

# Of Mice and Men Study Booklet



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Key Events				
Chapter 1	George and Lennie walk through the Californian countryside; George becomes frustrated with Lennie; George throws away Lennie's dead mouse; George alludes to Weed			
	'Tell about what we're gonna have in the garden and about the rabbits in the cages and about the rain in the winter and the stove'			
Chapter 2	George and Lennie are greeted at the bunkhouse by Candy; they are reprimanded by the boss; they meet Curley's wife and then Curley; Slim is introduced			
Chapter 3	George confides in Slim about Lennie; Carlson shoots Candy's dog; Candy overhears George talking about his plans; Curley looks for this wife; Lennie breaks Curley's hand			
	'Lennie held on to the closed fist. Curley was white and shrunken; by now, and his struggling had become weak. He stood crying, his fist lost in Lennie's paw.'			
Chapter 4	Crooks sits alone; Lennie sees a light and enters; Crooks taunts him; Candy enters and they discuss the dream ranch; Curley's wife quietly enters and becomes angry			
Chapter 5	Lennie sits alone; Curley's wife approaches him and asks about the dead puppy; she confides in him about her past; Lennie strokes her hair, but eventually kills her			
Chapter 6	Lennie waits for George; he hallucinates; George appears and Lennie asks him to talk about their dream ranch; George shoots Lennie; Slim and George walk-off together			
Key Characters		Key Themes		Key Words
George	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Looks after Lennie</li> <li>Frequently gets frustrated with him</li> <li>Becomes reconciled to his precarious lifestyle</li> </ul>	Dreams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wider context of the 'American Dream'</li> <li>Linked to freedom and escapism</li> <li>Largely unattainable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Soledad</li> <li>Salinas</li> <li>California</li> <li>America</li> <li>Depression</li> <li>Economy</li> <li>Migration</li> <li>Agriculture</li> <li>Itinerant</li> <li>Friendship</li> <li>Status</li> <li>Loyalty</li> <li>Masculinity</li> <li>Femininity</li> <li>Hierarchy</li> <li>Prejudice</li> <li>Respect</li> </ul>
Lennie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reliant on George</li> <li>Possesses the mind of a child</li> <li>Unable to control his strength</li> </ul>	Friendship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>George and Lennie's friendship</li> <li>Seen as strange and suspicious</li> <li>George sacrifices his friendship at the end</li> </ul>	
Curley's Wife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unhappily married to Curley</li> <li>Lonely and unfulfilled</li> <li>Eventually killed by Lennie</li> </ul>	Isolation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The ranchers live transient lives</li> <li>Curley's wife is married, but feels lonely</li> <li>Crooks is symbolically isolated</li> </ul>	
Curley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Insecure and aggressive</li> <li>Possessive of his wife</li> <li>Son of the boss</li> </ul>	Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Violence can be used to gain power</li> <li>Threats of violence are used to coerce</li> <li>Violence is often unpreventable</li> </ul>	
Slim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Respected by the ranchers</li> <li>An authoritative presence on the ranch</li> <li>Forms a friendship with George</li> </ul>	Money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Great Depression and the New Deal</li> <li>The ranchers are easily exploitable</li> <li>Women occupy particularly precarious positions</li> </ul>	

## Overview

Written by American author John Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men* was first published in 1937. The novel is set in a place called Soledad, (a Spanish word meaning solitude or loneliness) in California. The novel is set during the Great Depression, a period of significant poverty and unemployment across the USA following the Wall Street Crash in 1929.

John Steinbeck was born in Salinas, California in 1902. Although his family was not poor, when he was a teenager he spent time working on ranches near his home and this had a big impact on his writing. His experience of working with farm labourers and his interest in their lives is clearly evident in *Of Mice and Men*, as well as in some of his other books, like *The Grapes of Wrath*.

## The Great Depression

The Great Depression took place following the Wall Street Crash in October 1929 and affected the world's economy. Wall Street is a street in New York City, where many financial firms are based, and the term 'Wall Street' is used to describe the American sector, even though not all American finance companies are actually based there. The Great Depression lasted for ten years worldwide, and for the USA it did not fully end until 1941 when the country became involved in World War Two. The depression got increasingly worse between 1929 and 1932. At the peak of the Great Depression, it is thought that between 13 million and 15 million people in the USA were unemployed. Industrial production in the country dropped by almost half and house building decreased by 80%. Many people across America suffered from poverty, hunger and disease as a result of the depression. Benefits that we are used to having access to today, like Jobseekers' Allowance, did not exist in America at this time, so people who lost their jobs could also lose their homes and found it very difficult to buy food.

## Itinerant Workers

Farmers were usually less affected than the rest of the population during depressions because they were able to grow their own food; however, during the Great Depression, there was also the Dust Bowl – drought and dust storms swept across several states in mid-west America. This resulted in crops being very poor in these areas, which was coupled with falling prices for food. Small farmers were affected particularly badly by these conditions. Many small farmers were in debt because they would borrow money from banks to buy seeds and then pay back the loans when the crops came in; during the Dust Bowl, farmers could not pay back these loans and could also not afford to feed themselves and their families. In worst case scenarios, this led to banks repossessing farms, making the farmers and their families homeless.

As a result, many farmers migrated to California to look for work, as this state was perceived to have spare land and a lot of work. However, because so many people moved to California (an estimated 1.3 million), work was not so easy to find. Ranch workers like George and Lennie often moved from one place to another looking for work, as jobs on ranches would be temporary and seasonal. Wages for men like these were low and jobs were scarce, so the lifestyle that they lived was very insecure. Without work, people would have no way of supporting themselves. This is why the dream is so important to George and Lennie: it would give them a sense of safety and independence.

## African Americans in the 1930s

Although all Americans were affected by the Great Depression, African Americans were hit the hardest. It is thought that by the end of 1932, 50% of black Americans were unemployed. In some cities in the northern states, white people called for black people to be fired from their jobs due to unemployment in the white communities. African-Americans received less aid than their white counterparts and were sometimes even not allowed to use charity soup kitchens.

