Higher: Look closely at how Crooks speaks and behaves here. What does it reveal about his character?

Crooks said, "I didn't mean to scare you. He'll come back. I was talkin' about myself. A guy sets alone out here at night, maybe readin' books or thinkin' or stuff like that. Sometimes he gets thinkin', an' he got nothing to tell him what's so an' what ain't so. Maybe if he sees somethin', he don't know whether it's right or not. He can't turn to some other guy and ast him if he sees it too. He can't tell. He got nothing to measure by. I seen things out here. I wasn't drunk. I don't know if I was asleep. If some guy was with me, he could tell me I was asleep, an' then it would be all right. But I jus' don't know." Crooks was looking across the room now, looking toward the window.

Lennie said miserably, "George wun't go away and leave me. I know George wun't do that."

The stable buck went on dreamily, "I remember when I was a little kid on my old man's chicken ranch. Had two brothers. They was always near me, always there. Used to sleep right in the same room, right in the same bed—all three. Had a strawberry patch. Had an alfalfa patch. Used to turn the chickens out in the alfalfa on a sunny morning. My brothers'd set on a fence rail an' watch 'em—white chickens they was."

Gradually Lennie's interest came around to what was being said. "George says we're gonna have alfalfa for the rabbits."

"What rabbits?"

"We're gonna have rabbits an' a berry patch."

"You're nuts."

"We are too. You ast George."

"You're nuts." Crooks was scornful. "I seen hunderds 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. Hunderds of them. They come, an' they quit an' go on; an' every damn one of 'em's got a little piece of land in his head. An' never a God damn one of 'em ever gets it. Just like heaven. Ever'body wants a little piece of lan'. I read plenty of books out here. Nobody never gets to heaven, and nobody gets no land. It's just in their head. They're all the time talkin' about it, but it's jus' in their head."

Foundation: What do you think of the way Slim speaks and behaves here? Give reasons for what you say, and remember to support your answer with words and phrases from the extract.

Higher: Look closely at how Slim speaks and behaves here. What does it reveal about his character?

A tall man stood in the doorway. He held a crushed Stetson hat under his arm while he combed his long, black, damp hair straight back. Like the others, he wore blue jeans and a short denim jacket. When he had finished combing his hair he moved into the room, and he moved with a majesty only achieved by royalty and master craftsmen. He was a jerkline skinner, the prince of the ranch, capable of driving ten, sixteen, even twenty mules with a single line to the leaders. He was capable of killing a fly on the wheeler's butt with a bull whip without touching the mule. There was a gravity in his manner and a quiet so profound that all talk stopped when he spoke. His authority was so great that his word was taken on any subject, be it politics or love. This was Slim, the jerkline skinner. His hatchet face was ageless. He might have been thirty-five or fifty. His ear heard more than was said to him, and his slow speech had overtones not of thought, but of understanding beyond thought. His hands, large and lean, were as delicate in their action as those of a temple dancer.

He smoothed out his crushed hat, creased it in the middle and put it on. He looked kindly at the two in the bunk-house. 'It's brighter'n a bitch outside,' he said gently. 'Can't hardly see nothing in here. You the new guys?'

'Just come,' said George.

'Gonna buck barley?'

'That's what the boss says.'

Slim sat down on a box across the table from George. He studied the solitaire hand that was upside-down to him. 'Hope you get on my team,' he said. His voice was very gentle. 'I gotta pair of punks on my team that don't know a barley bag from a blue ball. You guys ever bucked any barley?'

'Hell, yes,' said George. 'I ain't nothing to scream about, but that big bastard there can put up more grain alone than most pairs can.'

Lennie, who had been following the conversation back and forth with his eyes, smiled complacently at the compliment. Slim leaned over the table and snapped the corner of a loose card. 'You guys travel around together?' His tone was friendly. It invited confidence without demanding it.

Extract Question

Look closely at the way George speaks and behaves here. What does it reveal about his character?

George said, 'What was it you wanted to see me about?'

Candy pointed at Curley's wife. George stared. 'What's the matter with her?' he asked. He stepped closer, and then he echoed Candy's words. 'Oh, Jesus Christ!' He was down on his knees beside her. He put his hand over her heart. And finally, when he stood up, slowly and stiffly, his face was as hard and tight as wood, and his eyes were hard.

Candy said, 'What done it?'

George looked coldly at him. 'Ain't you got any idear?' he asked. And Candy was silent. 'I should of knew,' George said hopelessly. 'I guess maybe way back in my head I did.'

Candy asked, 'What we gonna do now, George? What we gonna do now?'

