

Of Mice and Men

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE Study Guide

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Contents

Product Support from ZigZag Education	ii
Terms and Conditions of Use	iii
Teacher's Introduction.....	1
The Assessment Objectives.....	2
Plot Overview.....	3
Section-by-Section Analysis	5
Section 1 Analysis and Activities	5
Section 2 Analysis and Activities	13
Section 3 Analysis and Activities	20
Section 4 Analysis and Activities	27
Section 5 Analysis and Activities	33
Section 6 Analysis and Activities	39
Lennie's Story	44
Whole-text Analysis.....	45
Characterisation	45
Relationships	59
Settings.....	61
Themes.....	64
Ideas and Messages	75
The Writer's Use of Language	77
Form	80
Structure	80
Contexts	81
Exam Guidance.....	84
Guidance on PEE	84
General Guidance on Writing Essays	87
Revision Checklist.....	89
Key Terms Glossary	90
Further Reading.....	92
Answers / Indicative Content	93

Teacher's Introduction

This resource has been designed for teachers who have chosen *Of Mice and Men* for the Pearson Edexcel IGCSE Literature specification. The beginning of this resource offers a lens of analysis through which students are expected to consider *Of Mice and Men*. There are also a variety of informative text boxes relating to historical context, detail and active learning tasks threaded throughout each section of this resource to aid understanding of *Of Mice and Men*. Within each section a vocabulary glossary has also been included, amalgamated into a 'Key Word Glossary' at the end of the resource for your reference. Quotations with analysis, discussion points and exercises and a variety of section writing and visual tasks are included. A view between Steinbeck and the Potential Reader has been included to assist students who want to explore why Steinbeck may have chosen particular words. This activity can be read in class or set to read as homework. At the end of the resource is also a task for students on how Steinbeck presents the characters in the text.

Following the section-by-section analysis, this resource begins to ease students into interaction with the text, first introducing them to a plot overview and a section within which there are a variety of 'Knowledge Check' gap-fill and question exercises to test students' understanding of the text. After the section-by-section analysis, this resource looks at Steinbeck's text as a whole. This includes in-depth analysis of Steinbeck's setting, relationships with one another, with a mind map to aid the students' visualisation of characters in the novel. The study also explores Steinbeck's themes including dream, loneliness, cruelty, hierarchies, and anger and violence. Along with Steinbeck's text, this resource is included to highlight the various ideas and messages explored throughout the novel, the concept of the American Dream, his investigation into the agency of humanity and of social minorities in 1930s America.

Sections are also included relating to Steinbeck's use of language and form, imagery and are used throughout the text, particularly in the characterisation section. These are as they specifically relate to *Of Mice and Men*. There are also five writing activities exploring and experimenting with the text, in which they can empathise with Steinbeck's characters. At the beginning of the guide the assessment objectives are also included to aid to pupils' understanding of the extra support. There are also character-based 'first impressions' which may need further help, particularly when being introduced to different characters. Storyboard activities and activities for pupils who are more able with the text – such as the use of light and darkness are examples in the guide of language-based activities for interpretation. There are also sections which focus on Steinbeck's use of foreshadowing which encourages pupils to explore the novel on a deeper level.

Along with supporting textual understanding and analysis, this resource provides writing, sample responses for Higher and Foundation papers, a range of questions and timed responses which can be used and adapted to suit the needs of the individual. There is also a focus on exam criteria, an activity for exam answer practice and a guide can be used as a revision guide and in class as various tasks run throughout.

Specification Information

This guide applies to: **Component 1: Poetry and Modern Prose: Section C: Modern Prose**

- Component 1 is worth 60% of the total qualification (30 marks).
- In this component candidates will answer one essay question on unseen poetry from an anthology poetry (30 marks) and one question on modern prose (40 marks).
- Component 1 is a closed book exam and so there are no prescribed editions to the texts. The edition of the text used is the 1974 edition, published by Pan Books.

Acknowledgements

ZigZag Education would like to thank Lewis Gilliard for providing the original character and scene illustrations.

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¹ The interview with John Steinbeck (pp. 63–66) is entirely an original creation and this should be noted.

The Assessment Objectives

Component 1: Poetry and Modern Prose: Section C: Modern Prose (examined)

- One question on modern prose from a choice of two (40 marks)
- AOs tested: **AO1, AO4**

Always check for new changes sample

AO1	Demonstrate a close knowledge and understanding of texts, maintaining a critical style and presenting an informed personal engagement.
AO4	Show understanding of the relationships between texts and the contexts in which they were written.

So, what do these mean?

You will show the text by knowledge

You will link cultural and explain how been impacted readers at

Keywords

Critical Showing careful judgement or evaluation

Influence The act or capacity of producing an effect on someone

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Plot Overview

George and Lennie, two **migrant** workers, have been dropped off a bus miles away where they're expected to work. George is small and dark with 'sharp, strong features' while Lennie is a giant with a 'shapeless' face. The novel begins with the two characters stopping at a place where they decide to camp there for the night. We soon discover that Lennie has a mental disability and is dependent on him for support and direction.

Lennie loves to pet soft things and has even accidentally killed them. This becomes evident when Lennie had been keeping hold of a dead mouse. George angrily threatens Lennie, saying that life would be a lot easier without the duty of looking after Lennie. Lennie really values their relationship. Their friendship is mutually very strong. The two men dream of owning a farm. This would involve caring for rabbits, a task which Lennie was good at. The story ends with their story about what their lives would be like if they were living their dream.

The next morning the men arrive at the ranch ready to work. George tells Lennie that if Lennie could spoil things for them with the boss. George insists that he'll do the work. They are cousins and that Lennie was kicked in the head by a horse when he was a child. Curley is a handyman with a missing hand, and an old dog, then Curley, the boss's son. He is jealous of any attention which his flirtatious young wife receives. He is also full of jealousy towards Lennie. When George and Lennie are alone in the bunk house, Curley's wife shows them. George warns Lennie to stay away from her, knowing what trouble both she and Lennie could get into. The other men return from the fields to eat and the two men meet Slim. He is a doctor who comments on how rare the friendship shown between George and Lennie is. Slim's hand, brings up how, since Slim's dog has just given birth, they should offer Candy a puppy.

The next day George tells Slim the truth: that he and Lennie are not really cousins. Slim explains how Lennie has got them both into trouble in the past. An example of this is that Lennie had a woman's dress but they had to leave because he was accused of rape. Slim says that Lennie has puppies yet Carlson can't bring up the subject of Candy's dog. Slim agrees that death is a painful end to the suffering of the animal, so Candy agrees – as long as Lennie is taken outside.

Slim goes to do some work and Curley appears again, searching for his wife. He tells George and Lennie that later. Later George and Lennie talk some more about their dream, and Candy listens to them. They agree to keep their plan a secret. Slim had been challenged about his whereabouts. Curley, looking for an easy target, picks on Lennie. In a fit of action, Lennie crushes Curley's hand. Slim warns Curley that if he reports what has happened to everyone what has happened on the farm.

The next night Lennie is left with Candy and Crooks as most of the men go to the stable-hand. Curley's wife flirts with them. She sees the cuts on Lennie's face and has crushed Curley's hand. The next day Lennie accidentally kills his puppy. Curley tells Lennie that her life with Curley is a disappointment and that she wished that she was becoming a film star. Lennie tells how he loves to pet soft things and she offers to let him. She points he grabs her too tightly and she cries out. As Lennie attempts to quieten her, he kills her.

Lennie runs back to the pool where George has made plans for either of them to go into trouble. The men at the ranch find out what has happened and organise a search for Lennie, and George can't believe that George isn't mad at him for killing Curley's wife. About the farm which they will have together – he describes the rabbits that Lennie was good at. One of the men comes closer. George shoots Lennie in the back of the head.

When the others arrive, George tells them that Lennie actually had the gun and that he had shot him. Slim is the only one who understands that he has murdered Lennie. He takes Lennie away, and the other men remain, puzzled.

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Context: Plot Summary (AO4)

After reading the plot you will become aware that Steinbeck has a number of themes during this time. Straightaway we discover that the main characters are two who embrace the concept of the American Dream. However, through the plot, Steinbeck contrasts greatly with the daily grinds of reality. However, the dream enables them to see in the future. Is Steinbeck criticising the concept of the American Dream in the text or suggest that he does. Through Candy and his dog he shows how one can become obsessed with his usefulness in terms of work, and how this can only become a strain on society. The culture in which workers form a hierarchy: from the leadership of the Boss to the lowest place, a place which Candy occupies. Steinbeck also uses the character of Crooks to represent the reality of this dream. His dignity is to remain in the lower ranks because of the colour of his skin. When he tells Lennie that he changes his mind after asking if he could become a part of the dream.

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Section 1 Analysis and Assessment

The Opening

Summary

We are introduced to two workers walking by the Salina river, near Soledad, California. Lennie. The pair are making their way to new employment on a local ranch. George follows after Lennie, and tells him of the future where they could have one day owning their own

Analysis

Before we begin, it's important to be aware of Steinbeck's **opening descriptive paragraph**. It's not just simply background description. The descriptions create a world for the novel which will be explored.

The story begins with a description of the countryside near to the Salinas river near Soledad. The events in the story will take place either near or at this spot. The area is described as a place of innocence, like Eden before man and woman's fall.

Steinbeck creates a peaceful world of nature in the opening where the wildlife is abundant. The opening descriptions give the reader positive feelings which are full of hope. The story is set in spring and the cycle will continue no matter what. However, we also see the first sign of interference – man has beaten a path nearby and it is well used.

Two men are introduced and they are dressed in denim which shows that they are ranch-hands. They also carry blankets which reveal that they are used to moving around. George is presented as being smart and sharp. He's the leader. Lennie is his opposite – George and blundering, he has a learning disability and relies on George for support, direction and guidance. He is like a child, and is described in animal-like terms. Steinbeck uses descriptions to make Lennie sound animal-like in his movements, however, he has the mentality of a child. The two men are presented as being opposites. Lennie is shapeless, whereas George is sharp. Lennie moves and has the strength of an animal, yet is simple-minded. This could potentially be a dangerous combination: strength and innocence.

When we look at the characters we immediately know that George is the leader of the two. He tells Lennie off for drinking from the pool like a horse. Lennie is trying to satisfy his immediate needs like an animal. We also know that Lennie does not have a strong temper. He is irritated by the owner who did not take them in. Lennie becomes more frustrated by Lennie who has forgotten where they are going. George explains things to Lennie again. The two men become aware that George has to do more than Lennie. They are different in appearance and they are also different in their characters.

Again George's dominance is shown when he has to shout after he discovers that Lennie has killed a mouse to stroke. We learn that he likes to pet soft things – like a child would. This shows Lennie needs comfort and closeness – it also forewarns later events in the novel.

George also has to instruct Lennie on how to behave when they meet the boss – to show how good a worker he is as soon as they start. Lennie says that he will. George



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past in Weed and we find out that Lennie often gets them into trouble so they have to leave on. This is a **foreshadowing** of future events. George reveals how he believes that without Lennie around as he could even get a girlfriend.

George openly tells Lennie that he is a burden on him and his life could be of a better quality if Lennie was dead. This creates **tension** in the relationship as George views his life as being more difficult than it needs to be. When George follows instructions to collect firewood George shows that he is **frustrated** with Lennie.

When Lennie starts to cry George feels sorry for him and takes the time to explain to him why he broke it by petting it. He tells Lennie that he broke it by petting it.

Again this is a **foreshadowing** of future events. Lennie does not realise his own strength. This is made apparent when George reminds him about what happened when he was giving him mice to pet.

The whole pattern of their lifestyle is revealed by George when he is angry at Lennie. They have to keep their jobs because Lennie always does bad things. They never settle anywhere and are always moving on. George always has to bail him out of trouble. The full details of what happened when he brings up how Lennie felt a girl's dress, petting it like it was a mouse. This is the first time we have seen it that way. When she yells the two of them have to hide in a ditch all day.

However George becomes ashamed after his outburst. He genuinely cares for Lennie and the fact that he caused him to feel anguish.

George is sorry about the way that he has treated him and promises that he will get Lennie a better chance that he gets. Lennie craftily suggests that George tell him the story about the ranch.

George's story begins with a description of what it is like to be a lonely ranch worker. He says that men like them are the loneliest guys in the world, who have no family and no place to go. They waste their money, but they are happy because they have each other and they can look after each other.

Lennie confirms this by saying that they look after each other.

This section is important as it sets up the idea that something bad will happen – this is particularly after hearing the story in Weed. The reader thinks that Lennie will be safe.



Mini Vocabulary Guide

Bundle	a small number of items rolled up inside a blanket and carried
Cat house	brothel
'Coons	racoons
Heron	a bird with a long neck
Morosely	in a sad, gloomy manner
Stake	an amount of money

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Useful Quotations and Analysis

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Page 7

slipped twinkling over the yellow sands in the sunlight

Steinbeck shows at the start of

willows fresh and green with every spring

Steinbeck's description of the beauty of Eden

Rabbits come out of the grass to sit on the sand

This could be Lennie when he returns to the

a man beaten hard by boys coming down from the ranches... and beaten hard by tramps who come wearily down from the highway...

These descriptions of destruction will give the impression of a man.

Page 8

They had walked in single file down the path, and even in the open one stayed behind the other

This immediately shows Lennie follows George and knows anything

Strong features

Steinbeck introduces a strong character

walked his opposite, a huge man, shapeless of face...

The introduction of the opposite to George's character.

heavy hands

Straightaway shows he is strong.

He smiled happily

This reveals the happy Lennie.

'It's a good water,' he said. 'Looks like a scummy.'

This line shows Lennie and his companion

Page 9

big paw

This metaphorical imagery Steinbeck

Lennie, who had been watching, imitated George exactly

This shows how Lennie follows George.

'Jesus Christ, you're a crazy bastard!'

George's words to his friend.

Page 10

'Think I let you carry your own work card?'

Through the character's words, we learn more about the character and what he has to take responsibility.

Page 11

'You're...'

This line shows Lennie's reaction to keeping the dead



'An' you ain't gonna do no bad things like you done in Weed, neither'

George's words to Lennie have caused trouble and also foreshadow

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Useful Quotations and Analysis (continued)

	Quotation	
Page 12	<i>'They run us outa Weed'</i>	Lennie's description of the land again foreshadows his death.
Page 13	<i>'Slowly, like a terrier ... I want to bring a ball to ...'</i>	This line shows the relationship between George and Lennie. Steinbeck also uses imagery for Lennie.
	<i>George snapped his fingers sharply</i>	George's action shows his control over their relationship.
Page 14	<i>'Blubberin' like a baby?'</i>	This line again shows Lennie's childish behaviour.
	<i>'you've broke it pettin' it'</i>	Again Steinbeck shows Lennie's behaviour early on.
Page 15	<i>George went on furiously. 'I got you!'</i>	George's outburst shows him looking after Lennie. He feels that it's his life.
Page 17	<i>'Tell me - like ... before'</i>	This line shows Lennie's need to be told by George.
	<i>'Guys like us... look ahead to...'</i>	George's words show his predicament of being a migrant worker.
Page 18	<i>'O.k. Some day - we're gonna get the jack together... Nuts!'</i>	This whole passage shows the dream of the future. It also captures Lennie's optimism.
Page 19	<i>'I want you to come right here an' hide in the brush'</i>	This instruction shows the end of the novel.

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Questions on Section 1

Read Section 1 before answering the questions.

Active Learning Task 1

- a. Read the beginning of the novel before the introduction to George is described?

- b. Copy the following quotations and underline any words which suggest beauty.

slipped twinkling over the yellow sands in the sunlight (p. 7)
willows fresh and green with every spring (p. 7)



What do these beautiful natural descriptions make you think of? Think about Milton's *Paradise Lost* in relation to George and Lennie. What beauty and innocence could be compared to.

- c. Now discuss with your partner the following lines. Be prepared to tell us what you think about what **message** Steinbeck may have been trying to convey.

a path beaten hard by boys coming down from the ranches...
and beaten hard by tramps who come wearily down from the highways

Write down what you think these descriptions suggest.

- d. **The first descriptions of the men**

We've already focussed on first impressions of George and Lennie's appearance. Read this description of their clothes:

Both were dressed in denim trousers and in denim coats with brass buttons. Both wore shapeless hats and both carried tight blanketed packs slung over their shoulders.

The casual denim tells us they are rough-hands. The 'tight blanketed' packs of their work – to move around. Their lives involve moving from place to place, work that is nomadic – they have no sense of home. The line about the 'blanketed' packs in a line of workers who move around. Aside from their work, they are completely opposite in the way that they look.



Write what the **clothes reveal about the men** in your own words.

- e. **Visual task**

Based on your first impressions of George and Lennie from early in the novel, **draw and label the men using quotations from the text**.

Also focus on the differences between them – for example – when you describe George's features as being 'sharp', remember to draw how Lennie's features are different.

Copy out the table below and use it to compare your drawings of George and Lennie.

	George	Lennie
Size		
Clothes		
Luggage		
Features		
Hands		
Eyes		



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f. Descriptions of Lennie

Steinbeck uses descriptions to make Lennie sound animal-like in also has the mentality of a child.

- Find **two quotations** to show how Lennie is presented as being 'child-like'. Copy them down.
- Write about how Lennie is presented by Steinbeck in Section 1.

- g. Find evidence to show that Lennie looks up to George. Copy down the evidence and explain why you have chosen it in your own words.

- h. Look at the worksheet. Write two headings: one for George down the first column which describe George under his name. Do the same with the other two. Then answer the questions with the person next to you and/or feed them back.

slow clumsy irritated cautious soft

i. George and Lennie's dream

Read the following passage about George and Lennie's dream.

'Some day -- we're gonna get the jack together and we're gonna have acres an' a cow and some pigs and...'

'An' live off the fatta the lan', Lennie shouted. 'An' have rabbits. Go we're gonna have in the garden and about the rabbits in the cages and and the stove, and how thick the cream is on the milk like you can ha George.'

'Why'n't you do it yourself. You know all of it.'

'No ... you tell it. It ain't the same if I tell it. Go on... George. How I

'Well,' said George. 'We'll have a big ~~wood~~ patch and a rabbit-hut. If it rains in the winter, we'll just set a fire with goin' to work, and stove and set around it ~~and~~ till the rain comin' down on the roof.

George runs out of time to tell the rest of the dream because he

the photograph that continues what George and Lennie do
jobs they have to do to maintain their farm.



Context: Section 1 (A04)

The natural world presents an innocent contrast to the threatening society St Lennie are more at ease in this environment, where they can talk freely about embraces the idea that to work hard means to achieve your dream, tension mount George brings up work and warns Lennie not to talk to the boss. This is due to Len

Their lifestyle is revealed in more detail when we discover that they move around with their culture and therefore move around from place to place to survive. By the end of the book, we learn a little about the life of a lonely ranch worker, who lived without family, friends or community.

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Knowledge Check

Fill in the gaps for Section 1 using the words at the bottom.

George and Lennie are travelling _____. They are

_____ working. George is _____

_____ after him. Lennie is _____

also has a _____ disability and is _____

likes _____ soft things. The two of them have _____

become _____ forgets things and gets into _____

_____ sometimes gets fed up of looking after Lennie

having to move on. He gets _____ but also feels _____

afterwards. They worked at a place called _____

_____ because Lennie touched a woman's dress.

George is angry at the _____ driver for not dropping them

Instead they spend the night at a clearing near _____

down for sleep Lennie _____ George to tell the _____

_____ about owning a _____



Weed	George	angry
learning	big	regret
pool	pet	looks
leave	simple	bus
Lennie	smarter	trouble



Discussion Prompts

1. What do we learn about George and Lennie's **status** based on the way they speak different to what we consider to be Standard English from the text.
2. What makes us feel **sympathetic** towards Lennie? Think of two points.

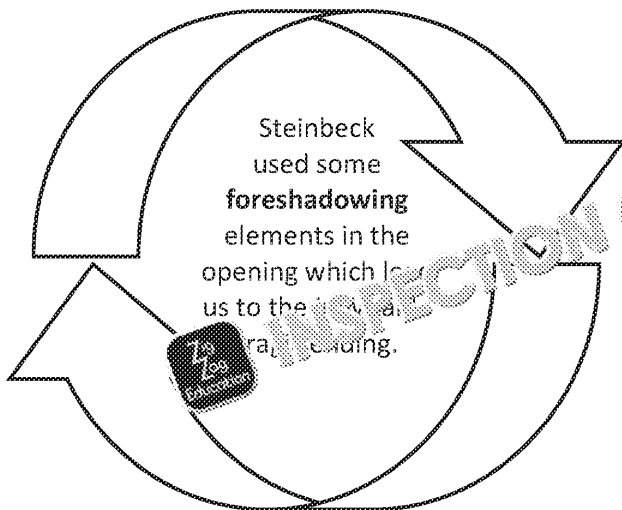


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Foreshadowing in Section 1



The opening and the ending to the same setting at the end establishes the relationship by the end of the story we can motivate them. The doors scenes associated

Straightaway Steinbeck for when he describes how boys clearing and tramps have been language emphasises man's we actually see it.

References are made to Weed which foreshadows the trouble to come for George. Not get the full details, we are aware that Lennie has a tendency to do bad things. already sets up tension as we want to know more about Lennie and what he has problems.

Lennie's character is developed further as we learn that he likes to pet soft things because of his great strength. Although these were accidents we are uneasy about what could happen with Lennie's actions. This is another example of foreshadowing.

Another example of foreshadowing is that we are introduced to George and Lennie. we realise that this dream keeps both men going through their daily realities and about it more with Lennie throughout the story.

It is significant that George tells Lennie to hide in the brush if he gets into any trouble. inevitability as they even start at the ranch.



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Section 2 Analysis and Ac

Summary

George and Lennie arrive at the ranch and are shown to their bunkhouse. The pair meet the boss, the ranch owner, his son, Curley, and Curley's wife. The pair also meet some of their fellow workers: a man named Candy and his dog, and Slim, a skinner and the leader of the ranch's workers. George and Lennie try to stay out of trouble, and to avoid Curley and his wife whom George believes to be trouble.

Analysis

The language Steinbeck uses to describe the bunkhouse is plain. George is angry about the idea that his bunkhouse may be infested with fleas and lice. They arrive at ten o'clock and the old man with the white hand shows them the bunkhouse. He tells them straightaway that he was there last night and this makes the reader uneasy – already George and Lennie are on edge. We find out later that this old man is Candy and he reminds them twice that the boss is a 'nigger'.

