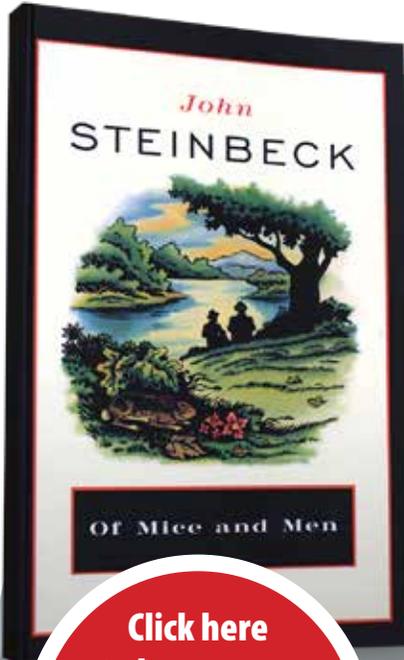




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A Student Response Journal for...

Of Mice and Men

by John Steinbeck

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Item No. 201146

Of Mice and Men

SECTION 1

1. As you read Steinbeck's opening description of the river water forming a dark pool with "recumbent limbs" of sycamore trees arching over it, what feeling do you get? Tell or draw the image that you have in your mind that produces this feeling.
2. Re-read this introductory scene, paying particular attention to the details of Lennie's facial expressions, body movements, and actions. How do they contrast to George's? Write a letter giving your opinion of each man.
3. After listening to the dialogue between the two men, what is your opinion of their relationship?
4. When evaluating George's reaction to or treatment of Lennie, some readers might consider George too harsh. Others might think George is too protective; some might feel George is too unrealistic. What is your opinion? What advice would you give George or Lennie?
5. Can you relate to a time that you were, or felt you were obligated to care for an individual who was extremely frustrating? Perhaps you were babysitting, dealing with a brother, sister, grandparent, neighbor, etc. Include the details of the situation, some dialogue, and people's reactions.

Response Journal

6. George is angry because he believes the bus driver had him get off the bus too soon. Can you remember a time you felt powerless or when someone took advantage of you?

7. At one point George says, “Guys like us, that work on ranches, are the loneliest guys in the world. They got no family. They don’t belong no place....They ain’t got nothing to look ahead to.” Do you think George is right, or is he just feeling sorry for himself? What advice would you give George?

8. Although the two of them are migrants, George believes he and Lennie are different because they have each other, and they have the dream of combining their paychecks and buying their own little farm. In this dream their problems are solved, and Lennie would be safe. By raising rabbits, Lennie would have plenty of soft things to pet; if he killed some, that would become profit because they could eat rabbit meat and sell the fur. In a sense, this dream of George’s can be considered a representation of the dreams of all people since it satisfies the common desire for companionship, independence, and comfort. What is your dream? How do you imagine you will achieve independence and find comfort and companionship?

Of Mice and Men

9. In their present reality, however, Lennie causes problems for George. There are repeated mentions of lost jobs, Lennie getting in trouble, and Lennie's compulsion to touch soft things. George seems to expect Lennie to get in trouble again because he tells Lennie if there is trouble to "hide in the brush 'till I come for you." If you were George, would you continue to protect Lennie?

10. Can you describe a pattern of troubled behavior that you have experienced yourself, or observed in others? Why do you suppose it's so hard for Lennie to change this pattern?

Section 2

11. How would you feel about living in the bunkhouse and working on the ranch with Candy, Carlson, Curley, and the rest of the characters in *Of Mice and Men*? Can you think of good and bad points, or only one or the other?

12. A person's reactions to situations in life often reveal his or her attitudes, concerns, and personality traits. In this section of *Of Mice and Men*, when George and Lennie arrive at the ranch, the reader is presented with three contrasting reactions to the unusual occurrence of two men travelling together. First, when George answers for Lennie, the boss responds with suspicion and accuses George of taking Lennie's pay. Next, Curley reveals his hostile personality by becoming threatening and insisting that Lennie speak. Finally, Slim, who is confident and friendly, approves of George and Lennie's friendship. If you were a worker on the ranch, how do you suppose you would have responded to George and Lennie? Does your choice say anything about you?

