



Of Mice and Men

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE Activity Pack

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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**

AO	
AO1	Demonstrate a close knowledge and understanding of texts, making a critical style and assessing an informed response and 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 text by responding knowledge

You will link and historical how they have important different times

Keywords

Critical	Showing careful judgement or evaluation
Structure	The way in which something is constructed or organised
Influence	The act, power or capacity of producing an effect on somebody or something

This resource pack provides engaging and comprehensive activities that cover the used by GCSE exam boards for literature. There is a primary focus on AO1 and AO4 areas of assessment that students are tested on for the study of prose. However, detailed exploration of the context, setting, themes and characters, allowing students to respond to the text, thus also preparing them thoroughly for exams.

The table below overleaf the assessment objectives for each activity throughout

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AO Cross-reference Grid

Activity	Assessment
Pre-reading Activities	AO4
By the River Salinas, and Extension Activity	AO1 and AO2
George and Lennie, and Extension Activity	AO1 and AO2
The Trouble at Weed, and Extension Activity	AO1 and AO2
The Dream, and Extension Activity	AO1, AO2, and AO4
Candy and the Boss, and Extension Activity	AO1 and AO4
Curley, and Extension Activity	AO1 and AO4
Curley's Wife, and Extension Activity	AO1 and AO4
Slim, and Extension Activity	AO2 and AO4
George and Lennie's Past, and Extension Activity	AO1
A Merciful Killing, and Extension Activity	AO1 and AO2
Tragedy vs Hope, and Extension Activity	AO1 and AO2
Violence, and Extension Activity	AO1
Crooks, and Extension Activity	AO1 and AO4
Hopes and Doubts, and Extension Activity	AO1
Loneliness and Scorn, and Extension Activity	AO1 and AO2
Curley's Wife's Past, and Extension Activity	AO1 and AO2
The Killing, and Extension Activity	AO1 and AO2
The Dream Ends, and Extension Activity	AO1 and AO2
Visions, and Extension Activity	AO1 and AO4
The Shooting, and Extension Activity	AO1 and AO2
Post-reading Activities: Characterisation	AO1 and AO2
Character Relationships, and Extension Activity	AO1, AO2 and AO3
Setting, and Extension Activity	AO1, AO2 and AO4
Form	AO2 and AO4
Structure	AO2 and AO4
The Great Depression, and Extension Activity	AO4
Racism	AO4
Social Status, and PEE Activity	AO4
Migrant Workers, and Exam-style Question	AO1 and AO4
The American Dream	AO1, AO2 and AO4
Dreams	AO1
Loneliness, and Extension Activity	AO2 and AO4
Tragedy, and Extension Activity	AO1
Steinbeck's Imagery	AO1 and AO2
Language Shaping Character	AO1 and AO2
Symbolism	AO1 and AO2

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Pre-reading Activity

Biography

John Steinbeck was born in Salinas, California, on _____
27th, 1902. His father served as the _____ treasurer while his mother was
a _____ who inspired Steinbeck's love of

After _____ from High School Steinbeck attended
Stanford _____. During this time he worked from time to
time at various _____ before leaving to pursue his writing
career in New _____.

His _____ novel, *Cup of Gold* was _____ in
attention. *Tortilla Flat* (1935) marked the _____ point in Steinbeck's career.
He received the California Commonwealth Club's _____ Medal for
Mice and Men, which became one of his most famous _____.

Steinbeck continued writing, relying upon detailed _____
Wrath (1939) won the Pulitzer _____ and great critical acclaim.

During World War II, Steinbeck was a war _____ for the Navy.
Some of his _____ were later _____ and made into the movie *The Long*.

Steinbeck was awarded the _____ Prize for Literature in 1954 for his
showing sympathetic humour and a keen _____ perception of life.

Throughout his _____ Steinbeck remained a private person.
_____ He died in 1968 in New York City, and is survived by his
wife, Elaine and one _____. His ashes were placed in the _____
Memories _____ in Salinas.

life	turning	city	February	
third		Cemetery	Gold	
job	York	first	reading	
research	Prize	collected	Nobel	

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Extension Activities

1. Research Activity

Get into groups of three or four, and, using one of the headings below, make a presentation to the rest of the class about John Steinbeck's life. In your presentation be sure to include biographical information you have found influenced Steinbeck's writing of *Of Mice and Men*. Include events or passages from the novel to support your reading.

- 'Childhood and School Years – The Young Steinbeck'
- 'Steinbeck and the War – Writing *Red Pony*'
- 'Steinbeck the Writer – From *Cup of Gold* to *Of Mice and Men*'
- 'Steinbeck the Traveller – *In Search of America*'
- 'The Author – Steinbeck's Legacy and Literary Recognition'
- 'Steinbeck and Salinas – The Garden of Memories'

2. Essay-writing Skills

Using the information you have learned in this section, write a short response to the questions. Don't forget, you cannot rely heavily on biographical information. Your knowledge of Steinbeck's experiences and background will inform your understanding of the text. You want to structure your answer as follows:

- Outline the focus of the question – which theme, setting or character has been chosen?
- Analyse how your chosen focus is presented in *Of Mice and Men*
- Integrate your knowledge of the biographical context – has Steinbeck used his life to shape or influence his presentation of your chosen focus?
- Has your knowledge of Steinbeck's life or experience changed your interpretation of your chosen focus?

How does Steinbeck present nature and/or the American landscape in *Of Mice and Men*?

How does Steinbeck use the relationship between George and Lennie to present the lives of travelling workers in 1930s America in *Of Mice and Men*?

How does Steinbeck present the theme of conflict in *Of Mice and Men*?

3. Active Learning Task

Follow the link below to the official website for the BBC Radio 4 programme *Special*.

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

Listen to the short 30-minute broadcast, and with a partner discuss the following questions.

- Did anything you learn surprise you? If so, what and why?
- What sense did you get of Steinbeck as a writer? Do you feel intrigued by his writing, if so, which, and why?
- Has anything you learned informed or changed your reading of *Of Mice and Men*?

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During-reading Activity

By the River Salinas



Pages 1–10: The novel begins with a description of the countryside in California where two travelling (migrant) workers, George and Lennie, who stop by a river, become clear how very different the two men are from each other...

A01



1. Describe the two migrant workers.
2. What does George tell Lennie to throw away?
3. Explain the strict instructions that George gives to Lennie in this section.
4. Find a quotation that reveals George's reason for delaying their arrival at the ranch.
5. How would you describe the mood (atmosphere) at the beginning of the novel?
6. What does George discover on page 10? What does this suggest to the reader?

A02

7. Extension Activity

Now imagine you are going to direct the opening to a film version of *Of Mice and Men*. You will need to give to faithfully represent the atmosphere and events. You should consider:

- Setting (page 1)
- Lighting
- Props
- Music/audio
- Acting directions

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George and Lennie

A01/2

- Complete the table below with explanations of what we learn about the two George and Lennie, during the first ten pages of the novel.

Event	What is revealed about
1. Lennie is told off by George for drinking the store's milk in the	
2. George tells Lennie to get rid of the dead mouse.	
3. Lennie is given instructions about not speaking to the new boss.	
4. George wishes to spend the night freely in the open.	
5. George directs Lennie to collect wood for a fire.	
6. Lennie reclaims the dead mouse and is caught by George.	

- Practise with a partner reading out the dialogue between George and Lennie. How are the two characters different in their speech?

Explain what types of actors you would choose to play these two characters. How would you advise them to say and act their lines in a film adaptation? Explain the reasons for your choices.

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The Trouble at Weed



Pages 10–13: It soon becomes apparent how Lennie and George were in circumstances in Weed, the previous town where they had worked. The Lennie's simple character can often be misunderstood...

A01

- Using your copy of the text, make notes about what happened at Weed.
 - Why were George and Lennie at Weed?
 - What was Lennie of a crime?
 - How and why did Lennie get into trouble?
 - What was the outcome of what happened at Weed?
- Using your notes from the above questions, create a newspaper report for the events of Lennie and George's ordeal. Include witness statements in your report from people of Weed.

Don't forget – the first paragraph of a good newspaper report contains the five Ws and H: who, what, where, when, why and how. Use the notes you made in the exercise above to help you with the task.

A02

3. Extension Activity

The incident at Weed has been carefully placed at this part of the story for a reason. Consider the answers to the questions below.

- Why has Steinbeck placed the Weed storyline?
- What new insights do we learn about the two characters?
- What do these events suggest to the reader?

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The Dream



Pages 14–18: Despite the heated and emotional interchange between George and Lennie, they both seem to fall back upon a story which they obviously often return to. George describes the dream to Lennie between the two men, which Lennie listens to with great delight...

A04

1. Comparative Exercise

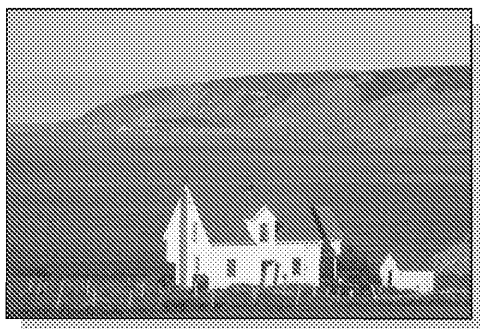
The theme of a dream is constantly referred to in the novel. During America's Great Depression many people lost their jobs, homes and life savings. Therefore the concept of dreaming of a better existence became an important part of surviving and persevering in their unhappy lives.

Describe similar situations that you have heard of or read about, where people fall back upon a dream to escape their deprived, wretched or mundane lives. How are these situations different and similar to George and Lennie's?

A01, A02

2. Extension Activities

1. Explain what George and Lennie's dream is.
2. How do both characters act as the dream is related?
3. Explain what effect the dream has on George and Lennie at the end of the novel.
4. How would you describe the relationship between George and Lennie in the novel?
5. Is it likely that this dream will become successful? Explain your answer.



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Candy and the Boss



Pages 19–25: When George and Lennie arrive at the ranch the next day, the swamper, who shows them around the bunk house, while telling the two

A01

- Fill in the table below with information about the character Candy. The left side should have quotations from pages 19 to 22, while the right side should have comments about the quotations.

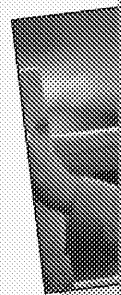
Quotation	What this
1. 'a stoop shouldered old man' (Section 2)	
2.	Candy wishes to make himself comfortable.
3. 'He was sure burned when you wasn't here this morning.' (Section 2)	
4.	Candy lost his hand and now works in the cleaner.
5. 'Yes sir. Jesus, we better run.' (Section 2)	

A04

2. Extension Activity

Candy describes the boss as a 'pretty nice fella' – do you agree with this comment, when considering the information we have learnt about the boss so far?

Make a bullet-point list of facts we have learnt about the boss. Would you describe him as a good person? How does the boss treat George and Lennie at their first meeting? Explain the reasons for your opinions.



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Curley



Pages 26–27: Following the meeting with the boss, George and Lennie reappears to be an unpleasant character from the very start. The arrogant wife and tries to provoke the innocent Lennie into a fight.

A04

1. Looking through the text find quotations to support these statements:
 - A. Curley is a violent and pugnacious man.
 - B. He is concerned about the behaviour of his wife.
 - C. Curley tries to pick a fight with Lennie.
 - D. Curley has a grudge against people bigger than him.
 - E. George is worried there will be trouble with Curley.

A01

2. Extension Activity

Create a dramatic monologue spoken by George, following the events covered in the text. What would be his reactions and thoughts following the meeting with the wife? What would he have?



Remember to write your monologue working closely with the text and your own work.

