Socratic Seminar Questions

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1. Why is Mice and Men described as a tragic novel? Why not?

First, I believe that the novel is a tragedy because based on the definition, which says that a tragedy is a play about a good person, important to society, but suffers a fall brought by something in their nature. I think the novel, Mice and Men, is a tragedy because George, one of the protagonists, is a good person towards society, but due to Lennie, he has some disadvantages. If it weren’t for Lennie, George can get a good job, get a wife, and have a good life. But since George must travel with Lennie, George must take care of Lennie, and use part of the earnings towards him. To feed Lennie, bathe him, clothing, etc. George and Lennie have always been together, and George All of the dreams that George and Lennie had are crushed.

“Sure, we’d have a little house an’ a room to ourself. Little fat iron stove, an’ in the winter we’d keep a fire goin’ in it. It ain’t enough land so we’d have to work too hard. Maybe six, seven hours a day. An’ when we put in a crop, why we’d be there to take the crop up. We’d know what come to our planting.” This quote describes that George and Lennie have a dream, a goal that they would like to achieve. Unfortunately, at the end of the story, these dreams are crushed when George kills Lennie. Chapter 3, Page 58, Paragraph 1.

Secondly, Lennie is a good person, but due to his strength, size and mental state, manages to accidentally kill animals. Lennie loves soft things, so he would find a soft and fluffy creature, and pet it too hard. Petting the animal too hard would result in death. Furthermore, Lennie’s mental state indicates that he still acts like a child, he doesn’t want to hurt anything or anyone. Lennie adores and loves animals, never intending to hurt them. Since he acts like a child, Lennie doesn’t know what to do when a problem arises, so he just keeps doing what he is doing. For instance, at the beginning of the story, Lennie holds on to a women’s dress and when she screams, Lennie kept holding on to her red dress. Lennie only touched it in the first place because it was soft. This is an example of a tragedy because Lennie is a good person, but due to his nature and mindset, suffers a fall. He suffers the loss of many opportunities and makes lots mistakes, such as killing innocent entities by accident.

“Jus’ wanted to feel that girl’s dress, jus’ wanted to pet it like it was a mouse. Well, how the hell did she know you jus’ wanted to feel her dress? She jerks back and you hold on like it was a mouse. She yells and we got to hide in an irrigation ditch all day with guys lookin’ for us, and we got to sneak out in the dark and get outta the country. All the time somethin’ like that, all the time. I wisht I could put you in a cage with about a million mice an’ let you have fun.” This quote is from George and how he is saying that he is mad at Lennie for them not getting a job, how he had ruined their chance to get a job. This is because Lennie likes to touch soft things, so when Lennie sees something soft, he would go up to it and hold on to it. Chapter 1, Page 11, Paragraph 1.

Thirdly, another reason why the novel is a tragedy is because of Curley’s wife. This is because Curley’s wife is always being called a tart and other insults by the men. The men think that since she is the only woman on the ranch, and that since Curley’s wife likes to apply lots of makeup and wear dresses and clothes that stand out. She tends to hang out around the bunkhouse often and likes to talk to the ranchmen as she is very lonely. At the end of the story, she unfortunately dies.

“’I get lonely,’ she said. ‘You can talk to people, but I can’t talk to nobody but Curley. Else he gets mad. How’d you like not to talk to anybody?’” This quote says that Curley’s wife is very lonely but she’s very nice as well. Chapter 5, Page 87, Paragraph 1

Loneliness is expressed in Crook because it is during the Great Depression and people was rude and mean towards him because he was different. They had ridiculed because of his skin color and treated him differently. Crooks had an entire room to himself, and he lived alone. His room is very neat and has many of his possessions on the floor. This is because Crooks is alone, and he can just leave his things on the floor. Some of his possessions include several pairs of shoes, a pair of rubber boots, a single-barreled shotgun and a big alarm clock. Crooks doesn’t have any pets, or roommates, and demanded distance from the others. Crooks didn’t allow people to go into his room without his permission.

“This room was swept and fairly neat, for Crooks was a proud, aloof man. He kept his distance and demanded that other people keep theirs. His body was bent to the left by his crooked spine, and his eyes lay deep in his head, and because of their depth seemed to glitter with intensity.” This quote describes tells readers that Crooks is very introverted and doesn’t like to interact with people often. Chapter 4, Page 67, Paragraph 3

Candy is lonely because when his dog dies, he has no one else. He played with his dog and talked to his dog, indicating how lonely he is.

“I ain't got no relatives nor nothin” – Chapter 3, Page 87. Candy says this when his dog died.

When Lennie found a dead mouse in his pocket, and George stated how Lennie would always kill things, that’s why Aunt Clara stopped giving him animals. But this would foreshadow the death of the puppy and the death of Curley’s wife, when Lennie accidentally kills them.

Also, Lennie states that if there was something better to pet, Lennie would pet it. This foreshadows Lennie petting Curley’s wife hair too hard, and eventually killing her by accident when he snaps her neck.

"I like to pet nice things... Sometimes I've even pet mice, but not when I could get nothing better." Chapter 5, Page 90