

The background is a dark, atmospheric landscape. It features a calm body of water in the foreground, reflecting the sky and the silhouettes of mountains in the distance. The mountains are dark and layered, creating a sense of depth. The sky is a deep, dark blue or purple, suggesting twilight or dawn. The overall mood is somber and contemplative.

Of Mice and Men

John Steinbeck

IMPORTANT

- 'Of Mice And Men' is a novel selected by the Department of Education & Skills for study by Junior Cycle students.
- It contains material that is of a sensitive nature and it is expected that students have the maturity to look at words and actions in context.
- This means that when someone commits an offensive act (e.g punching someone) or says something extremely offensive (e.g commenting on someone's religion, sexual orientation or race with language that is not politically correct), the viewer has the maturity to look at the kind of person who acts or speaks like this.
- We will be appalled at the sheer ignorance and lack of education of characters in some regards.
- We will see dreadful word choices, extremely offensive terms, violent behaviour.
- We are educated enough to view the context of the film as a contributing factor to the behaviour of the characters - which is inexcusable

It is a Novella

- A novella is a narrative prose fiction whose length is shorter than that of most novels, but longer than most short stories.



Overview

George, who is smaller and smarter, takes care of Lennie, who is big and "simple." Although they are just laborers, it is revealed they have big plans to own their own farm one day, and George promises Lennie can take care of the rabbits in the future if he behaves himself. Lennie is innocent but unable to understand other's social cues, and George wants Lennie around and takes care of him, even if he is bitter about it sometimes. What we are supposed to understand from their interactions is that although they aren't educated or similar- even they can be the best of friends. Friendship is one of the major themes of the novel.

Background Information



- Published in 1937
- Narrates the experiences of George Milton and Lennie Small, two displaced migrant ranch workers, who move from place to place in California in search of new job opportunities during the Great Depression in the United States.
- They are in Soledad on their way to another part of California. They hope to one day attain the dream of settling down on their own piece of land. Lennie's part of the dream is merely to tend and pet rabbits on the farm, as he loves touching soft animals, although he always accidentally kills them. This dream is one of Lennie's favorite stories, which George constantly retells. They had fled from Weed.

The Great Depression



- The **Great Depression** was a severe worldwide economic depression that took place mostly during the 1930s, beginning in the United States. The timing of the Great Depression varied across the world; in most countries, it started in 1929 and lasted until the late 1930s. It was the longest, deepest, and most widespread depression of the 20th century. The Great Depression is commonly used as an example of how intensely the global economy can decline.

Important

- While it is a book taught in many schools "*Of Mice and Men*" has been a frequent target of censors for vulgarity, and uses offensive and racist language.

- Dreams, loneliness, companionship, , friendship, power, oppression and fate are some of the most significant themes that run through the narrative spine of the novella, 'Of Mice and Men'.

Themes



George Milton



Physical Traits: George has sharp facial features, tan skin, and is muscular, although not as strong and big as Lennie.

Character Traits: George is very intelligent and suspicious of people. He is protective of Lennie.

Quote: "Guys like us, that work on ranches, are the loneliest guys in the world. They got no family."

Lennie Small



Physical Traits: Lennie is very large and strong, stronger than he realizes. He has pale blank eyes and a shapeless face.

Character Traits: Lennie has an intellectual disability. Because of this he likes to touch soft things, forgets things often, relies on George and forgets his own strength. He is often a source of conflict for George.

Quote: "I'd pet em, and pretty soon they bit my fingers and I pinched their head a little and then they was dead - because they was so little."

Candy



Physical Traits: Candy is pretty old and lost one of his hands. He isn't big either.

Character Traits: Since Candy is both old and missing a hand, he is one of the weaker men on the ranch. He provides a lot of information both for the reader and George and Lennie. It is clear that Candy is lonely.

Quote: "A guy on a ranch don't never listen nor he don't ask no questions."

Slim



Physical Traits: Slim is pretty tall, a bit strong but not as strong as Lennie.

Character Traits: Slim is a natural leader, whose opinion matters to the ranchers more than anyone else's. He is sharp, insightful, and picks up on things other people don't.

Quote: "Ain't many guys travel around together"

Curley



Physical Traits: Curley is the smallest on the ranch and pretty skinny. He wears high heeled boots to make himself seem taller. Despite his size he packs a punch.