We find out that the boss takes his anger out on Crooks, the stable-buck. Candy is a 'nigger'. Immediately we are aware that Crooks is presented as the lowest in the hierarchy of the stable-buck and for being black. This treatment of Crooks is further reinforced when Christmas they actually let him come in for the night. We learn that Crooks is an outcast, different to the others on the ranch. It's natural that he does not live with the others in 1930s America.

Shortly after this exchange, we meet the boss. He wears high-heeled boots and spurs – this makes it clear that he isn't a labourer.

When the boss questions them George sends Lennie a look to remind him to keep quiet. Lennie responds by looking down. However, when the pressure is on Lennie forgets and drops his head in shame at the boss's feet. The boss hears that Lennie is crying so he questions whether or not George is taking care of him and taking his pay.

The overall situation with the boss shows us that George and Lennie are already under suspicion. George tells the boss that they are cousins and that he'd told Lennie's mum that he'd take care of him. Nevertheless the boss tells George that he has his eye on them. He also asks about Weed which catches George off guard. George's response is brief, he tells the boss that the job was done. Tension is heightened as George tells Lennie that they are being watched and they can't afford to make any mistakes.

George is annoyed to find that Candy was hanging around outside. He comes in to see the boss. There are parallels to be followed between the relationship between Candy and the boss. The dog struggles and depends completely on his master.

George insists that Candy was listening to his conversation with the boss. In his opinion, a guy on a ranch shouldn't be in or ask questions. This shows us that he believes a worker should make no ties.

When Curley enters he is described as being young and he wears a work glove on his father's hand. He asks if anyone has seen his father. He stands like a boxer and is aggressive. Left, Candy says that Curley sees himself as a boxer and doesn't like men who are not. We also find out that Curley has recently had a fight with the workers Slim and Carlson.

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When Candy leaves George expresses his troubled feelings to Lennie. He reveals he is going to have trouble with Curley. He explains that he has seen that kind of he is going to have a go at Lennie because of his size.

Curley's wife stands in the doorway. She has full, rouged lips and heavily made-up her hair is coiled. She throws herself forward – it seems she has come to look at the staring at her and his eyes move over her. Slim turns up and is her good-looking her husband. She goes back to the house. George calls her a tramp but Lennie thinks

George warns Lennie about the danger of getting involved with Curley or his wife him that he doesn't like women and that it's a bad place. Lennie also thinks will foreshadow something bad. It's ironic that it's George who says they have to stay

Steinbeck presents Slim as a character to be respected. He's interested when he stick together because it's so unusual.

Carlson also comes in and meets the two men. He's friendly and talks with Slim as produced some new puppies. He then brings up Candy's old dog and suggests that

George and Lennie are about to follow when Curley rushes in. He speaks angrily tone is just as insulting when he answers Curley's questions about his wife. After as George reveals the extent of his hatred for him: he says that he hates his guts know that there will be trouble involving Curley in the future.



Mini Vocabulary Guide

Burlap ticking	coarse material which covers the straw mattress
Vials	small glass jars and bottles
Roaches	cockroaches
Pants rabbits	lice, etc.
Swamper	cleaner
Grey-b	lice
Tick	mattress cover
Stable buck	the negro who looks after the stable
Skinner	driver of a mule team (mule means a type of horse)
A bum steer	false information
Buckers	loaders
Handy	a good fighter
Canned	sacked
Purty	pretty
Jerkline skinner	driver who can control a team of mules with a single rein

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Useful Quotations and Analysis

Quotation

Page 22

'Ya see the stable buck's a nigger'

This is the intro to the general trend of 1930s America.

Page 24

'... he's sure a J. ... a good worker. Strong as a horse'

George's simile of a worker, again in terms.

Page 26

'A guy on a ranch don't never listen nor he don't ask no questions'

Candy's words about the existence of the ranch.

Page 27

He glanced coldly... fists

This description of Curley as being a violent character.

Page 28

'Lennie's strong and quick and Lennie don't know no rules'

George reveals that he is potentially violent, foreshadows conflict.

Page 31

'... full of 'em... 'er... sausages'

The description of Slim confirming what he has heard about her.

Page 33

'I seen 'em poison before, but I never seen no piece of jail bait worse than her'

George's warning about the story and a relation to work.

'It's mean here'

Lennie's words about the ranch and his interaction with Curley are ironic that it's so mean. He insists that they need money.

Page 34

he moved with a majesty only known by royalty and master craftsmen

The description of Slim as the most respected man on the ranch.

Page 35

'A lot many guys travel around together...'

Slim's surprise that men travel around together.

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Questions on Section 2

Active Learning Task 1

Read Section 2 before answering the questions.

- Describe the building at the start of this section in your own words.
- What is the reason that Lennie isn't too bright according to George?
- Read the following description of Curley and then write down what you think he is like and use some quotations to support your ideas. It might help to use phrases in the text to guide you.



He stared coldly at George and then at Lennie. His arms gradually began to move and his hands closed into fists. He stiffened and went into a slight crouch. His face was red and pugnacious. Lennie squirmed under the look and shifted his feet nervously.

Here's an example:



He stands like a boxer and his behaviour is aggressive. The way he looks like a bully: 'Well, next time you answer when you're spoken to, it'll be up tension – immediately he's a threat. Candy's comment shows he's pretty handy. He done quite a bit in the ring. He's a lightweight.

- Write down another reason why Curley singled out Lennie. You must include your answer.
- What does George remind Lennie to do if he gets into trouble?
- Draw and label with quotations Curley's wife based on Steinbeck's description. What does the description tell you about her? What do you think of?
- Read Steinbeck's description of Slim:



'He moved with a majesty only achieved by royalty and master craftsmanship. (...) His authority was so great that his word was taken on any subject without question.'

Underline any words or phrases which give you an impression of Slim. Write a short description about how you feel that Slim is presented.

- Write down words and phrases Carlson uses to describe Candy's dog. What does this create for the reader?
- When Slim and Carlson leave what does Lennie excitedly talk about?
- Look at the words and phrases Steinbeck uses at the end of the section: 'You seen a girl around here?' 'Seen' is used angrily. 'Well, what the hell was he doin'?' 'Doin'' is used. George stood still, watching the angry little man. 'George seemed really to see George for the first time. His eyes, his height, measured his reach, looked at his trim middle. (pp. 10-11) In your own words, write about how Steinbeck presents Curley's wife.



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Context: Section 2 (AO4)

Immediately Steinbeck introduces us to the hierarchical nature of the ranch – George and Lennie are warned that the boss is mad, the boss takes his anger out on Crooks because he is a 'nigger' – Steinbeck shows us how Crooks is the lowest in status terms.

Steinbeck's natural style reveals how it was common for black people to be treated differently in American culture at this time. The prejudiced nature of society is reinforced when the boss can't help but tell George that George isn't using Lennie for his pay.

Candy reinforces the solitary nature of a ranch worker: he believes that a man should look after himself and not make ties.



Discussion Prompts

How the word 'nigger' was used in 1930s America

The word 'nigger' is an insulting term for 'Negro', which is itself a derogatory term for black people, but in the 1930s people would use these terms regularly. In 1930s America, black people were not seen as being equals by many white people. Separation was common in many places. Therefore it's natural that Crooks doesn't live with the others. He lives with the animals (the stables).

Thinking about Crooks' separation from the other men, why do you think Steinbeck situates Crooks in the stables, as opposed to a bunkhouse separate from the others? Do you think his use of the word 'nigger' relates to this separation and treatment?

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Knowledge check

Fill in the gaps for Section 2 using the words at the bottom.

George and Lennie arrive at the _____ the next day. _____ takes them to their _____ and _____ shows them where _____.

They meet the _____ who is angry as they have become _____ suspicious about George and Lennie's _____ whether or not he is taking advantage of Lennie. George _____ that they are cousins and that Lennie was kicked in the _____ when he was young.

After the boss has left, we are introduced to Candy and his old _____ who interrupts them. We find out that he sees himself as a _____ man who are larger than him. He is looking for his dad, the boss, and _____ too.

He is _____ to Lennie and George worries that _____ between them. After Curley has _____, he tells them about his young _____ wife. _____ warns that she is a _____.

Lennie _____ from _____.

Curley's wife comes in. She is pretty but heavily made up. Lennie can't _____ her. After she leaves George warns Lennie to stay away from her too.

_____ and Carlson come in. Carlson suggests that _____ the _____ as he is old. Before George and Lennie leave _____ men out, Curley shows up again and is _____. _____ H _____.

Tension rises between the characters.

Slim	curly	boxer
cheerful	ranch	staring
Curley	shot	boss
lies	bunkhouse	flirt
	hostile	relationship

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Active Learning Task 2

- a. **Research** as much as you can about this period of time and consider how it affects Lennie as a victim of persecution when you read the rest of the text, in particular the following:
- b. **A lot of characters**
Write down **one** thing that you have learned about the following characters:
Candy
The boss
Curley
Crooks
Curley's wife
Slim
Carlson
- c. **Lennie**
'Lennie's strong and quick and Lennie don't know no rules.' (p. 28)
- Who says this?
 - Why do they say it?
 - What does it reveal about Lennie? Refer to what we know about him so far.
- d. **Who is it?**
Copy out the quotation and write down which character is being described:
'All people stopped when he spoke' (p. 34)
'His arms gradually bent at the elbows and his hands closed in fists' (p. 27)
'Leaned against the door frame so that her body was thrown forward' (p. 32)

Foreshadowing

Steinbeck sets up a lot of tension by **foreshadowing** events. We know that some of the things that happen to Lennie as the text progresses are things that have happened before (for example, in Week 1). In the past, George reminds him to go back to the pool and wait for him there if he gets into trouble. This creates a sense of expectancy that Lennie will get into trouble.

Also the boss is instantly suspicious of them both, he asks George questions about Lennie and suspects that he is taking advantage of him. He also asks Lennie to speak for himself. After we meet Curley, then his wife. George warns Lennie to stay away from both of them.

Steinbeck uses irony when Lennie himself says that he doesn't want to stay there because they stay for money.

George warns that Lennie is strong and doesn't know any rules, which again creates tension. Parallels are set up between Lennie and Candy's dog who also seems to be headstrong.

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Section 3 Analysis and Ac

Summary

George and Slim enter the bunkhouse and the pair talk about Lennie and his strength. George has given Lennie a puppy from his dog's litter and now Lennie won't leave him alone. Candy talks about his mental difficulties and his past, particularly an altercation with a pair of men in the town. A young girl there, resulting in the pair being chased out of town. Candy arrives in the town and Carlson and Slim encourage him to put the dog down to prevent his suffering in his old age. Candy shoots it, much to Candy's relief. Following his dog's death, Candy talks about his same fate due to his age and mental difficulty. George tells Candy of his and Lennie's plan and invites Candy to join them. Curley enters the bunkhouse and antagonises Lennie. Lennie fights with Curley's hand and injuring him.

Analysis

In his discussion with George, Slim speaks favourably about Lennie, admiring him and acknowledging that he isn't bright, but recognises him as a good worker. George agrees, telling Slim that he'll do whatever you say.

George then confides in Slim about his relationship with Lennie and we find out more about them. We hear about Lennie's close relationship with his Aunt Clara, who used to live with George. George also confesses that he was quite mean to Lennie and played some nasty tricks on him, like making him jump in a river.

George also explains the reasons why he sticks with Lennie in some more depth. He talks about the ranch workers on their own and they don't have any fun. In fact, they become more of a family. The companionship and closeness that comes from his friendship with Lennie. There's something from his relationship with Lennie too.

He also talks some more about the evil Slim Weed. We find out that the girl at Weed was the one which makes us visualise the wife – the red symbol of danger becomes more real.

Also George describes how there was a lynch party after Lennie which suggests a danger. After Weed George and Lennie hid in a ditch under water and then escaped at night. Lennie was hurt but George assures him that she wasn't, but was very scared.

Lennie comes in and sits down quickly. Immediately George can tell by his actions that Lennie is a puppy. George tells him off – he must take the puppy back straightaway. Lennie is in a bad manner, telling George that he just wanted to pet him a little.

Candy and Carlson return to the bunkhouse. Carlson nags about Candy's old dog again. Should he shoot him? Carlson has no **empathy** for Candy who protests that his dog was the best. There's a sense of **foreshadowing** in Carlson's description when he describes how to shoot the dog. When Slim agrees with Carlson, Candy agrees to do it. The men try to continue as normal, but out, however there's a tense atmosphere until a shot is heard.

George talks with Whit, another ranch worker, about Curley's wife. Whit says that she's around. George says that she'll make a mess. Again this **foreshadowing**.

Whit invites Lennie to stay with the rest of the group. Lennie and George agree. Curley enters the bunkhouse threateningly. He's looking for his wife and is suspicious of Slim.

When it's quieter, George asks Lennie about what Slim was doing in the barn and Lennie is turned up. Then Lennie moves onto the dream again, asking how long it will be before they can have the land and have the rabbits?

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Candy listens as George tells some of his story about the dream. George describes a windmill, a shack, a chicken run, a kitchen and an orchard. Again, their dream is one that Candy has heard it.

He wants to become a part of the dream and discusses his financial prospects with them, suggesting that he could contribute. At first George is unsure but after discussing the matter with Candy, he decides to save which he could contribute. Candy also tells them that he would leave the money to them if he were suddenly to die. Candy tells George what he says that they will fix up the place that he has in mind and they'll live there. Lennie agrees firmly – in a month and he warns George to keep quiet about it. Candy confesses that he had shot his dog because it was old and he was no longer useful.

This reveals that Candy feels that he should have taken responsibility for his dog. When Slim comes back – Slim is scowling as Curley has accused him of flirting with his wife. Candy should tell his wife to stay at home. Curley turns on him too, but Carlson isn't there to help him. Carlson tells him that he would kick his head off and Candy joins in by showing his disgust at Curley.

Curley turns on Lennie, who is still smiling about the dream farm. By this point, Curley is extremely angry and he misinterprets Lennie's smile. He thinks that Lennie is laughing at him, so attacks him. Lennie is frightened as he is beaten up by Curley. Curley's cowardly behaviour is shown through his vicious attack on Lennie. Despite Lennie's size, Curley assumes that he is gentle. It's shocking that Curley hits Lennie in the face until he's bleeding. He looks to George for support, but it is not until George gives him permission to defend himself that he grabs Curley's hand.



Slim wants to step in but George shouts for him to get Curley himself. The tables turn as Lennie fights back and we see the full extent of Lennie's strength. The extremity of Lennie's actions have an effect in a moment. George tells him to let go but Lennie, gripped in terror, won't. Curley's hand is crushed. Lennie finally lets go and Curley looks in wonder at his crushed hand.

Slim and Carlson plan to take Curley to Soledad for medical treatment but George gets fired as a result of what has happened. Slim tells Curley to tell his dad that a doctor is on the way in order to save his reputation on the ranch. Curley agrees.

George's earlier line which foreshadowed trouble is brought up again when George tells Lennie.



Mini Vocabulary Guide

Hands	workers
Slug	a single drink, especially of alcohol
Rheumatism	a painful condition involving the joints and the muscles
Loaded shell	an unfired bullet
Magazine	the part of the gun which holds the bullets
Barrel	the long part of the gun through which the bullet travels
Ejector	a part of a gun which throws out the empty cartridge of a bullet
Run	an enclosure for animals in which they can feed, run etc.
'Cots	apricots
Alfalfa	a plant widely grown for animal feed
Smoke-house	a building where meat or fish is prepared by means of smoking
Setter dog	a setter is any several breeds of long-haired dogs
Candy wagon	a bus or truck used for transport

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Useful Quotations and Analysis

Quotation

Page 37

'Well, what the hell was she doin'?'

Curley's tone is
when he quest

Page 39

'he never lifted a finger against me

George confide
loyalty toward

Page 41

'This dress on the

This dress on the
Curley's wife as
her.

Page 42

'He's jes' like a kid, ain't he?'

This is Slim's pe

Page 43

*'If you was to take him out and shoot him
right in the back of the head...'*

Carlson's insens
man does not al
man.

Page 49

'Ever' time the guys is around she shows up'

This line shows
men – we later
company.

'She's gonna make a mess'

George's word
Curley's wife b

Page 53

*'George, how I can be till we get
that litt' live on the fatta the
leg.'*

Steinbeck rein
much it's need
Lennie needs i

*'Got a little win'mill. Got a little shack on it,
an' a chicken run. Got a kitchen, orchard,
cherries, apples, peaches, 'cots, nuts, got a
few berries'*

George's word
about their dre

Page 55

*'I'll break their God damn necks. I'll... I'll
smash them with a stick'*

Although Lenni
cats, his aggress
harm and again
damage that Le

Page 56

'We'll do her,' he said

George believe
accomplish the
that it become
reality.

Page 58

Then Curley's

This line shows
released which

*Lennie covered his face with his huge paws
and bleated with terror*

Again Steinbec
when he descr
'paws'. He con

Page 59

*The next minute Curley was flopping like a
fish on a line*

This line captur
as Curley is rec

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Questions on Section 3

Active Learning Task 1

Read Section 3 before answering the questions.

- What does Slim say about Lennie as a worker?
- Read what Slim says about ranch-workers in general.

'Hardly none of the guys ever get together. I hardly never seen two know how the hands is, they just come in and get their bunk and to quit with the cattle. Never seem to give a damn about nobody.' (See Section 3)



Write down what impression Slim gives about the lives of ranch-workers. Comment on key words and phrases.

- What do we find out about Lennie's relationship with Aunt Clara?
- What does George **confess** to Slim about, when he is talking about Lennie?
- Read what George says about lone ranch-workers:

'I seen the guys that go around on the ranches alone. That ain't no good. After a long time they get mean. They get wantin' to fight all the time.'

What **benefits** does George get from his friendship with Lennie? Help you with your answer.

- George also confesses to Slim about what Lennie did in Weed. Write in detail as possible.
- What are Lennie's actions like when he comes into the bunkhouse? How does George respond?



- In Section 3, George moves onto a description of their dream home: a little fat iron stove, working six to seven hours a day, a few pigeons, a dog and cats. At one point Lennie interrupts to ask George:
 - What is it?
 - Who does it involve?
 - Why does he say this?
 - What does Steinbeck show about Lennie through his threat?

- Later on in this section, we know that Lennie is frightened by Curley. **Underline any words and phrases which show Lennie's fear.** Write your answer with quotations to show that Lennie is scared of the situation.

Lennie looked helplessly at George. Curley then he got up and tried to get balanced and poised. He stepped at Lennie with his left, and then smiled with his right. Lennie gave a gasp of terror. Blood welled from his nose. 'George, alone, he got me backed until he was against the wall, and Curley, he was afraid of Lennie's hands remained at his sides; he was too frightened to do anything.'



Remember that a character's feelings are revealed through their actions. How does Steinbeck show that Lennie is scared in this paragraph? Use PEEL and PEE to support your answer.

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Questions on Section 3 (continued)

- j. Look at the two examples of **animalistic language** Steinbeck uses when Lennie fights back. For each phrase write down what it suggests about Lennie.

i) *Lennie covered his face with his huge paws (p. 58)*
This line suggests...

ii) *bleated with terror (p. 59)*
The word 'bleated' sounds like...



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Context: Section 3 (AO4)

The predatory nature of society is again presented when George confides in Lennie during their younger years. He exploited Lennie, taking advantage of his weakness. George also learns that George now needs Lennie as much as Lennie needs George. This is because Lennie is the only one to be alone, which is the common lifestyle in this ranch culture. The companionship is unusual on the ranch and in the culture of migrant farmers during this period.

Candy's dog is another example of cruelty in American society. Carlson insists on shooting the dog to outlive his usefulness. When Candy asks if he can become a part of the dream, Carlson says no, as he knows that he will be asked to leave the ranch soon due to his age and disability. By the end of this section the incident with Curley casts a grim foreshadowing over their future.



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Knowledge Check

Fill in the gaps for Section 3 using the words at the bottom.

This part of the novel takes place in the _____.

_____ saying what a good worker he is and how

and Lennie travel around together. Carlson confides in Slim and tells

_____ he also admits that he used to tell Lennie

advice. _____ he even told him to _____ in

George also tells Slim about what happened in _____

he is hiding a _____. George tells him to take it

_____. Carlson tells _____

_____ because he is _____

is _____ to his faithful dog. Whit shows Slim a

sent by a man who used to _____ on the ranch.

Candy finally agrees to let _____ shoot his dog

a _____ on Saturday. _____ When Lennie returns

about their dream _____. When Candy overhears

_____. George starts to _____

_____ anyone. Candy confides in George that

_____ the dog himself.

Curley is _____ when he sees Lennie smiling about

_____ farm. Curley beats Lennie up until George

_____ back. Lennie _____

Curley not to tell or he will spread the truth. George tells Lennie that

_____.

bunkhouse	brothel	angry	crush
wrong	sign	dog	farm
Le	puppy	dream	Wee
close	shot	Candy	Carlson
barn	suffering	plan	George

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Active Learning Task 2

Through George's conversation with Slim we find out about the history behind C's relationship which started from a young age.

- a. In your own words write down the history of George and Lennie's how it started to currently. Remember to include: how they became, the horrible treatment of Lennie at first, their travelling lifestyle, what and their current situation.

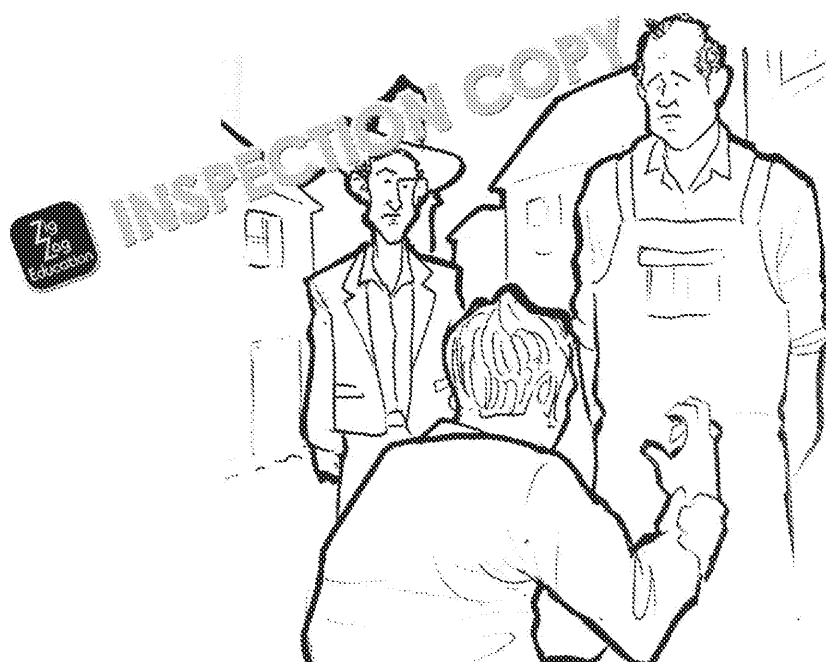
Another event in Section 3 involves Candy's old dog. Just like George takes advantage of the weak, the cruelty of the weak is shown when Carlson wants to kill Candy's dog. He has outlived his usefulness on the farm, but he is of great importance to Candy.