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Curley's Wife



Pages 28–33: The old swamper Candy tells George and Lennie about Curley's character of his newlywed wife. However, it isn't long before the two new men are for themselves, face to face...

A01

1. Make notes on the character of Curley's wife, using the bullet-point headings for your comments with quotations from the text.
 - Appearance
 - Personality
 - Relationship with husband
 - Behaviour with other men
 - Her reputation

A04

2. Extension Activity

Why does Curley's wife act the way she does with other men? Is she a more somewhat justified in her actions?

Explain your reasons with references to the text, making observations about about her position on the ranch.



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Slim



Pages 34–38: George and Lennie next meet Slim, the jerkline skinner, with an assured manner. Steinbeck describes Slim as a masterful character considered by other ranch workers, which is demonstrated when a worker called Carlson

A02

1. Explain what each of these quotations reveals to us about Slim's character.
 - i. 'He moved with a quality only achieved by royalty and master craftsmen' (Section 2)
 - ii. 'How you get on my team' (Section 2)
 - iii. 'Ain't many guys travel around together' (Section 2)
 - iv. 'Well looka here, Slim. I been thinking.' (Section 2)
 - v. 'You guys better come on, while there's still something to eat.' (Section 2)

A04

2. Extension Activity

Slim has many noble qualities, including leadership, skill at his work and kindness, and yet his position in society is confined to working on a ranch for a boss.

Why has Steinbeck portrayed the character of Slim in this manner? What statement is the author making about the working class migrant workers?



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George and Lennie's Past



Pages 39–43: As evening lights appear in the bunkhouse, George talks to Lennie about the past. Due to his trust in Slim, George also explains what happened in Weed when Lennie was accused of rape. Slim, like the reader, gains an understanding of Lennie's past.

A01

1. Explain George and Lennie's past – how did they become friends and fellow workers?
2. What does Slim find so strange about George and Lennie's relationship?
3. What new information are we given about the Weed incident?
4. What does George stop Lennie from doing at the end of this section? Explain his reasons.
5. Make a list of all the different things and events which make Lennie appear to be like a child in this section.

6. Extension Activity

How would you describe George's feelings about Lennie when speaking to Slim for each of the statements below, and explain why they reveal about the relationship?

- Lennie is a nuisance to George
- George sticks up for Lennie
- George feels compassion for Lennie
- George trusts Lennie like a child

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A Merciful Killing



Pages 44–50: While the workers in the bunkhouse relax, Carlson persists in having his old dog ‘put down’ and he is supported by the authoritative Slim. To divert the conversation, Candy gives in, allowing Carlson to take the animal.

A01, A02

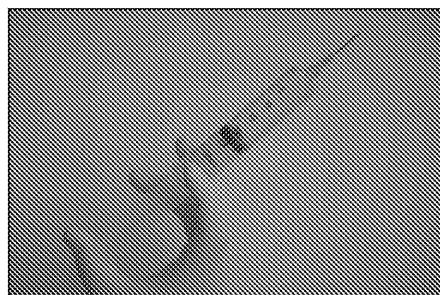
1. Consider the range of emotions felt by the work hands in this section. Using the list of characters below, explain each person’s thoughts about the merciful killing of Candy’s dog. Be sure to explain why each character would feel the way they do, while including quotations to support your comments.

- Candy
- Carlson
- Slim
- Whit

2. Extension Activity

Find a dictionary and look up the word ‘euthanasia’ – what does it mean and which section of the novel?

Do you personally agree with this concept or do you believe it should be illegal?



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Tragedy vs Hope



Pages 50–61: As the evening progresses, it becomes apparent how Curley play a part in the upcoming tragedy of the novel. However, Candy is entirely loyal to George and Lennie's dream, and offers money for having a share in the project.

A01/2

- Throughout this section of the novel, the writer presents elements of hope in the affair of Curley's wife. Organise the six quotations above into two categories: hope and tragedy. Explain what is happening in each quotation, and why they apply to that category.

A. 'Been any trouble since she got here?' (p. 51)

B. 'What fat bastard's that?' (p. 51)

C. Old Candy turned slowly over. His eyes were wide open. (p. 57)

D. 'What's that?' (p. 57)

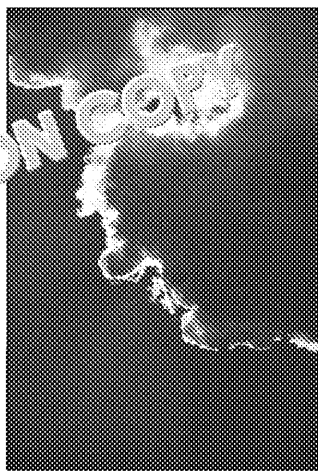
E. 'Jesus Christ! I bet we could swing her.' (p. 57)

F. 'What's that?' (p. 57)

2. Extension Activity

Looking back through the previous pages of the book, find three other examples of hints at both upcoming tragedy and doomed hope, e.g. the ranch hands' reaction to the new woman (hope) or the merciful killing of Candy's dog (tragedy).

Why does Steinbeck use and blend these two conflicting tones? What effect does this have on the reader?



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Violence



Pages 62–65: Events take a dramatic downturn as Lennie is forced into a fight. Despite Slim's earnest attempts at preventing upcoming trouble for Lennie, Lennie's misfortune prevails...

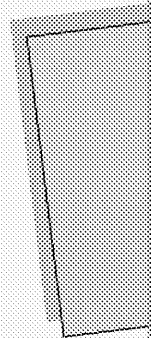
A01

1. Explain how the mood of the section is shattered at the beginning of this section.
2. Find quotations that reveal both Lennie's childishness and his strength.
3. What does Slim try to do at the end of the section?
4. Explain the emotions of these characters at the end of the chapter: Lennie, Curley and George. Explain your opinions with references to the text.

5. Extension Activity

Now write an account of the violence in the house-hall from Candy's viewpoint. You should include:

- An explanation of Curley's motivation
- Lennie's behaviour
- Slim's involvement in covering up the fight
- Candy's own concerns about the purchase of the 'dream' farm and how this might be hindered.



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Crooks



Pages 66–74: Since George has gone into town with the other ranch hands, Crooks' room. It isn't long before the naïve simplicity of Lennie is overcome by the stable buck...

A01

1. Using the text from pages 66 to 74, make detailed notes on the character of Crooks.

You should include:

- Crooks' home and treatment from the ranch hands
- His loneliness
- His bitter attitude towards Lennie's dream
- His fear at angering Lennie



A04

2. Extension Activity

Of Mice and Men was published in 1937, when racism and the ill-treatment of minorities were still very much present in American society.

Comment on your reaction to the treatment of Crooks by his fellow workers in American society today?



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Hopes and Doubts



Pages 74–76: While Crooks tries to calm Lennie's fears about George, Candy shows him his room for the first time. Although Crooks views the plan to buy the farm with skepticism, he is moved by the power of the dream...

A01

1. Looking through the text of this section, find quotations that demonstrate these events.
 - A. Candy tells Lennie about being in Crooks' room for the first time.
 - B. Candy is excited about buying the farm.
 - C. Crooks scornfully rejects the possibility of buying the farm.
 - D. All migrant workers dream of having a better life.
 - E. Men destroy their dreams.
 - F. Crooks wants to be a part of the dream.

2. Extension Activity

Create a dramatic monologue spoken by either Crooks or Candy, voicing the thoughts of your chosen character at this point of the novel. Your writing should consider:

- Why they wish to become part of the dream
- How the farm would change their lives
- How would you expect your character speak?



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Loneliness and Scorn



Pages 76–82: Candy, Crooks and Lennie are interrupted by the appearance of Curley's wife. Her loneliness and bitter scorn towards the other characters creates a dishevelled and desperate atmosphere.

A01/2

1. For each quotation explain the thought and attitudes of Curley's wife; what behaviour? What is revealed about her character?

A. 'I don't know where they all went?' (p. 76)

B. 'Think house'

C. 'I tell ya I could of went with shows.' (p. 78)

D.

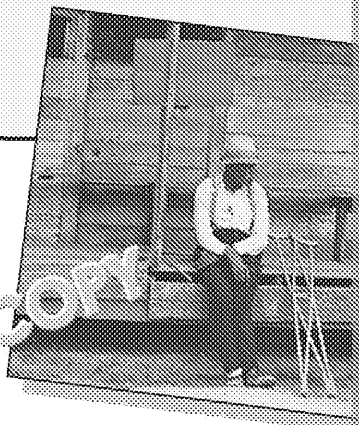
E. 'I like machines.' (p. 79)

F. 'You know what I want to you if you trap?' (p. 80)

2. Extension Activity

During this scene the reader experiences different emotions towards the characters. Steinbeck's use of language makes you respond to the following characters

- Curley's wife
- Crooks
- Curley
- Lennie



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Curley's Wife's Past

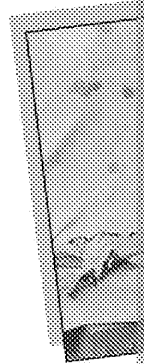


Pages 83–88: While Lennie mourns over his accidental killing of the pup and begins talking to him about her sad, exploited and unfulfilled past.

A01

1. Imagine that you are the mother of Curley's wife, following her running away from home. Create a dramatic monologue voicing her feelings about her daughter's actions and feelings. The following is a suitable beginning to help you with the task:

I can't believe it! How could my daughter be so foolish as to run away? Can't she see how she has been tricked by that man?



The Killing



Pages 89–91: When Curley's wife encourages Lennie to stroke her hair, Lennie unwittingly commits a terrible act, resulting in the death of Curley's wife which triggers the end of the novel.

A01

1. Explain how the killing of Curley's wife happened.
2. Using quotations, describe Lennie's state of mind after the accidental murder.
3. Make a list of all the hints that Steinbeck has given to the reader that this event was going to happen. Why has the author done this?
4. Explain what Lennie decides to do following the killing, and why.
5. Describe the atmosphere of the barn after Lennie's departure. Why has Steinbeck described it like this?

A02

6. Extension Activity

Imagine you are filming this event in a new movie version of the novel. Make notes on how you would present the tragic incident effectively to a film audience. You should consider:

- Directions for the actors
- Standing/sitting positions
- Camera angles
- Lighting and sound

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The Dream Ends

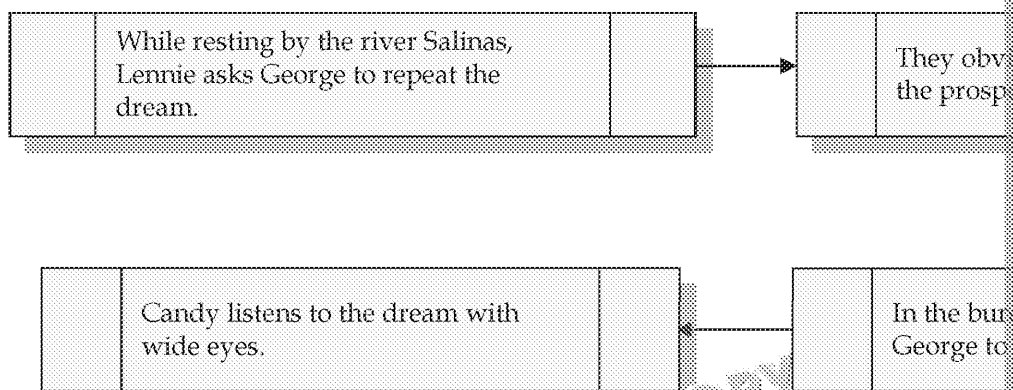


Pages 92–97: With the discovery of the body in the barn, George and Candy no longer be realised. Plans are made to catch the fugitive Lennie, signalling

A01/2

1. A flowchart can be used to represent the **process** of events in a text, helping of the writing in more detail. Here is the beginning of a flow chart that anal that relates to George and Lennie's dream.

