

## American Dream Essay

In the novel Of Mice and Men, John Steinbeck shows American dream as an unreachable goal for the characters. Of Mice and Men is a novel based on two childhood friends, Lennie and George, who travel together in search of work. Lennie, the gentle giant, has a mental disability and an obsession of petting soft objects. One day, while stroking a girl's hair, Lennie accidentally kills her. And eventually by the end of the novel, George is forced to shoot Lennie. Steinbeck shows American Dream as an unreachable goal because of a character's standing in the society, their dreams to be unreal and their dependency on other characters.

American Dream is unreachable because of the different levels created in the society leading to discrimination. Firstly, Curley's wife goes through gender discrimination that stands as an obstacle in front of her from living her American Dream. After her marriage with Curley, her dream is shattered into pieces. We come to know how her life is horrible when she admits that she "(does not) like Curley" (100) because he "ain't a nice fella" (100). And Curley being overprotective over her, he wants her "to talk to nobody but (him)" (98) or else "he gets mad" (98). But getting "awful lonely" (98), she tries to start a conversation with the people in the bunkhouse. And in return, all she ever gets is being called a "tart" (31) or a "tramp" (35). So if Curley forbids his wife to talk to anyone, there is no way he would let her pursue her dream. Therefore due to all the discrimination that Curley's wife suffers, she is unable to reach her American Dream. Secondly, Crooks goes through racial discrimination. Crooks' American Dream is to be treated equally by everyone. But he

“ain’t wanted in the bunkhouse” (77) because he is “black” (77) and he “stink(s)” (77) to them. People use words like “stable buck” (22) and “n-word” (22) to call him, instead of using his real name. This is the reason why he lives alone, all by himself in a room. Furthermore, the boss tortures him by “giv(ing) (him) hell” (22) whenever he gets frustrated about something. Crooks is awfully lonely and in great agony. The pain in his back symbolizes the pain he has from all the hate he gets from the people. Therefore through all the discrimination that Crooks suffers, he is unable to reach his American Dream. Finally, migrant workers like Lennie and George go through social discrimination. They have an American Dream to have a land with their own house along with animals such as pigs, cows and rabbits around. So in order to reach their American Dream, Lennie and George go to the ranch for working and earning money. However, when they enter the bunkhouse, they instantly experience discrimination. People are very unwelcoming and suspicious on them, which risks their job in danger. For instance, during their first meeting with the boss, we see how the boss tries to intimidate them by “hook(ing) his thumb in his belt and squint(ing) one eye nearly closed” (28). Furthermore, when Curley, the boss’ son, enters, he glances “coldly” at Lennie and George, and specifically targets Lennie trying to intimidate him because of his hate for “big guys” (29). Both, the boss and Curley try to intimidate George and Lennie trying to show them that they own the place, while they are just workers working for them. So because of the discrimination George and Lennie suffer, they are unable to reach their American Dream. In these ways, Steinbeck shows the characters’ American Dream unreachable because of the discrimination in the society.

American Dream is unreachable because it is just a fantasy in people's mind that is unreal. Firstly, when Curley's wife's talks to Lennie about her American Dream to be an actress, we come to know that she is trying to achieve it since she was "sixteen" (99). It all started when she "met one of the actors" (99) who tells her "he was gonna put (her) in the movies" (100) and as "soon's he got back to Hollywood he was gonna write to (her) about it" (100). However, she "never (gets) that letter" (100), and all her life, she has been believing that her "ol' lady stole it" (100). This American Dream started because of a man who tells her that she has the talent to act in movies. But, that man might not have been serious, and says this just to flirt with her. And because she never gets a letter from him, proves that he was not serious about giving her a movie. Although Curley's wife's still believes in her American Dream, it is unfortunately unreachable because it is something that is unreal for her achieve. Secondly, having an obsession of petting "sof' things" (101), Lennie's American Dream is to "have rabbit" (16) in their farm, in order to pet them anytime he wants. But seeing his past incidents, it will be impossible to keep rabbits for petting as he would end up killing them accidentally. Furthermore, thinking about his death, that is caused because of an unintentional crime that he commits, is the end result of his obsession over petting soft things. Therefore, if Lennie's obsession of petting soft things can end up with someone else's or his own death, it is impossible to have an American Dream like that. Finally, Lennie and George's American dream is to "have a little house" (16) and "live off the fatta lan'" (16) with "a cow and some pigs" (16) and "rabbits in the cages" (16). However, when we are first introduced to George and Lennie, we see their condition as migrant workers is