- b. Look at this extract again. How is the theme of cruelty shown here at different points and quotations.

Foreshadowing in Section 3

There are many foreshadowing elements in this part of the story which lead us to

- The story of Weed describes Lennie's unchanging behaviour – he does not learn.
- We witness the extent of Lennie's capacity to do harm when he crushes Curley's hand.
- The way Carlson kills Candy's dog creates a tense mood which foreshadows the end of the story.
- Candy confides in George that he wishes that he'd killed the dog himself – the way which George makes to shoot Lennie himself rather than let Curley and the



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Section 4 Analysis and Ac

Summary

In this section we are properly introduced to the character, Crooks, and his residence in the ranch's barn. Lennie enters Crooks's bunk in search of company after George and him go to go into town and socialise. Crooks teases Lennie and takes pleasure in scaring him to abandon him. However, after being intimidated by Lennie's temper, Crooks settles plans with George to own a ranch of their own. Although Crooks initially mocks Lennie, he asks if he too can work and stay on the ranch. Candy enters the room, shortly following Lennie, looking for her husband. Lennie is talking to the men and threatening Crooks, Curley's wife.

Analysis

This section begins at the barn where Crooks lives. Steinbeck spends a lot of time to show us that where someone lives tells a lot about what they are like. This is why Steinbeck's arrangements are neat overall but he has some items scattered around. He does this because he is not sharing with other men. We also learn that Crooks is isolated from others and demands that they keep theirs.

Steinbeck presents Crooks as having a body which is bent over to the left by his deformity, which lie deeply in his head and glitter with intensity. His face is lined and his lips are thin. His spine has been damaged as the result of an accident. We learn that he's in constant pain and has to rub his spine. He's also literate – books are specifically mentioned in the text. He's independent. He's annoyed when Lennie interrupts his self-treatment and is shocked when Lennie has no right to come in his room.

Crooks is a **victim of prejudice** because he's black and Steinbeck wants us to have sympathy for him. It's understandable when he tells Lennie that because he isn't wanted in the bunkhouse, he has to live in his room. Steinbeck is showing that his treatment of others is a **defence mechanism** against others who have treated him unfairly.

Lennie is lonely because the other men are spending their Saturday night in town. Although Lennie is not alone, but he lets Crooks know that he is. This is because he is disarmed by Lennie's smile. Like Lennie, Crooks is some company and he is friendlier to him. Straightaway Lennie lets it slip about his dream and tells Crooks that Candy is thinking about the rabbits and Crooks makes comments that Lennie has to respond. He insists that it isn't a lie and they are going to live off the land. Lennie forgets George's rule not to tell anyone.

When Crooks talks about his childhood Lennie doesn't really listen – his mind is on his dream. Steinbeck shows the theme of loneliness: even if men talk, others don't really listen. Crooks has the opportunity to torture Lennie, telling him that George may not return. This is too much for Lennie. In this sense Crooks is taking delight in psychologically torturing Lennie. Lennie forgets about George's possible desertion which upsets Lennie. His face actually lights up when Lennie talks about George.

Lennie becomes increasingly worried and confused by this torment. This nearly ends in a fight between Lennie and Crooks, who realises that he could be in danger. Tension builds up as Lennie uses his words to reassure Lennie that George will be alright. Lennie then finds out his mood and Crooks.

Crooks has thought a lot about loneliness and has come to the conclusion that even if he has company, without company a man can become lonely and sick. This makes us feel sympathy for him. He is very aware of his own loneliness. He talks of how he has no one to set guidelines for him, right or wrong. When Lennie tells him about their hopes for land, Crooks is scornful. He says that hundreds of men pass through with the same thought in their heads but they never do anything about it's just in their heads.

Candy comes in after Crooks has given him permission. He can't cover up the pleasure of being in the room. At first Candy is reluctant to come in and talk to Crooks because he's aware of the tension in the room. This makes him feel uncomfortable and he says that this is the first time he's ever been in the room.

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When the dream of land is brought up again Crooks again is brutal about it – he insinuates that if they talk before and it seems like every man is thinking of land. Candy sticks up for them and offers the money needed in the bank and has the land picked out for the three of them. When the dream of land is actually becoming a plan of action, he asks if he can become part of it. When Curley's wife comes in and interrupts them. She's very abrupt when she talks about the weak ones behind. This is ironic as she too is isolated and weak because she has no company and seeks it. Curley has gone to the brothel with the other men. We feel sorry for her as she too is lonely.

She confides when she tells them that she likes to talk too every once in a while. She is in the house all of the time. This makes her isolation despite being married – we feel sorry for Curley all day. She wants to find out the truth about Curley's crushed hand.

She tells them the story of her own dream. Again, this makes her very similar to the other women who have gone off doing shows and become a film star. One man had even said that he could marry her. However, any sympathies which we have for her do not last as she insults them all, like Lennie.

Candy reacts angrily. He again reveals information about their land and says that he is getting fired. She laughs about their plan and then asks Lennie about his facial injury. Lennie doesn't know what to say without George's guidance. All that he can do is repeat the story of the dog caught in a machine.

She speaks to Lennie flirtatiously and she says that she might get a couple of rabbits if Lennie wants. Lennie doesn't understand the double meaning behind her words. Candy comes up, trying to protect Lennie. He tells her he will ask the boss to stop her coming in. Lennie, a man, confronting a white woman is putting himself at great risk due to his social position. Candy is ugly as she threatens to have him strung up against a tree.

It's important to realise that the power of status on the ranch continues, even with Candy. On Saturday night. Curley's wife asserts her power she has by saying that she is the boss. She uses the word 'nigger' to assert her authority over him. It works, as Crooks retreats. She also exerts her power over Candy. Before she sneaks back to the house she tells him that he has to be careful of Curley because she thinks that he had it coming to him. Crooks tells her that he isn't sure if he wants them there anymore. This is because if they hadn't come in, Lennie wouldn't have been there either – and the chain of events which led to him being threatened wouldn't have happened. This reminds him of his true position and he no longer wants to be part of the dream.

George returns and scowls when he hears that the plans for the farm have come up. He tells Candy to forget about his request before to be part of the plan. He's changed his mind.



Mini Vocabulary Guide

Riveter	a tool used to fasten rivets. Rivets are small metal bolts.
Hame	the piece along a horse collar to which chains are attached
Champing	chewing noisily
Meager	of small amount
Keg	a small barrel
Rummy	a card game
Whinnied	the sound a horse makes
Twist	a sharp, sudden punch
Subside	calmed down

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Useful Quotations and Analysis

	Quotation	
Page 62	<i>He kept his distance and demanded that other people kept theirs</i>	Crooks is described as being very proud and this line reveals how he treats the other ranch-workers.
	<i>'I ain't wanted in the bunkhouse, and you ain't wanted in my room'</i>	His words show how his way of living affects the other men and the experience of being on the ranch.
Page 63	<i>Crooks scowled, but Lennie's disarming smile defeated him.</i>	Crooks longs for a friend like Lennie.
Page 65	<i>His voice grew soft and persuasive. 'S'pose George don't come back no more.'</i>	Crooks cannot help but feel sympathy for George.
Page 66	<i>'a guy gets too lonely an' he gets sick'</i>	Crooks explains his isolation on a man.
Page 67	<i>'Nobody gets to heaven, and nobody never gets no land'</i>	Crooks reveals his deep-seated bitterness behind many of his actions.
Page 70	<i>'... If you ever need a hand to work for, I'll be glad to help - just his keep, why I'd come an' let you have a hand'</i>	When Crooks reveals the possibility of being a friend to Lennie, it shows that he would like to be part of a team.
	<i>'Think I don't like to talk to somebody ever' once in a while?'</i>	Curley's wife reveals her loneliness.
Page 71	<i>'a nigger an' a dum-dum and a lousy ol' sheep'</i>	Curley's wife is jealous of the weaknesses of Lennie and Candy.
Page 73	<i>'Well, you keep your place then, Nigger. I could get you strung up on a tree so easy it ain't even funny.'</i>	Again Curley's wife shows the way that she uses her power to threaten what little power Lennie has. It is an example of her cruelty.

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Questions on Section 4

Active Learning Task 1

Read Section 4 before answering the questions.

a. What do we learn about Crooks from the living arrangements he has?

b. Look at the following words and phrases. What do they suggest about Crooks?

'bent over to the left by his crooked spine' (p. 62) shows that...

'lean face was lined with deep black wrinkles' (p. 62) reveals that...

'nervous little snips' (p. 62) could suggest that...

c. Draw a line to show that Crooks is angry about the way that he is treated.

d. *'Crooks scowled, but Lennie's disarming smile defeated him' (p. 63).*

What is Steinbeck revealing about Crooks' character through this?

e. What does Crooks do to provoke Lennie and make him feel angry?

f. *'I tell ya a guy gets too lonely an' he gets sick' (p. 66).*

What is Steinbeck showing about the **effects of isolation** through this?

g. How does Crooks react to George and Lennie's dream?

h. *'...If you... guys would want a hand to work for nothing -- just his keep, why I'd work.'*

What makes Crooks change his mind and agree to become a partner?

i. Read the short passage which continues the encounter between Crooks and Curley's wife.

'She turned back on him. "Listen, Nigger," she said. "You know you can't go to the trap?" Crooks stared hopelessly at her, and then he looked down at himself. She closed on him. "You know what I could do with you? I could make you smaller, and he pressed himself against the wall. "Yes, ma'am." "Well, you keep your place then, Nigger. I could get you strung up even funny."

Crooks had reduced himself to nothing. There was no personal pride to arouse either like or dislike. He said: "Yes, ma'am," and his voice was dead.

Using the text in bold, write about how Curley's wife asserts her actions, choice of language and her assertion of status. Also write about her behaviour on Crooks, and how his behaviour contrasts with how she behaves.

Write a couple of paragraphs and remember to use PEE to plan your answer. Some pupils find that planning their answer first helps, or you can write some answers and get started.

j. By the end of this section, Crooks has changed his mind about being a partner. Based on the events at the end of the section, write about what he is no longer wanting to be a part of it.

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Context: Section 4 (AO4)

Crooks is introduced in this section – so far as we've only heard about him for Steinbeck reveals how isolated Crooks is on the ranch – he doesn't live with the other men, he's used to the way he's treated – he keeps his distance from the other men. Steinbeck shows Crooks who is a victim of prejudice because of his skin colour. The cruelty of society is that the outcasts on the ranch are left to their own devices on a Saturday night. Crooks and Curley's wife are the isolated figures who are left behind.

Through Crooks, Steinbeck shows how difficult it is to be isolated in society. The isolation psychologically tortures Lennie. We still feel sympathy for Crooks despite his actions because everybody needs company, otherwise they would become lonely and sick.

However, Crooks is a victim of prejudice on the ranch, and the way that he has been treated has made him bitter, and has left him believing that Lennie's dream is not possible. In his comment, 'Just-like heaven. Ever'body wants a little piece of lan'. I read plenty of books, but never gets to heaven, and nobody gets no land' (p. 67). Despite this, he later warms to the idea when he realises that it might provide him with possibility. However, by the end of the novel, his fate as a victim of a society which brands him an outcast. He makes this decision when Curley's wife, who used her position to threaten him. Through this event, Steinbeck shows the order established even with the weak: it's the nature of society.

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Knowledge Check

Fill in the gaps for Section 4 using the words in the box.

It's _____ night and Crooks is in his room when
appears at his door. At first Crooks tells him to _____
allowed in the _____ eventually Crooks warms

_____ Lennie tells _____

Crooks first _____ their _____ saying that all
heads _____ also winds Lennie up about _____ --
as what if George doesn't come _____? It is on

_____ that Crooks realises that it's best to stop

He _____ Lennie down and then tells him about

Candy appears and talks to Lennie about the _____

aren't being realistic about the farm – George is out now at a _____

insists that it's real – money has gone in the bank. Crooks asks if he can

Curley's wife appears claiming to look for _____

_____. Candy says she shouldn't be fooling around

Curley's _____. Candy tells her to leave. He goes

plans _____ her own _____ – she laughs at

She questions Lennie about his _____. He doesn't

repeats the line about him getting his hand caught in the _____

her to get out or he will go to the _____ and re

turns on him, threatening to have him strung up to a tree. They hear the

George appears and is _____ that the farm plan

Crooks tells Candy to forget his earlier offer to join the farm.

place	Lennie	annoyed
machine	_____	calms
buried	rabbits	whorehouse
leave	dream	Saturday
join	bruises	lonely
	George	hand

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Section 5 Analysis and Act

Summary

Lennie is playing in the barn alone, holding his puppy who, like his other pets, has been killed by Lennie's rough play. Lennie is soon joined by Curley's wife, who is lonely and looking to share their dreams, with Lennie speaking of his and George's future ranch and Curley's wife being an actress in a travelling show – a dream that both come to an end once Lennie tries to pet Curley's wife. Scared of Lennie's advances, Curley's wife begins to yell, saying that people will come running, Lennie tries to silence her. In the struggle to silence Curley's wife, Lennie murders her and flees the scene. On learning of his wife's death, Curley threatens Lennie with vengeance. George and Slim then leave the ranch in search of Lennie.

Analysis

It's Sunday afternoon and the workers have some free time. Most men are outside but Lennie is looking at a small dead puppy which is laid out in front of him. He strokes and plays with the puppy. Lennie has bounced the puppy too hard – again, without knowing his own strength.

He puts the body in a little hollow and covers it up with hay. We know that he has a fear of being caught about where to go if he has done a bad thing: he has to go hide in the brush. Again, Lennie is not aware of his own strength: he talks to the puppy, asking him why he died.

He plans to tell George that he found the puppy like that but hurls it in anger as he goes back to work through his lie. He says that he won't get to tend the rabbits but brings back the puppy's skin.

At this point Curley's wife appears and moves quietly so that Lennie doesn't hear her and tries to cover the pup with hay. He tells her that he's not supposed to talk to women but she knows he broke her husband's hand.

She explains that Curley doesn't know her or to talk to anybody. She asks what he has to say about the puppy – Lennie was trying to tell the puppy that he was sorry.

Curley's wife is closer to him and speaks soothingly. She also says that the men are going to leave the ranch while Lennie again expresses his concern about what George would say.

We find out Curley's wife needs someone to talk to and she recognises that Lennie is a nice man. She's unhappy with how she lives and insists that she could have made something of herself.

She then tells Lennie about her background starting with how she came to Salinas as a child and a show came through and she met one of the men who said that she should go with the show, her mum wouldn't let her because she was only fifteen, later she met another guy who told her that he would put



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her in films and that she was a natural, he told her when he got back to Hollywood never got the letter but suspects that her mum stole it, she confronted her mum with the letter, she married Curley to get out of her own home and finally she reveals how her wife is similar to Lennie, Crooks and Candy because, like them, she doesn't fit into the world, she's **isolated**.

Just like when Crooks talks about his childhood, Lennie doesn't really pay attention. This reinforces the sense of **loneliness** as even when characters talk, others don't listen. It is when Carlson doesn't empathise with Candy when he takes out his dog.

Lennie tells Curley's wife about the farm. He gives details about the house, garden and rabbits. She asks him about the rabbits and he explains about how he likes to pet soft things. She thinks he is a nut but then she understands a bit more. She tells him that she likes his hair and then talks about how nice her own hair feels and she invites Lennie to touch it. She then tells him to stop and jerks her head sideways, and Lennie's fingers close on her hair. She tells him to let go but the more she panics, the more he hangs on.

Lennie shakes her in anger at doing another bad thing and breaks her neck. Her body is found by Slim and Curley. Curley is angry with Lennie. When he realises what he has done he grows up. He has done another bad thing and that George will be angry. He remembers George's words and decides to take the pup's body so that George will not be as mad.

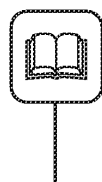
Candy discovers the body of Curley's wife and he gets George. When George discovers the body he knows and believes that part of him did. They talk about what to do next. Curley asks what to do to Lennie if he catches him – he would not show any mercy. Candy then reveals that he is getting the farm anymore. Before George even answers, he knows that it won't work. George makes a decision to tell the others. He then tells Candy that they might try to kill Lennie. He instructs Candy to tell them when he's back in the bunk house.

Soon all of the men are at the barn: Slim, Carlson, Whit, Curley and Crooks who stay in last. Curley wants to go after Lennie immediately.

Carlson bars Lennie from the barn, saying that he'll get his Luger. When they have gone Slim tells Lennie is the only one who knows of her death. George accepts this but asks if they could bring Lennie back. Slim defends Lennie, telling Slim that he's nuts. Slim understands but knows that Curley will reveal that Lennie has stolen his Luger.

Curley coldly calls Lennie a nigger and says that he's now got a shotgun. He then tells Lennie's guts.

The group are now justified in killing Lennie as they presume that he has the stolen money. Curley wants to kill Lennie – he doesn't want to stay with his wife's body. He tells Whit to go and also suspicious of George and tells him that he's going with them. He tells Candy to remind George to stick with them.



Mini Vocabulary Guide

Taloned
Pulley
Dugs

a fork with 'claws'
a small wheel
to dig



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Useful Quotations and Analysis

Quotation

Page 76

...looked at a little dead puppy that lay in front of him

The start of this is the start of Curley's wife's puppy.

Page 78

'I get it, I get it, I get it'

This line shows Lennie confides in Lennie.

Page 79

'I don't like Curley. He ain't a nice fella.'

This line reveals Lennie's loneliness – she is alone.

Page 81

Lennie began to cry with fright

Lennie panics at Curley's wife's sight.

Page 82

her body flopped like a fish

This line reminds Lennie of his strength and is reminiscent of his encounter with the puppy.

Page 84

Now Candy's got his greatest fear. 'You an' me, we can't go to that little place, can't we George?'

Candy's 'greatest fear' is that he can no longer go ahead with his dream.

Page 88

'You stick with us so we don't think you had nothin' to do with this'

Curley reveals Lennie's fear of George with respect.

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Questions on Section 5

Active Learning Task 1

Read Section 5 before answering the questions.


- Lennie is alone at the start of this section. Where are the other ranch hands?
- Lennie is worried about how George is going to react. What happens?
- Look at the description of Curley's wife. What do you notice about her?
- Writing Task:** Write Curley's wife's story



Curley's wife came to Salinas as a child. A show came through town with actors, who said that she could go with the show. Her mum said no, she was only fifteen.

Later she met another guy who told her that he would put her in a movie. He told her that when he got back to Hollywood he would get the letter. She never got the letter but suspects that her mum stole it. She could have said that he hadn't taken a letter. She married Curley to get revenge, but she doesn't even like him.

Using the information above, write a diary entry as Curley's wife and write about the events leading up to Curley's proposal for her to be a charmer at the Riverside Dance Palace. Make up a Christian name. Write a long entry or a series of diary entries. A possible start could be: 'I came to Salinas. Use your imagination as Steinbeck does not give us a full story.'

- How real do you think that Curley's wife's promises were of going to Hollywood that the letter was sent?
- Is Curley's wife naïve in any way? Write down an example from the text.
- Read the following short passage and underline Lennie's reaction.
 *Lennie was in a panic. His face was contorted. She screamed then, and bit her mouth and nose. 'Please don't,' he begged. 'Oh! Please don't do that to me.'*
 - What does it show about his behaviour?
 - What incidents referred to earlier in the novel are we reminded of?
- her body flopped like a fish (p. 82)*
 What technique does Steinbeck use to describe Curley's wife? What effect does it have?
- When George discovers the body he says,
'I should have known (...) I guess maybe way back in my head I did.' (p. 84)
 What is George talking about? In what way may he feel responsible?
- What is Candy's 'graves' for?



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Context: Section 5 (AO4)

Curley's wife's loneliness on the ranch becomes evident when she approaches J. Curley becomes clear that she's unhappy on the ranch. She reveals how she had a dream. Like George and Lennie, it is one of escapism: to be a film star. However, once again, the dream fails, and tragedy strikes when Lennie accidentally breaks her neck.

When George discovers the body he tells Candy that he 'should have known'. This suggests that, as a realist, he never fully believed that they would accomplish their dream and break out of their current situation. It was Lennie who made him believe in possibility. It also suggests that George's current course of events, as Lennie's companion, Candy too, knows that his hopes of escape are the result of Lennie's dream.

Curley's wife's warning to Carlson about shooting Lennie in the guts reveals the cruelty of the situation. There will be no mercy, despite Lennie's disability. In this sense, Steinbeck presents a threatening place where the strong attack the weak.



Debate Prompt

Curley's Wife

Do you think that a different side is shown to Curley's wife at this point of the novel? Take one side of the argument, one arguing for a sympathetic reading of Curley's wife and one against. Find 3 quotations in the text to support your argument and then present your argument to another member of the class as witness. Whose argument is more convincing?

Foreshadowing

This section begins in an ominous way as Lennie holds his dead puppy and strokes the dead mouse. This is the start of the novel.

When Curley's wife shows up at the barn we know that something bad is going to happen. There are foreshadowing descriptions throughout the novel so far. In particular, we are reminded of the men who wore red, as Curley's wife wears the clothes that she wore when Steinbeck was in the army: a red dress and the shoes with the red ostrich feathers.

The ominous feeling builds up to create tension when Lennie moves closer to Curley's wife. We know how he likes to pet soft things. We already know that Curley's wife is a threat to Lennie. We know that Lennie does not know his own strength and Curley's wife is vulnerable.

The tension is heightened when she lets him stroke her hair as we immediately associate it with the dead puppy and mice of the past. When Carlson comes in and says that Lennie is a danger, we know that Lennie does not have the sense to plan ahead and steal. Therefore this foreshadows the end of the novel.

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Knowledge Check

Fill in the gaps for Section 5 using the words at the bottom.