Complete the flowchart with all other events or references to George and Lennie's dream. Remember, flow charts can go left, right, up and down in any direction you think the order of events can be seen!



2. Looking at your flow chart, describe how the writer gradually builds up relief and impending doom in the section of the play.

What effect does the structure of this scene create for the audience?

2. Extension Activity

Looking at your flow chart, describe how Steinbeck gradually creates the impression that the dream can never be accomplished. Think about:

- Other characters' reactions to the dream
- The hints of tragedy and death in the novel
- Events that happened in the past (e.g. Weed).

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Visions



Pages 98–101: While Lennie waits for George at their agreed meeting place, he has two visions that reprimand him for the terrible deed he committed in the bar.

A01

- Complete this table with explanations of the two visions that Lennie expects George. Why has Steinbeck used these elements in the story?

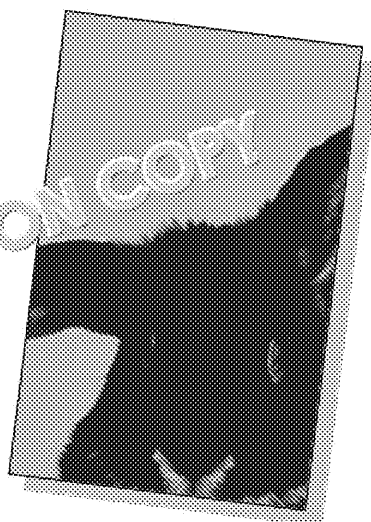
	The First Vision	
<i>Description of Vision</i>		
<i>Connection of vision to Lennie</i>		
<i>Lennie's reaction</i>		
<i>Summary of what is said</i>		
<i>Steinbeck's purpose in using the visions</i>		

A04

2. Extension Activity

Do you believe Lennie has committed a crime, or is he innocent? Should he be punished? What would be a suitable punishment? Carefully give reasons for your decision.

- How the 'murder' took place
- Lennie's simple character
- How Lennie would be treated in our society today



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The Shooting



Pages 101–106: A distracted George eventually finds Lennie at the agency. Steinbeck creates a sombre and emotional atmosphere where George performs an unthinkable act he has set himself...

A02

- Complete this table with quotations about how Steinbeck's use of language creates a shocking climax at the end of the novel.

Quotations	How Steinbeck creates
1. George came stiffly near and sat beside him. (p. 101)	Steinbeck's use of the word 'stiffly' shows the state of George's mind, as well as the nature of the shocking task he is about to perform.
2. The shadow in the valley was blue and soft. (p. 102)	
3. His voice was monotonous, had no emphasis. (p. 102)	
4. Lennie cried happily. (p. 103)	
5. An' we'll have maybe a nice little chickens... an' we'll have a little alfalfa... (p. 104)	
6. Lennie jarred, and then settled slowly forward to the sand, and he lay without quivering. (p. 105)	

A01

2. Extension Activity

Imagine you are a news reporter for the local Salinas radio station. Create a day's events, concerning the killing in the barn, the final tragic shooting and Slim and George.

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Post-reading Activity

Characterisation

A01/2

When studying a text it is important to understand how a writer uses language, to paint a picture of their characters. It is vital to observe how authors use language to add depth to their characters and enhance our understanding of them and their world.

1. Test Your Memory

Below you will see a number of phrases used by Steinbeck in *Of Mice and Men*. Without using the text, match each phrase to the character you believe is best described by the text, find the phrases, and see if you were right.

Curley	'... his eyes lay deep in his head and seemed to glitter with intense light' (Section 2)
Curley's Wife	'... full, rouged lips and wide-open eyes' (Section 2)
George	'... at his heels there walked a little, fat, balding man' (Section 2)
Lennie	'... restless eyes and sharp, strong features' (Section 2)
Crooks	'His tanned face was ageless, like the face of a Chinaman, five or fifty.' (Section 2)
Candy	'... a huge man, shapeless of face and limbs' (Section 1)
	'He wore a work glove on his right hand' (Section 1)

2. Write Like Steinbeck

Steinbeck likes to use animal imagery throughout *Of Mice and Men* to describe the characters below and write a short couple of sentences, using animal imagery to describe their appearance. When you are finished, write a sentence in which you explain why you chose that particular animal, and compare your description with that written by the poet.

George

Crooks

Slim

3. Media Task

Watch the 1992 film adaptation of *Of Mice and Men*, directed by and starring George Clooney, looking carefully at the appearance and presentation of the characters. Are the characters faithful to Steinbeck's description of them? Do the characters look like the characters in the text? Make notes of your thoughts and discuss your opinion with a partner.

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Character Relationships

A01/2

In any literary text, relationships between characters are just as important as the settings in which they reside. Questions which require you to evaluate the relationships are very common in the exam, so make sure you have a firm understanding of how text relates to all others.

- Below is a table that lists the key relationships in *Of Mice and Men* and a number of blank boxes of the same size. Fill each box with the name of the two characters who you wish to compare, and a quotation that you feel represents the relationship listed.

Relationship	Quotation
1. George and Lennie	
2.	'I shouldn't ought to of let no stranger see you.'
3. Crooks and Curley's Wife	
4.	'Come on, ya big bastard. Get up on you gonna laugh at me.' (Section 3)
5.	'You let this guy alone. Don't you do no gonna tell George what you says.' (Section 4)

2. Essay-writing Practice

- George and Lennie
- Crooks and Curley's Wife
- Curley and his Wife
- Candy and his Dog

Above is a list of relationships in *Of Mice and Men*. Choose one of the relationships and write an essay that you feel best illustrates the relationship between the characters. You will be assessed on AO1 and AO2, analysing the relationship. In your piece you may want to keep the following points in mind:

- Who is the relationship between, and why do you think this extract is significant?
- What language, imagery and techniques does Steinbeck use to present the relationship?
- Does the relationship change in any way through the course of the novel?
- Does this relationship tell us anything about the social, historical or literary context of the novel?

A03

- Extension Activity (AO3) – Note that you will not be tested on AO3 in your exam.** *Of Mice and Men* in the exam so will not be expected to make comparisons to other texts. This is a fun and useful exercise to help you understand the dynamics of Steinbeck's world.

George and Lennie's relationship is the most important relationship in Steinbeck's novel. It is a relationship that reminds you of an important relationship or duos you have encountered in other texts. Choose another relationship with which you are both familiar and compare it to George and Lennie's relationship. In your mind map be sure to include the following points:

- How does your chosen relationship resemble George and Lennie's?
- How does your chosen relationship differ from George and Lennie's?
- Are there any similarities between the text from which your chosen relationship is taken and *Of Mice and Men*? If so, how are the two similar?
- Which pair do you believe have a better or stronger relationship, and why?

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Setting

A02

Settings are just as important as any character or event in a text. Settings can be mood that the writer wants to create, and can also signify coming events. It can characters themselves when analysing their appearance, and the role they play in

1. Extract Comparison

Below are two extracts from *Of Mice and Men*, each describing the same setting in the novel. Read each extract and make a note of how the setting appears to have changed in the following:

- How has the appearance and mood of the setting changed?
- What ideas and messages do you think Steinbeck is trying to convey in this extract?
- How does this change reflect the events of the novel?

The Salinas River

Chapter One

A few miles south of Soledad, the Salinas River drops in close to the hillside bank and warms too, for it has slipped twinkling over the yellow sands in the sunlight before reaching the flat. Farther on the river the golden foothill slopes curve up to the strong and rocky Gabilan mountains, which are lined with trees – willows fresh and green ... On the sand banks the rabbits sat as if they were stones.

Chapter Six

The deep green pool of the Salinas River was still in the late afternoon. Already the sun was up the slopes of the Gabilan mountains, and the hilltops were rosy in the sun. But by the river the golden foothill slopes curve up to the strong and rocky Gabilan mountains, which are lined with trees – willows fresh and green ... On the sand banks the rabbits sat as if they were stones. A water snake glided smoothly up the pool ... a heron that stood in the shallows. A cormorant's head and beak lanced down and plucked it ... the heron swallowed the little snake whole and its head bobbed frantically.

2. Essay

Below is a sample essay response to the following question:

'Consider the importance of setting in *Of Mice and Men*.'

Using three different coloured highlighters or pens, annotate the answer in the box to see how it fulfils assessment objectives 1 and 4. Does it fulfil both objectives? From any ways do you think the answer could be improved? Write a few sentences describing the weaknesses of the extract. Compare your findings with the person sitting next to you.

'Steinbeck's use of setting in *Of Mice and Men* is vital to the writer's ideas, messages and mood to his reader. Steinbeck's settings serve to change in mood and the image of the Salinas River as the novel progresses. This is most clearly visible in the way Steinbeck's presentation of the Salinas River changes at the end of the novel. In the novel's opening scene, upon our first meeting of the travelling workers and companions, George and Lennie, Steinbeck presents the Salinas Valley as Edenic in presentation. The landscape is defined by its 'green' appearance and vitality, and appears inviting to the workers.

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and 'twinkling' water running 'over the yellow sands in the sunlit Valley. The Valley brings a much-welcomed peace for the working sitting on the sands of the river 'as quietly as little gray, sculpture landscape not only offers the promise of peace for the workers, but appears rich and opulent in appearance. Steinbeck describing as 'golden'. However, by the end of the novel when we return to the Valley, the frightened Lennie, the promise and optimism that she had offered him, is gone. Lennie is now alone, seeming to retreat above the Gabilan mountains. When we return to the Valley, the Gabilan mountains are 'strong and rocky', firm in the face of the sun. In the Valley, by the novel's close the mountain serves as a retreat and a place of safety. The sun that 'has left the valley to go climbing up the slopes' of the mountains, the Valley now appears a retreat and hiding place for Lennie in his escape from Curley following the death of his wife. Lennie is now gliding through the Valley, only to 'frantically' meet its death predator the heron, Lennie too has come to the Valley to die.

3. Extension Activity

Now you have established how the text may answer could be improved, rewrite your own analysis and improve it.

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Form

A02, A04

Although a sound knowledge of any text as a singular piece of writing is vital to a response in the exam, it is important to acknowledge the position of that text within any exam response, always be sure to mention the **form** of your text and how it fits the form – ‘genre’ talk is key here!

1. Active Learning Task

Follow the link below to the official website for the BBC Radio 4 programme *The Mice and Men Reading Aloud*.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p05p38cn>

Listen to the short 30-minute broadcast, making notes on the form and impact of *Of Mice and Men* within literature. Be sure to consider the following things:

- To what extent does *Of Mice and Men* conform to the genre of the Great American Novel?
- Are there any similarities or differences between *Of Mice and Men* and the programme?

2. Cloze Exercise

The Great American _____ is a form of literature characterised by _____ language, _____ and _____ of America during a _____ movement. The term ‘Great American Novel’ comes from an essay by John _____ Civil War novelist, published in _____ essay, De Forest’s _____ ‘picture of the ordinary emotions and _____’ _____ exist. _____ Novels include Herman _____ *Moby Dick* (1851); *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* by _____ Mark Twain (1884), F Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* by _____ Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* (_____). A notable author of the Great American Novel is _____ Steinbeck. Along with *Of Mice and Men*, Steinbeck’s 1939 novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*, is a classic within the literary form. Steinbeck’s Great American Novels often focus on _____, in his literary explorations of the lives of American farm workers. *Of Mice and Men* and *The Grapes of Wrath*, both being written in the 1930s, explore the _____ on American lives. Along with the devastating effects of the Great Depression, *Of Mice and Men* explores the brutal social climate of institutional _____ of black workers from white. Like most Great American Novels, *Of Mice and Men* consists heavily of tragic events and emphasises the _____ and _____ during the period.