poor. They do not have “ketchup” (12) to eat their food with or a place to live and sleep. So keeping in mind their present situation, it seems that their American Dream is kind of impossible to achieve. Furthermore, the place they describe sounds like a place that does not exist. And during Crooks, Lennie and Candy’s conversation, we see Crooks tries to open their eyes and give them a really check about life by stating a fact about their and other migrant worker’s same American Dream. He tells them that their American Dream is just a fantasy that “hundreds of men” (83) dream of. They come “on the ranch” (83) to earn some money for their American Dream. But “they quit an’ go on” (83) after realizing that such a heaven-like place are too good to be real. So although, Crooks tries to make them understand that their American Dream is unreal, Candy and Lennie still keeping hope inside them argues with him. Therefore because a character’s American Dream is unreal and just a fantasy in their head, Steinbeck shows it as an unreachable goal for them.

American Dream is unreachable because of a character’s dependency on the other. Firstly, Lennie being dependent over George, he cannot achieve his American Dream without him. George seems to save Lennie everytime he makes mistakes, by showing him the right way out of situations. For instance, back in Weed, when Lennie “jus’ wanted to feel that girl’s dress-just wanted to pet it like it was a mouse” (13), the girl “jerks back” (13) feeling uncomfortable. But because her action makes Lennie panic, he holds on to her “like it was a mouse.” The lady screams saying Lennie is trying to rape her, which gets everyone’s attention land on Lennie. So George hurries and saves Lennie by “sneak(ing) out in the dark” away from the country. However, without George, Lennie always seems to make mistakes, causing

troubles for them to reach their American Dream. For instance, while “stroking (Curley’s wife’s) hair” (102), Lennie’s grip of his hands gets stronger. This gets her to “(struggle) violently” (103) trying to get out his grip, and starts shouting at Lennie to “let go” (102). This makes Lennie panic and he puts his “other hand closed over her mouth and nose” (103), begging her to stop. But then he notices she has become “still” (103). He then realizes he has “done a bad thing” (103), he got her neck broken, resulting in her death. These two similar situations that Lennie creates, shows how important George’s presence is to guide Lennie in a problem. So because George is not present with Lennie, he gets Curley’s wife killed. And this action of Lennie further gets him killed as well. Therefore without George, Lennie makes a big mistake, causing their American Dream to be put at an end forever. Secondly, George being dependent over Lennie, he loses all his hope to reach their American Dream without him. So because of Lennie’s big and physically strong, George convinces the boss by saying Lennie is “sure a hell of a good worker. Strong as bull” (24). We see that George is somewhat dependent on Lennie, because seeing his physical strength people easily give them a job which helps them save “a big stake together” (63) for their American Dream. However, after the crime committed by Lennie, George realizes that there is no way Lennie can escape from being shot by Curley. This makes George completely lose his hope of pursuing his American Dream. Instead, he decides to live a normal life like any other worker, spending the money they earn on “some lousy cat house” (107) or “set in some in some poolroom till ever’body goes home” (107). Therefore without Lennie, George is pretty lonely to follow his American Dream. And so he loses all of his hope for reaching his American

Dream. Thirdly, Candy is completely dependent over George and Lennie for achieving his American Dream. He makes a deal with them that together, they could “get a big stake” (63) in order to buy a “little place an’ live on the fatta the lan” (63). Candy says he would “cook and tend the chickens and hoe the garden some” (67). However, after Lennie accidentally kills Curley’s wife, Candy in “his greatest fear” (107) asks George if they could still “get that little place” (107). But he knew it was no, and right at that moment his American Dream comes to an end. Therefore if Candy would be all by him following his American Dream without depending on George and Lennie, he would have been successful.

In the end, even after working so hard, none of the characters were able to reach their American Dream. In conclusion, Steinbeck shows American Dream as an unreachable goal because of a character’s standing in the society, their dreams to be unreal and their dependency on other characters.