Racism increased during the Great Depression and racial violence, which had been decreasing, rose again during the economic downturn. Although Crooks has a stable job, his character reflects the discrimination that many black Americans had to endure during this period in the USA.

Source: BBC Bitesize | <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zgdr82p/revision/1>



## Big Question

What do Steinbeck's first descriptions of **George** and **Lennie** reveal about them?

## Vocabulary

Migrant	Farm	Money	Transience
Worker	Labour	Livelihood	Isolation
Ranch	Employment	Friendship	Frustration

## Retrieval

1. George and Lennie walk down the Salinas River
2. Lennie drinks water from a pool of still water
3. George warns Lennie not to drink too much
4. George grows frustrated at the memory of the bus ride
5. Lennie reveals he has lost his work card and bus ticket

## Extract

Evening of a hot day started the little wind to moving among the leaves. The shade climbed up the hills toward the top. On the sand banks the rabbits sat as quietly as little gray sculptured stones. And then from the direction of the state highway came the sound of footsteps on crisp sycamore leaves. The rabbits hurried noiselessly for cover. A stilted heron labored up into the air and pounded down river. For a moment the place was lifeless, and then two men emerged from the path and came into the opening by the green pool.

They had walked in single file down the path, and even in the open one stayed behind the other. Both were dressed in denim trousers and in denim coats with brass buttons. Both wore black, shapeless hats and both carried tight blanket rolls slung over their shoulders. The first man was small and quick, dark of face, with restless eyes and sharp, strong features. Every part of him was defined: small, strong hands, slender arms, a thin and bony nose. Behind him walked his opposite, a huge man, shapeless of face, with large, pale eyes, and wide, sloping shoulders; and he walked heavily, dragging his feet a little, the way a bear drags his paws. His arms did not swing at his sides, but hung loosely.

The first man stopped short in the clearing, and the follower nearly ran over him. He took off his hat and wiped the sweat-band with his forefinger and snapped the moisture off. His huge companion dropped his blankets and flung himself down and drank from the surface of the green pool; drank with long gulps, snorting into the water like a horse. The small man stepped nervously beside him.

"Lennie!" he said sharply. "Lennie, for God' sakes don't drink so much."

## Multiple-Choice Question

'He walked heavily, dragging his feet a little' – which adjectives most accurately describe Lennie's movement?

1. Strong and agile
2. Slow and lethargic
3. Lumbering and clumsy
4. Swift and energetic



## Big Question

What does the **dialogue** between George and Lennie reveal about the nature of their relationship?

## Vocabulary

Anger	Loyalty	Discipline	Support
Irritation	Help	Questions	Relationship
Trust	Advice	Responsibility	Patience

## Retrieval

1. George says he has Lennie's work card and bus ticket
2. Lennie reveals he has a dead mouse in his hand
3. George demands that Lennie hands over the mouse
4. Lennie pleads with George to let him keep the mouse
5. George refers to the ranch in Weed

## Extract

He looked down at the ground in despair.

"You never had none, you crazy bastard. I got both of 'em here. Think I'd let you carry your own work card?"

Lennie grinned with relief. "I . . . I thought I put it in my side pocket." His hand went into the pocket again.

George looked sharply at him. "What'd you take outa that pocket?"

"Ain't a thing in my pocket," Lennie said cleverly.

"I know there ain't. You got it in your hand. What you got in your hand—hidin' it?"

"I ain't got nothin', George. Honest."

"Come on, give it here."

Lennie held his closed hand away from George's direction. "It's on'y a mouse, George."

"A mouse? A live mouse?"

"Uh-uh. Jus' a dead mouse, George. I didn't kill it. Honest! I found it. I found it dead."

"Give it here!" said George.

"Aw, leave me have it, George."

*"Give it here!"*

Lennie's closed hand slowly obeyed. George took the mouse and threw it across the pool to the other side, among the brush. "What you want of a dead mouse, anyways?"

## Multiple-Choice Question

Which statement most accurately describes the relationship between George and Lennie at the start of chapter one?

1. Friendly and good-natured
2. Fractious, but based on genuine companionship
3. Cold and distant
4. Uneasy, but steadily improving



## Five Key Points to Remember

1. Lennie has a child-like mentality and struggles to remember simple instructions; this irritates George
2. George regularly swears at Lennie and imagines his life without him, but this does not mean he despises Lennie
3. Lennie provides George with companionship; they are not like other ranchers (or so they believe)
4. George alludes to former events in Weed; it is clear that George has been vital to Lennie's survival
5. Lennie is compared to powerful animals at the start of the novel – a bear and a horse

## Big Question

What does the **language** used by Candy to describe Crooks reveal about racial tensions in 1930s America?

## Vocabulary

Discrimination	Hostility	Isolation	Change
Racism	Anger	Loneliness	Relationships
Prejudice	Resentment	Injustice	Inequality

## Retrieval

1. Candy reminds George and Lennie that they are late
2. Candy shows George and Lennie to their bunks
3. Candy reminisces about when the ranchers got drunk
4. George and Lennie are introduced to the boss
5. George blames the bus driver for their late arrival

## Extract

“Sure. Ya see the stable buck’s a nigger.”

“Nigger, huh?”

“Yeah. Nice fella too. Got a crooked back where a horse kicked him. The boss gives him hell when he’s mad. But the stable buck don’t give a damn about that. He reads a lot. Got books in his room.”

“What kind of a guy is the boss?” George asked.

“Well, he’s a pretty nice fella. Gets pretty mad sometimes, but he’s pretty nice. Tell ya what—know what he done Christmas? Brang a gallon of whisky right in here and says, ‘Drink hearty, boys. Christmas comes but once a year.’”

“The hell he did! Whole gallon?”

“Yes sir. Jesus, we had fun. They let the nigger come in that night. Little skinner name of Smitty took after the nigger. Done pretty good, too. The guys wouldn’t let him use his feet, so the nigger got him. If he coulda used his feet, Smitty says he woulda killed the nigger. The guys said on account of the nigger’s got a crooked back, Smitty can’t use his feet.” He paused in relish of the memory. “After that the guys went into Soledad and raised hell. I didn’t go in there. I ain’t got the poop no more.”