<i>Great Gatsby</i>	identity	ranch workers
America	segregation	negative
experience	racism	Depression
	California	Melville’s

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Structure

A02, A04

As important as form and genre is to our understanding of the make-up of a text, an author can either conform with or go against the form's convention, which can tell us about the contents of the chapters within a text, but also consider the structuring of the text.

- Below is a number of events that take place in the plot of *Of Mice and Men*, in the text. Correctly match the event to the chapter within which it occurs. **closed-book**; therefore it is essential that you remember the order of events which occur in the text each event occurs.

Chapter
Chapter 1
Chapter 2
Chapter 3
Chapter 4
Chapter 5
Chapter 6

Event
Lennie and George talk about their dream
Lennie hallucinates
Curley's wife talks to George and Lennie
George tells Lennie about the dream
George and Lennie talk about the dream
Lennie murders Curley's wife

- Reimagining Steinbeck's Structure**

The order of events in any text is specifically designed to create a particular effect. Now, imagine that the book is going to be read in reverse order, so that the final chapter comes before the first. Consider the effect this would have on you as a reader in relation to the following questions, and discuss your answers with a partner.

- Do you think the new order would be more or less impactful than the original?
- Does this new order change your attitude towards a) the narrative, and b) the characters? For example, how does our knowledge of Lennie's death before we read the first chapter change our attitude towards him?

- Steinbeck and Suspense**

Steinbeck's use of suspense in his text creates a foreboding atmosphere, with a sense of tension and worrying about what will happen next. Below you will see a table of each chapter. Next to each, write any questions you had upon reaching the end of the chapter. This will help you to fill in to help you.

Chapter	Questions Raised by the Reader
1	... What bad thing did Lennie do in Weed? Will George and Lennie secure their employment despite being black?
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	

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Context

The Great Depression

Alongside these activities students will also benefit from watching excerpts from present life during the Great Depression:

A04

When studying a text it is important to gain an understanding of the historical and characters and storyline, especially when they are so different from our society.

'Depression' is a term used to describe a period of low economic activity with rising levels of unemployment. In 1929 the longest and most severe depression ever experienced by the modern world occurred; it is now referred to as the Great Depression. Many of Steinbeck's novels were written during this bleak period and they often show how normal Americans suffered and overcame the ordeals of poverty, unemployment and exploitation.

The Great Depression began with the catastrophic collapse of stock-market prices on the New York Stock Exchange in 1929. During the next three years stock prices in the United States continued to fall, ruining thousands of people across the country. Families lost their savings, jobs and homes within days. Many people chose to commit suicide rather than face up to the tragic change in their lives. Thousands of men and women travelled from town to town looking for work, homeless, penniless and poor.

Economic distress led to the election of the Democrat President Roosevelt in 1933, who introduced major changes in the structure of the American economy to encourage a recovery. By 1937 unemployment figures dropped significantly. With the start of the Second World War in 1939, the economy was busy with orders for weapons and military items. The Great Depression ended in the United States themselves entered the war in 1941.

1. Complete this table with examples of how life was difficult during the Great Depression throughout the novel. Include quotations in the right-hand column for future reference.

Life in the Great Depression	Event in the text
Poverty	
Lack of work	
Inability to develop relationships	
Homelessness	

2. Extension Activity

For a visual representation of life during the Great Depression try watching the following films: *Seabiscuit* and *The Grapes of Wrath* (particularly the opening scene) and *The Legend of Bagger Vance* and *Cinderella Man*.

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Racism

A04

The treatment of African Americans during the Great Depression was very different. Slavery had been abolished, black people did not have the same rights as white people, and were banned from using the same shops, restaurants and public facilities as white people. There were also incidents of anti-black violence, including horrifying lynchings.

It is through Steinbeck's sympathetic portrayal of Crooks in *Of Mice and Men* that we can see how a repressed black person could be portrayed.

Crooks, the stable buck, had his bunk in the harness-room; a little shed that leaned off the side of the barn. On one side of the little room there was a square window, and on the other, a narrow plank door leading into the barn. Crooks' bunk was a long box filled with straw, on which his blankets were flung. On the wall by the window there were pegs on which hung broken harness in process of being mended with new leather; and under the window itself a little bench for leather-working tools, knives and needles and balls of linen thread, and a small hand riveter. On pegs were pieces of harness, a split collar with the horsehair stuffing sticking out, a broken halter, a trace chain with its leather covering split. Crooks had his apple-box over his bunk, and a range of medicine bottles, both for himself and for the horses. There were cans of saddle soap and a drippy can of tar with its paint-brush sticking over the edge. And scattered about the floor were a number of personal possessions; for, **being alone**, he could leave his things about, and being a stable buck and a cripple, he was more permanent than the other men, and he had accumulated more possessions than he could carry on his back.

Crooks possessed several pairs of shoes, a pair of rubber boots, a big alarm clock, a single-barrelled shot-gun. And he had books, too; a tattered dictionary and a manual of the California civil code for 1905. There were also a few battered magazines and a few cards on a special shelf over his bunk. A pair of large gold-rimmed spectacles hung from the wall above his bed.

This room was neat and fairly neat, for Crooks was a proud, aloof man. He kept his distance and was offended that other people kept theirs. His body was bent over to this crooked spine, and his eyes lay deep in his head, and because of their depth they glittered with intensity. His lean face was lined with deep black wrinkles, and he had pain-tightened lips which were lighter than his face.

It was Saturday night. Through the open door that led into the barn came the sound of moving horses, of feet stirring, of teeth champing on hay, of the rattle of halter chains. In the stable buck's room a small electric globe threw a meagre yellow light.

Crooks sat on his bunk. His shirt was out of his jeans at the back. In one hand he held a bottle of liniment, with the other he rubbed his spine. Now and then he poured a few drops of the liniment into his pink-palmed hand and reached up under his shirt to rub against his back and shivered.

1. Using the example above, annotate this extract from the novel, which introduces Crooks. Underline and explain the different ways in which Steinbeck presents Crooks as disadvantaged, compared to the other ranch workers.

Once you have completed your notes, spend 45 minutes answering this exam question from the above exercise to help you with the task:

How does Steinbeck create sympathy for the character Crooks?

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Social Status

A04

In *Of Mice and Men* the characters have different social levels – which we can call important to understand how this system works. Superior characters are often depicted subjugating inferior characters. For example, consider the difference in status between George and Lennie.

Steinbeck's portrayal of 1930s America gives readers a realistic and, at times, shocking view of modern day society.

1. Looking at the hierarchy on the right, discuss with your partner the position of each character below. Why are some characters 'above' others? Is this morally right?

When you have agreed, you can write each character on to the diagram.

Other Characters:

- George
- Lennie
- Curley
- Curley's Wife
- Slim
- Carlson
- Candy
- Candy's Dog
- Aunt Clara
- Whit

2. Using your ideas from above, spend 25 minutes answering this exam style question. Remember to answer in the (Topic, Point, Evidence, Explain) structure.

How does Steinbeck's portrayal of the relationship between Curley's wife and Crook reflect the social hierarchy in 1930s America?



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Migrant Workers

A04

During the Great Depression, work was hard to find and paid little. Therefore, many Americans, searching eagerly for migrant jobs. Whole families were disrupted, as they embarked on the desperate search of an extra buck.

In Steinbeck's famous novel *The Grapes of Wrath*, he depicts the Joads, an Oklahoma family who become migrant workers, travelling across the States in search of work, which in

1. Imagine that your family had to suddenly leave home, and your parents/guardians had to look for work elsewhere, across the other side of the country.

How would you feel leaving your home, friends and memories far behind? Write down your thoughts and feelings regarding this scenario. Explain your emotions openly and your reasons clearly.



The Joad family's dwelling in Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*

2. However, families would often separate and many men and women became independent migrant workers, only able to support themselves.

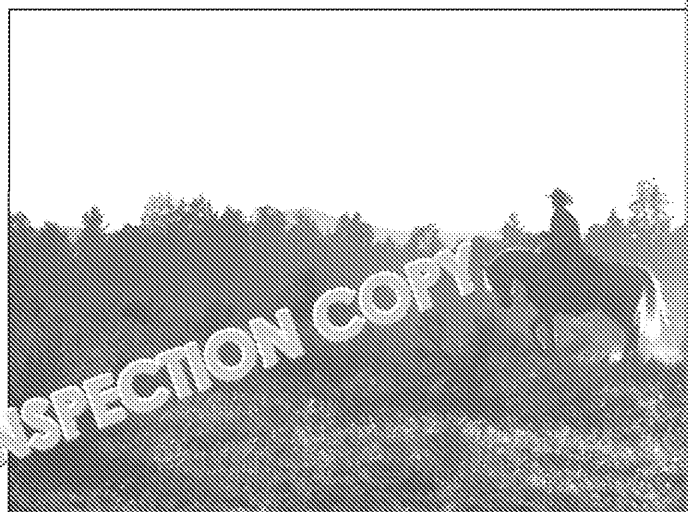
On page 40, Slim says to George:

'Funny how you an' him string along together.'

Discuss with a partner what this quotation reveals about life as a migrant worker.

3. Once we have discussed these aspects, consider this exam-style question:
How is the relationship between George and Lennie presented in the novel?

In small groups, create a bullet-point plan of how you would respond to this question. Use ideas generated from above, as well as other parts of the novel.



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The American Dream

A04

The American Dream is a national belief that promises prosperity. In the American Truslow Adams in 1931, citizens of every rank feel that they can achieve a 'better' life, believing that 'all men are created equal'. Many years ago, thousands of people came to America in search of wealthy lives in the 'New World', where it was said that 'anyone can make it'.

Nowadays, the term 'The American Dream' is often used as another meaning for happiness. It has historically been seen as status, separating the middle classes and the poor.

1. With a partner, discuss what other novels and films mention the American Dream.

- What does it mean to the characters in the stories?
- Now, compare the American Dream to British society. Do we have our own version of this concept?

2. Consider how Steinbeck has used the ideology of the American Dream in *Of Mice and Men*. What is so important to George and Lennie throughout the novel?

Explain clearly, in your own words, why the American Dream was so important to them.

What do we learn about how difficult it was for men like George and Lennie to achieve it?

3. Working in pairs, find useful quotations from the novel, which could be used in an exam question:

In Of Mice and Men, how is the American Dream important to George and Lennie?



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Themes

Dreams

A01

The hope of improving life and the dreaming of a better existence are major themes. The portrayal of dreams highlights the desperate and unhappy state of the novel's characters.

George and Lennie dream about...

Quotation(s):

Candy dreams about...

Quotation(s):

While reading Wild West magazines, the men in the bunk house dream about...

Quotation(s):

Curley's wife dreams about...

Quotation(s):

Crook dreams about...

Quotation(s):

Curley wanted to...

Quotation(s):

A01

1. Explain the different dreams expressed by the characters above, while selecting suitable quotations about their desires.
2. Why does Steinbeck use the theme of dreams? What is he saying about human beings and their desires?

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Loneliness

Steinbeck's portrayal of lonely individuals during the Great Depression is a recurring theme in *Of Mice and Men*. Many characters experience a sense of isolation, suffering from an inability to connect with others.

A02

1. Explain how the theme of loneliness is presented in each of the above quotations and what is the cause of the different types of loneliness in the novel.