_____ is on his own in the barn stroking his dead
_____ that George will be mad at him and won't
_____ so he buries the puppy in the hay to _____
he changes his mind and _____ it again realising
will know _____ that he did it, like he has known before. He _____
puppy _____ the barn but then _____ it up again

Curley's wife has _____ in quietly. She asks what
allowed to _____ to her. When she discovers the
plenty of _____ in the world, but Lennie worries the
after the rabbits. Curley's wife talks about her past and her _____
film star. Lennie is more concerned about the rabbits. She carries on reg
met _____. He tells her about how he likes to _____
things and she invites him to _____ her hair. He do
him to _____. He becomes scared and holds on. Th
until she becomes lifeless. He has taken her neck out of panic. He know
_____ thing and remembers to go to the _____

Candy finds Curley's wife and gets George. They _____
the bunkhouse so that he is not a _____ when C
Candy hopes that they will still have the farm but George knows that
come in and Curley _____ Lennie straightaway
guts. Carlson follows him out to get his _____ b
has stolen it. They all leave to search for Lennie.

suspect	Lennie	up	fee
blames	an	picks	pet
George	dream	river	crep
angry	talk	struggle	bad
	rabbits	mutts	stroke

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Section 6 Analysis and Ac

Summary

In this final section, we find Lennie at the banks of the Salinas river. In a state of shock, he hallucinates, picturing his Aunt Clara and a talking rabbit shouting at him for killing George's anger. In the hallucination, Lennie is reminded that his behaviour is a burden that George will abandon him now for good. George finds Lennie near the river, he looks across the river as he tells him of the dream in an effort to comfort him. George shoots Lennie, and is soon joined by Slim and Carlson. Slim comforts George and reassures him that he made the right decision, saving Lennie from a cruel fate at the hands of Curley.

Analysis

The novel ends where it began – at the Salinas river. It's now late afternoon and a description of nature – a water snake swims across the river but becomes the prey. This captures Steinbeck's ideas about the hunter and the prey in society – this links to **foreshadows** what's to come.

Lennie moves like a creeping bear and finds a place to wait for George. As he sits, he wishes that he was alone without Lennie causing trouble for him. This suggests that he has done a bad thing but he may have done something bad enough for them to leave. He says that he could go off and find a cave to live in, which echoes the start of the novel where he does precisely that. However, that was under different circumstances.

Lennie visualises Aunt Clara before him and she tells him off for causing more trouble. She lets him tend to the rabbits now.

Lennie's mental health can be questioned at this point as he visualises a giant rabbit and a voice, just like the vision of Aunt Clara did. The rabbit tells him that he wouldn't let him look after any rabbits. The rabbit says that George will beat him and leave him. The rabbit continues to talk to him again and again, telling him that George shouts for George, who answers him. He asks him what he is yelling about and if he is going to leave him. George tells him no.

Lennie reveals that he's done another bad thing. George hears the shouts of men and is in much time. This creates tension. Lennie asks if George is going to give him hell and George tells him that he doesn't remember anything that happens but he remembers words that are normal so that nothing appears out of the ordinary to Lennie but he says the lines that Lennie wants to know if he's going to give him more hell but George replies that he won't.

George then tells the story about the farm. This is tragic for George and the reader as he is about to die. Tension increases as the men's voices sound closer than before. George realises that he's to get this done. He tells Lennie to look across the river. As he tells him about Carlson's gun and prepares to kill him. Finally George reassures Lennie that they're going to a heavenly place and as George holds the gun close to the back of his head, we hear him say somewhere like it.

George makes Lennie's death quick. Lennie is completely unaware at his point of death. The old dog is evident – it was a task which he had to do to avoid future misery.

George throws the gun on the ground. He is very quiet after the event, when the other men tell him that a man has to go to do things that he doesn't want to do sometimes. George asks if Lennie has his gun. George's voice becomes a whisper. Only he knows that he has the gun. Lennie so that he can avoid misery inflicted by Curley. He has the responsibility, but he doesn't want to.

A new friendship is suggested when Slim tells George that they'll go and get a drink. Slim is trustworthy – a possible good friend for George. Curley and Carlson are both genuine reactions to Lennie's death. The last line from Carlson reveals this when he wonders if Lennie was worth the trouble. This shows the extent to which one man is **isolated** from another's feelings and experiences.

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Mini Vocabulary Guide

Gingham

A cotton cloth, usually woven in stripes or checks

Jack-pin

A removable wooden or metal pin put into the rail of ships



Useful Quotations and Analysis

Quote

Page 88

A silent hunter's head lanced down and pounced on him by the head...

Steinbeck uses the metaphor of a hunter and prey to describe the situations with Lennie.

Page 94

'I ain't mad. I never been mad, an' I ain't now. That's a thing I want ya to know.'

George reveals Lennie's mental state.

Page 95

'Now what the hell ya suppose is eatin' them two guys?'

Carlson's last words suggest he really understands the situation and seems to be aware of the fact that he is affected either way.



Questions on Section 6

Active Learning Task 1

Read Section 6 before answering the questions.

- Where does Lennie return to?
- Describe the event with the water snake in your own words. Through this description, what is Steinbeck saying about the strong and the weak?
- How does Steinbeck suggest that Lennie's mental health is deteriorating?
- Use the text to write about how Steinbeck presents Aunt Clara.
- What does Aunt Clara say to Lennie?
- What does the rabbit say to Lennie?
- When George 'tells Lennie off' for doing another bad thing, he says 'You better get on your feet and walk.' What does the word 'walk' suggest about how George has changed?
- 'For a moment he was business-like' (Section 6). What does 'business-like' suggest about George?
- We know that there is a close relationship of friendship between George and Lennie. How are Slim's relationships different to the other men's after the discovery of Lennie's condition?
- Write a short paragraph about the following quote: *'Now what the hell ya suppose is eatin' them two guys?'* (Section 6)

Why do you think that Steinbeck chose to finish the novel with Carlson's words?

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Context: Section 6 (AO4)

The natural description at the start of this section where a heron captures an animal illustrates the hunter and prey mentality revealed not only in the natural world but also in the society of the novel.

The novel's tragic conclusion reveals how the dream will only ever remain that wish. Lennie's death is inevitable – the narrative structure reveals that it is only a matter of time before what happens which leads to his downfall. The society which Steinbeck presents fails to offer George the support which leads to his tragic fate.

At the end of the section Curley and Carlson genuinely can't understand why George kills Lennie. Steinbeck reveals a lack of empathy in this cruel society.



Knowledge Check

Fill in the gaps for Section 6 using the words at the bottom.

_____ is by the pool of the Salinas river waiting for Lennie.
He visualises his _____ telling him off for doing _____
_____ to George. Then he pictures a giant _____
cruelly tells him that he can't _____ the rabbits.
George _____ cries out for his friend. George comes over silently. He asks what Lennie
_____ about. Lennie _____ crosses that he has done _____
not angry though – instead _____ him that he is _____
for the _____ of the farm and George tells him _____
_____ as he listens.

While George tells the story, he prepares the _____
Lennie knows that he is not _____ with him and _____
Lennie. Lennie falls forwards and George _____

The men run over and see the body. They assume that Lennie had the _____
_____. Slim suggests that they go for a drink. He _____
leave, Carlson wonders what the problem _____ them.

listening	rabbit	mad
boy	throws	Lennie
alright	tend	George
	Aunt Clara	story

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Discussion Prompt

Once again the scene opens near the riverbed and its surroundings. There is a repetition from the novel's opening such as the Galibani mountains and the water snake clearly sets up Lennie's death: the fall of the innocent and uneducated.

Read the description of the water snake at the start of this section as its death links to Lennie's fate.

Fulfilment of Steinbeck's foreshadowing

The story comes full circle by returning to the setting at the start of the novel. The water snake caught by a heron foreshadows Lennie's fate – the image is of the prey falling completely unaware.

Also there is the repetition of the two friends talking at the river – however, we know that it is under different circumstances. **Dramatic irony** is used here – like George, we are aware of Lennie's fate, despite Lennie not knowing himself. Therefore it's tragic when George tells Lennie to take his hat off and Lennie obeys his friend, unquestioningly. It's also tragic when George goes through the motions of telling his friend off so that he doesn't get suspicious. The final tragedy is when George tells Lennie about the dream farm as a final way of providing comfort before his death. In this sense, Lennie does get his dream farm, just not in this reality.



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Active Learning Task 3**Story Board Activity**

For each storyboard plan there are six events described. There are **three** different storyboards. Choose one and draw (or sketch) the events out. Look at the example on the first page.

Section 1 events

- ✗ George and Lennie come to a clearing by the Salinas river
- ✗ Lennie drinks water like a horse from the river
- ✗ George is angry at Lennie for keeping a dead mouse to pet
- ✗ Lennie says that he can go off and live in a cave
- ✗ They have supper
- ✗ George tells Lennie the story of their dream

Curley's wife's story

- ✗ A show came through Salinas and Curley's wife met an actor
- ✗ He said that she could go with the show, but her mum wouldn't let her
- ✗ Later another man said that he would make her a film star
- ✗ He said that he'd write to her from Hollywood but she didn't get the letter
- ✗ She confronts her mum, thinking that she stole it. Her mum said that she didn't
- ✗ She meets Curley and marries him, but is unhappy

Events at the ranch

- ✗ George and Lennie arrive at the ranch and the boss is suspicious of them
- ✗ Candy warns them about Curley and his wife
- ✗ Curley attacks Lennie but Lennie crushes his hand
- ✗ Lennie accidentally kills his pup, then Curley's wife
- ✗ He runs away back to the brush
- ✗ A lynch mob sets out to kill him

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Lennie's Story



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Whole-text Analysis

Characterisation

From the very beginning of the novel, Steinbeck **contrast**s two main characters in their size, appearance and manner.

Lennie is a migrant worker who doesn't mind the impact of his own strength. He has a mental disability, which means that he is dependent upon George to be protected. He has a dream to own a farm with George and tend to the rabbits and soft things, raise animals, dresses and people's hair.

George is also a migrant worker. He's the opposite of Lennie – small and smart, his travelling companion. George is like a carer to Lennie – he supports him and protects him and regularly tells him about their dream to own a farm in the future.

Candy is an old ranch handyman who lost his hand in an accident and worries about the chance of being involved with George and Lennie's dream about the savings. When Candy's dog is shot, this is a **foreshadowing** act of mercy which reveals his fate.

Curley's wife is the only female who features in the novel yet she is never given a name, referred to only in terms of her husband, Curley. She is labelled by the other men as a 'tramp' and she constantly seeks attention from men. She likes to dress up and get into the world. She's a victim: she admits that she's unhappy with Curley and how she wishes to be a film star, before she dies.

Curley is the boss's son. There are rumours that he's a champion prize-fighter. He tries to pick fights with other men, is young and freshly married, yet is jealous of his new wife.

Crooks is the stable-hand. He's bitter and funny, yet isolated from the other men. He grows to like Lennie and even asks if he too can participate in the dream.

Slim is a skilful mule driver who is the most respected on the ranch. The others like him. When he agrees for his old dog to be shot, it is only after Slim agrees with Carlson that it signifies the friendship between George and Lennie on a deeper level, and supports George's dream.

Carlson is a ranch hand who regularly complains about Candy's old dog, until finally he commits the act, promising to make it as painless as possible. The same goes for Slim's dog.

The Boss is in charge of the ranch. He's Curley's dad. Like Curley's wife, he is never given a name. When George and Lennie first arrive, he is the one who gives them the job.

Aunt Clara is Lennie's aunt, who used to look after him until she died. She doesn't appear in the novel except at the end, in Lennie's vision where she tells him off for causing trouble for the novel, she was a kind woman who loved Lennie.

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Active Learning Task 1**First Impressions of George**

- a. Look at the first description of George in *Of Mice and Men*:

The first man was small and quick, dark of face with restless eyes and sharp, thin body frame. Here, too, the legs were long and thin, and the arms were long and thin. The face was a little too thin, and the nose was a little too sharp. (p. 1)

Underline the key words which describe George then write them down. Look at each one and suggest what it suggests about him?

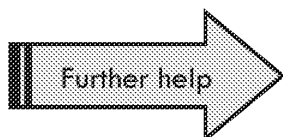
Here's an example of what the word 'small' suggests about George:



The word 'small' immediately shows that George is a little man, particularly in terms of his physical appearance.



- b. Write your own suggestions for three words that you've chosen.



This shows...

This word suggests...

This line reveals...

- c. Overall, what first impressions does George provide the reader with? Use a paragraph.

Here's an example of a paragraph which describes a reader's **first impression** of George:



The word 'small' immediately shows that George is little, particularly in terms of his physical appearance. He is also described as 'quick' which suggests that he is smart and that he is effective in his work. The 'strong features' also reveals character too. Since George shows this strength of character straightaway, it shows that he is a man who can be relied on to support Lennie with support.



- d. Have another look at the **first words** George says to Lennie:

'Lennie!' he said sharply. 'Lennie, for God's sakes don't drink so much.' Lennie pool. The small man leaned over and shook him by the shoulder. 'Lennie. You've got to stop drinking. You've got to stop drinking. You've got to stop drinking last night.' (Section 1)

What kind of tone is set by Steinbeck with regards to their relationship?

Active Learning Task 2**First Impressions of Lennie**

- a. Examine the first description of Lennie. He is described straight after George:

...walked his opposite, a huge man, shapeless of face, with a large, pale eye, with a thick, dark line under his eye. His head was like a great stone, and he walked heavily, dragging his feet a little, the way a bear drags his paws...

Underline the key words which describe Lennie then write them down. Write a paragraph suggesting what each one suggests about Lennie.

Here's an example:



The phrase 'walked his opposite' could have been used by Steinbeck to be the opposite of George in terms of appearance and character.



- b. Overall, what first impressions does Lennie provide the reader with? Write a paragraph about Lennie so far.

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Active Learning Task 3**First Impressions of Curley**

The reader meets Curley a bit further into the novel. Consider the first description

...a thin young man with a brown face, with brown eyes and a head of tightly curled hair. He wore a brown glove on his left hand, and, like the boss, he wore high-heeled boots. (p. 26)

Pick two words or phrases which describe Curley and write them down. Now, use your own first impressions of Curley. A couple of sentences will do but make sure you support any points.

Active Learning Task 4**First Impressions of Curley's wife**

a. Find and consider the first description of Curley's wife:

A girl was standing there looking in. She had full, rouged lips and wide-spaced, finger-nails were red. Her hair hung in little rolled clusters, like sausages. She had on red mules, on the insteps of which were little bouquets of red ostrich feathers.

Underline the key words and phrases which you think are important in your first impressions of Curley's wife. Write them down.

b. Write a paragraph which describes your first impressions of Curley's wife using the quotations which you have underlined. You could start with why you think the name 'Curley's wife' this way rather than using her Christian name?



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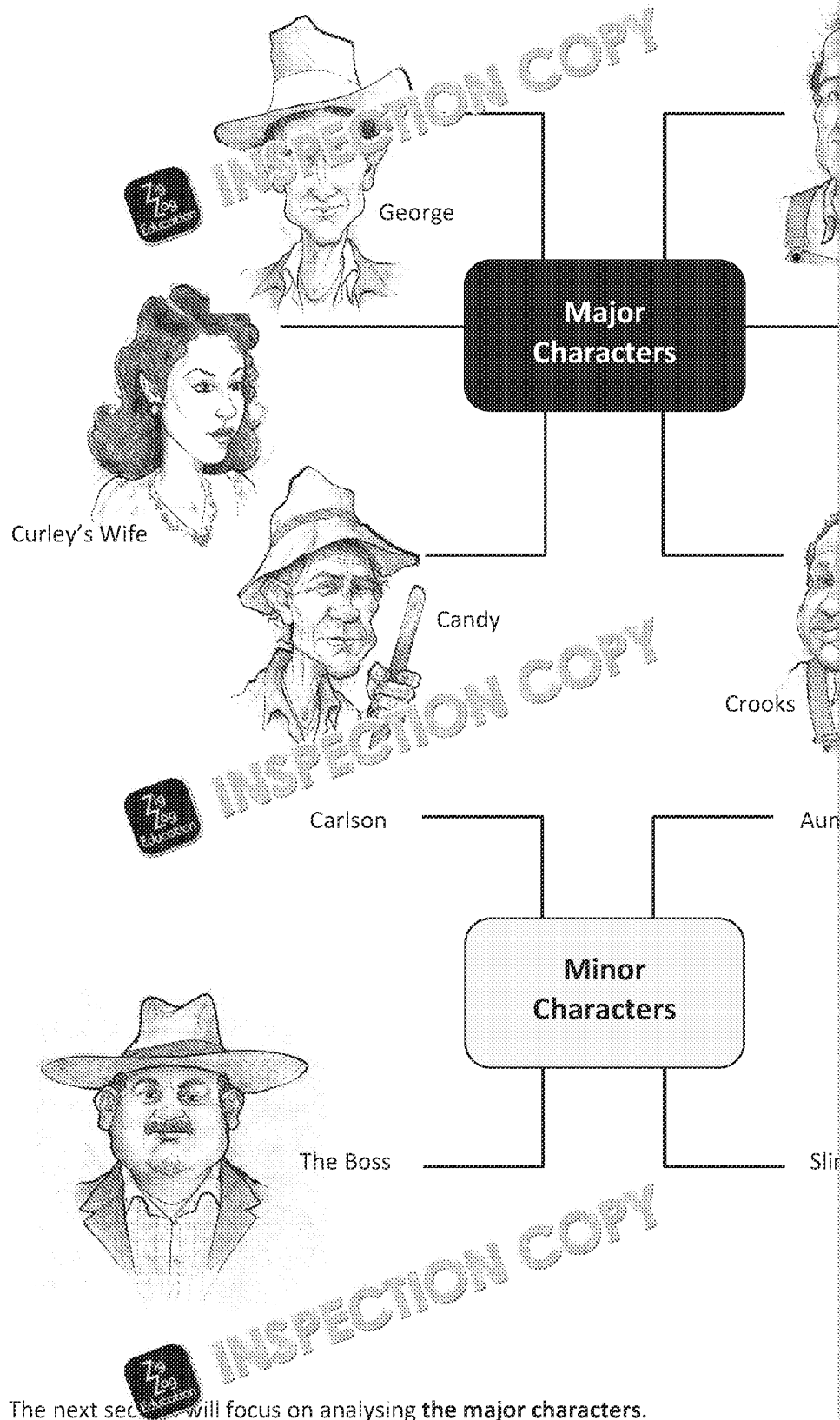
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Analysis of Major Characters

Although first impressions are significant we learn more about all of the characters. There are a number of important characters, but the minor characters are also functional along. It's important to understand who the major characters and minor characters are important as they will be used by Steinbeck to explore themes and ideas or send



The next section will focus on analysing the major characters.

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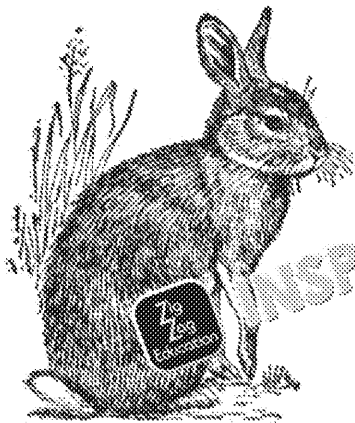
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Lennie Small

The surname 'Small' is **ironic** as Lennie is actually huge and lumbering. He's described in contrast to George as he is 'shapeless' (Section 1). There's a lot of **animal imagery** used to describe him, such as bear-like movements. There are also other animal descriptions such as the descriptions of a dog and this can lead to ideas about him being loyal to his 'owner' George. Certainly Lennie follows instructions which his 'owner' gives him, but he has no concept of what loyalty is.

The character Lennie doesn't develop, grow or change throughout the story as it progresses. He's a **simple** character, with the personality of a young child. Everything is interpreted simply by him. Straightaway we learn that even though he is large and strong, he has a learning disability, which gives him a child-like innocence and wonder at the world around him. He is certainly very vulnerable. We know that he's George's companion and is dependent on him for guidance and support. He loves petting soft things. When the world becomes too scary he loves the security which comes from stroking. Lennie believes in the dream about the two men's future farm, even if George is cynical. It's the farm throughout the story which excites George and keeps the dream alive.



When he does bad things he only knows that he's done wrong because George will give him hell and won't let him tend the garden. He doesn't feel guilty or show any remorse. The combination of his lack of conscience and intelligence makes him dangerous. George does not foresee.

We know from the start that Lennie is a tragic figure. His constant state of helplessness makes him extremely vulnerable to the dangers presented by Curley and his wife. He is compared to most of the characters in the novel as a victim of destruction.

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George Milton



Like Lennie, George is presented in a simple way, being physically small with sharp features. He's a loving, supportive friend to Lennie. 'Milton' comes from the author John Milton, one of Steinbeck's favourite pieces of writing, *Paradise Lost*.

In the epic poem, Adam and Eve fall in the Garden of Eden. After their fall, man is doomed to walk the earth. Many people believe that George is representative of man in the novel, suffering. The only thing that makes him different is his relationship with Lennie. Although he sometimes feels the burden of looking after his friend, he knows he is in the right place. He protects him to the best of his ability and shows an understanding and acceptance of Lennie's needs and goals for both of them. This is evident when he is involved in the plan for the farm, he describes the land such as where they will get the ranch and how they will work to pay for it.

However, despite his thoughtful nature he's also prone to becoming angry with himself and his actions. He calms himself by remembering Lennie's situation. Over the course of the novel, George's relationship with Lennie becomes a relationship which no other man in the novel has. Lennie makes him stand out from the crowd and has the duty of responsibility for his friend.

In contrast to Lennie, George changes as the novel progresses. This is firstly evident through his conversation with Slim. He fights his instincts when telling Slim the truth about his relationship with Lennie. He also admits to Slim that he once abused Lennie to amuse himself.

By the end of the novel George realises that the world will prey on the weak and this is a terrible realisation for him which contrasts with the start of the novel when he tells Lennie about their dream. He's motivated to work for this dream, which was different from the rest of society. George has to make the moral decision to shoot his friend to prevent the brutality which would be inflicted through Curley's lynch party. Unfortunately George's decision to kill Lennie is dangerous because Lennie could be so he takes the situation into his own hands. The tragic end of George is that he is doomed to once again wander alone.

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Candy

Candy is an old man. His right hand is a stump because he lost it in an accident. The old handyman worries that soon the boss will tell him to leave the ranch. The situation with his old dog supports his fears – he was once a sheep herder who is now old. The unfeeling Carlson keeps suggesting that the dog should be put out of his misery. But the character of Candy and his dog can both be seen as symbols for anyone who outlives his usefulness in that work. Through them Steinbeck is showing how useful someone can become if they are old and handicapped in American society. They will be discarded of.

After Candy has been killed he tells George that he should have taken responsibility for his dog's death himself. This **foreshadows** later events when George makes the decision to kill Lennie.