Lennie was just finishing making his bed. The wooden latch raised again and the door opened. A little stocky man stood in the open doorway. He wore blue jean trousers, a flannel shirt, a black, unbuttoned vest and a black coat. His thumbs were stuck in his belt, on each side of a square steel buckle. On his head was a soiled brown Stetson hat, and he wore high-heeled boots and spurs to prove he was not a laboring man.

## Multiple-Choice Question

Based on Candy’s remarks, which statement most accurately describes Crooks’s status on the ranch?

1. A marginalised and lonely figure
2. An important and experienced rancher
3. A skilful worker who is appreciated by the boss
4. A worker who has chosen to isolate himself



## Big Question

What **words** and **phrases** does Steinbeck use in introducing us to Curley, which suggest he might be trouble for Lennie?

## Vocabulary

Power	Influence	Bullying	Insecurity
Hierarchy	Aggression	Hate	Fear
Authority	Intimidation	Prejudice	Threat

## Retrieval

1. Curley enters the bunkhouse
2. Curley asks about the whereabouts of his father
3. Curley stares at Lennie
4. George answers Curley's question on behalf of Lennie
5. Curley leaves the bunkhouse in frustration

## Extract

George said, "S'pose he don't want to talk?"  
Curley lashed his body around. "By Christ, he's gotta talk when he's spoke to. What the hell are you gettin' into it for?"  
"We travel together," said George coldly.  
"Oh, so it's that way."  
George was tense, and motionless. "Yeah, it's that way."  
Lennie was looking helplessly to George for instruction.  
"An' you won't let the big guy talk, is that it?"  
"He can talk if he wants to tell you anything." He nodded slightly to Lennie.  
"We jus' come in," said Lennie softly.  
Curley stared levelly at him. "Well, nex' time you answer when you're spoke to." He turned toward the door and walked out, and his elbows were still bent out a little.  
George watched him go, and then he turned back to the swamper. "Say, what the hell's he got on his shoulder? Lennie didn't do nothing to him."  
The old man looked cautiously at the door to make sure no one was listening. "That's the boss's son," he said quietly. "Curley's pretty handy. He done quite a bit in the ring. He's a lightweight, and he's handy."  
"Well, let him be handy," said George. "He don't have to take after Lennie. Lennie didn't do nothing to him. What's he got against Lennie?"

## Multiple-Choice Question

Which two adjectives below most accurately describe Curley?

1. Calm and patient
2. Violent and angry
3. Aggressive and intimidating
4. Welcoming and friendly

## Big Question

How is the character of **Curley's wife** presented when she enters the bunk house?

## Vocabulary

Woman	Suspicious	Beauty	Desire
Ranch	Misogyny	Superficiality	Hatred
Loneliness	Objectification	Trust	Pity

## Retrieval

1. George indicates to Candy that he dislikes Curley
2. Candy suggests that Curley's wife is flirtatious
3. George warns Lennie to stay away from Curley
4. Curley's wife enters the bunkhouse
5. George and Lennie meet Slim

## Extract

Both men glanced up, for the rectangle of sunshine in the doorway was cut off. A girl was standing there looking in. She had full, rouged lips and wide-spaced eyes, heavily made up. Her fingernails were red. Her hair hung in little rolled clusters, like sausages. She wore a cotton house dress and red mules, on the insteps of which were little bouquets of red ostrich feathers. "I'm lookin' for Curley," she said. Her voice had a nasal, brittle quality.

George looked away from her and then back. "He was in here a minute ago, but he went."

"Oh!" She put her hands behind her back and leaned against the door frame so that her body was thrown forward. "You're the new fellas that just come, ain't ya?"

"Yeah."

Lennie's eyes moved down over her body, and though she did not seem to be looking at Lennie she bridled a little. She looked at her fingernails. "Sometimes Curley's in here," she explained.

George said brusquely. "Well he ain't now."

"If he ain't, I guess I better look some place else," she said playfully.

Lennie watched her, fascinated. George said, "If I see him, I'll pass the word you was looking for him."

She smiled archly and twitched her body. "Nobody can't blame a person for lookin'," she said. There were footsteps behind her, going by. She turned her head. "Hi, Slim," she said.

Slim's voice came through the door. "Hi, Good-lookin'."

"I'm tryin' to find Curley, Slim."

## Multiple-Choice Question

Which statement most accurately describes the presentation of Curley's wife?

1. A flirtatious and superficial woman
2. An untrustworthy and manipulative temptress
3. A lonely, isolated and misunderstood woman
4. A friendly and sociable woman

## Big Question

What leads Slim to conclude that Lennie has the mental age of a **child** and is not deliberately mean or wicked?

## Vocabulary

Kindness	Empathy	Danger	Secret
Respect	Mentality	Responsibility	Escape
Tolerance	Trust	Violence	Vulnerability

## Retrieval

1. George thanks Slim for giving Lennie a puppy
2. Slim talks about George and Lennie's relationship
3. George tells Slim that George isn't crazy
4. George recalls a time when Lennie almost drowned
5. George recalls the trouble Lennie got into in Weed

## Extract

"I ain't got no people," George said. "I seen the guys that go around on the ranches alone. That ain't no good. They don't have no fun. After a long time they get mean. They get wantin' to fight all the time."

"Yeah, they get mean," Slim agreed. "They get so they don't want to talk to nobody."

"Course Lennie's a God damn nuisance most of the time," said George. "But you get used to goin' around with a guy an' you can't get rid of him."

"He ain't mean," said Slim. "I can see Lennie ain't a bit mean."

"Course he ain't mean. But he gets in trouble alla time because he's so God damn dumb. Like what happened in Weed-" He stopped, stopped in the middle of turning over a card. He looked alarmed and peered over at Slim. "You wouldn't tell nobody?"

"What'd he do in Weed?" Slim asked calmly.