George was a long time in answering. 'Guess ... we gotta tell the ... guys. I guess we gotta get 'im an' lock 'im up. We can't let 'im get away. Why, the poor bastard'd starve.' And he tried to reassure himself. 'Maybe they'll lock 'im up an' be nice to 'im.'

But Candy said excitedly, 'We oughtta let 'im get away. You don't know that Curley. Curley gon'ta wanta get 'im lynched. Curley'll get 'im killed.'

George watched Candy's lips. 'Yeah,' he said at last, 'that's right, Curley will. An' the other guys will.' And he looked back at Curley's wife.

Now Candy spoke his greatest fear. 'You an' me can get that little place, can't we, George? You an' me can go there an' live nice, can't we, George? Can't we?'

Before George answered, Candy dropped his head and looked down at the hay. He knew.

George said softly, '- I think I knowed from the very first. I think I knowed we'd never do her. He usta like to hear about it so much I got to thinking maybe we would.'

'Then - it's all off?' Candy asked sulkily.

George didn't answer his question. George said, 'I'll work my month an' I'll take my fifty bucks an' I'll stay all night in some lousy cat house. Or I'll set in some pool-room till ever'body goes home. An' then I'll come back an' work another month an' I'll have fifty bucks more.'

Candy said, 'He's such a nice fella. I didn't think he'd do nothing like this.'

George still stared at Curley's wife. 'Lennie never done it in meanness,' he said. 'All the time he done bad things, but he never done one of 'em mean.' He straightened up and looked back at Candy. 'Now listen. We gotta tell the guys. They got to bring him in, I guess. They ain't no way out. Maybe they won't hurt 'im.' He said sharply, 'I ain't gonna let 'em hurt Lennie. Now you listen. The guys might think I was in on it. I'm gonna go in the bunk house. Then in a minute you come out and tell the guys about her, and I'll come along and make like I never seen her. Will you do that? So the guys won't think I was in on it?'

Candy said, 'Sure, George. Sure I'll do that.'

'OK. Give me a couple minutes then, and you come runnin' out an' tell like you jus' found her. I'm going now.' George turned and went quickly out of the barn.

Extract response. This response was written by a student in an exam.

At the start of the extract Steinbeck presents the character of George as a quick-thinker as when he realises that Curley's wife is dead, despite his exclamation of 'Oh Jesus Christ!' he makes a speedy recovery and acts fast, immediately getting 'down on his knees beside her'. His methodical approach to checking to make sure she was dead is demonstrated by the declarative sentence 'He put his hand over her heart', and reflects his calm, measured attitude towards the bad news.

George's character is also presented as rather distant, as he removes all emotion from his face- 'his face was hard and tight as wood, and his eyes were hard'. This presents him as quite cold, and implies that he is almost resigned to the fact that Lennie has killed Curley's wife, and has already accepted it. He looked 'coldly' at Candy, and this adverb suggests that he has put up a protective façade or shield to try to hide the fact that he is affected by the incident. However, his true feelings are exposed as he admits in defeat 'hopelessly' that 'I should of knew, even stating 'I guess maybe way back in my head I did', which also suggests that he already had an idea of the events that would occur, presenting him as perceptive and also emphasising his relationship with Lennie as he knows him well.

It is evident that George cares deeply for Lennie as he hesitates, demonstrated by the use of ellipsis, 'Guess ... we gotta tell the ... guys', which implies that he doesn't want to 'lock' Lennie up. His concern for Lennie shines through 'Why the poor bastard'd starve', which shows he cares for his well-being. The fact that he 'was a long time in answering' before he admits that 'We can't let him get away', suggests that his real feelings want to allow Lennie to escape.

George is also presented as a defeated as he speaks 'softly', and his dedication to Lennie is shown at the end of the extract as he says 'sharply' that 'I ain't gonna let 'em hurt Lennie', and this dialogue attribution shows how defensive he is of his friend, even when Lennie is clearly in the wrong, which also portrays him as loyal.

George's insistence that 'Lennie never done it in meanness' could suggest his denial of the gravity of the incident that has occurred, yet he is not delusional and realises that 'they ain't no way out'. He moves on from the event quickly, rapidly forming a plan, which reflects his intelligence. He orders Candy 'Now you listen', and his use of an imperative shows that he knows how to assert his power.

Overall, George is portrayed in this extract as a faithful friend to Lennie, yet he knows his character well enough to understand what he has done. He understands the gravity and consequences of Lennie's actions, and is able to formulate a plan, demonstrating his ability to think on his feet, also implying his intelligent, sharp nature.

Examiner comment: The response is concise, packed with perceptive commentary on George's thoughts and feelings here. There is a strong overview at the end and a sustained focus on how the writer uses language to reveal the subtleties of the way the character reacts throughout the extract. Mark: 10. A*