Response Journal

13. In this section, Steinbeck gives the reader a portrait of Slim. Some students refer to Slim as the “Marlboro Man.” He is presented to the reader as “the prince of the ranch.” We are told that “there was a gravity in his manner and a quiet so profound that all talk stopped when he spoke.” Give a portrait of a person that you consider exceptional. Follow Steinbeck’s example by starting with physical characteristics, then describe the person’s manner and the way he or she affects others.
14. Consider Steinbeck’s description of Curley. Notice how Curley’s “body language” conveys his feelings.

His eyes passed over the new men and he stopped.
He glanced coldly at George and then at Lennie.
His arms gradually bent at the elbows and his
hands closed into fists. He stiffened and went into
a slight crouch.

Take time to observe some people and find moments when some of their expressions and movements communicate feelings. Describe one of your observations. How often do you think people are aware of their own body language or actually conscious of the body language of others?

15. Candy explains Curley’s behavior to George by saying, “Curley’s like a lot of little guys. He hates big guys. He’s all the time picking scraps with big guys. Kind of like he’s mad at ‘em because he ain’t a big guy.” What is your opinion of Slim’s theory? From life or fiction describe why some “little guys” seem eager to pick fights.

Of Mice and Men

16. “Lennie cried out suddenly—I don’ like this place, George. This ain’t no good place. I wanna get outta here.” What do you suppose he finds fearful about this situation?

17. Candy explains the general gossip about Curley’s wife. Then, the reader is given a description of her behavior when she comes to the bunkhouse door. Finally, George concludes that she is a tramp. However, a reader who understands the treatment of women might conclude that Curley’s wife may be the victim of gender bias. For instance, she has no name or identity; she is simply her husband’s possession. Even worse, the males see her only as a sexual object. Her attempts to talk to people are interpreted by the men as “giving the eye” and dangerous, because Curley would beat them up for showing an interest in his property. What is your view of Curley’s wife and her situation?

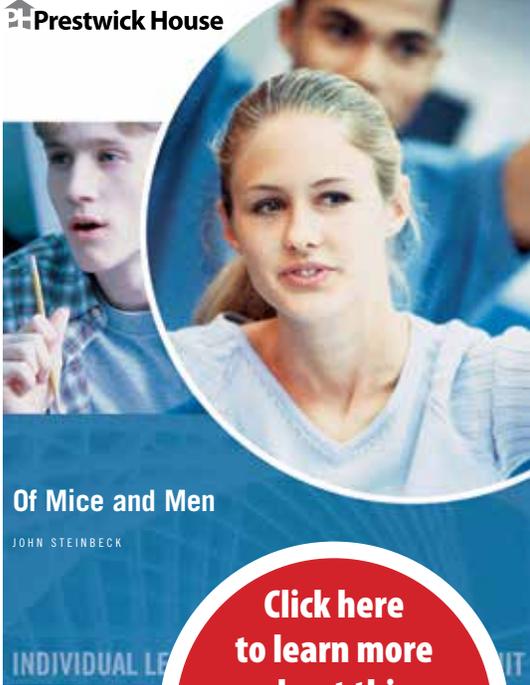
18. The issue of mercy killing is raised in this section. What is your perspective on Slim’s drowning of the four pups because the mother would not be able to feed them? What do you think of Carlson trying to get Candy to shoot his dog just because it is old?



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Teaching Unit

Of Mice and Men

by John Steinbeck

written by Michelle Ryan

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Item No. 300790

Of Mice and Men

Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. explain the significance of the title and its relationship to one of the major themes in the novel.
2. recognize and explain the allusion in the title, *Of Mice and Men*.
3. explain the use of figurative language and rhetorical techniques within the text and how they function.
4. follow the main and secondary characters within the novel and explain their purpose in the story.
5. offer a close reading of the novel and support all assertions and interpretations with direct evidence from the text.
6. demonstrate a literal, personal, interpretive, and critical understanding of the text.
7. explain the central conflicts in the play and the nature of the internal and external conflicts with which various characters cope.
8. identify and discuss the following themes in the play:
 - the impossibility of the American Dream
 - loneliness and isolation during the Depression
 - friendship and camaraderie
 - nature
 - violence
 - euthanasia
9. trace and discuss these images: Candy's dog, Lennie's pup, rabbits.
10. define the term *microcosm* and point out how the ranch in this novel is a microcosm of American society.
11. understand how the Depression influenced the lives of American men and women.
12. explain how each of the main characters in the novel deals with the concept of loneliness.
13. understand how the Naturalist literary movement is reflected in the novel.
14. discern George's motives.
15. decide if fate plays a role in the plot.