"You wouldn't tell? . . . No, 'course you wouldn't."

"What'd he do in Weed?" Slim asked again.

"Well, he seen this girl in a red dress. Dumb bastard like he is, he wants to touch ever'thing he likes. Just wants to feel it. So he reaches out to feel this red dress an' the girl lets out a squawk, and that gets Lennie all mixed up, and he holds on 'cause that's the only thing he can think to do. Well, this girl squawks and squawks. I was jus' a little bit off, and I heard all the yellin', so I comes running, an' by that time Lennie's so scared all he can think to do is jus' hold on. I socked him over the head with a fence picket to make him let go. He was so scairt he couldn't let go of that dress. And he's so God damn strong, you know."

Slim's eyes were level and unwinking. He nodded very slowly. "So what happens?"

## Multiple-Choice Question

Which statement most accurately describes Slim's relationship with George?

1. A relationship built upon mutual trust and respect
2. A close and enduring friendship
3. An uneasy and fragile alliance
4. A distant association between two workers

## Letter from John Steinbeck to Claire Luce

To Claire Luce

Los Gatos, 1938

Dear Miss Luce,

Annie Laurie says you are worried about your playing of the part of Curley's wife although from the reviews it appears that you are playing it marvellously. I am deeply grateful to you and to the others in the cast for your feeling about the play. You have surely made it much more than it was by such a feeling.

About the girl – I don't know of course what you think about her, but perhaps if I should tell you a little about her as I know her, it might clear your feeling about her. She grew up in an atmosphere of fighting and suspicion. Quite early she learned that she must never trust anyone, but she was never able to carry out what she learned. A natural trustfulness broke through constantly and every time it did, it got her. Her moral training was most rigid. She was told over and over that she must remain a virgin because that was the only way she could get a husband. This was harped on so often that it became a fixation. It would have been impossible to seduce her. She had only that one thing to sell and she knew it.

Now, she was trained by threat not only at home but by other kids. And any show of fear or weakness brought an instant persecution. She learned to be hard to cover her fright. And automatically she became hardest when she was most frightened. She is a nice, kind girl, not a floozy. No man has ever considered her as anything except a girl to try to make. She has never talked to a man except in the sexual fencing conversation. She is not highly sexed particularly but knows instinctively that if she is to be noticed at all, it will be because some one finds her sexually desirable.

As to her actual sexual life – she has had none except with Curley and there has probably been no consummation there since Curley would not consider her gratification and would probably be suspicious if she had any. Consequently, she is a little starved. She knows utterly nothing about sex except the mass misinformation girls tell one another. If anyone – a man or woman – ever gave her a break – treated her like a person – she would be a slave to that person. Her craving for contact is immense but she, with her background, is incapable of conceiving any contact without some sexual context. With all this – if you knew her, if you could ever break down a thousand little defences she has built up, you would find a nice person, an honest person, and you would end up by loving her. But such a thing could never happen.

I hope you won't think I'm preaching. I've known this girl and I'm just trying to tell you what she is like. She is afraid of everyone in the world. You've known girls like that, haven't you? You can see them in Central Park on a hot night. They travel in groups for protection. They pretend to be wise and hard and voluptuous.

I have a feeling that you know all this and that you are doing all this. Please forgive me if I seem to intrude on your job. I don't intend to and I am only writing this because Annie Laurie said you wondered about the girl. It's a devil of a hard part. I am very happy that you have it.

Sincerely,

John Steinbeck

## Review Task

Think about all the characters in the novel: what they're *like*, what they *do*, how they *interact* with each other.

**Create a ranch hierarchy. Start with the character who possess the highest status and work your way down.**

## Review Task

George and Lennie have obvious differences between them. However, they also share similarities.

**Make two lists.**



## Big Question

Why does Curley pick a **fight** with Lennie, the strongest of all the men on the ranch?

## Vocabulary

Aggressive	Forceful	Hostile	Defiant
Violent	Vicious	Destructive	Frightened
Insecure	Powerful	Apprehensive	Confused

## Retrieval

1. Curley enters the bunk house and asks about his wife
2. Curley asks about Slim
3. George warns Lennie to stay away from trouble
4. Curley enters the bunk house and picks on Lennie
5. Lennie crushes Curley's fist

## Extract

Curley stepped over to Lennie like a terrier. "What the hell you laughin' at?" Lennie looked blankly at him. "Huh?"

Then Curley's rage exploded. "Come on, ya big bastard. Get up on your feet. No big son-of-a-bitch is gonna laugh at me. I'll show ya who's yella."

Lennie looked helplessly at George, and then he got up and tried to retreat. Curley was balanced and poised. He slashed at Lennie with his left, and then smashed down his nose with a right. Lennie gave a cry of terror. Blood welled from his nose. "George," he cried. "Make 'um let me alone, George." He backed until he was against the wall, and Curley followed, slugging him in the face. Lennie's hands remained at his sides; he was too frightened to defend himself.

George was on his feet yelling, "Get him, Lennie. Don't let him do it."

Lennie covered his face with his huge paws and bleated with terror. He cried, "Make 'um stop, George." Then Curley attacked his stomach and cut off his wind.

Slim jumped up. "The dirty little rat," he cried, "I'll get 'um myself."

George put out his hand and grabbed Slim. "Wait a minute," he shouted. He cupped his hands around his mouth and yelled, "Get 'im, Lennie!"

Lennie took his hands away from his face and looked about for George, and Curley slashed at his eyes. The big face was covered with blood. George yelled again, "I said get him."

Curley's fist was swinging when Lennie reached for it. The next minute Curley was flopping like a fish on a line, and his closed fist was lost in Lennie's big hand. George ran down the room. "Leggo of him, Lennie. Let go."

## Multiple-Choice Question

Which statement most accurately describes the aftermath of the fight between Curley and Lennie?

1. A triumphant victory for Lennie
2. A deserved beating for Curley
3. A dramatic and unexpected victory for Lennie
4. A humiliating defeat for Curley

## Big Question

What does Crooks's **attitude** towards the other ranchers reveal about attitudes towards race in 1930s America?