'Guys like us, that work on ranches, are the loneliest guys in the world.' (p. 15)

'Funny how you can get together.' (p. 40)

'I'm so used to him,' he said softly. 'I had him from a pup.' (p. 46)

'S'pose you could and play rummy. How'd you like to play?' (p. 40)

'Think I don't like to talk to somebody ever' once in a while? Think I like to stick in that house all the time?' (p. 77)

Now Candy spoke to me can get that dog? George?' (p. 93)

A04

2. **Extended Activity**

Compare our modern day life to the portrayal of life in the 1930s. How do they differ? Consider these points:

- Who suffers from loneliness in our society, and how do we try to solve it?
- Are the problems of the novel's characters different from our own?
- Does Steinbeck portray an issue which will always affect mankind, or is it specific to the novel?



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Tragedy

A01

Although the death of Curley's Wife and the shooting of Lennie are the novel's most tragic events, they are not altogether unexpected. Throughout the narrative Steinbeck uses constant hints and references to the final tragic events of the novel.

1. Complete this table with quotations that reveal the many references and hints Steinbeck uses throughout the novel.

Hints and references to death	
1. Lennie has killed a mouse by petting it too roughly.	
2. Lennie caused trouble with a girl at Weed.	
3. References to Lennie's great physical strength.	
4. George's belief that Curley's Wife will cause trouble for Lennie and himself.	
5. Candy is forced into having his dog shot by Carlson.	
6. Lennie has accidentally killed his new pet puppy.	
7. At the beginning of the final chapter, Steinbeck uses an image of nature to hint at the shooting to come.	

A01

2. Extension Activity

Why does Steinbeck constantly hint at the tragic events to come? Is it effective suspense for the reader?

You may wish to create a graph of events demonstrating Steinbeck's hints on the x-axis and 'tragedy' along the y-axis to visually see how Steinbeck uses tension to lead to the tragic shooting at the end of the novel.



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The Writer's Use of Language

Steinbeck's Imagery

A01/2

Writers use images to evoke certain feelings or impressions in readers. An image vividly represents an event or emotion. Steinbeck doesn't simply tell us what is happening; he shows it to us through imagery. Consider the opening of Chapter 1:

They nestled on the sand, and as the blaze dropped from the fire, the sphere of light grew smaller; the curling branches disappeared and only a faint glimmer showed where the tree trunks were. From the darkness Lennie called, 'George – you asleep?' 'No. Whatta you want?' 'Let's have different color rabbits, George.' 'Sure we will,' George said sleepily. 'Red and blue and green rabbits, Lennie. Millions of 'em.' 'Furry ones, George, like I seen in the fair in Sacramento.' 'Sure, furry ones.' 'Cause I can jus' as well go away, George, an' live in a cave.' 'You can jus' as well go to hell,' said George. 'Shut up now.' The red light dimmed on the coals. Up the hill from the river a coyote yammered, and a dog answered from the other side of the stream. The sycamore leaves whistled in a little night breeze.

THE SPHERE OF LIGHT

1. Read the sample interpretations on the right of the extract. As you can see, various meanings can be applied to what appears to be at first a simple image. By using vivid images, Steinbeck conveys complex meanings and infuses a powerful atmosphere in his writing.

Now, choose three other images in the above extract and suggest your own interpretations of what they reveal or evoke. Consider what is happening in the novel at the time, what will happen later on and the tone of the current scene.

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Language Shaping Character

A02

Steinbeck uses language (words) to bring his characters vividly to life. The extract of Slim when he first appears in the novel. After reading the extract, complete the table of how Steinbeck's use of language is effective in presenting his character.

A tall man stood in the doorway, holding a crushed Stetson hat under his long, black, damp hair streaming back. Like the others he wore blue jeans and he had finished combing his hair he moved into the room, and he moved by royalty. Master craftsmen. He was a jerkline skinner, the prince of the ten, sixteen, even twenty mules with a single line to the leaders. He was capable of driving a wheel's butt with a bull whip without touching the mule. There was a gravity so profound that all talk stopped when he spoke. His authority was taken on any subject, be it politics or love. This was Slim, the jerkline skinner, ageless. He might have been thirty-five or fifty. His ear heard more than words. His speech had overtones not of thought, but of understanding beyond thought. His actions were as delicate in their action as those of a temple dancer.

He smoothed out his crushed hat, creased it in the middle and put it on the bunkhouse.

'It's brighter'n a bitch outside,' he said gently. 'Can't hardly see nothing in here' (Section 2)

Language features	This is effective
1. 'he moved by royalty '	The emotive word 'majesty' suggests an authoritative manner, despite only the use of repetition...
2. 'capable of driving ten, sixteen, even twenty '	
3. <i>Dignified language:</i> 'gravity' 'so profound' 'His authority'	
4. <i>Simile:</i> 'as those of a temple dancer'	
5. 'He looked kindly .'	
6. <i>Colloquial language:</i> 'It's brighter'n a bitch outside,'	

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Symbolism

A02

A 'symbol' is not only an image that gives a physical description, it can represent a theme or event. This extract is taken from the last chapter, just before the fatal confrontation. Read it carefully, considering why Steinbeck uses such images/symbols.

'The deep green pool of the Salinas River was still in the late afternoon valley to go climbing up the steep slopes of the Gabilan Mountains, and the hill by the pool was covered by gnarled sycamores, a pleasant shade had fallen.

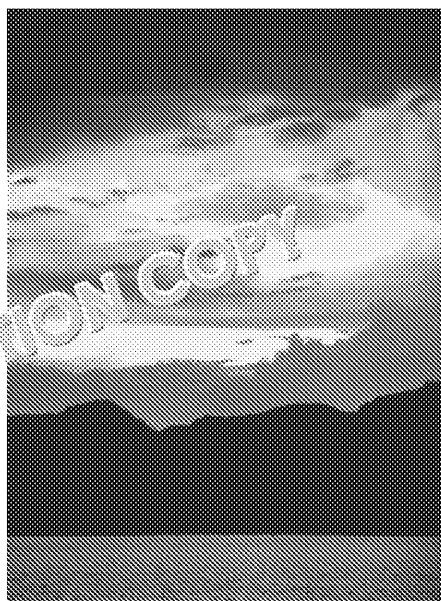
A water snake glided smoothly up the pool, twisting its periscope head swam the length of the pool and came to the legs of a motionless heron. The silent head and beak lanced down and plucked it out by the head, and the snake while its tail waved frantically.

A far rush of wind sounded and a gust drove through the tops of the trees. The leaves turned up their silver sides, the brown, dry leaves on the ground in a row of tiny wind waves flowed up the pool's green surface.

As quickly as it had come, the wind died, and the clearing was quiet again. The shallows, motionless and waiting. Another little water snake swam up the pool, head from side to side.' (Section 6)

1. Working in pairs, make notes on how Steinbeck uses symbolism in his description to guide your response.

- What is Steinbeck suggesting about the power of nature?
- What is significant in the use of light/darkness?
- Why is the word 'periscope' used? What does it suggest? (i.e. submarine)
- How does Steinbeck hint at future/past events?



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Of Mice and Men: Quiz

1. *Of Mice and Men* is set during:
 - ☐ The Great Depression
 - ☐ The Black Plague
 - ☐ The Credit Crunch
2. The book can be described as:
 - ☐ A tragedy
 - ☐ An epic
 - ☐ A dystopia
3. The novel John Steinbeck won:
 - ☐ An Academy Award
 - ☐ The Booker Prize
 - ☐ The Pulitzer Prize
4. George and Lennie share a:
 - ☐ Horse
 - ☐ Dream
 - ☐ Rifle
5. The novel is set in:
 - ☐ Latvia
 - ☐ New York state
 - ☐ California
6. The ranch is run by:
 - ☐ The Boss
 - ☐ Curley's Wife
 - ☐ Candy's Dog
7. Candy
 - ☐ Chews your teeth
 - ☐ A swamper
 - ☐ A stable buck
8. Lennie previously got into trouble in:
 - ☐ Weed
 - ☐ Salinas
 - ☐ San Francisco
9. 'he moved with a majesty only achieved by royalty and master craftsmen'.
 - ☐ Crooks
 - ☐ Carlson
 - ☐ Slim
10. Curley hates:
 - ☐ Small men
 - ☐ Rabbits
 - ☐ Large men
11. Who convinced Lennie to jump in a river?
 - ☐ George
 - ☐ Slim
 - ☐ Curley
12. Who shoots a dog?
 - ☐ Carlson
 - ☐ George
 - ☐ Curley's Wife
13. What happens to Candy?
 - ☐ Damaged in a car crash
 - ☐ Caught in a mine
 - ☐ Wife gave him a gun
14. Has fond childhood
 - ☐ Whit
 - ☐ Lennie
 - ☐ Crooks
15. 'You know what I can trap?'
 - ☐ The Boss
 - ☐ Slim
 - ☐ Curley's wife
16. Curley's wife dreams
 - ☐ Being a movie star
 - ☐ Sheep
 - ☐ Buying her own house
17. Lennie's killing of Curley
 - ☐ Poor working conditions
 - ☐ The end of the world
 - ☐ Aggressive violence
18. Lennie's first vision
 - ☐ Giant rabbit
 - ☐ Aunt Clara
 - ☐ The Boss
19. The novel uses these literary devices:
 - ☐ Taxidermy
 - ☐ Foreshadowing
 - ☐ Personification
20. George takes:
 - ☐ Carlson's gun
 - ☐ A bus to New York
 - ☐ Lennie back to the ranch
21. '...then settled slowly without quivering.'
 - ☐ A prayer
 - ☐ Curley's frantic
 - ☐ Lennie's death
22. What does the book explore?
 - ☐ Futile hopes
 - ☐ Poor transportation
 - ☐ The power of nature

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Planning Your Essay

When planning to write a response to an exam question, you must first understand what is asked to do. Good essays are always relevant to the question, while essays that are not are marked down.

Therefore, get to know the question. Underline the key words, and read it again to gain a better understanding of the essay question.

1. Underline the key words in this question:

What can we learn about the lives of migrant workers during the Great Depression from Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men?

Now explain in your own words what you would have to write about (discuss).

You should always make a plan of your essay. Examiners like to see this because it shows you have thought about what you are going to write. Essay plans also help you to structure your essay to keep to while writing the essay.

2. Complete this essay plan for the question above:

Essay Plan

Paragraph 1: Introduce the novel and what the essay will be discussing

Paragraph 2: Discuss how migrant workers are lonely and isolated + quote from the text

Writing an Introduction

The introduction of an essay should be short and to the point. There are only two things to include:

- Introduce the text(s) you will be discussing – name of text, published date and author.
- Explain what the essay will be looking at/discussing about this text – in other words, the question.

Good essays have original beginnings. Don't settle for the uninteresting 'In this essay, I will discuss...' find a more interesting start.

Perhaps you know an interesting fact related to the novel, or you could refer to the author's life. Give the examiner/marker a first line that is different to all the other papers.

Try not to use the first person reference 'I' – make your writing sound more mature.

E.g. Instead of writing 'I think that *Of Mice and Men* is a novel...' write something like 'The novel *Of Mice and Men* is a novel...' or '*Of Mice and Men* is a novel...'.

1. Using the advice on this worksheet, write the introduction for the essay you have planned. Use the example below, based on the previously mentioned essay question:

*Life was difficult during the Great Depression; in fact, it was downright terrible. This is reflected in Steinbeck's novel *Of Mice and Men* (1937). The lonely, deprived and tragic lives of the migrant workers give the reader a clear insight into just how challenging and upsetting life was for them.*

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Using Evidence

When writing an essay, it is important that you use quotations to support what you want about a text, but you must have the evidence to prove it. This is usually a C grade and a D grade in GCSE essays.