The relationship between Candy and his old dog **parallels** the relationship between George and Lennie. Just as Lennie depends on George to take care of him, Candy's dog depends on him too. Like George, Candy is different to the other ranch-hands as he has the responsibility of looking after his dog.

Another reason why Candy is important is because of actually offers the money to pay for the down payment to **start** the dream. This is the chance that the dream could become reality. However, **George** to still can't afford Lennie's death.



Curley

Curley is a threatening figure in Steinbeck when Candy says that apparently Curley is picking fights – particularly with men who prove his masculinity, another example of attractive young female. The fact that she 'Curley's wife' indicates that she's his possession. He tries to interact with the other men and he is completely isolated. He makes a big deal of being gentle with her. The reader knows that the he cannot control her actions, despite his attitude.

When he challenges and fights Lennie, he realizes the danger that he has put himself in. He gives Lennie permission to fight back, and him crushing Curley's hand is the only reason why Curley does not tell his father is does not want to lose status on the ranch amongst the men.

Ultimately when Lennie kills his wife Curley will want revenge and George knows why George plans to kill Lennie – so that he will not suffer.

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Curley's wife



There's an argument that Steinbeck does not put Curley's wife in a positive light in the novel. Through Curley's wife we can see her be troublemakers who cause problems for the men. Names for her such as 'jailbait' (p. 33) and 'whore' suggest much more than her red fingernails and feathered hair. She walks about like a temptress, a threat to the workers, and Curley's jealousy and suspicion of his new wife.

There is evidence to suggest that Steinbeck has presented a **misogynistic** view of women – the other women referred to in the novel are either dead or prostitutes.

Lennie can't take his eyes off her when he is repeating 'she's purty.' (p. 32) George warns him to stay away from her. She knows that her strength lies in her beauty. Curley is jealous. Like Crooks she's isolated on the ranch because she is a threat – to anyone who interacts with her would have to face him.



She can be presented as being like Eve in the Bible, as she represents temptation as she tries to do. She brings about the fall of the dream. Her actions cannot be forgiven and the two men's commitment to the dream is broken.

When she's in Crook's room she threatens to not show her respect as the wife of the boss. She is aware of her place in society, but the way she uses it to threaten him.

Curley's wife is shown to have some depth. Steinbeck reveals her dreams. At first she may have been described as being a threat to them, but when she speaks to Lennie, Candy and Crooks she admits that her vulnerable side is shown of her when she admits to Lennie her own **dream** of being a movie star. This gives us a fuller picture of her, rather than how she is perceived through the eyes of the men. Like other characters, Curley's wife has learned to use her beauty as a weapon against the others – this is why she is a threat on the ranch.

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Crooks



Crooks is a black, lively stable hand. His name is a pun on 'crock'. He's isolated from the other characters because of his race, which makes him lonely. Like Candy, Crooks is a victim of the effects of discrimination. With Candy the discrimination is based on age, with Crooks it is based on colour. His place in the hierarchy is low. An important point of the novel which shows the extent of his isolation is when he is driven away from their houses, then why should he stay? Ultimately his need for companionship leads to his downfall.

However, like Curley's wife, his vulnerability makes him a target for those weaker. He plays a game with Lennie when he has left him – it's only when Lennie actually arrives that the reader is aware of the reasons why Crooks has been so cruel. He spends some time and this leads to his cruel behaviour. The companionship between George and Lennie is a key theme.

belonging. He would like to join in with card games and chats with the other men, but there would be any room for him on the farm in the future. George's response was to withdraw his offer.

The fact that he wants to become part of the dream farm shows the extent of his isolation. That when he is no longer of use then he will be told to leave. This makes him vulnerable.



Context: Characterisation / Analysis

The American Dream affects George and Lennie as it encourages them to work hard for their abilities. Although George is slightly cynical, Lennie maintains a childlike enthusiasm throughout the novel. However, Lennie is vulnerable by nature, and ultimately becomes a victim of society. At the end of the novel, George realises that the world will prey on the vulnerable.

Candy is another victim of cruelty in Steinbeck's society. He worries that the boss will get rid of him soon because he is old, like his dog. They have both outlived their usefulness and how useless someone can become if they are old and handicapped in society. Candy is a key character in Steinbeck's novel. He's also linked with power and status in society. When he sees Lennie, George has to kill his friend in order to avoid him suffering. In terms of his character, he is strong threatening the weak.

Curley's wife is also a threatening figure, but in terms of temptation as she is a flirtatious isolated figure on the ranch, she is aware of her place in this work-orientated society. She threatens Crooks using her lower status as the wife of the boss' son and a white woman. She is an isolated figure in Steinbeck's society. The colour of his skin excludes him from living the dream, also the reason why he tells Candy that he is not part of the dream.

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Character's names

Sometimes a character's name can provide relevance about who they are. For instance, it's ironic that Lennie's surname is 'Small', George Milton links with Steinbeck's ideas in the novel which relate to John Milton's *Paradise Lost* and the name 'Curley' seems to tie in with the character who suffers with a crooked spine.

The character's appearance

When you complete the section you will develop your knowledge of a character's appearance. Most writers use appearance to suggest a character's personality. For example, Slim is apparent with the first description of him as a child-like mentally and animal-like. Lennie is immediately presented as being cautious of the two. Other characters like those of Curley, Curley's wife.

What to Look For in Characters

What other characters say

First impressions are sometimes conveyed through what other characters say. These characters can create a false image that may not necessarily be true. Nevertheless, they have value. An example of this is with Curley's wife who come through the words of the ranch hand. She is a picture of a tart and flirt. When Curley's wife's expectancies are fulfilled. However, later on she reveals her past to Lennie. We begin to see her character and maybe even feel more sympathy for her especially when she meets her tragic end.

What a character says and does

A character's personality is conveyed through what they say and do. Hence with George and Lennie we learn more about their characters through their interactions with each other. Similarly, we learn more about Curley's wife when she first appears – her appearance is very suggestive to the reader, as are her actions. Other examples include Curley, Slim, Candy, Crooks and Carlson, all of the minor characters. Overall, a character's words and actions are important to conveying what they are like, their personality and their interactions with other characters are also particularly important in revealing their character.

Dialogue – The exchange between two or more characters make characters seem more real. It helps readers learn more about characters such as their ideas, plans, dreams and how they think and feel about other characters.

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Active Learning Task 5

Writing in Role

These tasks are designed to encourage you to think how the characters of *Of Mice and Men* might feel at the end of the novel. Writing as if you are both of these characters will allow you to

George

You have just shot your best friend.

Write down your **thoughts and feelings** after your drink with Slim.

These might include:

- How you feel about what has happened
- Why you decided to do this
- How you feel about the death of Curley's wife
- Whether or not you feel any responsibility towards what's happened
- What you plan to do next, without Lennie

Curley

You have just seen Lennie's body after trying to hunt him down. You are still angry.

You are going to write down your **frustrations, thoughts and feelings**.

These might include:

- How you feel now that the day is over
- Your thoughts after the discovery of your wife's dead body
- Your earlier suspicions of George and how you feel about him now
- How much you wanted to get revenge on Lennie
- What you planned to do
- How you felt when you discovered that George had already killed him
- How you can't believe that George and Slim were upset when justice had been done

Lennie

You have just accidentally killed your puppy.

Write down your **thoughts and feelings** after this event.

These might include:

- How you feel about what you did
- How you are punished
- How you think that George will react when he finds out
- What you think that you will do next

Curley's wife

You have just returned home after your argument with Crooks.

Write down your **thoughts and feelings** after this event.

These might include:

- Your anger towards Crooks
- Why you said such hurtful and threatening things to him
- Your thoughts about Curley going with the other men to a brothel
- Your feelings of loneliness in general

Crooks

You have just sent Lennie and Candy out after your argument with Curley's wife.

Write down your **thoughts and feelings** after this event.

These might include:

- Your anger towards Curley's wife
- How you feel about her threatening words
- Whether or not you have changed your mind about participating in the men's dream

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Active Learning Task 6

Use the interview to make notes on how Steinbeck presents the characters in *Of Mice and Men*.

Imagining an interview Between John Steinbeck and a Student

Student: Mr Steinbeck, how do you describe Lennie Small?

Steinbeck: In Chapter 1 of my book I describe Lennie as:

...a huge man, shapeless of face, with sunken eyes, with wide, sloping shoulders; ... he walked heavily, dragging his feet a little, the way a bear drags his paws.

I wanted to show that he was a gigantic beast of a man so I made Lennie look animal-like in the way he walked. I hope the reader picture him as a large bear. The way I show the reader that he moves heavily is to describe what happens to his arms as he follows his friend George.

His arms did not swing at his sides, but hung loosely and only moved when his hands were pendula.

I use the adverbs 'heavily' and 'loosely' to emphasise to the reader that Lennie's uncontrolled his actions are.

I make his face shapeless and his eyes blue so that readers can imagine him as an overgrown, innocent infant. I make Lennie wear denim trousers and a button-down shirt. Only labourers wore denim when I wrote the novel. It was to be dressed in the uniform of the farm labourer at the start to establish him as one on a farm. I make him wear the same black and shapeless hat as his friend George.

Student: How do you describe George Milton?

Steinbeck: I had a few problems with him. I had a picture in my mind about what I thought he should be interesting to the reader to make him look and feel like a real person. Although I dressed them in the same denim outfit and identical shoes.

small and quick, dark of face, with restless eyes and sharp, strong features: small, strong hands, slender arms, a thin and bony nose. Besides his nose, who, of course, was Lennie.

who, of course, was Lennie.

I wanted you to know George was intelligent and his intelligence was described his eyes as 'restless' to show that George was always on his guard. Characters, Slim, a well-respected ranch hand, refers to him in Chapter 2 as 'a fellow who was travelling with a 'cuckoo'.

It was almost what you might call a visual joke to see a big bear of a man on whom his whole world depended. There was also something about him that was almost comical.

Student: How do you describe Candy?

Steinbeck: This is what I write as a description of Candy in Chapter 2:

The door opened and a little, scrawny, old man came in. He was carrying a broom in his left hand.

I wanted to make Candy look like a pitiful old man with 'bristly-white whiskers', who does a job that is not his. After the workers, including changing their washbasins and keeping the place tidy. He can't do this job very well because he is disabled and slow. He is leaving a stump at the wrist. When he pointed with his right arm, it was just a stump. *out of the sleeve came a round stick-like wrist, but no hand.*

He also holds the broom between his elbow and his side when he walks.

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Clearly his hand has been missing sometime.

I made sure that George and Lennie met Candy outside the bunkhouse aside for the workers. In fact, I chose to make Candy lead the two as he was in charge of showing them their accommodation. In order to show the character Candy is in danger of becoming, I show that he finds it hard when he introduces George and Lennie to him. I use the verb 'shut out of the boss' presence. In terms of power on the ranch, the boss is at the top and Candy the least.

I make Candy the ranch dog. He listens in on conversations and tells everyone what he hears. He does not know when to keep his mouth shut.

I give Candy a dog. It is an ancient, smelly and nearly blind sheepdog, his only companion.

Student: How do you describe Curley, the boss' son?

Steinbeck: He is a 'mean bastard' like a little bantam cock. Because he is a small man, complex about his size, he feels he has to take on anyone bigger than him.

...a thin young man with a brown face, with brown eyes and a head of brown hair. He wore high-heeled boots, like his father, to show that he was not a worker.

Like his father, Curley is small of stature, but he is thin, whereas I describe his father as a 'little man'. It would help if I gave you the description of Curley's father so you are able to picture the similarities and differences between them:

The boss 'wore blue jean trousers, a flannel shirt, a black, unbuttoned shirt, and his thumbs were stuck in his belt, on each side of a square steel buckle. He wore a Stetson hat, and he wore high-heeled boots to prove he was a man.

George cannot understand why Curley hates Lennie on sight and he explains to the reader and George why. The explanation for Curley's behaviour: he is just Lennie. Curley is always looking to prove himself as a man by fighting. This shows that he is insecure and feels threatened.

I let the old swamper Candy explain the cause of Curley's hostile attitude.

Curley's like a lot of little guys. He hates big guys. He's alla time pickin' on 'em. Kind of like he's mad at 'em because he ain't a big guy. You seen little guys always scrappy.

Student: Tell me about Crooks and Curley's wife. Crooks seems to have a reputation on the other ranch hands because he is black. Curley's wife is branded as the only woman on the ranch and feels lonely. Did you deliberately use this to explore racism and sexism in American culture during the depression?

Steinbeck: Let me describe Crooks first. I call him 'the negro stable buck', but he is a 'nigger'. This was how black people were addressed in those days. He is an aloof man who kept his room tidy. He had a sense of dignity. Some white people were subhuman and not fit to be with. It was ok to make them as equals. In fact, they were persecuted. The boss took out his anger on them. He saw anything wrong with them.

Crooks was not allowed in the bunkhouse because of his colour. He lived a very lonely and isolated life. To make Crooks feel even more isolated, I made him a 'cripple', or as he referred to himself a 'back-busted nigger' by a horse and was deformed by this accident. Black people called 'niggers' during those days because they accepted or were resigned to the inferior position in society.

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Student: What about Curley's wife?

Steinbeck: She is different because she is the only woman on the ranch. Candy has strong language. He tells George and Lennie his views on Curley's wife.

Know what I think... Well I think Curley's married... a tart.

George seems not to be overly influenced by this when he replies:

There's plenty done that.

Candy is eager to press the point home about Curley's wife being a tart.

Well, you look her over an' you see if she ain't a tart.

I like the way Steinbeck writes Curley's wife. She suddenly appears in the

This is how Steinbeck introduces her:



A girl was standing there looking in. She had full, rouged lips and was looking up. Her fingernails were red. Her hair hung in little rolled clusters, like cotton housedresses and red mules, on the insteps of which were little blue feathers. 'I'm looking for Curley,' she said. Her voice had a brittle, nervous quality.

She has a hint of that cheap, trailer park 'white trash' look about her. She provokes men with her body. Lennie falls to her obvious charms and spells it out to Lennie that he must keep away from her. He says:

Listen to me you crazy bastard, don't you even take a look at that bitch and what she does. I seen 'em poison before, but I never seen no piece of meat like her be.

He has now fallen in with Candy's views about her. In life, she has a troubled and shows her unhappiness. However, she looks calm and content after Lennie breaks her neck in the barn, as if all her cares have melted away about her at that time:

Curley's wife lay with a half-covering of her body. And the meanness, the discontent and ache for attention that had been gone from her face. She was smiling. Her face was sweet and peaceful. She looked at her rouged cheeks and her reddened lips and sleeping peacefully.

Student: I will move on to the minor, but important, characters such as Slim.

Steinbeck: I use my minor or background characters to advance the plot or set the scene. All the ranch hands look up to Slim. His word is law in the bunkhouse. I show this by writing that 'his authority was so great that his subject'. Also 'all talk stopped when he spoke'.

He seems to be any age between 35 and 50, as 'his hatchet face was weathered and lean and their movements are delicate and graceful 'like a ten-year-old's eyes'.

I show that Slim is easy to talk to, approachable, wise and a prince among men. Of knowing him, George, who is a very private person, tells him his secrets. Lennie can be a burden to him at times, and even divulges what Lennie

Slim has a drawl which makes him appear slow of speech but he has a lot of things. He is an expert mule driver. I describe him as a king-like person, 'prince of the ranch' who commands respect. The words I use to portray him are:



A tall man...He held a crushed Stetson hat under his arm while he combed his hair straight back. Like the others, he wore blue jeans and a short denim jacket. His majesty only achieved by royalty and master craftsmen.

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Relationships

- **Relationship status:** Travelling companions, George appears as father or guardian-like figure to the vulnerable Lennie.
- **Interactions between the characters:** George either provides guidance or support for Lennie, or scolds him when he misbehaves.
- **Role they play in the plot:** George and Lennie's relationship lies at the heart of the plot and serves as the basis for the moral dilemma in the final pages of the text.

George

- **Relationship status:** Friends on the ranch, potential business partners in George's future plans of owning their own ranch.
- **Interactions between the characters:** George offers his support and sympathy for Candy's vulnerable position due to his injury, with the pair discussing their same hopes and dreams.
- **Role they play in the plot:** Steinbeck uses the relationship to highlight the difficulties and vulnerabilities shared by ranch workers of all ages and positions in the brutal climate of 1930s America.

Lennie

- **Relationship status:** Curley is Lennie's superior on the ranch with Lennie being an employee of his father.
- **Interactions between the characters:** Curley repeatedly bullies and taunts Lennie in their exchanges, exploiting what he perceives to be Lennie's vulnerability until the pair have a violent confrontation in which Curley is injured.
- **Role they play in the plot:** Curley and Lennie's difficult relationship drives the plot to its conclusion with Curley's hunt for Lennie as vengeance for the accidental murder of Curley's wife resulting in Lennie's death.

Curley

- **Relationship status:** Husband and wife. The pair have an unhappy marriage in which Curley treats his wife with little respect.
- **Interactions between the characters:** Interaction between the pair is ironically rare, with Curley's wife uncharacteristically spending much of her time searching for Curley and pining for his attention.
- **Role they play in the plot:** Curley and his wife's unhappy marriage is arguably a contributing factor in the death of Curley's wife, as it is her constant searching for Curley and desire for attention due to her loneliness in the marriage that causes her to seek Lennie's company.

Curley's Wife

- **Relationship status:** Acquaintances on the ranch.
- **Interactions between the characters:** Main interaction between the pair leads to the death of Curley's wife.
- **Role they play in the plot:** The relationship between the two leads to Lennie's death at the end of the text.

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Analysis of Key Relationships

George and Lennie

The relationship between George and Lennie is the driving force in Steinbeck's text. On the pages it becomes apparent that the pair are foils of one another, appearing opposite in love and friendship between the two travelling companions, the relationship between them is due to George's adoption of a parental role in which he must care for the vulnerable Lennie. However, Lennie provides a companionship and protection that George would not have as a travelling worker – a fate that most travellers share in the line of work, as George points out. It is this love that fuels and complicates the final scene in the novel, in which George's brutal execution at the hand of Slim. While some readers may see this event as an opportunity that he selfishly took to get rid of Lennie, who often became a problem when travelling, others may see the ending of this relationship as a difficult act of kindness.

George and Candy

George and Candy become close friends on the ranch, as seen in their promise to enter into business and live with one another on a ranch of their own. The promise of friendship and working relationship brings a sense of hope and optimism to the pair, and the promise of the American Dream as the foundation of their relationship. Despite their dreams, George and Candy appear foils of one another, with George representing the younger ranch workers and Candy the older, debilitated, and, therefore, vulnerable, later in the text. Their differences, Steinbeck uses the relationship between the two to show the state of the world of ranch work in 1930s America. George and Candy face the same difficult dream of security and happiness they both desire, and in Candy George sees that he too is at risk of facing a life in a line of work that relies heavily on physical strength.

Crooks and All Other Characters

Crooks holds a unique position in the text due to his relationship with the other characters, representing the vulnerability of minority groups in 1930s American society in much the same way as Lennie in their representation of disabled individuals. Crooks remains an outcast from the company of animals to human beings, from slaves in isolation in the ranch's stable, seen on grounds of racial prejudice. Symbolised by his home in the stable, Crooks is seen as a fellow worker reduced to the status of an animal on the ranch. His relationship with the other men is one of obedience to their command, and his endurance of their derogatory treatment and language when addressing him. Although Slim shows sympathy and appreciation for Crooks, Crooks arguably holds the closest relationship to Lennie, with the pair bonding in their exclusion from the other men's social activities. Despite the pair's bond, there remains a power imbalance in their relationship, with Crooks exploiting Lennie's naivety and vulnerability in cruel tactics. Crooks will abandon Lennie. Like the other characters in the text, Crooks too appears unable to hold power over a fellow worker.

Lennie and Curley

From the outset of Lennie's time on the ranch, Curley exerts his superiority over the other men as a target due to Lennie's mental vulnerability. As Candy points out to George, with men of a greater physical stature to him and who he perceives as a possible rival, Curley's relationship with Lennie is emphasised in his repeated derision of Lennie again. Following Curley's vicious assault on Lennie in the bunkhouse, George instructs Lennie to defend himself against Curley's attacks, in which Curley's hand is crushed under Lennie's grip. From this point, Lennie and Curley's relationship becomes more contentious than before, and it contributes to Curley's decision to kill Lennie as an act of retribution for Lennie's attack on his wife. Curley's wife, despite insisting that his intention to kill Lennie is purely an act of revenge for his wife, Curley's ignorance and mistreatment of his wife throughout the text, and his argumentative nature, causes us to question his motives.

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Lennie and Curley's Wife

The relationship between Lennie and Curley's wife appears problematic from the presence of Curley's wife among the men instils a foreboding air and the threat of a ranch. This threat appears particularly dangerous to Lennie, with his naivety and inability to reject Curley's wife's advances. The pair's relationship appears all the more problematic due to Lennie's past experience with a young woman, an event that George tells us resulted in the loss of Lennie's employment and home. This is not the only event that foreshadows the danger in the relationship, as Steinbeck uses Lennie's relationship with his many pet mice and the death of a mouse to foreshadow the accidental murder of Curley's wife. Although their relationship comes to a tragic end, Lennie and Curley's wife share a common loneliness and desire for attention from others.

Settings

The novel opens and ends at the Salinas river in California. George and Lennie are introduced in these sections. Steinbeck makes a link to the natural cycle of nature, as the novel happens in 'man's world'. There's also the idea that it's a symbolic setting for the novel. The descriptions capture the beauty of the surroundings, yet we are already forewarned of the danger of nature due to the beaten path made by people who come to the clearing by the river.

The action in Sections 2, 3, 4 and 5 of the novel takes place on a ranch in the Salinas Valley. We watch the actions of the characters and their struggles for survival in the man-made setting. The bunkhouse and it is not by chance that it's presented as being in darkness. The natural world has natural light. However, Steinbeck presents the man-made reality as being emphasised by the solitary game of solitaire which George plays, and the dim bulb in the bunkhouse. Darkness and light is continued with ideas such as when Curley's wife blocks out the light, a reference to threat.

Other places in the ranch are the barn (where Lennie kills Curley's wife) and Crook's house. Steinbeck opens each section with important descriptions of the place and it's important to note that these are relevant to Steinbeck's ideas. In the task below, see if you can consider how the descriptions are relevant to Steinbeck's ideas, rather than merely being descriptive.

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Active Learning Task 1

Below is a quotation from each section of *Of Mice and Men* which describes set. Write what kind of **mood** Steinbeck evokes through each description:

Section 1 – the natural world

- a) 'Rabbits come out of the brush to sit on the sand in the morning'

This description...