## Vocabulary

Ranch	Isolation	Segregation	Insecurity
Health	Possessions	Suffering	Respect
Horses	Appearance	Anger	Resentment

## Retrieval

1. Lennie enters Crooks's room
2. Crooks reacts angrily to Lennie's unannounced visit
3. Lennie explains that he saw a light on in the barn
4. Crooks tells Lennie that he is not welcome
5. Crooks tells Lennie about his childhood in California

## Extract

Crooks leaned forward over the edge of the bunk. "I ain't a southern Negro," he said. "I was born right here in California. My old man had a chicken ranch, 'bout ten acres. The white kids come to play at our place, an' sometimes I went to play with them, and some of them was pretty nice. My ol' man didn't like that. I never knew till long later why he didn't like that. But I know now." He hesitated, and when he spoke again his voice was softer. "There wasn't another colored family for miles around. And now there ain't a colored man on this ranch an' there's jus' one family in Soledad." He laughed. "If I say something, why it's just a nigger sayin' it."

Lennie asked, "How long you think it'll be before them pups will be old enough to pet?"

Crooks laughed again. "A guy can talk to you an' be sure you won't go blabbin'. Couple of weeks an' them pups'll be all right. George knows what he's about. Jus' talks, an' you don't understand nothing." He leaned forward excitedly. "This is just a nigger talkin', an' a busted-back nigger. So it don't mean nothing, see? You couldn't remember it anyways. I seen it over an' over—a guy talkin' to another guy and it don't make no difference if he don't hear or understand. The thing is, they're talkin', or they're settin' still not talkin'. It don't make no difference, no difference." His excitement had increased until he pounded his knee with this hand. "George can tell you screwy things, and it don't matter. It's just the talking. It's just bein' with another guy. That's all." He paused.

## Multiple-Choice Question

Which statement most accurately describes Crooks's initial reaction to Lennie's unexpected visit to the stable?

1. He welcomes Lennie warmly and asks him to stay
2. He is happy to have some company
3. He is suspicious of Lennie's motives for visiting
4. He is angrily resentful at the invasion of his privacy

## Big Question

Why does Crooks eventually choose **not** to become part of Lennie’s plan to buy a ranch?

## Vocabulary

Dream	Stability	Doubt	Uncertainty
Ambition	Hope	Pessimism	Delusion
Realism	Plan	Hesitation	Cynicism

## Retrieval

1. Candy enters Crooks’s room
2. Crooks offers to work at the ranch
3. Curley’s wife enters Crooks’s room
4. Curley’s wife enquires about Lennie’s fight with Curley
5. Curley’s wife threatens to have Crooks lynched

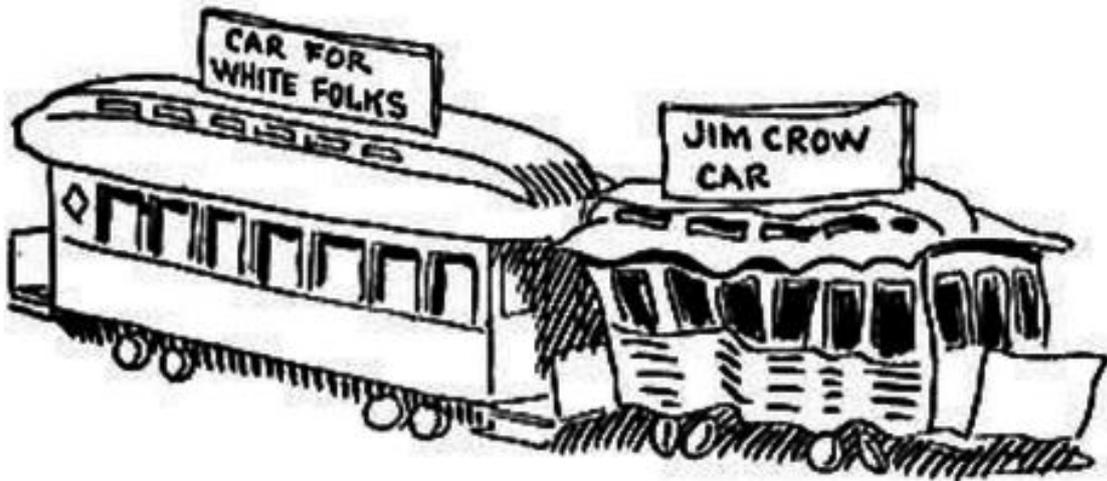
## Extract

“Well, if that’s all you want, I might get a couple rabbits myself.”  
Crooks stood up from his bunk and faced her. “I had enough,” he said coldly. “You got no rights comin’ in a colored man’s room. You got no rights messing around in here at all. Now you jus’ get out, an’ get out quick. If you don’t, I’m gonna ast the boss not to ever let you come in the barn no more.”  
She turned on him in scorn. “Listen, Nigger,” she said. “You know what I can do to you if you open your trap?”  
Crooks stared hopelessly at her, and then he sat down on his bunk and drew into himself.  
She closed on him. “You know what I could do?”  
Crooks seemed to grow smaller, and he pressed himself against the wall. “Yes, ma’am.”  
“Well, you keep your place then, Nigger. I could get you strung upon a tree so easy it ain’t even funny.”  
Crooks had reduced himself to nothing. There was no personality, no ego—nothing to arouse either like or dislike. He said, “Yes, ma’am,” and his voice was toneless.  
For a moment she stood over him as though waiting for him to move so that she could whip at him again; but Crooks sat perfectly still, his eyes averted, everything that might be hurt drawn in. She turned at last to the other two.

## Multiple-Choice Question

Which statement most accurately describes Crooks’s initial reaction to Lennie’s unexpected visit to the stable?