Using a PEE (Point, Evidence and Explain) paragraph structure in your writing can

POINT



Start your paragraph with an explanation of what you want to make.

E.g. Migrant workers led very lonely lives during the war and they usually travelled from place to place.

EVIDENCE

Now support your statement with evidence from the text.

E.g. This is shown when Slim is surprised to learn that the men travel around together, and he comments that 'they string him along together'.

EXPLAIN



Finally you must explain what the evidence tells you about your point?

E.g. Slim's reaction reveals how unusual it was for men to develop close relationships. The fact that they maintain such a friendship appears 'funny' and shows how alone and isolated most men were during the Depression.

Putting these three sections together will create a supported and well-structured paragraph.

Now create your own PEE paragraph that reveals another aspect of life as a migrant worker during the Depression. Take your time in choosing relevant quotation(s), while using the examples to guide you in the task.



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Concluding Your Essay

The conclusion is the final paragraph of an essay. In this section you will need to sum up the points you have made (your arguments), bringing the essay to a conclusion. In other words, it is a review of what the essay has been discussing.

For Example

In this essay...

What do we learn about the lives of migrant workers during the Great Depression in Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men?

...you would need to summarise the different points you have made about life as migrant workers during the Great Depression.

Therefore, writing a conclusion is a lot easier than it seems, since the hard work has already been done – all you have to do now is summarise your main points.

1. Looking at the essay you have written, summarise the main point (argument) from the introduction, in a bullet-point list.

Now write a paragraph that briefly explains what was argued in each bullet-point, with a final sentence summarising what has been revealed about the subject.



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Exam Practice

When answering the *Of Mice and Men* exam question, you must make sure that which your teacher will advise you of. Other questions in the exam must be given a simple but well-ordered plan should be made in the first few minutes. For example:

How does Steinbeck prepare you for the idea that the death of Curley's wife is inevitable?

It is very important that you understand and stick to the question! So, underline the different things that you see in the novel with relation to the question. E.g. The Curley's wife, the death of the mouse, the Weed incident, the killing of the puppy, the novel, gloom, the use of language and imagery, etc.

Now, decide how many of these ideas you can include in your answer during the time you have. You need to find a quotation for each point that you make (PEE paragraphs!), and explain the point (e.g. how Steinbeck prepares the reader for Curley's wife's death). The simple bullet point plan for your answer ...

Plan

Paragraph 1: Briefly introduce the question to be answered

Paragraph 2: Explain how Lennie kills everything he comes into contact with

Paragraph 3: How the Weed incident prepares for a similar incident + a quotation to prove it

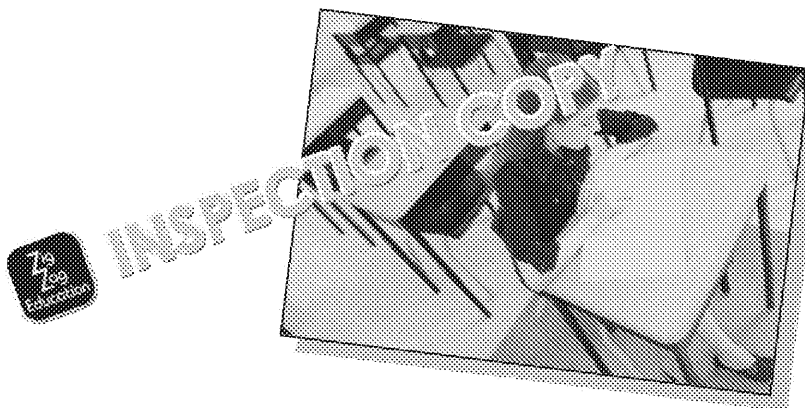
Paragraph 4: Steinbeck's use of gloomy language to create a tragic atmosphere

Quotation to prove it

Paragraph 5 – Conclusion:

Summarise the different points that have been made

Once you have made your plan, you are ready to begin answering the question. Point, Evidence, Explain technique, while remaining relevant to the question.



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Practice Questions

Working in a group of six people, consider these practice exam questions on the group member should choose one question, for which they will make a list of possible answers.

Practice Questions:

1. In what ways does Steinbeck present dream as a theme in *Of Mice and Men*?
You must write about context in your answer.
2. Explore how Steinbeck convinces you that Lennie's death is inevitable.
You must write about context in your answer.
3. 'Maybe ever'body in the whole damn world is scared of each other,' says Slim.
Explore Steinbeck's use of this idea in the novel.
You must write about context in your answer.
4. Explore the character of Curley's wife in this novel.
You must write about context in your answer.
5. Examine the significance of dreams and reality in *Of Mice and Men*.
You must write about context in your answer.
6. Explore how Steinbeck uses Lennie's relationships with other characters to develop the theme of the novel.
You must write about context in your answer.

Once the group have completed their lists, each member can feedback their ideas on the question. Discuss each question together, considering quotations that could be used to support ideas that may arise.

Each member of the group can now write the answer for one of the questions allocated. After a correct amount of time writing your response, swap answers among the group and discuss. What suggestions of improvement can you advise?

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Answers / Indicative Co

Pre-reading Activities

John Steinbeck – Cloze Activity

Words should read as follows:

- | | |
|---------------|---------------|
| 1. February | 9. publiche |
| 2. school | 10. terring |
| 3. reading | 11. old |
| 4. graduating | 12. novels |
| 5. University | 13. research |
| 6. jobs | 14. Prize |
| 7. York | 15. reporter |
| 8. first | 16. collected |

Extension Activities:

Research Activity

Students' own research required, but in terms of relating their biographical research to the support in the following areas can be provided:

- 'Childhood and School Years': Steinbeck was born and raised in Salinas, the same set worked on ranches as a child
- 'Steinbeck and the War': Steinbeck's homesickness during the war retrospectively and homelessness in *Of Mice and Men*
- 'From *Cup of Gold* to *Of Mice and Men*': Comparisons can be made between *Of Mice and Men* works, particularly his use of the California setting in '*To a God Unknown*' and his depiction of the land
- 'Steinbeck the Traveller': Steinbeck's depiction of America in his travelogue and his travelling resonates heavily with the plot and major themes in *Of Mice and Men*
- 'Steinbeck's Legacy and Literary Recognition': Discussion on *Of Mice and Men* as turning the start of his legacy
- 'Steinbeck and Salinas' – Discussion on Steinbeck's relationship and familiarity with the setting of *Of Mice and Men*

Essay-writing

Students' must choose their own question and form their own response; therefore, no indicative content is provided

Active Learning Task

Student's own personal response required; therefore, no indicative content is provided

During-reading Activities

By the River Salinas

1. George is described as short, dark, quick, intelligent, with pointed features. Lennie is moving like a bear and imitating George's movements.
2. His dead mouse – from an early stage students need to understand the childlike nature to throw away the dead mouse.
3. George tells Lennie not to speak to the boss of the new ranch, to behave himself and that if he gets into trouble to come and hide near the river.
4. 'I like it here. Tomorra we're gonna go to work. I seen a lot of machines on the way bucking grain bags, bustin' a gut. Tonight I'm gonna be right here and look up.'
5. Peaceful, promising, optimistic
6. Immediately we are presented with a hint of the tragic ending of the novel – Lennie to his overwhelming death.
7. Extension activity – student's own creative response for directing activity.

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George and Lennie

Event	What is revealed about
1. Lennie is told off by George for drinking the stagnant water in the pool.	George often has to tell Lennie what to do.
2. George tells Lennie to get rid of the dead mouse.	George has to discipline Lennie as a child.
3. Lennie is given instructions about not speaking to the new boss.	Lennie cannot be trusted in social situations or George's employment.
4. George wishes to spend the night freely in the open.	George finds the work tiring and desires peace.
5. George directs Lennie to get a fire for a fire.	Lennie too cares for and looks after the pair's companionship.
6. Lennie kills the dead mouse and is caught by George.	Lennie is often mischievous and draws an eye on him.

Extension Activity

Student's own creative response for directing activity, but they should take note that George is more sophisticated than Lennie's and that Lennie's pronunciation and syntax mimics that of a child.

Trouble at Weed

1. Questions Exercise

- George and Lennie were working in Weed
- The young girl
- Lennie was stroking the dress of a young girl and her screaming alerted some men, which drove George and Lennie down
- George and Lennie had to leave Weed

2. Student's own creative response for newspaper report activity

3. Extension Activity

- The Weed incident is the second hint of Lennie's carelessness, yet unintentional, for the dead mouse and the misunderstood encounter at Weed demonstrate how he fails to understand the world.

The Dream

1. Comparative Exercise

Comparative exercise between real life situations, literature and film should be made here. Examples include the Israelites, Martin Luther King's famous speech, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, the Major's Secret Life of Walter Mitty short story, the play *Billy Liar*, etc.

2. Extension Activities

1. They dream about their freedom, and owning a farm and land together, and tending to the crops and rabbits
2. Both characters grow happier, with Lennie particularly growing giddy and excited
3. The pair appear optimistic about their future, and George uses the dream to inspire Lennie
4. George and Lennie's friendship and dependence upon each other is relevant to the dream, as the existence unites the two men, creating a more equal level than detectable in the real world
5. Students should consider the hints of Lennie's incredible strength, his accidental killing of a woman at Weed, which all point towards a tragic ending, where the realisation of the dream is impossible.

Candy and the Boss

1.

Quotation	What this reveals about
1. 'a stoop shouldered old man' (Section 2)	Candy is an elderly man.
2. "'You can have them try to be comfortable,' he said" (Section 2)	Candy wishes to make his life comfortable.
3. "'I was supposed to be here this morning' (Section 2)	Candy is preparing to work.
4. "'I was pointed with his right arm, and out of the sleeve came a round stick-like wrist, but no hand.' (Section 2)	Candy lost his hand when he worked in the low position.
5. 'Yes sir. Jesus, we had fun.' (Section 2)	Candy is social with the other men.

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2. **Extension Activity:** Student's own opinion required but comments may include:
 - We learn that the boss is a good man but unfairly takes his anger out on the staff, especially at Christmas
 - He is firm but kind to George and Lennie upon meeting them, asserting his authority

Curley

1. A choice of many valid quotations available – for example:
 - A. 'Curley lashed his body around.'
 - B. 'Yeah? Married two weeks and got the eye? May be that's why Curley's pants is so tight.'
 - C. 'Well, nex' time you answer when you get spoke to.'
 - D. 'He hates big guys. He's a little feller picking scraps with big guys.'
 - E. 'I'm scared. You got a little trouble with that Curley guy. I seen that kind before.'
2. **Extension Activity:** Student's own creative response for dramatic monologue activity

Curley's Wife

1. Any quotations from the text that illustrate the following are valid:

Curley's Wife often dresses in red, has her hair rolled, and is heavily made up; she is resentful of her rejection of her; she appears lonely in her marriage and appears to resent preventing her career as an actress
2. **Extension Activity:** Student's own response and opinion required for extension activity

Slim

1. **Quotations Exercise:**
 - i. Slim is a gracious, talented and highly respected man
 - ii. Slim is friendly and encouraging to the men
 - iii. Slim is familiar with the loneliness of ranch workers and admires George and Lennie
 - iv. The other men respect Slim's conversation and opinion
 - v. Slim is inviting and cares about the welfare of the other men
2. **Extension Activity**
 - Steinbeck's interest in the nobility of the working man in all sections of society
 - Despite his lack of academic attainment, Slim displays the qualities of a philosopher
 - Students may also explore the age-old debate of nature vs nurture.