Section 2 – the bunkhouse

- b) 'Over each bunk was nailed an apple box with the opening forward so that it served as a shelf for the things of the occupant of the bunk. And these shelves were loaded with talcum powder, razors and those Western magazines ranch-men love to read and And there were medicines on the shelves, and little vials, combs; and from nails on neckties.'

Steinbeck creates...

Section 3 – the bunkhouse at night

- c) 'Slim and George came into the darkening bunkhouse together. Slim reached up on the tin-shaded electric light. Instantly the table was brilliant with light, and the brightness straight downward, leaving the corners of the bunkhouse still in dusk.'

Steinbeck's description evokes ...

Section 4 – Crooks' room

- d) 'Crooks' bunk was a long box filled with straw, on which his blankets were flung. There were pegs (...) And scattered about the floor were a number of personal possessions Crooks could leave his things about...' (p. 61)

Steinbeck's description of Crooks' room...

Section 5 – the barn (where Curley kills Curley's wife accidentally)

- e) 'The moonlight shined in through the cracks of the barn walls and lay in bright patches on the floor.'

This description makes me think...

Section 6 – the natural world (George and Lennie come full circle)

- f) 'Already the sun had left the valley to go climbing up the slopes of the Galibani mountains. The hills were rosy in the sun.'

Steinbeck's words make me feel...

Active Learning Task 2

Look at the beginning of each section again.

Find your own quotation which you consider to be important and write about what you think through his words, for each one. Remember to practise considering the effect of your words (and how they will help you with this).

There should be six in total which focus on:

1. The natural world
2. The bunkhouse
3. The barn at night
4. Crooks' room
5. The natural world again
6. The natural world again

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Each place is important to the novel – firstly, the natural world parallels with man ‘hunter and the prey’ are a natural part of life. The places on the ranch are general descriptions in the bunkhouse and Crooks’ room show the ranch-hands’ solitary

In Section 2, the cowboy magazine in the bunkhouse stands out: Steinbeck uses it to show most of the ranch-hands secretly want to live – a subtle reference to the American Dream.



Context: Setting (AO4)

We know that the natural world at the start and end of the novel contrasts with the man-made world. However, man’s destructive nature is apparent even here, which has led to the world being brought down.

The ranch contains the characters as they struggle for survival in this ‘dog eat dog’ world. That the bunkhouse is presented as being in darkness and the sleeping area suggests lives that are prone to change. In this sense, the setting reflects the solitary culture.

In the bunkhouse Steinbeck subtly contrasts the reality of the setting with the lives we aspire to with a cowboy magazine. The image on this magazine fuels the American Dream.

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Themes

Themes are ideas or messages which writers explore in their texts. Usually a novel and Steinbeck uses the form of *Of Mice and Men* to explore different themes such as loneliness and cruelty in a hierarchical society and friendship.

Dreams

Active Learning Task 1

Match the dream to the dreamer.

Me and Lennie will be free and independent on the farm and I wouldn't have to worry about him anymore.

If I was rich I wouldn't have to work. I'd just live off my money.

I could be working in the money.

I want to live with George and Lennie, somewhere I won't be put out when I stop being useful.

Curley's wife

Slim

Candy

George

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George and Lennie's Dream

We first hear about the dream in Section 1.

Straightaway we know that Lennie is obsessed with this dream and likes George to tell it as often as he can get him to. George uses the dream to make Lennie happy and it also settles him down if he becomes angry.

When George tells the story at the end of Section 1 he speaks as if he is telling a bedtime story to a child. Lennie loves to hear the story and he knows the details.

When Candy hears about the dream he wants to become part of it. He offers to give his savings. He sees this as a chance to belong somewhere and be part of something a possible reality. This is how George starts to think on a practical level.

When Lennie tells Crooks about the dream he too wants to become a part of it but might become a reality. However, after being treated brutally by Curley's wife he gives up on the dream, understanding that his reality is suffering.

The dream dies with Lennie. When Candy asks about whether or not the future is possible without Lennie, we know from George's response that it won't.



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The Power of the Dream

Steinbeck makes George and Lennie's dream so powerful that Candy and Crooks

Section 3: Candy

Candy, the one-handed swamper, overhears them talking and wants to become

'Tell you what ... S'pose I went in with you guys. Tha's three hundred an' fifty bu good...but I could cook and tend the chickens and hog an' raise an some. How'd that

Active Learning Task 3

- How does Candy want to become a part of the dream?
- What does he offer to do around the farm?

Section 4: Crooks

Crooks is cruel to Lennie at first about the dream. What he says here shows that

'I seen hundreds of men come by on the road an' on the ranches with their bundles damn thing in their heads. Hundreds of them. They come, an' quit an' go on; every of lan' in his head. An' never a goddam one of 'em ever gets it. Just like heaven. Eo lan'. Nobody never gets to heaven, and nobody gets no land. It's just in their head. about it, but it's just in their head.' (pp. 67-68)

Active Learning Task 4

- What is the dream that every man has, according to Crooks?
- What does he compare getting a piece of land to?

Later in this section Crooks attempts to become a part of it when he realises that coming true because of the dream is just in place.

'I need a guy really do it,' he said. 'I seen guys nearly crazed with loneliness where a blackjack game took what it takes... You guys would want a hand keep, why I'd come an' lend a hand. I ain't so crippled I can't work like a son of a b'

Active Learning Task 5

- What usually distracts most men from their dream?
- What does Crooks say that he'd work for?

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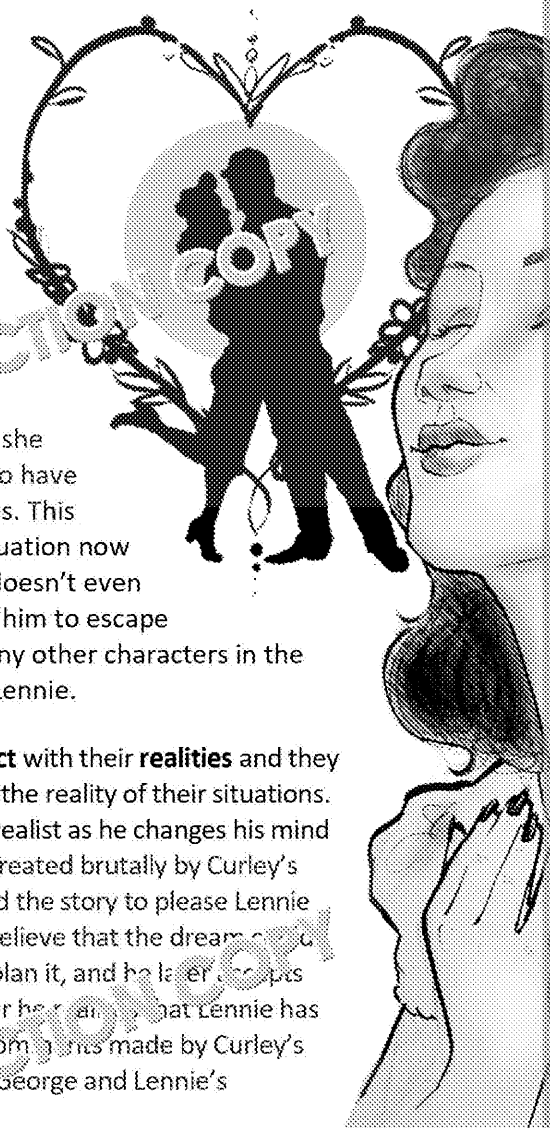
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Curley's Wife's Dream

We learn about Curley's wife's dream when she reveals to Lennie that she wanted to be a film star. She wanted to be glamorous and a part of Hollywood. However, her dreams are not very realistic, as we find that men have made comments but they were only passing comments that don't seem to really mean anything. She comes across as being naive when she talks about these men who seem to have led her astray for their own reasons. This makes her feel upset about her situation now with Curley. She realises that she doesn't even like him and that she only married him to escape from home. She is isolated like many other characters in the story and meets a tragic fate, like Lennie.

The characters' dreams are in **conflict** with their **realities** and they use them as a way of escaping from the reality of their situations. Only Crooks seems to be more of a realist as he changes his mind about joining the dream after he is treated brutally by Curley's wife. George is quite realistic: he told the story to please Lennie and calm himself, he only starts to believe that the dream can become a reality when he starts to plan it, and he later accepts that the dream will not happen, after he realises that Lennie has killed Curley's wife. There are also comments made by Curley's wife and Crooks which contradict George and Lennie's dream.



Context: Dreams (AO4)

The dream which George and Lennie have is to 'live off the fatta the land' and have a ranch of their own. This idea appeals to Candy and Crooks, who have both experienced discrimination. The ranch can be seen as a microcosm of society during this time. Through it, Steinbeck explores themes of discrimination and isolation. The dream is George and Lennie's own version of hope for this period of Depression: hope and a chance to escape daily suffering.

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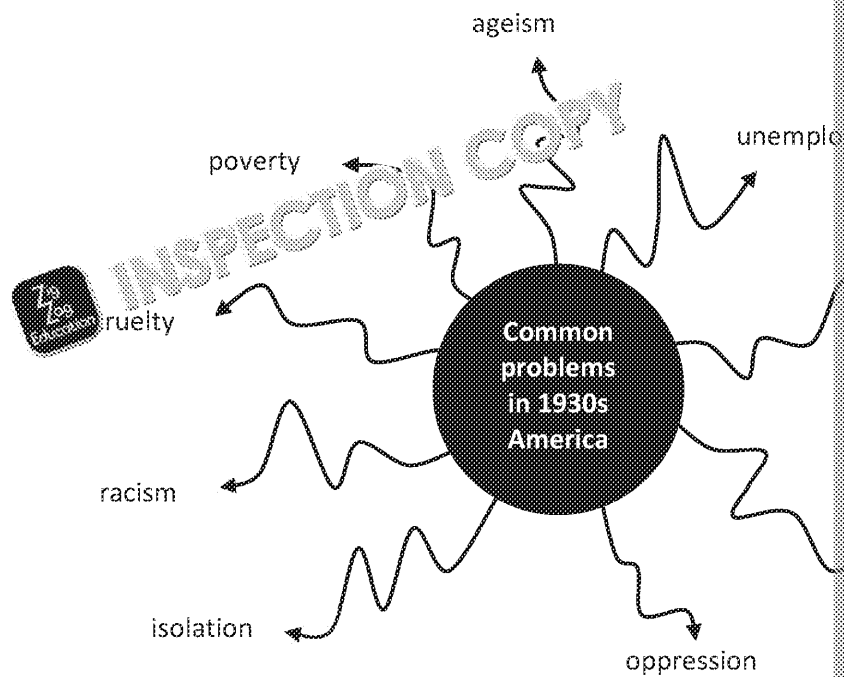


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Reality

George and Lennie's dream continuously clashes with the reality of their situation. The kinds of problems which they faced were common in 1930s America during this time.



Nearly every character in *Of Mice and Men* suffers from one or more of these problems.



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Active Learning Task 6

Tick the appropriate box in the table to show which characters suffer from each

	George	Lennie	Candy	Crooks
unemployment				
poverty				
isolation				
homelessness				
sexism				
racism				
disability				
ageism				
oppression				

- Look at the results. Who do you think is the best and the worst off?
- Write about who you have chosen as the 'best off' and give examples from the text.
- Write about who you have chosen as the 'worst off' and give examples from the text.



Context: Reality (AO4)

During this period of hardship and suffering, dreams became a form of escape and a symbol of hope for many. It allowed people to deal with common problems such as

However, Steinbeck shows that not everyone could believe in the American Dream. Isolation and racism. Understandably, he is cynical about the idea of the dream, of the dream farm, at first. By the end of the novel he believes that the dream is not able to have, and is resigned to this understanding and his situation.

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Friendship

George and Lennie have the strongest friendship in the novel and their relationship is unusual. Their friendship is unusual because it was common for men working in a situation of isolated figures. The two men travel together, work together and look after each other. George trusts Lennie and Lennie trusts him greatly.

During the American Depression in the 1930s migrant workers lost their homes as a result of this. Workers had to travel from place to place looking for work alone. They were not anywhere long enough to make long-lasting friendships.

We know that their friendship is **different** because it is commented on so much. The friendship is a key part of the story, when he suspects that George is taking advantage of him for pay. Another example is when Lennie is victimised by Crooks who taunts Lennie about his return to him. This may be because Crooks is **envious** of the friendship between George and Lennie, which is greatly contrasted with his complete isolation.

Slim seems to be understanding about their friendship. George even confides in Slim with Lennie. He trusts Slim and at the end of the novel we can take some hope and share an understanding about the loss of Lennie.

However, George does get **angry** with Lennie regularly. We know this at the start of the novel when George is angry with Lennie for petting a dead mouse. We get the idea that Lennie does 'better' than learn from his mistakes. He simply follows instructions from George, if he can remember them. George, understandably, becomes frustrated with Lennie's actions, especially when he forgets and repeats them.

However, George benefits from his friendship with Lennie. It stops him from being a lonely worker and he finds that telling the story of the dead mouse relaxes him and gives him a sense of purpose.



Context: Friendship (AO4)

In a period which embodies the idea of the 'survival of the fittest', close friendship is presented as a form of hope in the novel. In an isolated society, George and Lennie's friendship is unusual to the other workers, who are accustomed to feelings of loneliness. The contrast between their relationship and the other inhabitants on the farm is so great that it highlights the isolation of the workers.

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Loneliness

As we know, life as a migrant worker was a lonely occupation which is why it was Lennie were travelling companions. This was because workers tended to move from work to work, so that they did not settle anywhere and form relationships. This would have

The characters who experience loneliness in the story are Crooks, Candy and Curley's wife.

Candy is old and disabled and therefore does not fit in on the ranch. He knows the time as a worker and is becoming a burden. His only close companionship which was with his old dog. The other men fail to understand how the loss of Candy's dog affects him. The dog depended on him and Candy later regrets that he didn't take matters more seriously.

When he hears about George and Lennie's dream he desperately wants to become a part of it. This is because he knows that soon he will find it difficult to find employment and savings.

Crooks is also a victim of loneliness. He is victimised due to the colour of his skin and the frustrations on him and he is isolated in the stables with the animals. He warns Lennie that loneliness has on a person after he has been cruel towards Lennie, perhaps because of his friendship with George. Like Candy he wants to become a part of the dream but his encounter with Curley's wife leads him to decide to stay with reality and know his place.

Curley's wife is also lonely. This explains why she regularly comes out to see the threatening figure, particularly because Curley is suspicious of any interactions with her. She admits that she regrets marrying Curley, which she did to escape her family life.



Context: Loneliness (AO4)

The lifestyle of a migrant worker is one of loneliness, and we know that George contrasts with the others on the ranch. Migrant workers moved from place to place to find work, so they were always alone. However, with Crooks, Steinbeck warns that isolation is unhealthy and compares it to a disease.

Sadly, those who are 'different' are excluded. Steinbeck uses the characters of Crooks and Curley's wife to show this. The dream of the future farm is a brief glimpse of escape for Crooks and Lennie. They are excited about this exciting prospect. However, they both become resigned to their fate.

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Cruelty

Cruelty is a theme which runs throughout the novel and there are many events which show through the way that the characters treat each other. One example is when George plays tricks on Lennie and even told him to jump into a river. Unlike other characters, George does not take advantage of his friend.

Another example is when Carlson takes out Candy's old dog and shoots it. He thinks of his misery but he's not acknowledged the cruelty of taking the dog from Candy.

Just as this act is cruel, Candy is aware that what happened to his dog could foretell his own fate. He knows that the time will come when he will be old and useless.

Cruelty is particularly noticed the most strongly in relation to Crooks. We see the way that he is treated by the other workers and his boss. Black people were commonly treated as being inferior in America during the Depression. Some white people considered that black people were subhuman. Black people became used to being addressed with the word 'nigger' and being treated as less than white people.

This treatment also shows the **hierarchical** nature of society in the world of the novel. The strong attack the weak but the weak attack the weaker. Weakness could be due to colour, age or physical strength. These causes suffering and a sense of disempowerment.

The ending of the novel confirms this as Steinbeck uses nature to describe the cycle of life. The river becomes the prey of a heron. The hunter and the prey is shown and the cycle continues between the characters in a natural manner.



Context: Cruelty (AO4)

In his microcosm of the American dream, Steinbeck depicts a society which is cruel and instead of helping them. An event in the text where this is evident is the shooting of Candy's dog. The shooting foreshadows Candy's fears of being cast out of the culture which requires hard work, a man who outlives his usefulness will inevitably be discarded.

Cruelty is also imparted to Crooks who is also a victim of society at this time: he's isolated because this was widespread and acceptable in American culture at this time. The people weren't treated on equal terms.

Even George is not immune to cruelty – he confides in Slim that he used to take pleasure before he realised that it was wrong.

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Hierarchies

A hierarchy is a system which places people in order of importance. The most important (or rich) are at the top and then the hierarchy moves downwards towards the mass or bottom.

People at the top of a hierarchy would own a greater share of wealth and power. They would own little and make a living by selling their labour to people higher up. Steinbeck's hierarchy is animal-like in the sense that people pick on those weaker than themselves.

Active Learning Task 7

Think about the hierarchy in *Of Mice and Men*. Place the following characters on a hierarchy: Lennie, Curley, Curley's wife, Slim, Carlson, Crooks. Give reasons for each of your placements.



Context: Hierarchies (AO4)

The hierarchical system depicted on the ranch is used by Steinbeck to highlight the cruelty which takes place between people of different positions – examples of this are it being perceived as being acceptable for the boss to take out his frustrations on Crooks, the way that Curley speaks to the workers on the ranch, the way that Curley mimics the way that his father dresses and how Curley's wife uses her little power to threaten Crooks.

Steinbeck uses these examples to reveal the nature of this society: how people instinctively pick on those weaker than themselves.



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Anger and Violence

Steinbeck presents different angry characters in *Of Mice and Men*. Curley stands out because he's eager to assert his authority, through his masculinity, over the other men. He does this because of his flirtatious wife. We see the full extent of his aggression when he attacks Lennie. Following nature's cycle, he attacks someone weaker than he is, or at least that's what Lennie is for the simple reason that he is bigger than he is.

There are a lot of incidents of violence throughout the novel with Curley – he's a threatening character and uses threatening language and actions towards the others. This is his way of asserting authority. It is only when Lennie crushes his hand that Curley falters – for a short while. He seems to be more concerned about his reputation than his crushed hand, so that Slim is able to blackmail him to keep quiet about what really happened.

However, he takes revenge when he gets the chance and gets a lynch mob together when he discovers that Lennie has killed his wife. His language is violent, leading George to having to take matters into his own hands before Curley can make Lennie suffer. Curley tells Carlson to aim for the gut with his gun when he sees Lennie.

Other examples of violence which involve Lennie are his crushing of a furry creature, his own downfall, and the murder of Curley's wife, at the climax of the text.

There are other acts of violence in the text. These are the shooting of Candy's dog and the natural act of the heron eating the water snake at the end of the text where violence is a natural part of society.

George is angry with Lennie at times, but he does not use violence. He does reveal himself to be cruel to Lennie when he was younger, but before he realised that it was wrong. We see his anger and frustration on Curley's face before we even meet them.

Crooks is often the victim of other people's anger – because he's the lowest in the 'pecking order', like the boss, on a regular basis. Curley's wife also angrily threatens him with a lynch-mob, taking advantage of her position of power over him. It seems that Crooks is angry with others, because of the way that he's treated, however it likewise makes him angry with himself.

George attacks Lennie on a psychological level – possibly because he is jealous of Lennie. He attacks George, possibly to release some of his own anger and frustration at the way he is treated. He acknowledges that being alone is not good for a person, and it can make them sick.



Context: Anger and Violence (AO4)

Persecution of black people was common during this period and Steinbeck presents other people's anger and abuse. Power was linked with hierarchy and status and people used power using anger and violence to those beneath them. There's also a competition in with masculinity. Mainly this links with Curley and his eagerness to prove himself.

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Ideas and Messages

Linguistic and narrative devices are literary techniques used by authors to convey messages that they wish to pass on to their reader. An author's 'idea' is any thought, influence and surfaces in their writing. When writing *Of Mice and Men*, John Steinbeck was writing during a period of economic devastation and uncertainty in 1930s America, an age of social strife, and a time when the reality of the American Dream was ever more distant for the American people.

The American Dream

The dream remains a powerful motif in Steinbeck's text (See the 'Themes' section on dreams). However, it is a specific type of dream that Steinbeck had in mind when writing *Of Mice and Men*. The American Dream is an age-old ideal held by the country that anyone, regardless of their background or station in life, can be successful and achieve anything he or she wishes. The American Dream brings with it hope and infinite possibility for the American individual, and the belief that all of humanity is equal in terms of their ability to be successful and reach their goals. The American Dream caused many to migrate to America, with many believing that they could find security and success from living and working off the rich and fertile lands in America. After a period of dry weather and dust winds throughout America's farming states, known as 'the Dustbowl', many dreamers, like George and Lennie, moved to areas such as California to achieve their dream. However, following the crash of the stock market in America and a period of intense poverty and economic decline worldwide that lasted throughout the 1930s, areas such as California, and farmers and workers were left disappointed with the

Lennie and George's discussion of their dreams of owning and living off a ranch is a clear embodiment of the American Dream, with the pair trusting in the ideal that they can become successful as they do as men who come from poor travelling backgrounds. Despite the disheartening situation, with low income, and a lack of property or security, the promise of the American Dream motivates them in their work. Like George and Lennie, Candy, and Crook, the dismissal of Lennie and his dream into the hope and opportunity promised by the American Dream is part of Steinbeck's union of men through the ideal of the American Dream is part of his message to his readers. By uniting men from vastly different backgrounds (with Candy being of a different race, Candy losing his employment security and being belittled by the other men, George and Lennie losing their homes and stability through their status as solo travellers), Steinbeck emphasises to us readers the universal nature of the American Dream and its power. However, there is a cynical tone to Steinbeck's message, as all men are also united by the dream and achieve the ideal they strive for. Following the death of Curley's wife, the future for George and Candy appears bleak, with the pair abandoned by Lennie. By the end of Steinbeck's novel, we as readers are left believing Crook's words: 'talk about it a hell of a lot' but 'won't get no land.' (Section 4).