Character Traits: Curley is a short tempered person, and gets pretty mad easily. Candy notices that he gets mad at people bigger than him and likes to pick fights with them, especially Lennie. This along with his high heeled boots shows that he is insecure.

Quote: "Let the big guy talk...Well, next time you answer when you're spoke to."

Curley's Wife



Physical Traits: Blonde "sausage curl" hair, red lipstick and nail polish, lots of makeup, red shoes...very attractive

Character Traits: Always wandering around "looking" for Curley. Very flirtatious with a nasal voice. Seems to be looking for attention from men other than Curley.

Quote: "She smiled archly and twitched her body. 'Nobody can't blame a person for looking.'"



Of Mice and Men

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Chapter 1

Chapter One – Summary



- Lennie and George are in the beautiful Soledad countryside.
- They are opposites. George is small and sharp, while Lennie is large and takes longer to understand or remember things.
- George is annoyed that the bus driver let them off where he did, forcing them to walk for miles in the heat.

Chapter One – Summary

- Lennie does not know where they are headed, he has forgotten. He says he remembers about the rabbits though, to George's annoyance.
- George has worked cards for both of them, he has arranged work on the ranch. Lennie pets a dead mouse until George takes from him. George is in charge of reminds Lennie that they do not want any trouble like they had in Weed.

Chapter One – Summary

- George talks about all he could do if it were not for Lennie, but feels bad when Lennie asks if he should leave.
- George tells Lennie that they're not like other guys and tells Lennie how good they will have it when they get their own place. George tells Lennie to return to this spot in the brush if he gets in trouble.



Chapter One – Notes

- Steinbeck makes great use of description to set the scene and show the peace and tranquillity of nature.
- The relationship between the men is quickly established, with Lennie's dependence on George clearly evident.
- The reference to trouble in Weed is important, as it foreshadows the trouble that is to come for the men.



Chapter One – Notes

- Lennie's petting of the dead mouse is significant, for it not only highlights his simple, child-like character, but prepares us for what happens later on.

Chapter One – Questions (PQE)

1. Describe the setting as this novel begins.
2. What does Lennie have in his pocket? What does this tell you about him?
3. Does Lennie make life difficult for George? Why does George stay with Lennie?
4. Describe the relationship between these two men as you see it. Refer to the positives and negatives of their friendship.



Of Mice and Men

John Steinbeck

Chapter 2

Chapter Two – Summary

- An old man (Candy) shows George and Lennie to their bunks.
- He tells them the boss was annoyed that they did not arrive the night before.
- George blames their lateness on the bus driver. He does all the talking with the boss, speaking for Lennie and himself.
- This makes the boss suspicious of George. He thinks George may be taking Lennie's money from him.
- George responds by saying that Lennie is his cousin.

Chapter Two – Summary

- When the boss leaves, George Blames Lennie for the bosses questions and tells him to keep his mouth shut.
- Curley, the boss's son, comes in looking for his father. He tries to talk to Lennie and get annoyed when George cuts in on his behalf. When he leaves, the old man tells them that Curley likes to pick fights with the big guys. George feels that Lennie would be well able to handle Curley.

Chapter Two – Summary

- The old swamper says that Curley has been worse since he got married. He says that Curley's wife has been giving other men the eye.
- George is worried about Curley and he warns Lennie to keep away from him.
- Curley's wife comes into the bunkhouse looking for Curley. George thinks she is a tramp but Lennie is struck by how pretty she is.
- George warns Lennie to keep away from her. Lennie does not want to stay at the ranch, but George tells them that they have to stick with it long enough to get a stake together.

Chapter Two – Summary

- Slim and Carlson come in from bucking barley.
- Carlson suggested shooting the old swampers (Candy's) dog and replacing it with a pup from Slim's dog's litter.
- Lennie is excited at the prospect of a pup, wanting George to ask for one for him right away.
- The two men are leaving to go to dinner with when Curley comes in looking for his wife.



Chapter Two – Notes

- Candy will soon become George and Lennie's closest ally on the farm. It's clear that he wants to help them, look out for them, and warn them about any impending trouble. This highlights the theme of companionship and friendship.
- George is sceptical of his new surroundings. It is a lonely, harsh place, characterised by cruelty and lack of human warmth.
- It is assumed that George is trying to make money out of his companion. This adds to the themes of friendship and isolation.