1. He is aware that the dream is ultimately unattainable
2. He knows that he cannot afford to pay rent
3. He likes George, but does not trust Lennie
4. He believes that he would still be treated as an outcast



# Jim Crows Laws



## Review Questions: Chapters 1-4

1. Who wrote *Of Mice and Men*?
2. In which decade is the novel set?
3. In which American town is the ranch where George and Lennie work?
4. How many miles short of the ranch does the bus driver leave George and Lennie?
5. What does George demand that Lennie handover to him?
6. What is the name of Lennie's aunt?
7. Who is the first character that George and Lennie meet on the ranch?
8. Why does George object to his assigned bed?
9. Why does George speak on behalf of Lennie when Curley questions him?
10. What colour is particularly associated with Curley's wife?
11. Why does Carlson object to Candy's dog?
12. Which rancher (apart from Curley) appears to have the highest status on the ranch?
13. What does Slim offer to give to Lennie?
14. Which character does Curley constantly appear to be looking for on the ranch?
15. What does Lennie do that provides Curley with an opportunity to start a fight?
16. What does Lennie do to Curley during the fight?
17. What story do the ranchers agree on to explain Curley's injury?
18. What does Lennie see that he believes makes it acceptable to enter Crooks's room?
19. What does Curley's wife threaten to have done to Crooks?
20. Which other characters enter Crooks's room before George returns from town?

## Big Question

What has Lennie done at the beginning of the chapter that suggests he is **irresponsible** and **dangerous**?

## Vocabulary

Murder	Violence	Remorse	Misery
Revenge	Escape	Fear	Hope
Justice	Chase	Regret	Dream

## Retrieval

1. The men play horseshoes outside the barn
2. Lennie sits alone in the barn
3. Lennie speaks softly to the dead puppy
4. Lennie becomes angry at the dead puppy
5. Curley's wife enters the barn

## Extract

Only Lennie was in the barn, and Lennie sat in the hay beside a packing case under a manger in the end of the barn that had not been filled with hay. Lennie sat in the hay and looked at a little dead puppy that lay in front of him. Lennie looked at it for a long time, and then he put out his huge hand and stroked it, stroked it clear from one end to the other.

And Lennie said softly to the puppy, "Why do you got to get killed? You ain't so little as mice. I didn't bounce you hard." He bent the pup's head up and looked in its face, and he said to it, "Now maybe George ain't gonna let me tend no rabbits, if he fin's out you got killed."

He scooped a little hollow and laid the puppy in it and covered it over with hay, out of sight; but he continued to stare at the mound he had made. He said, "This ain't no bad thing like I got to go hide in the brush. Oh! no. This ain't. I'll tell George I foun' it dead."

He unburied the puppy and inspected it, and he stroked it from ears to tail. He went on sorrowfully, "But he'll know. George always knows. He'll say, 'You done it. Don't try to put nothing over on me.' An' he'll say, 'Now jus' for that you don't get to tend no rabbits!'"

Suddenly his anger arose. "God damn you," he cried. "Why do you got to get killed? You ain't so little as mice." He picked up the pup and hurled it from him. He turned his back on it. He sat bent over his knees and he whispered, "Now I won't get to tend the rabbits. Now he won't let me." He rocked himself back and forth in his sorrow.

## Multiple-Choice Question

Which statement most accurately explains Lennie's sense of fear and frustration at the start of the chapter?

1. He knows that Slim will not give him another puppy
2. He believes that Curley will tell him to leave the ranch
3. He thinks Slim will be angry with him
4. He thinks that George will be angry with him

## Big Question

To what extent does Steinbeck present **Curley's wife** as an unfortunate victim?

## Vocabulary

Childhood	Determination	Sadness	Responsibility
Ambition	Hierarchy	Isolation	Hope
Excitement	Memory	Consequences	Dream

## Retrieval

1. Curley's wife tells Lennie about how she met Curley
2. Curley's wife says that she could have been an actress
3. Curley's wife invites Lennie to stroke her hair
4. Curley's wife panics when Lennie becomes too forceful
5. Lennie breaks the neck of Curley's wife

## Extract

Curley's wife lay with a half-covering of yellow hay. And the meanness and the plannings and the discontent and the ache for attention were all gone from her face. She was very pretty and simple, and her face was sweet and young. Now her rouged cheeks and her reddened lips made her seem alive and sleeping very lightly. The curls, tiny little sausages, were spread on the hay behind her head, and her lips were parted.

As happens sometimes, a moment settled and hovered and remained for much more than a moment. And sound stopped and movement stopped for much, much more than a moment.

Then gradually time awakened again and moved sluggishly on. The horses stamped on the other side of the feeding racks and the halterchains clinked. Outside, the men's voices became louder and clearer.

From around the end of the last stall old Candy's voice came. "Lennie," he called. "Oh, Lennie! You in here? I been figuring some more. Tell you what we can do, Lennie." Old Candy appeared around the end of the last stall. "Oh, Lennie!" he called again; and then he stopped, and his body stiffened. He rubbed his smooth wrist on his white stubble whiskers. "I di'n't know you was here," he said to Curley's wife.

When she didn't answer, he stepped nearer. "You oughten to sleep out here," he said disapprovingly; and then he was beside her and—"Oh, Jesus Christ!" He looked about helplessly, and he rubbed his beard. And then he jumped up and went quickly out of the barn.

## Multiple-Choice Question

Which adjective most accurately describes presentation of Curley's wife after she has died?

1. Peaceful
2. Insignificant
3. Beautiful
4. Innocent

## Five Key Points to Remember

1. A 'femme fatale' is a sexually attractive character who seduces men and leads them into dangerous situations
2. Curley's wife is not given a name: she is defined solely in terms of being the possession of her husband
3. She is particularly associated with the colour red, which is symbolic of – amongst other things – lust and danger
4. The threat to have Crooks lynched reveals that Curley's wife has the capacity to be predatory and cruel
5. Curley's wife's dream of becoming an actress helps to humanise her and evokes pathos

## Review Task

How do the male characters speak about women in the novel?

**Make a list of short quotations.**

## Review Task

Curley's wife calls Lennie, Candy and Crooks the 'weak ones' in chapter five. In what ways are they 'weak'?

**Make three spider-diagrams of your ideas.**

## Review Task

Look at the way in which the setting is described at the *start* of chapter six. It's the same setting that's described in chapter one.