Agency of Humanity and Our Nature

Throughout Steinbeck's body of work there is a recurring fascination with the nature of humanity. In *Of Mice and Men*, this fascination sees Steinbeck explore the agency of humanity, particularly in relation to people's future or fate. Throughout the novel, Steinbeck explores to what extent we as humans are able to change the future or fate mapped out for them. Clearly in his use of the idea of the American Dream throughout the novel. While the dream drives the narrative and motivates their actions throughout the novel, the question the likelihood of these dreams becoming reality for the men on the ranch whose age and physical condition calls into question is Lennie. From the outset of the novel, Lennie's mental disability is a source of trouble, and Steinbeck works hard to increase the tension and the time Lennie murders Curley's wife, his actions have already been foreshadowed by his pet mice and the pup given to him by Slim. Following Lennie's death, we must question to what extent Lennie had any control in his fate, and whether his downfall was always inevitable due to his vulnerability and inability to truly look after himself. As a result, we must also question whether we as readers are able to keep himself and Lennie out of trouble, and perhaps his naivety in thinking

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to rescue Lennie from trouble. Steinbeck here seems to be asking us as readers to consider free will, agency, and what power any of us have in determining our future when circumstances in which we are brought into the world.

Minorities in 1930s American Society

In the individuals making up the work force on the ranch, Steinbeck has included minority groups of people in 1930s America. While Crook represents the number one minority group, those who suffered under laws of racial segregation, Candy represents those with a physical disability, and Curley's wife represents those with a mental disability. To some extent, Curley's wife, as a woman, is a minority on the ranch among the predominantly male workers. Certainly, like black women too suffered from the discriminatory behaviour in society, particularly in the workplace. The characterisation of these individuals is no doubt deliberate, and a bid to urge his readers to consider how such minorities are treated within society. Steinbeck makes a point of emphasising that all individuals are often exploited for what society deems any factor that makes them different. While Curley's wife is often silenced, ignored, mistreated and made the subject of Crook's abuse, Crook is segregated from the other men and dehumanised in his placement with the dogs, like an animal. Like Curley's wife and Crook, Lennie and Candy are also alienated from the other men, as seen in their exclusion from the social trips to town and games on the ranch. Here Steinbeck illustrates the cruelty in society and the inequality within it, there does appear to be a sense that all four characters find some level of comfort in their alienation and loneliness together. Steinbeck's message is not a happy one. While Lennie and Curley's wife both reach for a better status, the future of Candy appears to hold unemployment, financial hardship, and Crook appears forever destined to a life of segregation on the ranch.

Essay Questions

Section C: Modern Prose

Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck

EITHER

- (6) 'Lennie is a victim of the society in which he lives.'

Explore the character of Lennie in *Of Mice and Men*.

You must write about context in your answer.

OR

- (7) Examine the significance of the natural world and how it relates to the characters in *Of Mice and Men*.

You must write about context in your answer.

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The Writer's Use of Language

Steinbeck's **simple** language makes the story realistic. The story is written in the way we can observe everything that is going on with the different characters. There are two ways a person: a writer can be 'universal' and allow the reader to see everything that has happened everything if the writer wants them to. This style of narration is also known as being 'universal'. Steinbeck lets us 'see' the different characters.

The dialect is written as it's spoken to make the characters even more realistic. Steinbeck uses simple language, to show the dialect that the characters would have spoken. Also language is used to show Lennie's language is child like to show that he has a learning difficulty. Curley's is a more formal, revealing how aggressive he is.

Imagery

Imagery is the use of words to create images or pictures in the reader's mind. A writer uses words more powerful to the reader.

Active Learning Task 1

Read the following lines from the text. Steinbeck has written them to create a particular image in your mind. Write out each line then draw out the image that comes to your mind:

1. *Her hair hung in little rolled clusters, like sausages* (p. 32)
2. *...This girl squawks and squawks* (p. 40)
3. *His body was bent over to the left by his crooked spine...* (p. 62)
4. *Lennie dabbled his big paw in the water.* (p. 9)

How are these images effective?

Although *Of Mice and Men* is written in a **simple** style, Steinbeck uses **images** as symbols to represent ideas.

Animal Imagery

Lennie

'...drank with long gulps, snorting into the water like a horse.' (p. 8)

'He walked heavily, dragging his feet a little, the way a bear drags his paws.' (p. 8)

'Lennie dabbled his big paw in the water' (p. 9)

'Slowly, like a terrier who doesn't want to bring a ball to its master, Lennie approached'

'Lennie covered his face with his huge paws...' (p. 58)

'...he came as silently as a creeping bear moves.' (p. 88)

Curley

'Curley stepped over to Lennie like a terrier' (p. 58)

'Curley was flopping like a fish on a line' (p. 59)

Curley's wife

'her body flopped like a fish' (p. 62)

Active Learning Task 2

- a. Write about how Steinbeck uses **animal imagery** to describe Lennie.
- b. Write about the **animal imagery** Steinbeck uses for Curley and Curley's wife.



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Images of Light and Darkness

Steinbeck uses images of light and darkness throughout his novel as a **stylistic technique**.

Active Learning Task 3

Look at the following quotations below. You have to decide whether they are suitable for 'light' or 'darkness'. You should record each quotation under the heading of either 'light' or 'darkness' as interpretive as possible!

- 'Although there was evening brightness, shining through the windows of the bunkhouse, I have put this quotation under darkness'.*
It shows...
This is important to the theme of the story as...
- Crooks' eyes 'lay deep in his head, and because of their depth seemed to glitter with intelligence'.
Both light and darkness are shown here because...
I think that this description reveals...
- When Curley's wife first appears at the bunkhouse, 'the rectangle of sunshine in the doorway'.
This reveals...
- As the story reaches its tragic climax, 'the light climbed on out of the valley' (p. 104).
This suggests that...

Important points:

- Steinbeck uses images of darkness and light throughout the novel which the reader can interpret.
- The darkness and the light are **symbolic** of other interpretations.



Context: Images of Light and Darkness (104)

The imagery of light and darkness links with the settings and ideas in the novel. Light is linked with freedom and the darkness in the bunkhouse represents the darkness of the world. Similarly, Crooks' treatment on the ranch leads to contrasting feelings within him. The uses of his intelligence. It's sad that Crooks' intelligence and independence are not valued. He can't see past the colour of his skin.

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Symbolism

The story begins and ends with descriptions of nature by the Salinas river. The way that the novel could symbolise the interactions between men – at least in the world of the

There's also the idea that the natural descriptions could symbolise the beauty of Eden. God creates Eden and man who he places there to look after it. God then creates the serpent to eat from the tree of knowledge despite God forbidding them to do so. She. They then have knowledge of good and evil. When God finds out he punishes them – child bearing and man will suffer through hard work. Both are banished from Eden. The suffering in general – through the daily struggle of life.

As stated earlier, George and Lennie could represent man wandering (Adam after being expelled from Eden (temptation)). In John Milton's epic poem *Paradise Lost*, Adam and Eve are who fall in the Garden of Eden. Because of their fall, each man is forced to suffer as a lonely being.

Descriptions of animals are usually linked with the character of Lennie. He's described animals throughout the novel such as a horse and a bear when we are first introduced. Lennie symbolises anyone who outlives their usefulness.

On an economic level, George and Lennie could be recognised as symbols of the struggle to be in control of their own lives.



Context: Symbolism (AO4)

We know that the description of the heron attacking the water snake at the end of the novel is a symbol of the nature of the prey and the victim in man's culture. Another example of symbolism is the treatment of Candy's dog.

Another interpretation of the novel is that George and Lennie could be recognised as symbols of the struggle to be in control of their own lives, as stated above. In this sense, the novel is a man's quest for the 'American Dream'. It is up to you to decide what you think about after reading the novel.

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Form

Description is mostly used at the start of each section, before Steinbeck moves in characters.

The first and the last sections contain a lot more description of the natural world. The

The sections at the ranch focus on character and interaction. The plot moves toward

Steinbeck intended the story to be adapted for the stage which would explain the focus on character and dialogue and animal settings.



Structure



Structure is the way that the story is put together.

Of Mice and Men is the first of Steinbeck's **form**. Each section contains few descriptions. Steinbeck's imagery of light and darkness works on the stage.

Although the form is short, the story has a powerful impact on the reader, due to the tragic figure from the start – we know this due to the ominous foreshadowing Steinbeck uses in the novel. The novel is also cyclical – it starts and ends at the Salinas river. The two men move from the man-made world only to return to the natural world once again at the end.



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Contexts



In terms of Literature, **context** is the circumstances in which an event occurs; a setting. Other words for 'context' are **background, connection, relations, meaning.**

John Steinbeck was born in Salinas, California, where he based a lot of *Of Mice and Men*. Steinbeck worked on the ranch, experiencing the hardships of rural California. He stayed with him.

He enrolled at Stanford University in 1919 but left six years later without having a degree. He worked as a reporter and then as a caretaker. Success came with the publication of *Villa Paria* in 1935.

The title, *Of Mice and Men*

The title of the novel is drawn from the Robert Burns poem *To a Mouse*. He took it from a line in the penultimate stanza:

The best laid schemes o' mice an' men / Gang aft agley

This is often paraphrased in English as meaning:

The best laid plans of mice and men / Go often awry

In the novel George and Lennie have plans to make their dream come true, but they are often wrong. In this sense, the title **foreshadows** the tragic nature of the novel.

Literary Context

Steinbeck's renowned works focus on the lives of **California wanderers** who, in their surroundings, usually succeed on a spiritual level. He was one of the most famous writers of the Great Depression.

The lives of the migrant workers are a recurring class in Steinbeck's trilogy of novels: *In Dubious Company* 1937 and *The Grapes of Wrath* 1940. All three portray the struggle of migration.



Context: US History (AO4)

The book is set in America during the **Depression**. The economic conditions were so bad that people like George and Lennie were treated like victims. The novel is set in the Salinas Valley, California. It was a place of **major immigration**.

In America, the idea of the **American Dream** is that through hard work, courage and determination success can be achieved. People of every rank can feel that they can achieve a 'better, richer and happier life' (James Truslow Adams, 1931).

The idea is also rooted in the **Declaration of Independence**, which states that 'all men are created equal' and that they are 'endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights', including 'Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness'.

Discuss the American Dream in the context of the novel.

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Steinbeck **critiques** the concept of the dream in *Of Mice and Men*. As we know, this was the time – during the 1920s and 1930s the Depression was the cause of hardship for many people.

The word '**dream**' suggests that something is desirable, yet unrealistic. George and Lennie have their own farm but this is never fully realised because of forces beyond their control.

In terms of George and Lennie's dream, we hear that part of it is to live off the 'fat' of the land. This is an expression which refers to having the best of everything. In terms of George and Lennie and their own place, it means that they believe they will be able to survive by relying on what they can grow and raise. As the land is so 'fat' they will need no

Active Learning Task 1

Make notes relating to America as 'another culture' as you read and re-read your text. You can make notes under the following headings:

- Steinbeck's descriptions of place which tells me about the conditions in America
- The way that characters behave and the attitudes they express, and how this changes over time



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The History of Migrant Farmers in California

Of Mice and Men is set in California during the period of the **Great American Depression**, a time when unemployment was high. Industry and the banks collapsed so a lot of people were left without money for the basic needs for survival: food, clothes and rent. Homelessness and joblessness became common.



During this time things grew worse in the country because farmers had to leave. The Dirty Thirties was a period of severe dust storms which caused agricultural damage in 1939. This was coupled with a period of drought which led to crops failing, so farmers lost their bank loans. As a result, lots of farmers were left without a home. Many of them chased their dream to own a piece of land. You will recognise the link to this in *Of Mice and Men*.

The two characters suffer throughout the novel, despite continuing to follow their dream to own their own farm. Other characters are also drawn into this dream, which gives the characters hope, if only for a short period of time.

Active Learning
Consider how this relates to your own life in relation to the concept of the American Dream.

George and Lennie are not just characters but they are also **symbols** for the hunger for land and the need to be in control of their own lives. They never achieved their dreams in reality. The difference between dreams and reality are seen when the two men dream but are faced with the reality of their situation on a day-to-day basis.

Historically, the Californians became scared that there were too many men involved and they drove them away with force. Those who stayed were put into refugee camps. Steinbeck gathered material for his books when visiting these camps.



Context: History of Migrant Farmers in California (AO4)

Migration was accepted as part of the culture in this period. There was a general need for survival – a 'survival of the fittest' mentality. The American Dream became a part of America's culture: the dream to own a piece of land.

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Exam Guidance

Guidance on PEE

Use of point evidence explain when describing character

You will be aware of the skill of **point evidence explain**. It's important to use well-chosen evidence to support your point. For example if you were asked to write about how Lennie is presented at the start of the novel, you could use the structure of PEE to help you write an answer. Here's a reminder of PEE:

P: point

E: evidence

E: explain



Here's a more detailed explanation with an example:

P: A point is made *Lennie is presented using animal imagery at the start of the novel.*

E: evidence *A quotation is provided to support the point 'and he walked heavily, dragging his feet a little, the way a bear drags his paws'.*

E: explain *A comment is made in some more detail, maybe a word or group of words in your quotation. The phrase 'the way a bear drags his paws' is effective as it immediately shows the size of Lennie's feet, his lumbering way, like a large bear.*

Now, imagine that you take away the PEE scaffolding:

Lennie is presented using animal imagery at the start of the novel.

'and he walked heavily, dragging his feet a little, the way a bear drags his paws.'

The phrase 'a bear drags his paws' is effective as it immediately shows how Lennie's size is portrayed, his lumbering way, like a large bear.

You can see here's a paragraph that provides a small part of an answer to the question 'How is Lennie presented at the start of the novel?' To make a longer answer you could use more paragraphs.

Here's an example of how a longer answer would gradually form from your writing. **Lennie presented using animal imagery at the start of the novel?** The first paragraph here to show the effect of how the writing looks altogether!

Lennie is presented using animal imagery at the start of the novel.

'and he walked heavily, dragging his feet a little, the way a bear drags his paws.'

The phrase 'a bear drags his paws' is effective as it immediately shows how Lennie's size is portrayed, his lumbering way, like a large bear.

P: *Lennie is also compared to a horse, shown when his actions are quite uncontrolled, as he cannot control himself:*

E: *'drank with long gulps, swilling into the water like a horse.'*

E: *The fact that Lennie 'follows' shows a lack of self-awareness, he is following the dog and as a result his is animal-like.*

P: *The bear imagery is continued to show the size of Lennie's hands:*

E: *'Lennie dabbled his big paw in the water and wiggled his fingers...'*

E: *The metaphor of the 'paw' reveals the great strength of Lennie and how his strength contrasts with the childlike innocence of his mind, shown when he is first introduced.*

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Active Learning Task 1**How is George presented at the start of the novel?**

Read the passage below and highlight any words or phrases (a phrase is a small group of words) that help you understand how George is presented at the start of the novel. Highlight at least three different words or phrases.

The first man was small and quick, dark of face, with restless eyes and sharp, strong features. Every part of him was defined: small, strong hands, slender arms, a thin, straight nose. Behind him was a man, shapeless of face, with large, pale eyes, with sloping shoulders; and he walked a little, the way a bear drags his paws. George's arms did not swing at his sides, but because the heavy hands were each in a pocket.

The first man stepped short in the clearing, and the follower nearly ran over him. The second man reached out with his forefinger and snapped the moisture off. His huge companion flung himself down and drank from the surface of the green pool; drank with long gulps, like a horse. The small man stepped nervously beside him.

'Lennie!' he said sharply. 'Lennie, for God's sakes don't drink so much.' Lennie continued to drink. The small man leaned over and shook him by the shoulder. 'Lennie, You gonna be sick.' (Section 1)

Now look at the PEE framework below. Notice that it's there **three times for this task**. If you're unsure about your points look again at the points which you have underlined. Think about the points which relate to **how George is presented at the start of the novel**. Copy the points into the PEE framework and structure an answer.

P:

E:

E:

P:

E:

E:

P:

E:

E:

If you're unsure about what to do or have run out of ideas have a look at the example below.

Another source of help is this example for George (without PEE in the margin):

Steinbeck reveals that George is the dominant one in the relationship from the start of the novel straightaway:

'Lennie!' he said sharply.

The word 'sharply' gives the impression of a strict yet caring teacher looking out for Lennie's welfare as he 'sharply' reminds him about the danger of drinking too much when he runs over to the pool.

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Active Learning Task 2

Revising PEE

In order to write well and develop your points, you need to be confident with using evidence from the text.

Copy and complete this **practise page for PEE**. Different parts of the PEE chain

- a. *George is like a guardian to Lennie:*

‘ _____ ’

This  reveals...

- b. *Curley's wife is* _____


‘Her finger-nails were red.’ (Section 2)

The description suggests that she is a character who represents

- c. *Curley is aggressive towards Lennie.*

‘Curley stepped over to Lennie like a terrier. ‘What the hell you

This line shows _____

Now make  your own PEE paragraphs for the following points. Try and use one or more pieces of evidence from the text.

Lennie is described as being childlike.

Candy is an old man who is worried about his future.

Slim is a respectable figure on the ranch.

Crooks is an isolated figure.

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General Guidance on Writing Essays

This section is for **any essay** so it is important to read before you focus on specific reminders to help you with your essay writing skills – you should already have had this section divided up into five sections:

- Planning
- Writing an Introduction
- Writing the main part of your essay
- Writing a conclusion
- Tips for writing better

Planning

Before you plan, you should **underline and examine the key words in the question** on what the examiner is looking for and it will help you to prepare an answer.

Jot down any **immediate ideas** and read through the passage related to the question.

Mind-map an essay plan – if it helps put the question in the middle of the page and then, number your points in the order which you think is best for each paragraph. You may prefer to use bullet points.

Also note down any **quotations** which you think support your points – you should have four or five.

Remember to include page numbers for any quotations which you will use as they support your points.

Writing an introduction

An introduction is usually **short and to the point** – **addressing the question focus** is important. You can introduce your ideas or arguments with reference to *Of Mice and Men* you may want to start from the start, depending on the nature of the question. If you have some information about the author, it can be good to use this. Similarly you may be answering a question about the American Dream and how racism and prejudice affect it. You may choose to include some details about the American Dream and how racism and prejudice affect it. This is where the historical and literary context become important. Remember to **address the question and focus of the exam question**, overall.

Writing the main part of your essay

After writing your introduction you may be feeling more confident. It's important to stay focused at this stage. You should now work through your plan creating a **structured argument**. If you have numbered your points, this may help you – or you could number them after you have written them. You may prefer to work through your plan naturally, adding and crossing out different points as you go.

Be aware of **timing**, however – you don't want to still be working on the main part of your essay. Timing is essential – don't dwell on one part for too long.

The structure of each paragraph could follow **PEE** and if you have practised this method, your writing flows naturally while following this form. Remember that for each paragraph, your analysis will be assessed.

Remember to **keep quotations short** and to **comment on the effects of words and phrases**. Look at good answers and be aware of what grade they received and why. Look at the grades and see how they could be improved.

Writing a conclusion

After working through your main points your conclusion should be **short and concise**. Your conclusion should **sum up your main points** which you have made and refer back to the question.

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Tips for writing better essays

Read essays which have gained the **grade** that you are aiming for – look at what is effective and consider how your own writing can improve to meet that target. Look at:

- How the introduction is approached and how the points are developed throughout
- How the essay maintains its focus on the question throughout
- How quotations are used and to what effect: for example, does the writer use them to support their points at all?
- How effectively the essay is concluded

Information about the question

With a passage based question, some pupils may find it easier to actually read the passage and know what they are discussing on when they read the passage. This saves time so they don't have to go back and re-read it twice. Also, identifying the focus of the question helps.

Active Learning Task 3

Answer these questions:

- What should you focus on in the question?
- What is a text's 'historical context'?
- How many points should you roughly aim for in your essay?
- How should you sum up your main points?

Using bullet points and spider diagrams

Spider diagrams are helpful for getting ideas down and maintaining focus when you write. You can refer back to and you don't have to use all of your ideas in it. You may even change your ideas as you write.

They may just be a starting point and may progress as you start writing. You may add more ideas as you're writing.

After studying your question, it's important to **write down as many ideas as you can**. You can also jot down any particular quotations or sections that you're planning to use in your essay. **making notes** is a good way to keep your focus on the question's key words and

When to use bullet points and spider diagrams

If your essay title requires you to write about a character, theme or any aspect of the text, you can use bullet points and spider diagrams to plan your essay.

Active Learning Task 4

- Making notes on each character

Make notes on each main character and focus on:

- What they say
- What they do
- What other characters say about them
- Any physical descriptions
- The way that they interact with other characters
- How they develop – do they change throughout the course of the novel?

For this activity you will need to **go through the text** and underline the parts where the character is introduced, where they are first mentioned or is discussed by other characters.

- Apply your own planning to the following characters:

George

Lennie

Curtis

Crooks

Remember to support your ideas on your diagram with quotations as much as possible.

Further planning activities for revision:

- Different themes in the text
- Different settings in the text

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Revision Checklist

Make sure that you know which unit you are doing *Of Mice and Men* for and determine how long it is.

Have you looked at **sample questions**?

- ✓ It would help to look at the questions in this guide and plan some possible answers. **planning and timing** – 5 to 10 minutes maximum planning time. Also practise answering questions and time yourself when you write them. Remember that it helps to plan your writing. The benefits of this are that it will increase your confidence and you will be better at time management.
- ✓ Remember that **time management** is crucial so the more time you spend with your plan for the text, the better. Have a **rough plan** for timing in your head: 10 minutes planning, 20 minutes writing and 5 minutes to read through your work and check it in your mind when you read over it.
- ✓ Remember to include revising the **historical background** to the text – the America of the 1930s and the history of migrant workers. You may find that your key points which you wish to make about certain characters in the text.
- ✓ **Re-read the text.** This will enable you to gain a deeper understanding of the motivations and themes. You will also respond to subtle techniques such as symbolism, darkness and descriptions of the setting. You will also be more aware of how Steinbeck uses foreshadowing throughout the novel, prior to the tragic ending. Make notes for particular areas on your second reading.

When writing exam responses

- Remember not to waste time with lengthy introductions – move straight into your answer.
- Remember to use standard English throughout your essay – make sure that you are clear and concise.
- Use a spider diagram or bullet points to help you with brainstorming and planning. You need to – feel free to add as many points to it.
- Make the most of your exam time. Divide it up so that you are aware of how much time you have. This will spread your efforts out. Be aware of how many marks are for each section as this indicates how much you are expected to write.
- Remember to build in planning time at the start and time to check through your work at the end.
- If you're unsure what to write at first it might help if you start with the quotation. Think about any points that you would like to make and/or you might not have thought of which you would like to use for your explanation!
- Be confident when quoting from the text. Remember to keep quotations short and to the point. Chain and interpret key words and phrases in your own words. Bring your ideas to the text. Remember that a writer's ideas are open to interpretation. Try and use embedded quotations in your writing.
- Don't be tempted to make your paragraphs long by over-quoting from the text. The marker of your work will not be fooled and you will lose marks for it and responses!
- Embedding quotations is a sophisticated way of expressing your points. You may find it natural to you or you may want to practise writing in this way. Obviously, you need to be able to quote but sometimes embedding a quotation helps your writing to 'flow'.