Chapter Two – Notes

- This passage demonstrates the unforgiving nature of the place in which Lennie and George have found themselves. The boss is shown to be a cruel man.
- The world of the text is clearly a world that is hostile to minorities and other marginalized people—which spells trouble for George and Lennie, too.



Chapter Two – Notes

- The boss demands total control over his workers and lets nothing go. This no-nonsense attitude reflects the dire circumstances the men are facing during the Great Depression.
- Candy and his dog are a symbol of the relationship between George and Lennie. Just as Candy can't bring himself to put down his dog, George can't find it within himself to separate from Lennie.



Chapter Two – Notes

- The ranch is an unforgiving place, and people like Lennie—people who are different—are liable to be singled out .
- This passage foreshadows the conflict among Curley, Lennie, and George.

Chapter Two – Questions (PQE)

1. What makes the boss suspicious of the new arrivals?
2. “If I was a relative of yours I’d shoot myself.” Is George mean to Lennie?
3. Assess the character of Curley, the boss’s son, based on how he acts and what the old man (Candy) says about him.
4. Lennie tells George that he is scared. Why does he feel this way?
5. Briefly describe Slim. Does he sound like a typical ranch worker? Explain your point of view.



Of Mice and Men

John Steinbeck

Chapter 3

Chapter Three – Summary

- George thanks Slim for giving one of his pups to Lennie. Slim is impressed that Lennie is so strong and is such a good worker.
- Slim is surprised that the men travel together.
- George tells Slim about the trouble they got into in Weed, when Lennie touched a girls red dress and frightened her. The girl screamed and Lennie held on to her, not knowing what to do. She told the law she was raped.

Chapter Three – Summary

- Lennie comes in holding his new pup but George tells him to put it back in the barn.
- Candy and Carlson come in. Carlson complains about the smell of Candy's old dog and tells Candy he should shoot the dog but Candy doesn't want to. Carlson perseveres and says that he will shoot the dog for him. Candy gives in. When the men hear a gunshot later on, Candy rolls over to face the wall.

Chapter Three – Summary

- Whit tells George about a brothel in town they go to on Saturday nights. George says he is saving his money for a stake with Lennie.
- Curley comes in looking for his wife. He heads to the barn when he hears that's where Slim is, thinking that she is with him.
- Lennie asks George to tell him about the place they are going to get together. Candy has been listening to their conversation. He offers the men \$350 if they will let him join. Candy is worried that he will be sacked from the ranch soon, due his missing hand.

Chapter Three – Summary

- George says they will do it together, excited at the prospect. He says that they will go in a month. George tells them not to tell anybody about their plan.
- Candy says he should have put his own dog down and not let someone else do it.
- Curley returns and picks on Lennie, accusing him of laughing at him. Lennie tries to retreat, but Curley attacks him.

Chapter Three – Summary

- Lennie calls on George to make Curley stop beating him. George tells Lennie to get Curley, so he grabs Curley's fist in one hand and squeezes it.
- When he doesn't let go, George slaps Lennie's face and shouts at him to release Curley, which he finally does.

Chapter Three – Summary

- Curley's hand is crushed. Slim arranges to take him to the doctor in Soledad. Slim tells Curley he better say his hand got caught in a machine. He threatens that if Lennie gets canned, they will make a laughing stock of Curley.
- When Curley leaves, George reassures Lennie that it wasn't his fault. Lennie is worried that he will not get to tend the rabbits, but George tells him that he has done nothing wrong.



Chapter Three – Notes

- George's account of the trouble Lennie got into in Weed is significant, as it foreshadows what is to come with Curley's wife. Although George and the readers know that Lennie isn't very sharp, people may judge him as something he is not because of his size and strength.
- The transient (lasting only a short time) nature of the ranch workers, and Candy's dog being shot draws attention to the loneliness and isolation (theme) of ranch life.



Chapter Three – Notes

- Some may feel that Curley's wife is the two-dimensional 'tramp' character that the men view her as, while others may feel she is isolated and lonely.
- George and Lennie's dream to get a stake together and live off the land is important. It sets them apart from the other men as they have a shared goal to work towards and it will be their own.



Chapter Three – Notes

- Candy's remorse over not shooting his dog himself is important, as it foreshadows George's grim task in the closing chapter.
- Lennie's reaction to being attacked by Curley shows that he is slow to anger or defend himself however, the damage he does to Curley is considerable.