**What differences can you identify and why might they be significant?**

## Big Question

In what ways are Lennie's two **hallucinations** at the beginning of chapter six significant?

## Vocabulary

Hallucination	Anxiety	Apprehension	Frustration
Vision	Fear	Punishment	Pressure
Dream	Guilt	Anger	Concern

## Retrieval

1. Lennie emerges from the brush
2. Lennie begins speaking softly to himself
3. Lennie 'sees' Aunt Clara
4. Lennie 'sees' a gigantic rabbit
5. George meets Lennie

## Extract

And when she spoke, it was in Lennie's voice. "I tol' you an' tol' you," she said. "I tol' you, 'Min' George because he's such a nice fella an' good to you.' But you don't never take no care. You do bad things."

And Lennie answered her, "I tried, Aunt Clara, ma'am. I tried and tried. I couldn't help it."

"You never give a thought to George," she went on in Lennie's voice. "He been doin' nice things for you alla time. When he got a piece of pie you always got half or more'n half. An' if they was any ketchup, why he'd give it all to you."

"I know," said Lennie miserably. "I tried, Aunt Clara, ma'am. I tried and tried."

She interrupted him. "All the time he coulda had such a good time if it wasn't for you. He woulda took his pay an' raised hell in a whorehouse, and he coulda set in a pool room an' played snooker. But he got to take care of you."

Lennie moaned with grief. "I know, Aunt Clara, ma'am. I'll go right off in the hills an' I'll fin' a cave an' I'll live there so I won't be no more trouble to George."

"You jus' say that," she said sharply. "You're always sayin' that, an' you know sonofabitching well you ain't never gonna do it. You'll jus' stick around an' stew the b'Jesus outa George all the time."

Lennie said, "I might jus' as well go away. George ain't gonna let me tend no rabbits now."

## Multiple-Choice Question

Which statement most accurately describes Lennie's state of mind at the beginning of chapter six?

1. He is deeply regretful that Curley's wife is dead
2. He vaguely understands he has 'done a bad thing'
3. He doesn't care about how George will react
4. He feels isolated and vulnerable

## Review Questions: Chapters 1-6

1. What is George's surname?
2. What is Lennie's surname?
3. 'You take a good big drink' >> Who said it?
4. 'Small and quick' >> Who is it?
5. 'Snorting into the water like a horse' >> Who is it?
6. Who is Slim?
7. What colour is associated with Curley's wife?
8. 'He's dumb as hell' >> Who is it?
9. 'Looks kinda scummy' >> Who said it?
10. 'He wore high-heeled boots' >> Who is it?
11. What were the Jim Crow Laws?
12. What is the relevance of Crooks's name?
13. 'Well, we ain't got any' >> Who said it?
14. 'He walked heavily' >> Who is it?
15. 'Come on in and set a while' >> Who said it?
16. In which chapter is the fight scene?
17. What animal does Lenny 'pet' in chapter one?
18. 'S'pose you didn't have nobody' >> Who said it?
19. 'Baloney!' >> Who said it?
20. 'Then – it's all off?' >> Who said it?
21. What is the name of Lennie's aunt?
22. In which chapter is Curley's wife introduced?
23. 'Tell how it's gonna be' >> Who said it?
24. 'Did he have my gun?' >> Who said it?
25. 'You hadda, George' >> Who said it?
26. Who is the subject of Lennie's first hallucination?
27. What is a 'luger'?
28. 'I don't want no trouble' >> Who said it?
29. 'You're nuts' >> Who said it?
30. 'Yeah. He had your gun' >> Who said it?

Lennie's big fingers fell to stroking her hair.

'Don't you muss it up,' she said.

Lennie said, 'Oh! That's nice,' and he stroked harder. 'Oh, that's nice.'

'Look out, now, you'll muss it.' And then she cried angrily, 'You stop it now, you'll mess it all up.' She jerked her head sideways, and Lennie's fingers closed on her hair and hung on. 'Let go,' she cried. 'You let go.'

Lennie was in a panic. His face was contorted. She screamed then, and Lennie's other hand closed over her mouth and nose. 'Please don't,' he begged. 'Oh! Please don't do that. George'll be mad.'

She struggled violently under his hands. Her feet battered on the hay and she writhed to be free; and from under Lennie's hand, came a muffled screaming. Lennie began to cry with fright. 'Oh! Please don't do none of that,' he begged. 'George gonna say I done a bad thing. He ain't gonna let me tend no rabbits.' He moved his hand a little and her hoarse cry came out. Then Lennie grew angry. 'Now don't,' he said. 'I don't want you to yell. You gonna get me in trouble jus' like George says you will. Now don't you do that.' And she continued to struggle, and her eyes were wild with terror. He shook her then, and he was angry with her. 'Don't you go yellin',' he said, and he shook her; and her body flopped like a fish. And then she was still, for Lennie had broken her neck.

He looked down at her, and carefully he removed his hand from over her mouth, and she lay still. 'I don't want ta hurt you,' he said, 'but George'll be mad if you yell.' When she didn't answer nor move he bent closely over her. He lifted her arm and let it drop. For a moment he seemed bewildered. And then he whispered in fright, 'I done a bad thing. I done another bad thing.'

He pawed up the hay until it partly covered her.

**Part (a)**

In this passage, how does Steinbeck present the death of Curley's wife? Refer closely to the passage in your answer.

**and then Part (b)**

In the rest of the novel, how does Steinbeck present the brutality of life on a ranch at the time the novel is set?

They had walked in single file down the path, and even in the open one stayed behind the other. Both were dressed in denim trousers and in denim coats with brass buttons. Both wore black, shapeless hats and both carried tight blanket rolls slung over their shoulders. The first man was small and quick, dark of face, with restless eyes and sharp, strong features. Every part of him was defined: small, strong hands, slender arms, a thin and bony nose. Behind him walked his opposite, a huge man, shapeless of face, with large, pale eyes, with wide, sloping shoulders; and he walked heavily, dragging his feet a little, the way a bear drags his paws. His arms did not swing at his sides, but hung loosely.