Of Mice and Men

Chapter 1

Vocabulary

bundle – a pack, bedroll
brusquely – gruffly
contemplated – thought about
debris – leftovers, garbage
dejectedly – sadly
imperiously – like a dictator; arrogantly
junctures – joints, crossroads
lumbered – moved heavily
morosely – glumly, gloomily
mottled – spotted, blotchy
quivered – shook, trembled
recumbent – reclining, resting
resignedly – in a surrendering manner
skittering – moving rapidly; skipping

1. The novel begins with a rich description of the physical setting. Cite three examples of descriptive language. Explain the effect on the mood by beginning the narrative with this description. What is Steinbeck trying to suggest about the area by the Salinas River?

2. “Jungle-up” is an idiom used in the following sentence: “...and beaten hard by tramps who come wearily down from the highway in the evening to jungle-up near water.” Explain the meaning of the idiom.

3. Compare and contrast the two men who come into the clearing by the river. Why do you think Steinbeck introduces the men by describing their physical features, highlighting the fact that one is small and one is huge? What can the reader infer about the two men based on their descriptions?

Chapter 2

Vocabulary

abruptly – suddenly
apprehensive – anxious, uneasy, fearful
archly – mischievously, slyly
bridled – drew back scornfully or angrily; took offense
complacently – in a self-satisfied way; contentedly
contorted – twisted
derogatory – deliberately offensive, negative
dousing – soaking
flounced – strutted
gravity – seriousness
grizzled – streaked with gray
intently – firmly; in a focused way
laden – burdened
liniment – soothing balm
mollified – soothed
ominously – threateningly; in a way that bodes evil
plaintively – mournfully, pleadingly
precede – to go before
pugnacious – warlike, inclined to fight, combative
scoff – to mock
scowled – frowned angrily
scrappy – quarrelsome
skeptically – doubtfully
slough – to cast off
vials – small bottles

1. In this chapter, Steinbeck again begins with a description of the setting. Explain how this description is different from the one at the beginning of the first chapter. What does this description tell us about George and Lennie's life?

2. When George and Lennie are shown their quarters, the old man tells them that the boss is angry at them. Why?

• **The Boss:** _____

• **Curley:** _____

• **Curley's wife:** _____

2. Some of the character names are nicknames, given to describe a characteristic, such as Slim (thin) and Crooks (crooked spine). Other names, however, seem to symbolize deeper meanings. Why do you think Steinbeck chose the following names for his characters? Use examples from the novel to articulate your opinion.

• **Curley:** _____

• **Whit:** _____

• **Candy:** _____

3. Why is Curley's wife nameless?

4. Steinbeck spends a great deal of time describing Crooks's living quarters at the beginning of this section. What does the reader gain through this description? What do we learn about Crooks?

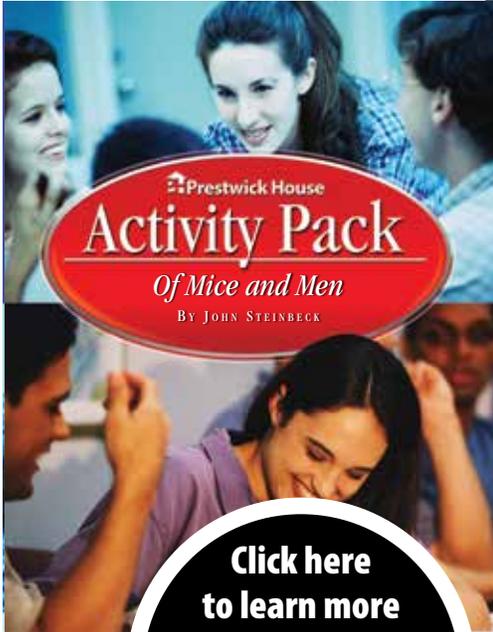
14. Who realizes what really happened between Lennie and George?