Chapter Three – Questions (PQE)

1. Slim remarks that ranch workers rarely travel together. What insight does this give you into the lives of ranch workers?
2. What happened in Weed that made Lennie and George run away? How does learning of this incident impact the mood and atmosphere of the novel?
3. What does Whit say about Curley's wife? In general, do the men have a good opinion of her? (pg. 57-58)

Chapter Three – Questions (PQE)

4. What makes Candy want to join George and Lennie in their dream place? DO you feel sorry for Candy? Explain.
5. What makes Lennie fight back when Curley attacks him? Does he intend to hurt Curley? Do you condemn (disapprove) or condone (accept) Lennie's actions here?
6. Do you think Lennie's fight with Curley could lead to problems later on? Explain your point of view.

The background of the slide is a dark, atmospheric landscape. It features a calm body of water in the foreground, reflecting the silhouettes of distant mountains and a hazy sky. The mountains are dark and layered, creating a sense of depth. The overall color palette is muted, consisting of dark blues, greys, and blacks, with a soft, hazy light source visible in the distance. The text is overlaid on this background.

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Chapter 4

Chapter Four – Summary

- This chapter begins in Crooks' quarters. He is a crippled, black, stable hand. He bunks in the harness room, separate to the other men.
- Crooks is rubbing liniment onto his back when Lennie appears in his doorway. Crooks is isolated from the other men because he is black.
- Lennie tells Crooks about the rabbits and their plan to live off the fat of the land. Crooks talk to Lennie and says George has got it right, having someone to talk to.

Chapter Four – Summary

- Candy comes into the barn, looking for Lennie. At first Crooks says they won't ever get a place of their own, but he is convinced by Candy. Crooks offers to join them and work for his board.
- Curley's wife appears, looking for Curly. She says that she likes to talk to people and complains about listening to Curly. She asks what happened to Curly's hand, but Candy will not tell her. This makes her angry and she insults the men.

Chapter Four – Summary

- Curley's wife sees the bruises on Lennie's face and figures out how curly got injured. Crooks tries to throw her out and she threatens him. Candy says he and Lennie will back Crooks up if she says anything, but she replies that nobody would believe them. The men return. As Curley's wife leaves, she tells Lennie that she is glad he hurt Curley a bit.
- Crooks tells Candy that he has changed his mind about working for them when they get a place. The men leave.



Chapter Four – Notes

- Crooks, like Candy, is an outsider, who does not fully fit in with the other men. This contributes to the idea that theirs is a cold, unfeeling world, with little compassion or friendship. His conversation with Lennie reveals the depth of his loneliness and isolation.
- Crooks and Candy have physical disabilities, something that hinders them severely in this physical, masculine world of the ranch.



Chapter Four – Notes

- The racism of their world is obvious in this chapter. Crooks lives a lonely, isolated life and is looked down on by the other men. Curley's wife's threats towards the end of the chapter remind us of his position in their society.

Chapter Four – Questions (PQE)

1. Is Crooks a lonely character? Explain your point of view with reference to the text.
2. What makes Crooks want to work with Lennie and George on their dream place? Explain your point of view with reference to the text.
3. Curley's wife calls Lennie, Candy and Crooks weak. Why does she insult them this way? Explain your point of view with reference to the text.
4. Do you think Curley's wife is a lonely character? Explain your point of view and give examples the text.
5. What does this chapter reveal to you about racism in the world of the text? Explain your point of view with reference to the text.



Of Mice and Men

John Steinbeck

Chapter 5

Chapter Five – Summary

- Lennie is in the barn, looking at his dead pup. He has killed it accidentally. He is afraid that he will get in trouble with George for killing it. He gets angry with the pup and throws it down, saying that now he will not get to tend the rabbits.
- Curley's wife comes into the barn and Lennie hides the pup. He tells her that he is not allowed to talk to her, but this does not deter her. She said she never gets to talk to anyone and is awfully lonely.

Chapter Five – Summary

- Curley's wife talks about her past, saying she could've been an actress. She says she does not like Curley.
- She asks Lennie why he likes rabbits so much and he explains that he likes to pet soft things. She invites him to feel her hair, because it is soft and fine, so he does.
- She tells him to stop, that he will mess it up, and jerks her head sideways. Lennie panics and hangs on to her hair. She starts to scream and then he covers her mouth with his hand to stop her. He gets annoyed that she is yelling, afraid that he will get in trouble, and shakes her, accidentally breaking her neck.