George and Lennie's Past

1. George's caring for Lennie after his Aunt Clara died, and they eventually became close friends
2. Slim's surprise at the fact that George and Lennie travel around together demonstrating their loneliness and solitude for migrant workers during the Great Depression. Unlike the other workers are described as 'never seem[ing] to give a damn about nobody' and 'they never get together'
3. George 'socked' Lennie over the head with a fence picket, the men in the town threatened them and they spent the remainder of the day in an irrigation ditch hiding from the townsmen
4. George stops Lennie from keeping Slim's pup; George stops Lennie from being passive and interjects and stops Lennie from fatally wounding Curley, no doubt through fear of Curley and the pair losing their employment
5. Lennie's fearful demeanour and innocence during Curley's attack, his crying and fear of being able to tend the rabbits as consequence
6. **Extension Activity**

A choice of many valid quotations available – for example:

 - 'Course Lennie's a God damn nuisance mos' of the time' (Section 3)
 - 'George spoke proudly. "Jus' tell I know what to do an' he'll do it if it don't take no time at all."
 - 'I knowed his Aunt Clara. He's a little feller when he was a baby and raised him up. Lennie just come along with me out workin'.' (Section 3)
 - 'You ain't got to be scairt no more. You done jus' what I tol' you to.' (Section 3)

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A Merciful Killing

- Any quotations from the text that illustrate the following are valid:
 - Candy – sadness and grief, wishes he had shot the dog himself out of loyalty
 - Carlson – sadness at Candy's reaction, but little to no remorse towards the dog and a burden to the bunkhouse
 - Slim – sympathises with Candy and tries to comfort him by offering him a pup; killing the dog is the best and kindest decision
 - Whit – feels uncomfortable about the dog's death and grows impatient at the situation
- Extension Activity:** Personal responses on real-life situations or recent news topics (e.g. animal rights)

Tragedy vs Hope

- Quotations Exercise**
 - Tragedy – obvious threat posed by Curley's wife
 - Hope – optimism is brought by the promise of George and Lennie's dream becoming a reality
 - Hope – the dream fills Candy with optimism
 - Tragedy – threat posed by this question
 - Hope – George's, Lennie's, and now Candy's dream becomes more realistic and achievable
 - Tragedy – foreboding of an inevitable tragedy due to Curley's antagonistic nature
- Extension Activity**
Steinbeck's juxtaposing of tragic and hopeful tones encourages the reader to share in the characters' hopes, while realising the futility of such desires. This blending of contrasting emotions allows the story to be all the more effective.

Violence

- The entrance of Curley in the scene shatters the mood of hope and peace
- A choice of many valid quotations available – for example:
"I don't want no fights," said Lennie.
'You jus' let 'em try to get the rabbits. I'll break their God damn necks. I'll...I'll smash 'em!'"
- Avoid confrontation with Curley and diffuse the situation
- Student's own opinion required – for example:
Lennie: anxiety, remorse, fear, anger, confusion, dread
Curley: fear, anger, humiliation, jealousy, anxiety, vengeful
George: proud, nervous, cautious, anxious, remorseful
- Extension Activity:** Student's own creative response required

Crooks

- Student's notes should include the following:
 - Crooks lives in the harness room, a shed that leans off the edge of the barn. He is respected by the men for his craft and sympathised with for his injury, but not fully accepted
 - Crooks has adapted to his isolation but does feel pangs of loneliness, and resentment
 - Crooks illustrates a pragmatic and cynical approach to Lennie's dream – he acknowledges it but feels little to no optimism about his future
 - Crooks does not resist the temptation of abusing his unique position of holding the ranch and, therefore, exploits Lennie's naivety, but he is quickly intimidated and is kind towards him
- Extension Activity**
Other texts dealing with the theme of racism could include *Holes*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *12 Years a Slave*, *In the Heat of the Night*, *Schindler's List* and *Crash*, as well as the television series *Roots*.

Hopes and Doubts

- A choice of many valid quotations available – for example:
 - 'Candy seemed embarrassed. "I don't know. 'Course, if ya want me to.'"
 - 'Candy smiled. "I don't care. We can make some money on them rabbits."
 - 'Candy smiled. "I don't care. We can make some money on them rabbits."
 - '...like ever' guy got land in his head.'
 - '"...never seen a guy really do it", he said. "I seen guys nearly crazy with loneliness. Where house or a blackjack game took what it takes."
 - '... If you guys would want a hand to work for nothing – just his keep, why I'd do it for you guys.'"
- Extension Activity:** Student's own creative response required

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Loneliness and Scorn

1. Quotations Exercise:

- Quotation A demonstrates Curley's wife's frustration at being treated as an outcast for going to a brothel.
- Quotation B demonstrates her lonely existence as the only woman on the ranch.
- Quotation C demonstrates her deluded belief that she had the opportunity to fulfil her own dream of a better life.
- Quotation D demonstrates her understanding of the nature of men, and her knowledge that they are unable to rise above their impoverished starting point.
- Quotation E demonstrates Curley's wife's flirtatious character, and her desire for attention which is withheld from her by men.
- Quotation F demonstrates the more malicious and cruel side to her character, and her determination that her husband should not be challenged by him.

2. Extension Activity: Student's own creative response required but could comment on the relationship between the two characters' behaviours

Curley's Wife's Past

1. Student's own creative response required

The Killing

1. Curley's Wife tempts Lennie into conversation with her and permits him to stroke her hair; this frightens her, and her screams scare him into roughly muffling and struggling with her.
2. Many valid quotations to choose from – for example:
'For a moment he seemed bewildered. And then he whispered in fright, "I done a bad thing."
'For the first time Lennie became conscious of the outside. He crouched down in the darkness.'
3. Hints of the killing of Curley's wife include Lennie's killing of the mouse, which is referred to in chapter 4, the incident of holding onto the girl's skirt at Weed and the killing of the puppy in chapter 5.
4. He covers Curley's wife with hay, and runs to the river to hide, just like George instructed him to do.
5. The quiet and still atmosphere of the barn following the death of Curley's wife creates a sense of isolation, emphasising the suddenness and finality of death.
6. **Extension Activity:** Student's own creative response required for extension activity.

The Dream Ends

1. Flow chart could include the following events:
 - Curley's offer of money to George and Lennie as a share in the farm/dream
 - Crooks' dismissal of the dream, and then his eagerness to be involved in it
 - George and Lennie's discussion of the dream before and following Curley's attack
 - Lennie telling Curley's wife of the dream
 - Aunt Clara and the rabbit's haunting warnings and threats that Lennie will no longer have the dream
2. **Extension Activity:** Other hints from Steinbeck that the dream will end could include:
 - Events in Weed
 - The death of Candy's dog
 - Curley's injury from Lennie
 - Crooks' dismissal of the possibility of the dream
 - Curley's wife's threatening behaviour
 - The death of Lennie's pup
 - The death of Curley's wife
 - Lennie's hallucinations

Visions

1. Table Exercise:

The First Vision

Aunt Clara scolds Lennie for his 'silly' relation serving as voice of wisdom; Lennie is shocked by Aunt Clara's language that he is and always has been a burden to George and that he should provide for him. This provides a sinister air from Steinbeck and foreshadows impending events.

The Second Vision

Lennie sees a talking rabbit; rabbit is the symbol of his dream and representative of the life he wants to own with George; Lennie grows angry and upset at the rabbit; the rabbit tells Lennie that he and George have been able to tend the rabbits and never will; Steinbeck exploits the symbol of the rabbit to give meaning to Lennie to foreshadow the impending events.

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2. **Extension Activity:** Student's own opinion required but could include discussion of:
 - Lennie's mental state and Curley's wife's reputation as a trouble causer and contributing factors to opinions regarding Lennie's punishment
 - In today's society Lennie may evade prison time due to his mental state and manslaughter trial

The Shooting

1.

Quotations	How Steinbeck creates
1. George came stiffly near and... (p. 101)	Steinbeck's use of the word 'stiffly' George's mind, as well as suggests shocking task he is about to complete
2. ... the valley was blue and... (p. 102)	A beautiful and peaceful image is contrast strongly with Lennie's situation
3. His voice was monotonous, had no emphasis. (p. 102)	George's empty voice chillingly predictable, yet unavoidable, action
4. Lennie cried happily. (p. 103)	Creates an ironic tone that jars with the situation
5. An' we'll have maybe a pig an' chickens... an' down the flat we'll have a... little piece alfalfa... (p. 104)	The reader feels sympathy for them that the dream can be accomplished
6. Lennie jarred, and then settled slowly forward to the sand, and he lay without quivering. (p. 105)	We are given physical description 'slowly' and failing to quiver, suggest and emphasising his lifeless state

2. **Extension Activity:** Student's own creative response required

Characterisation

1. **Test Your Memory**
 - The matches should read:
Curley: 'He wore a work glove'
Curley's Wife: '... full, rouged...'
George: '... restless eyes and a...'
Lennie: '... a huge hand, shapeless of face...'
Curley: '... his eyes lay deep in his head...'
Candy: '... at his heels there walked...'
Slim: 'His hatchet face was ageless...'
2. **Write Like Steinbeck**
Student's own creative response required – for example:
 - Description: 'Slim moved with the grace of an eagle'
 - Justification: 'Slim is seen as a character who is proud and respected, and water and its association with majesty and greatness'

3. **Media Task**
Student's own opinion required so no indicative content is provided

Character Relationships

1. **Table Exercise**

Relationship	Quotation
1. George and Lennie	'Lennie, when I was watching, imitated George's eyes, the way George's hat was'
2. Candy and his dog	'... shouldn't ought to of let no stranger shoot my dog'
3. Curley and his wife	'"Listen, Nigger," she said. "You know what I can do..." "Well, you keep your place then, Nigger. I could get you..." "ain't even funny."'
4. Curley and Lennie	'Come on, ya big bastard. Get up on your feet. No big me.'
5. Lennie and Curley's Wife	'You let this guy alone. Don't you do no messing around what you says.'

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2. Essay-writing Practice

Student's own choice of relationship and extract so no indicative content is provided as the student fulfils AOs 1, 2 and 4. However, likely choices of extract for each relationship are:

- George and Lennie – initial introduction to the pair by the river or the shooting
- Crooks and Curley's Wife – interaction in Crooks' bunkhouse with Candy and Lennie
- Curley and his Wife – Candy's discussion of the pair with George and Lennie in the context of his wife's death
- Candy and his Dog – Carlson's shooting of the dog and the ensuing conversation

3. Extension Activity

Student's own choice of relationship when they are struggling to think of one you need

- Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, Robert Louis Stevenson (1886)
- Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (1891)
- Jem and Scout, *To Kill A Mockingbird*, Harper Lee (1960)
- Mickey and Eddie, *Blood Brothers* (1983)
- Horatio and Hamlet, *Hamlet*, William Shakespeare (c.1599–1602)

Setting

1. Extract Comparison

- The setting has grown more sombre and ominous in presentation – strong representation of the Gabilan mountains
- Presence of death/threat absent in first extract but defines the secret, as symbol of predator metaphor
- Steinbeck's evolving setting reflects the violence and death that has haunted the valley and prey and predator image reflected in snake and heron now mimics Lennie and George

2. Essay-writing Skills

- The sample extract scores highly in its fulfilment of AO1 and AO2, due to its illustration of sound knowledge of the text overall and its adherence to the word limit
- The sample extract does not fulfil assessment objective AO4 as it includes no social or cultural context relating to the text

3. Extension Activity

Student should add a few sentences relating the analysis to relevant contextual information. For example, the historical context of the American landscape in relation to the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression. The American Dream as represented in the changing landscape of Steinbeck's novel. The promise brought to ranch workers from the fertile land of such valleys.