The first man stopped short in the clearing, and the follower nearly ran over him. He took off his hat and wiped the sweat-band with his forefinger and snapped the moisture off. His huge companion dropped his blankets and flung himself down and drank from the surface of the green pool; drank with long gulps, snorting into the water like a horse. The small man stepped nervously beside him.

'Lennie!' he said sharply. 'Lennie, for God' sakes don't drink so much.' Lennie continued to snort into the pool. The small man leaned over and shook him by the shoulder. 'Lennie. You gonna be sick like you was last night.'

Lennie dipped his whole head under, hat and all, and then he sat up on the bank and his hat dripped down on his blue coat and ran down his back. 'Tha's good,' he said. 'You drink some, George. You take a good big drink.' He smiled happily.

George unslung his bindle and dropped it gently on the bank. 'I ain't sure it's good water,' he said. 'Looks kinda scummy.'

Lennie dabbled his big paw in the water and wiggled his fingers so the water arose in little splashes; rings widened across the pool to the other side and came back again. Lennie watched them go. 'Look, George. Look what I done.'

**Part (a)**

In this passage, how does Steinbeck introduce the relationship between George and Lennie? Refer closely to details from the passage in your response.

**and then Part (b)**

In the rest of the novel, how does Steinbeck present ideas about relationships on a ranch at the time the novel is set?

Read the following passage and then answer **Part (a)** and **Part (b)**.

A tall man stood in the doorway. He held a crushed Stetson hat under his arm while he combed his long, black, damp hair straight back. Like the others he wore blue jeans and a short denim jacket. When he had finished combing his hair he moved into the room, and he moved with a majesty only achieved by royalty and master craftsmen. He was a jerkline skinner, the prince of the ranch, capable of driving ten, sixteen, even twenty mules with a single line to the leaders. He was capable of killing a fly on the wheeler's butt with a bull whip without touching the mule. There was a gravity in his manner and a quiet so profound that all talk stopped when he spoke. His authority was so great that his word was taken on any subject, be it politics or love. This was Slim, the jerkline skinner. His hatchet face was ageless. He might have been thirty-five or fifty. His ear heard more than was said to him, and his slow speech had overtones not of thought, but of understanding beyond thought. His hands, large and lean, 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. He looked kindly at the two in the bunk house. 'It's brighter'n a bitch outside,' he said gently. 'Can't hardly see nothing in here. You the new guys?'

'Just come,' said George.

'Gonna buck barley?'

'That's what the boss says.'

Slim sat down on a box across the table from George. He studied the solitaire hand that was upside down to him. 'Hope you get on my team,' he said. His voice was very gentle. 'I gotta pair of punks on my team that don't know a barley bag from a blue ball. You guys ever bucked any barley?'

**Part (a)**

In this passage, how does Steinbeck present Slim? Refer closely to the passage in your answer.

**and then Part (b)**

In the rest of the novel, how does Steinbeck show that some people on the ranch are considered more important than others? How does this reflect the society in which the novel is set?

Read the following passage and then answer **Part (a)** and **Part (b)**.

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

This room was swept and fairly neat, for Crooks was a proud, aloof man. He kept his distance and demanded that other people kept theirs. His body was bent over to the left by his crooked spine, and his eyes lay deep in his head, and because of their depth seemed to glitter with intensity. His lean face was lined with deep black wrinkles, and he had thin, 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 meager yellow light.

Crooks sat on his bunk. His shirt was out of his jeans in back. In one hand he held a bottle of liniment, and 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 again. He flexed his muscles against his back and shivered.

Noiselessly Lennie appeared in the open doorway and stood there looking in, his big shoulders nearly filling the opening. For a moment Crooks did not see him, but on raising his eyes he stiffened and a scowl came on his face. His hand came out from under his shirt.

Lennie smiled helplessly in an attempt to make friends.

Crooks said sharply, 'You got no right to come in my room. This here's my room. Nobody got any right in here but me.'

**Part (a)**

In this passage, how does Steinbeck present Crooks? Refer closely to the passage in your answer.

**and then Part (b)**

In the rest of the novel how does Steinbeck use Crooks to present attitudes to black people at the time the novel is set?

## 'To a Mouse', by Robert Burns

Wee, sleekit, cowran, tim'rous beastie,  
O, what a panic's in thy breastie!  
Thou need na start awa sae hasty,  
Wi' bickering brattle!  
I wad be laith to rin an' chase thee,  
Wi' murd'ring pattle!

I'm truly sorry Man's dominion  
Has broken Nature's social union,  
An' justifies that ill opinion,  
Which makes thee startle,  
At me, thy poor, earth-born companion,  
An' fellow-mortal!

I doubt na, whyles, but thou may thieve;  
What then? poor beastie, thou maun live!  
A daimen-icker in a thrave 'S a sma' request:  
I'll get a blessin wi' the lave,  
An' never miss't!

Thy wee-bit housie, too, in ruin!  
It's silly wa's the win's are strewin!  
An' naething, now, to big a new ane,  
O' foggage green!  
An' bleak December's winds ensuin,  
Baith snell an' keen!

Thou saw the fields laid bare an' wast,  
An' weary Winter comin fast,  
An' cozie here, beneath the blast,  
Thou thought to dwell,  
Till crash! the cruel coulter past  
Out thro' thy cell.

That wee-bit heap o' leaves an' stibble,  
Has cost thee monie a weary nibble!  
Now thou's turn'd out, for a' thy trouble,  
But house or hald.  
To thole the Winter's sleety dribble,  
An' cranreuch cauld!

**But Mousie, thou are no thy-lane,  
In proving foresight may be vain:  
The best laid schemes o' Mice an' Men,  
Gang aft agley,  
An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain,  
For promis'd joy!**

Still, thou art blest, compar'd wi' me!  
The present only toucheth thee:  
But Och! I backward cast my e'e,  
On prospects drear!  
An' forward, tho' I canna see,  
I guess an' fear!