Chapter Five – Summary

- Candy comes into the barn, looking for Lennie, and discovers Curley's wife. He goes to get George. George says they better tell the others, but Candy is afraid that Curley will kill Lennie. To Candy's disappointment, George realises they will never get a little place of their own now.

Chapter Five – Summary

- George asks Candy to 'discover' the body in a few minutes, when he is in the bunkhouse, so the other men will not think that he knew anything about it.

Chapter Five – Summary

- The men come in and Slim checks for a pulse. Curley immediately says Lennie is the culprit. He goes for his shot gun, planning to shoot Lennie. Slim says they better go after Lennie. He knows that Curley wants to shoot him.

Chapter Five – Summary

- Carlson's gun is missing. He thinks that Lennie has taken it. Curley wants George to go with them. He agrees, but asks Curley not to shoot Lennie. Curley says that of course they will shoot him.
- Slim suggests that Curley should stay with his wife, but Curley plans to catch Lennie and shoot him. Candy stays with Curley's wife and George leaves with the men.



Chapter Five – Notes

- This chapter opens with Lennie in the barn with the pup he has accidentally killed. There have been hints up to this point that he does not realise his own strength (e.g: the mice, Curley's hand).
- Lennie is upset about what he has done and does not want to get into trouble with George. This tells us what George means to Lennie.



Chapter Five – Notes

- Curley's wife's loneliness and isolation are clear in her conversation with Lennie. She is a desperately lonely character in search of companionship.
- Lennie's accidental killing of Curley's wife is not entirely unexpected, it is foreshadowed by the pup's death in the very same location.
- Curley's plan to shoot Lennie shows his cruelty and viciousness. The men's willingness to chase Lennie down shows the brutality of their world. George does little to stop them, showing his acceptance of Lennie's fate.

Chapter Five – Questions (PQE)

1. Does Lennie intend to kill Curley's wife? Is Lennie responsible for her death?
1. "Shoot for his guts". Comment on Curley's plan here. Does he seem upset by his wife's death, in your opinion?
1. We never learn Curley's wife's name. What point is the author making by doing this?



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John Steinbeck

Chapter 6

Chapter Six – Summary

- It is peaceful and calm by the pool in the brush when Lennie appears. He is worried that George will not want him any more.
- He imagines an old woman who tells him off for not listening to George and for doing bad things. Next he imagines a giant rabbit. It tells him that he would never be able to tend rabbits and says that George is going to beat the hell out of him with a stick. Lennie is annoyed by this and tells the rabbit that George is nice to him and will not be mean. The rabbit upsets Lennie, telling him that George is going to leave him.

Chapter Six – Summary

- George arrives and Lennie asks George if he's going to leave him and George says that he will not. Lennie told George that he has done another bad thing. He is surprised when George does not give him hell about this.
- Lennie asks George to tell him how they are different to other guys, because they have each other. George tells Lennie to take off his hat and look across the river. He tells Lennie about the place they will get together, how they will live off the fat of the land. He tells Lennie that he's never been mad at him and that he's not mad now.

Chapter Six – Summary

- Voices come closer in the brush. George tells Lennie they will get their place right now and then shoots him in the back of the head.
- George throws the gun away and Slim and the men arrive. Slim tells George that he had to do it and takes him to have a drink. Curley and Carlson wonder what is the matter with George and Slim.



Chapter Six – Notes

- The pool – side setting is significant here as it is where our story began. The peace and quiet of the natural world seems at odds with the violent world of the men.
- Lennie's concerns over upsetting George are touching. He has no regard for himself, he focuses all his attention on his friend. This also shows his lack of understanding about what he has done.



Chapter Six – Notes

- Lennie's imaginings show his worries over upsetting George, but also the faith and belief he has in George, who has treated him so well. This insight and self – criticism on Lennie's part adds to the sadness of this section.

Chapter Six – Questions (PQE)

1. What different things does Lennie imagine? What do each of these reveal to you about Lennie?
1. Is George angry with Lennie when he joins him? Why do you think this is?
1. George lies to Lennie, telling him that they will get their place together soon. Why does he lie to his best friend like this?
1. What makes George take his friend's life? What is your reaction to this?
1. Slim tells George that he had to do this to Lennie. Do you agree with Slim?