Form

1. Active Learning Task

Of Mice and Men remains one of the most popular and influential Great American novels. It is a commentary on the situation of America in the particular historical context of the 1930s, the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl.

2. Cloze Exercise

Words should read as follows:

Novel, identity, experience, 1868, American, Melville's, *Finn*, *Great Gatsby*, 1960, World War, Depression, racism, segregation, negative

Structure

1. Chapter/Event Exercise

Matches should read as follows:

Chapter 1: George throws away Lennie's dead mouse

Chapter 2: George and Lennie meet Curley's Wife

Chapter 3: Lennie and Curley fight

Chapter 4: Curley's Wife accuses Crooks

Chapter 5: Lennie and Curley's Wife

Chapter 6: Lennie hallucinates

2. Reimagining Steinbeck's Structure

Student's own personal response and opinion required so no indicative content is provided

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3. Steinbeck and Suspense

Student's own personal response and readings required here but likely questions raised

- Chapter 2: Will Curley find out what Candy said about him? Why does Curley tell the men finally accept Curley's wife's advances? Will Lennie stay safe away from the men? Will the dream be repeated?
- Chapter 3: Will George actually one day leave Lennie as he says he is a nuisance for the attack on Curley? Will Curley enact revenge upon Lennie? Will Candy and Lennie?
- Chapter 4: Is Crooks right, will the dream not come true? Will Curley's wife's threats actually leave Lennie, and Crooks be alone? Is George like the other men and spend time in 'whore houses'?
- Chapter 5: Will Lennie not escape from the men like he did in Weed? Will George be even more alone now? Will George or Lennie?
- Chapter 6: Will George forever be alone now? Will he strike up a friendship with Slim? Will he ever achieve his dream? Will he ever forgive himself for killing Lennie?

Context

The Great Depression

1. A choice of many valid events and quotations available for each scenario – for example

Life in the Great Depression	Event in the text	
Poverty	Presentation of George and Lennie's travelling lifestyle	"I like 'em with ketchup exploded. "Whatever we do" (Section 1)
Lack of work	George and Lennie's desperation for work in the opening scenes	'... You can't keep a job at (Section 1)
Inability to develop relationships	Slim's discussion of the life of ranch workers	'Hardly none of the guys ... two guys travel together
Homelessness	Candy's discussion of his fears for the future	'When they can me here ... they won't do nothing like an' I can't get no more job

2. Extension activity
No indication of content required

Racism

1. Key quotations of interest to students from the passage:
 - '... had his bunk in the harness-room ... a long box filled with straw ... both for Lennie and me ... alone ... a cripple ... battered magazines and a few dirty books ... aloof man. He ... that other people kept theirs ... meagre yellow light ... shivered'
 - Key techniques include themes of absence and minimalism, poverty, isolation and vulnerability

Social Status

1. *Hierarchy Exercise*
 - Student's own personal opinion and reading required, but likely hierarchy reading: The Boss, Curley, Slim, Curley's Wife, Carlson, Whit, George, Candy, Aunt Clara
2. *PEE Exercise*
 - Student's own reading and response required, but fulfilment of AO4 (context) Relevant contextual information includes references to racial segregation, Jim Crow, domesticity of women, misogynistic attitudes within a patriarchal society.

Migrant Workers

1. *Personal Paragraph Exercise*
Student's own personal and emotive response required
2. *Slim's Quotation Activity*
Life as a migrant worker is usually a lonely existence, and companionship between men often met with speculation by others

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3. *Exam-style Question*

- Student's own personal response and interpretation required but likely points to History and lifestyle of migrant workers including rarity of companionship; the novel and George's discussion of his relationship with Lennie to Slim and Candy; relationship between George and Lennie in Chapters 1 and 6

The American Dream1. *Comparator Text Exercise*

Student's own response and experiences required; compare the films that portray the American Dream: *A Woman, Rocky, An American Tail* (and others), *Mr Smith Goes to Washington*.

2. *Ideology Exercise*

George and Lennie's dream of land and freedom is most important to them. The promise of a better life and independence to the men, and helps them forge relationships with fellow workers.

3. *Mock Exam Question*

A choice of many quotations available; any reference to the following is a valid selection: the dream of a farm, discussions with Candy and Crooks about the farm, references to living off the land, the symbolism of Lennie tending to the rabbits, including Lennie's hallucinations in the

Dreams

1. Any quotation that represents the following is a valid selection:

- George and Lennie dream about owning their own farm, living off the land, then they can call home – for example, “Well,” said George, “we’ll have a big vegetable patch and a big cow and a little house with a porch and a garden and a little white picket fence and a little white picket fence and a little white picket fence” (Section 1), “We’ll have a cow,” said George. “An’ we’ll have maybe a pig an’ a little house and a little piece alfalfa ---” (Section 6)
- Candy dreams about having security in his old age, especially when he is no longer able to work – for example, “They’ll can me purty soon. Jus’ as soon as I can’t swamp out no bugger no more. Maybe if I give you guys my money, you’ll let me hoe in the garden even when I’m old.” (Section 4)
- The men dream about leaving the ranch like Bill, and having something even better – for example, “I know it. Bill and me was here one day. Bill had one of them magazines in it and he says, ‘I wrote a book. Wonder if they put it in the book.’ ‘Maybe they’re savin’ it for me,’ says Bill. ‘That’s just what they done. There it is.’” (Section 5)
- Curley’s wife dreams about being an actress working in a travelling show – a dream for example, “I’d like to see a show come through, an’ I met one of the actors. He says, ‘Lard, you ought to let me.’ ‘Coulda been in the movies, an’ had nice clothes – all them nice clothes in them big hotels, an’ had pitchers took of me.’” (Section 5)
- Crooks wishes he too could secure a stable financial position and have someone to rely on – for example, “... If you... guys would let me just his keep, why I’d come an’ lend a hand. I ain’t so crippled I can’t work like a dog.” (Section 4)
- Curley wanted to be a boxer – for example, “Curley’s pretty handy. He done quite a few fights, and he’s handy.” (Section 5)

2. Steinbeck uses the theme of dreams to unite all the men in the text and show that they are the same

Loneliness

1. Explanations of the selected quotations and their references to the theme of loneliness

- ‘Guys like us, that work on ranches, are the loneliest guys in the world.’ Page 1 – they are unlike other migrant workers, who travel alone and have no one as a companion.
- ‘Funny how you an’ him string along together.’ Page 40 – Slim’s surprise that George and Lennie travel together, unlike other solitary ranch hands.
- ‘I’m so used to him,’ he says, ‘I’ve had him from a pup.’ Page 46 – Candy’s fear of losing his dog to be shot.
- ‘S’pose you go into the bunkhouse and play rummy ‘cause you was black.’ Page 47 – Crooks tries to show Lennie how life can be lonely and isolated as a black man.
- ‘Think I like to stick to myself once in a while? Think I like to stick to myself?’ Page 48 – Curley’s wife demonstrates her loneliness as the only woman on the ranch, trapped and isolated from human contact.
- Now Candy spoke his greatest fear. ‘You an’ me can get that little place, can’t we?’ Page 50 – Candy realises that the dream farm can never be realised, signifying that he will remain lonely and isolated from companionship of George and Lennie.

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2. Extension Activity

Student's own personal response and opinion required here, however, as a general

- The elderly, or the homeless, those who suffer great loss and have no family or suffered a traumatic experience that most people cannot relate to, perhaps via through various charity appeals and events to raise money or provide support
- Both a 'yes' and 'no' answer could be valid here, but ultimately the argument is the characters in the novel do not differ too much from our own – we all have battle through periods (however short) of loneliness and seek to find companionship
- Both a 'yes' and 'no' answer could be valid here, but ultimately the argument is loneliness, economic struggle and inequality within society do appear to be eternal struggle with in some way. However, obviously various forms of victimisation in Crooks faces and in a poor understanding of mental disability that Lennie faces with the

Tragedy

1. Table Exercise

A choice of many valid quotations available for each scenario – for example:

Hints and references to death	Quotations
1. Lennie has killed a mouse by petting it too roughly.	'Uh-uh. Jus' a dead mouse, George found it dead.' (Section 1)
2. Lennie caused trouble with a girl at Weed.	'Well, he seen this girl in a red dress wants to touch ever' thing he likes.' (Section 2)
3. References to Lennie's great physical strength.	'There ain't no more harm in him strong.' (Section 3)
4. George's belief that Curley's Wife will cause trouble for Lennie and himself.	'Well, you keep away from her, one.' (Section 2)
5. Candy is forced into having his dog shot by Carlson.	"Let's get it over with," he said around his pipe. "Here." (Section 3)
6. Lennie has unwittingly killed his new pet puppy.	'What you got to get killed? You bounce you hard.' (Section 5)
7. At the beginning of the final chapter, Steinbeck uses the bird's behaviour to hint at the shocking outcome.	'A silent head and beak lanced at the water and the beak swallowed the little fish frantically.' (Section 6)

2. Extension Activity

Student's own personal opinion and response required here but the following points

- Should Steinbeck have used so many hints and clues (e.g. the dead mouse and at the end of the novel)?
- Is the narrative weakened by the lack of thrill factor, since we are so blatantly can we defend the author's story as being a study of character, and not a tale of suspense?
- Did Steinbeck intend to suggest that Lennie killed the girl at Weed since he possessed overwhelming strength, who is unable to avoid killing any living creature he comes in contact with?

Steinbeck's Imagery

1. Student's own interpretation and reading required – for example:

'... only a faint glimmer showed where the tree trunks were': Could symbolise a speck of hope that can be cultivated and grow, or alternatively a small glimmer that stands no chance around the men

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Language Shaping Character

1.

Language features	This is effective
1. 'he moved with a majesty '	2. The emotive word 'majesty' suggests an authoritative manner, despite only being used once. The repetition stresses the impressive nature of the character. The 'm' sound emphasises a moment of grandeur.
3. 'capable of driving ten, sixteen, even twenty '	4. The list of increasing numbers, increasing the reader's understanding of Slim's ability to perform his job.
5. <i>Dignified language</i> 'gravity' 'solemn' 'dignity'	• A range of such language illustrates the character's 'Gravity' and 'profound' suggests a sense of authority while 'authority' reveals that he is a 'dignified' words so closely together to create a sense of the character.
6. <i>Simile:</i> 'as those of a temple dancer'	• Despite the 'macho' and imposing image created in the description of a 'temple dancer' creates a sense of a character. He is not only tough and imposing but also be gentle, confirming his heroic nature.
7. 'He looked kindly .'	8. The adverb 'kindly' differentiates his impersonal behaviour of the other characters and Lennie so far.

Symbolism

- Steinbeck is suggesting that the power of nature is finite, and that the cycle of life will prevail and that certain futures are unavoidable
 - Light is fleeting in this passage and darkness is approaching – a fitting metaphor to reflect the unfolding tragedy of the narrative
 - Periscope suggests that the individual is submerged in a possibly dangerous environment, vulnerable and obscuring his/her sight of something, just approaching that could be Lennie's approaching death
 - Steinbeck uses light and dark, naturalistic and animal imagery, and pathetic fallacy and his use of foreshadowing and reference to the past throughout the novel to create a foreboding atmosphere regarding the future

Quiz

- The Great Depression
- A tragedy
- The Pulitzer Prize
- Dream
- California
- The Boss
- A swamper
- Weed
- Slim
- Large men
- George
- Carlson
- Damaged in
- Crooks
- Curley's wife
- Being a movie
- The end of the
- Giant rabbit
- Foreshadow
- Carlson's gun
- Lennie's death
- Futile hopes

Practice Questions

Personal responses required

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