

Ovee Dharwadkar

English 9 Map

Herzman

February 2, 2024

Powerfully Powerful

Ronnie Coleman, an all-star bodybuilder and eight time Olympiad proves how important physical power is to him. Many might agree and believe physical power is extremely important. However, the novel *Of Mice and Men* proves how mental power is equally as important. The novel *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck, is a story about two young men, George and Lennie, who are constantly traveling looking for work. They start to work at a ranch, where they experience just how important power is. Those who fit in, who keep their head down and stay out of trouble, fit the norm. And those who don't, are different. This novel reveals that when one is different from others, such as Curley's wife and Crooks, they are viewed as an outsider, and therefore have less power and are disrespected for who they are.

Curley's wife is the only woman on the all male ranch, which therefore makes her an outsider as she has less power and control over the others. Her presence disrupts the peace on the ranch, causing discomfort among those who fear the effects of interacting with her. When George and Lennie meet Curley's wife, she tries to get to know them. Lennie is friendly towards her, but George yells at him saying "don't you even take a look at that b*tch. I don't care what she says and what she does. I seen 'em poison before, but I never seen no piece of jail bait worse than her. You leave her be." (32). George's initial reaction to Curley's wife shows that merely because she's a woman, meant she is different and had to be disrespected. George knows nothing about her, but assumes that because she is an outsider that she is no good. Furthermore, as an

outsider, one can be blamed for things they never did. When Lennie kills Curley's wife, he gets chased by the group of men, leaving Candy with her dead body. He yells at her saying "'You God damn tramp,' he said viciously. 'You done it, di'nt you? I s'pose you're glad. Ever'body knowed you'd mess things up. You wasn't no good. You ain't no good now, you lousy tart.'" (95) She is slammed with insults while being the victim of murder. She is blamed and insulted simply because the other men don't see her as their equal.

Although many men keep their distance from Curley's wife because of her husband, they do the exact opposite to Crooks and purposely outcast and ridicule him based on the color of his skin. Crooks, a Black stable buck seen as an ownable item, expected to tend to the horses and keep his distance. After meeting Curley's wife, George and Lennie overhear others calling for a "'Stable Buck - ooh, sta-able Buck!' [and] 'Where the hell is that God damn n*gg*r?'"(29) As a Black worker on an all white farm, he is beneath all others. Trained to be alert and ready, to tend to his white superiors' needs, wherever and whenever. Additionally, when Curley's wife intrudes into Crooks's room, she asserts her dominance over him, using racial slurs and threatening him when she says "'Listen, n*gg*r,' she said. 'You know what I can do to you if you open your trap?'" (80). Although Curley's wife is an outsider, she still has significantly more power as a white woman than Crooks as a black man. She is insinuating that she can get him fired and kicked out, even though he didn't do anything to hurt her. Crooks is different, having a different skin tone, and in turn, treated like something that isn't human. This makes him vulnerable to insults and abuse, highlighting that society values conformity above individuality.

Of Mice and Men spotlights the exclusion and rejection of individuals who are different. Through examples of Curley's wife and Crooks, Steinbeck illuminates the harsh reality of being an outsider which leads to diminished power and respect. All of which are due to uncontrollable

factors such as gender or race. Although Ronnie Coleman's may be physically stronger than all others, the strength of fitting into conventional norms beats all others.