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Key Terms Glossary

A Bum Steer	False information
Alfalfa	A plant widely grown for animal feed
Barrel	The long part of the gun through which the bullet travels when fired
Bundle	A small number of items rolled up inside a blanket and carried
Buckers	Loaders
Burlap Ticking	Cheerful material which covers a straw mattress
Candy Wagon	A bus or truck used for transport
Canned	Sacked from a job
Cat House	Brothel
Champing	Chewing noisily
Context	In terms of literature, the circumstances in which an event occurs
'Coons	Racoons
'Cots	Apricots
Critical	Showing judgement or evaluation
Dugs	Teats
Ejector	The part of a gun which throws out the empty cartridge of a shell
Form	The shape or structure of something as distinguished from its content
Gingham	A cotton cloth, usually woven in stripes or checks
Grey-backs	Lice
Hame	The piece of a horse collar to which chains are attached
Hands	Men
Handy	A good fighter
Heron	A bird with a long neck
Influence	The act, power or capacity of producing an effect on someone
Jack-pin	A removable wooden or metal pin put into the rail of ships
Jerkline-skinner	A driver who can control a team of mules with a single rein
Keg	A small barrel
Loaded Shell	An unfired bullet
Magazine	The part of the gun which holds the bullets
Meager	Of small amount
Migrate	To move, relocate, resettle, travel, wander or roam
Misogyny	Hatred of women
Morosely	In a sad, gloomy manner
Mule	A type of animal
Pants Rake	Scabies, fleas, etc.
Pulley	A small wheel
Purty	Pretty
Rheumatism	A painful condition involving the joints and the muscles
Riveter	A tool used to fasten rivets (small metal bolts)

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Roaches	Cockroaches
Rummy	A card game
Run	An enclosure for animals in which they can feed, run, etc.
Setter Dog	Any of several breeds of long-haired dogs
Skinner	Driver of a mule team
Slug	A single drink, especially of alcohol
Smoke-house	A building where meat, fish is prepared by means of smoke
Stable Buck	The negro who looks after the stable
Stake	A unit of money
Structure	In terms of literature, the way that a story is put together, co
Subsided	Calmed down
Swamper	Cleaner
Symbol	An object which is used to represent something else
Taloned	A fork with 'claws'
Tick	Mattress cover
Twict	A sharp, sudden punch
Vials	Small glass jars and bottles
Whinnied	Past tense of 'whinny', the gentle sound a horse makes

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Further Reading

Books

The Grapes of Wrath, John Steinbeck (Penguin Books: 2000)

If students enjoyed *Of Mice and Men* then this Steinbeck classic could be an enjoyable read. It tells the story of the struggles of American farmers set also during the Great Depression. This edition includes an accessible and informative critical introduction by author and scholar, Robert De

The Great Depression and the American Dream: A Very Short Introduction, Eric Rauchway

Of Mice and Men, John Steinbeck (Penguin Books: 2000)

This edition of the text includes an accessible and informative critical introduction by author and scholar, Susan Shillinglaw.

Media

'The Origins of the American Dream', BBC Radio 4

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08k2fmj>

Short programme detailing the history and literature surrounding the idea of 'The American Dream' and its impact on today's society

1992 film adaptation, *Of Mice and Men*, directed by and starring Gary Sinise, and featuring a trailer, along with several clips from the film, is available on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQtiStdDaYw>

'Open Book: John Steinbeck Special', BBC Radio 4

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/m0001sxs>

A short half-hour programme celebrating Steinbeck's life and discussing Steinbeck's greatest works, *Of Mice and Men* and *The Grapes of Wrath*

Video Footage: Rayman College's 2016 theatrical adaptation of Steinbeck's novel

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q3MnmRYuQKM>

Websites

Official Webpage for 'The National Steinbeck Center'

<https://www.steinbeck.org/>

An organisation and museum dedicated to honouring and exploring Steinbeck's life and work

'Great Depression History', History.com

<https://www.history.com/topics/great-depression/great-depression-history>

An extended and accessible contextualisation of the Great Depression and its history




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Answers / Indicative Content

Section-by-Section Analysis

Question/Task	Answer / Indicative Content
Section 1: Active Learning Task 1 	a) Surrounding valley, river, mountainous landscape b) Garden of Eden, new position c) Same road taken by all men in life, all roads lead to the same end: maturity and degeneration d) Travelling job, matching attire of companions, lack of individuality evoked by 'shapeless' hats, etc. e) Student's own creative response required f) Examples could include, 'shapeless of face', 'the way he snorted into the water like a horse', 'dabbled his big feet in the mud' g) Examples could include 'Lennie, who had been watching the boys' and 'He pulled his hat down a little more over his eyes' h) George: Irritated, cautious, soft, quick i) Lennie: Slow, clumsy, soft, easy-going j) Student's own creative response required
Section 1: Knowledge Check	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Missing terms as follows: Companions, ranches, small dog, pet, Lennie, trouble, George, angry, regret, Weed, let's dream, farm
Section 1: Discussion Prompts	a. They have received little education, and often drop letters and use colloquialisms in their speech, e.g. 'ya', 'jus' hell with what I says' b. Lennie's learning disability, his tendency to be easily influenced
Section 2: Active Learning Task 1 	a. Student's own reading required b. He got kicked in the head by a horse when he was a boy c. Curley appears hostile, aggressive, egotistical, intimidated d. 'He hates big guys.' e. Hide in the bushes near the Salinas river f. Quotations may include 'full, rouged lips and wide-spreading red' and any reference to the colour red – evokes danger g. Words or phrases may include, for example; majesty, prince, authority. Slim is presented as a strong, respected individual h. Words or phrases may include, for example; God damn, can't eat. The dog appears vulnerable and aged like Lennie i. The possibility of owning one of Slim's pups j. 10. Curley is presented as misogynistic, over-bearing
Section 2: Discussion Prompt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Steinbeck places Crooks in with the animals in order to highlight this combined with the other characters repeated use of terms to refer to him heightens his isolation from them/affirms his status as 'other' to 'them' on the ranch
Section 2: Knowledge Check 	Missing terms as follows: Ranch, bunkhouse, belongings, small dog, boxer, Lennie, hostile, wife, flirt, Curley, starving

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Question/Task	Answer / Indicative Content
Section 2: Active Learning Task 2	<p>a. Student's own research required, accurate presentation</p> <p>b. Responses may include, for example:</p> <p>Candy: Kind, loves his sheepdog but fears for both the dogs</p> <p>Curley: Antagonistic, will pose a threat to Lennie through his size</p> <p>Curley's Wife: Will also pose a threat to Lennie later in the novel through her repetition of past experiences and her jealousy</p> <p>c. i) George</p> <p>ii) In response to Curley's threatening behaviour to Lennie</p> <p>iii) Possibility of overpowering all others, threat to Lennie</p> <p>iv) Curley, Curley's Wife</p>
Section 3: Active Learning Task 2	<p>a. Strong, quick, obedient worker who outdoes his fellow workers</p> <p>b. Lonely life of solitude, complete freedom and agency</p> <p>c. Clara took on the role of mother to Lennie, the only woman he has known</p> <p>d. George's previous exploitation of Lennie's naivety and his desire to protect him</p> <p>e. George has fun and laughs with Lennie, Lennie keeps him company</p> <p>f. Lennie tried to touch a young girl's red dress and scared her, which led them to their capture</p> <p>g. Secretive, naïve, child-like, mischievous, George's love for Lennie</p> <p>h. i) Breaking the necks of cats and smashing them with his hands</p> <p>ii) Cats who may prey on Lennie's rabbits</p> <p>iii) Upset and angry at thought of rabbits under the thumb of men</p> <p>iv) Violent tendencies, but fierce loyalty and care for Lennie</p> <p>i. Words and phrases may include, for example; helpless, frightened</p> <p>j. i) Lennie is bear like, and despite his size he is easy to defend himself</p> <p>ii) Lennie is like a sheep here, a contrast to the large, strong, quick, obedient worker who summons the image of a brave man</p>
Section 3: Knowledge Check	<p>Minor characters as follows: Bunkhouse, Lennie, George, Aunt Clara, Candy, dog, suffering, close, work, Carlson, brothel, angry, dream, fight, crushes, wrong</p>
Section 3: Active Learning Task 2	<p>a. Lennie began travelling with George after his Aunt Clara took advantage of Lennie's naivety and once told him to join George for comfort and companionship for each other but Lennie was often in trouble with George and often gets the pair in trouble, like in Weed where he touched a girl's dress and scared her, which led them to their capture</p> <p>b. Quotations may include, for example; 'Well, I can't shoot you out and shoot him right in the back of the head', 'Let's go to sleep with him stinkin' around in here'</p>

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Question/Task	Answer / Indicative Content
Section 4: Active Learning Task 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. He is segregated from the other men and dehumanised and respectable man, dedicated to the job that has crippled him b. Crippled by the job to which he is dedicated, he is not used to his state of prolonged suffering and discomfort c. Quotation could be, for example, 'Well, I tell you, you can't get any right in here with me' d. Crooks is reserved and lonely, deeply affected by his condition but ultimately has a good heart e. He is Lennie that George will one day abandon him in the case of power and Crooks' seizing of a rare opportunity over someone else f. Mental unhappiness and loneliness can manifest itself in various ways g. He first dismisses the dream but eventually buys into it h. His discussion of loneliness, and after seeing that Lennie's weaknesses with money and vice as previous men i. For example, Curley's wife uses racist, derogatory language to Crooks, using violent imagery to exacerbate the effect j. For example, Curley's wife's threats could have reminded him of the world they live in and his vulnerability within it, or George's dream deterred him
Section 4: Knowledge Check	<p>Missing terms as follows: Saturday, Lennie, leave, bunkhouse, George, back, dangerous, calms, rabbits, whorehouse, joint, bruises, machine, boss, annoyed,</p>
Section 5: Active Learning Task 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. They are at a horseshoe tenement b. Killed his puppy c. She appears over-dressed for the occasion and is dressed in a way that denotes danger and seduction d. Student's own narrative response required e. Student's own opinion required f. Curley's wife can be interpreted as naïve, as she seems to be chasing the glamour promised by the travelling show and the man who is 'so natural' g. A) He is desperate, scared, confused, and worried about Lennie B) The incident in Wee h. Simile, emphasises the limp and lifeless body of Curley compared to Lennie's strength i. George believes he should have predicted, and therefore prevented, the event. He may feel responsible as he left Lennie at the horseshoe tenement j. That his dream with George and Lennie will now be ruined by his wife's death, and Lennie's imminent murder
Section 5: Debate Prompt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Argument for: Curley's wife's death will no doubt eventuate in the eyes of the audience, encouraged by her sharing of her dreams and the disappointment and loneliness she feels with Crooks, who has humanised her • Argument against: Curley's wife has arguably been a catalyst for the action in the novel and has repeatedly put her life on the line. Her situations, her cruelty to Crooks also shows her less-than-humanised nature
Section 5: Knowledge Check	<p>Missing terms as follows: Lennie, worries, rabbits, concealed, picks, crept, talk, mutts, dream, Curley, pet, feel, stop, strangled, blames, Luger</p>

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Question/Task	Answer / Indicative Content
Section 6: Active Learning Task 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Salinas river and the valley b. The strong always conquer the weak and the weak always meet their inevitable fate c. Lennie has a hallucination d. Aunt Clara is presented as a 'little fat old woman' who takes pleasure in teasing him and scolding him e. That George will abandon him and has had enough of him f. That he was never going to ever think he would tend rabbits g. He is reluctant to scold Lennie and does so with little pleasure h. George is trying to subdue his emotions and prevent something personal i. Slim is sympathetic and sees the kindness in George j. Steinbeck could be suggesting that no-one suspects George could be hinting that George and Slim will be companions were in the beginning of the novel
Section 6: Knowledge Check	Lennie, George, Aunt Clara, listening, rabbit, tend, shouting, mad, throws, agrees
Section 6: Discussion Prompt	<p>Student's own reading and response required here but possible points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerability of the water snake mimics that of Lennie • Water snake unaware of the fate that awaits it, as is Lennie • Predator/prey image of the bird and the water snake relationship
Section 6: Active Learning Task 2	'Dramatic irony' is an instance in which the audience knows more than the character does
Section 6: Learning Task 3	Storyboard Activities Student's own creative response required

Whole-text Analysis

Question/Task	Answer / Indicative Content
Characterisation Active Learning Task 1	<p>First Impressions of George</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Words underlined could be, for example; small, quick, defined. All words reflect George's intellect, wit, strength b. Student's own reading required c. Student's own reading required d. Tone set is a parental one, with George taking on the role of protector, despite his slighter build
Characterisation Active Learning Task 2	<p>First Impressions of Lennie</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Words underlined could be, for example; huge, shapeless, heavily, dragging, bear, paws. All words reflect Lennie's humble nature, his ambling and slow demeanour, and his animal instincts b. Student's own reading required
Characterisation Active Learning Task 3	<p>First Impressions of Curley</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Words underlined could be, for example; thin young, tight, high-heeled boots. All words and phrases reflect Curley's temper, and his egotistical demeanour and status on the ranch



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Question/Task	Answer / Indicative Content
Characterisation Active Learning Task 4	First Impressions of Curley's Wife a. Words or phrases could be, for example; full, rouged red, rolled clusters, house dress, red mules, red ostrich feathers b. Red symbolises the threat Curley's wife poses and her role on the ranch, entirely defined by her status as a housewife and her Christian name symbolising her lack of own identity
Characterisation Active Learning Task 5	Writing in Role Student's own or alternative response required here, but, for example, may experience feelings such as: George: Regret, guilt, peace/relief, sadness, sorrow, loneliness Curley: Anger, frustration, lack of closure, injustice, sadness Curley's Wife: Anger, frustration, empowerment, guilt, sympathy, understanding Crooks: Vulnerability, anger, frustration, sadness, emasculation
Characterisation: Active Learning Task 6	Interview Between John Steinbeck and a Student: • Lennie presented as animal-like and child-like, lacking in understanding of George and his example • George characterised as polar opposite of Lennie – a humour evoked in their opposition • Candy used to evoke sympathy from the reader, etc.
Setting: Active Learning Task 1	a. Mood: Peaceful, naturalistic, calming, Edenic, etc. b. Mood: Homely, domestic, minimal, masculine, etc. c. Mood: Eerie, minimal, atmospheric, mysterious, dark d. Mood: Loneliness, domestic isolation, minimal, etc. e. Mood: Violent, ominous, foreboding, bittersweet, etc. f. Mood: Ominous, lonely, foreboding, calming, naturalistic, idyllic, etc.
Setting: Active Learning Task 2	Student's own choice from many possible quotations required
Themes: Active Learning Task 1	Dreams: • 'Me and Lennie...' – George • 'If I was part...' – Crooks • 'I want to live off...' – Lennie • 'I want to live with...' – Candy • 'I could be working...' – Curley's Wife
Themes: Active Learning Task 2	Candy and Crooks
Themes Active Learning Task 3	a. Candy offers money b. He offers to cook for the men and the chickens and the dogs
Themes: Active Learning Task 4	a. To own a piece of land b. Getting to heaven
Themes: Active Learning Task 5	a. 'Whore houses or a blackjack game' (Section 4) b. No income

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Question/Task	Answer / Indicative Content						
Themes: Active Learning Task 6 	Reality:		George	Lennie	Candy	Crooks	
		unemployment					
		poverty	✓	✓	✓		
		alienation					✓
		homelessness	✓	✓	✓		✓
		sexism					
		racism					✓
		disability		✓	✓		✓
		ageism			✓		
		oppression		✓	✓		✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 'Best off': Curley as most likely answer – examples provided• 'Worst off': Crooks, Candy, Curley's wife as most likely provided will vary							
Themes Active Learning Task 7 	Hierarchy Students should be given reading required here but most likely hierarchy						
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Curley• Curley's Wife• Crooks• Carlson• Lennie• Curley's wife						

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Question/Task	Answer / Indicative Content
Essay Questions	<p>Many responses possible here and student's own reading guide for each question is as follows:</p> <p>6.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lennie is presented as vulnerable, naïve, taking his actions – he is described as shapeless with a large naïve and innocent nature. He is vulnerable in the society in which he lives, and rendered in a position of adult responsibilities and expectations that makes impossible to fulfil. His mental disability also leads others to form prejudices to defend himself, leading him to be misunderstood by powerful/able members of society. In 1930s America there was also little knowledge of mental disability, meaning that individuals such as Lennie did not have the support or care he needed. <p>7.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Description of the natural world in the opening and presentation in the final chapter – initially appealing to the cruelty, pressures and responsibilities of work. By the end, the natural world is haunted by death, which George and Lennie's dream dies. The image of the water snake and the ominous presence of the danger Lennie is in and his inevitable fate as Curley.
The Writer's Use of Language: Active Learning Task 1	<p>Student's own creative response required</p>
The Writer's Use of Language: Active Learning Task 2	<p>Animal Imagery:</p> <p>a. For example, Steinbeck uses animal imagery to emphasise Lennie's stature, but also his simple nature and impulsive, instinctive nature, often compared to a bear. Steinbeck also compares Lennie to a bear when Lennie experiences great fear or intimidation, emphasising his size.</p> <p>b. Steinbeck likens Curley's short temper and quick movements to a cat, and Curley's wife are both compared to fish in the novel, using fish imagery to describe their status and bodily responses in the water, affirming their status as Lennie's prey and their vulnerability.</p>
The Writer's Use of Language: Active Learning Task 3	<p>Images of Light and Darkness</p> <p>a. Both light and dark, but mainly dark here, emphasising the gloom of the bunkhouse and foreshadowing the future conflict between good and evil, themes in novel of the constant conflict between good and evil, cynicism.</p> <p>b. Both light and dark, emphasising the contrast between light and the lightness of his eyes. Description reveals the men on the ranch and Lennie him by his darkness but Lennie's dream and hope shows his lightness.</p> <p>c. The lightness of the sun, and a darkness that envelops all lightness. The overwhelming evil on the ranch and in the life and future of the men, doubt that shadows their dreams and ideals. Symbolism of light and dark conquer his own darkness and triumph over evil.</p>
Contexts: Discussion Prompt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any reference to Lennie and George's dream of own land. Ideas created about senses of identity, agency, reality, and humanity, a cynical message from Steinbeck, etc.

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Question/Task	Answer / Indicative Content
Contexts: Active Learning Task 1	Notes may include, for example: a. Hotter climate, context of Dust Bowl and climate conditions particularly relevant here b. Free and frequent use of taboo, discriminative and racist language towards Curley's wife, treatment of Crooks and his segregation with no fear of prosecution
Contexts Active Learning Task 2	The History of Migrant Farming in California In regards to The American Dream, Steinbeck is emphasising the dream but also challenging the notion of the dream's impossibility

Exam Guide

Question/Task	Answer / Indicative Content
Exam Guidance PEE: Active Learning Task 1	Student's own response required here with many possible quotations, but, for example, responses may include: 1. 'The first man was small and quick, dark of face, with sharp features. Every part of him was defined' (Section 1) – and perceptive man 2. 'The first man stopped short in the clearing, and the other man stepped forward' (Section 1) – George is the leader in his and Lennie's eyes 3. 'The small man leaned over and shook him by the shoulder' – Lennie and appears to ironically function as his guard against his inferiority in size and strength
Exam Guidance Revising PEE Active Learning Task 2	Student's own response required here with many possible quotations, but, for example, responses may include: a. 'You never ought to drink water when it ain't running, because it might be poisoned' – George cares for Lennie and advises him b. Curley's wife is flirtatious with the men, striking in appearance, attention, and foreboding c. This line shows that Curley is argumentative, aggressive towards others, which he enjoys
Exam Guidance General Guidance on Writing Essays Active Learning Task 3	a. Any keywords used and establish what it is that the question is asking b. The relevant historical information that helps us understand the context c. Four or five points d. In a short and concise conclusion that refers back to the question
Exam Guidance Active Learning Task 4	a. Student's own in-depth response required here, but may include: George: Guides and defends Lennie and tells him of his dream of owning their own land; other characters respect George and Lennie; described as small, quick, sharp and intelligent and a protective nature; George grows bitter by the end of the novel than when he started Slim: When speaks and thinks of his and George's dream of owning things and animals, and his fear of upsetting George; Slim's strength and often ends up in trouble and hurting others; pity Lennie and grow to care for him except Curley and his vulnerability; described as tall, big, shapeless and childlike; compassion to other characters but often ends up hurting others; injuries Curley and kills his wife; Lennie shows no development reaching a cruel end after a period of degeneration in the end

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Question/Task	Answer / Indicative Content
	<p>Candy: Speaks of his vulnerability due to his disability of his future and his consequential desire to enter into Lennie; Candy does little manual work as a result of his ranch respect Candy due to his time on the ranch but to put it out of its misery; described as old, frail and provides support and care for Lennie and George and shows kindness to Crooks. At the end of the novel Candy dream and feel a great sadness</p> <p>Crooks: Defensive tone with others, voices wisdom and potential of ranch workers and the reality of their dream to Slim, shows cruelty and kindness to Lennie, and is threats; others undermine Crooks as a result of his relationship with other men, the boss takes his anger out on him, but for his work ethic and pride; defined by injury to back, glittering eyes are striking in description; defensive to others accustomed to his isolation, fearful of the men and Crooks appear to change, briefly straying but then quickly returning towards men, his future and the dream</p> <p>Curley: Antagonistic, cruel and egotistical in exchange for physical violence; son of the boss, neglectful of his family; all the characters despise Curley and believe his wife is powerful power he holds with his father; curly hair, short in stature, fashioned as a boxer; cruel, victimising, manipulative towards others; shows little improvement or progress by the end of the same anger and aggression as at the start</p> <p>Curley's Wife: Antagonistic seeking discourse, often speaks her desire for Lennie, spends her time asking after her husband; Curley's wife, spends her time bothering and insulting the other characters believe her to be a flirt and to be trouble; made-up, dressing in red and ostrich feathers with her hair; Curley's wife becomes more likeable and Steinbeck reveals her dreams but she reaches an unfortunate and violent end</p> <p>b. Student's own response and personal approach required</p>

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