15. Explain the significance of the final statement in the novel.



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OF MICE AND MEN

BY JOHN STEINBECK



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Item No. 200775

Edited by Paul Moliken

Name: _____

Date: _____

Section 1**Description**

Objectives: Visualizing a scene
Recognizing the use of concrete detail in descriptive writing

Activity

Steinbeck opens the novel with a description of a deep, green pool.

1. List all the concrete details that are included in the description. For instance, willow and sycamores are described in detail. Steinbeck mentions the wildlife around the pool “A stilted heron labored up into the air and pounded down river”; and “A water snake slipped along the pool, its head held up like a little periscope.”
2. List some ideas that come to mind as you read Steinbeck’s description.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Section 1**Characterization**

Objectives: Recognizing how character traits are revealed
Inferring meaning about a character by contrasting him or her with other characters

Activity

George and Lennie are frequently presented as opposites. Use the chart on the next page to contrast their physical and mental characteristics, personalities, and attitudes.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Section 2**Narrative Technique**

Objective: Interpreting the impact of the narrative device of a choral character

Activity

In Greek drama, a group of characters, or *chorus*, would comment on the action of the play and provide any background information the audience needed. In more modern times, some plays include “choral characters” who comment on the action, provide information, and interpret the situations for the audience.

In *Of Mice and Men*, Candy functions as a choral character; when George and Lennie arrive at the ranch, Candy tells them about the people on the ranch. Steinbeck uses this device to make the situation on the ranch clear to the reader.

Complete the chart on the next page on Candy's role so far.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Section 2**Inference**

Objectives: Understanding characters by interpreting their thoughts and language
Inferring character traits

Activity

In this section, the boss, Curley, and Slim reveal their character to the reader by their reactions to George and Lennie. Each of the three responds to situations in different ways. Their interpretations reflect their own character and concerns.

Complete the chart on the next page that contrasts the reactions of the boss, Curley, and Slim to George and Lennie.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Section 3**Inference and Persuasive Writing**

Objectives: Drawing inferences about the relationship between events in a literary work
Responding to the philosophical position put forth in a story
Using persuasive techniques

Activity

1. In small groups, consider the section in *Of Mice and Men* when Lennie crushes Curley's hand. Some view this event as an inevitable result of a chain of events that Lennie could not control. Complete the chart on the next page showing the causal chain.
2. George makes a choice to let Lennie hurt Curley, knowing how powerful Lennie is. When Curley starts hitting Lennie, George said, "Get him." Slim jumps up to stop Curley, but George holds Slim back, repeating, "Get him, Lennie." What is your view of this? Do you think George should be held responsible? Write a letter to Curley (from any other major character) and explain your feelings to him.
3. List the internal forces that Curley is experiencing, considering the psychological issues he already appears to have. Do you think Curley is responsible for striking out at Lennie? State your position and list your reasons.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Section 3**Plot**

Objective: Recognizing rising action in a plot

Activity

Complete the chart on the next page on how each aspect of George's situation has become more intense and what you predict the outcomes may be.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Sections 1 – 6**Journalistic Style**

Objective: Writing an article, editorial, and headlines for a paper

Activity

After re-reading the following scenes from *Of Mice and Men*, prepare a newspaper story and a headline for one scene and an editorial and headline for a different scene out of the four below. Be sure to include who, what, when, where, and why in your news story. Remember that a news story is objective, unbiased, and presents only the facts as they happened. An editorial, however, allows you to express your own opinion. Make sure, though, that your opinions are supported by facts in the novel.

- The incidents at Weed
- Curley's wife's death
- Lennie's death
- The scene of Lennie crushing Curley's hand

Name: _____

Date: _____

Wrap-Up

Theme

Objective: Writing statements of theme and supporting your thesis with details from the novel

Activity

For each of the following topics present in the novel, write a thematic statement that includes Steinbeck's point of view on the topic. Then cite incidents or comments from the book that support each thematic statement. An example is provided.

Topic Example: Treatment of Women

Thematic Statement: Steinbeck portrays women as second-class people, without personalities of their own.

Comments from the book that support Topic Example: Treatment of Women: The woman in Weeds falsely accused Lennie of rape, and George believes woman are the cause of evil in the world. Curley's wife has no name or individuality of her own; everything she does is in relationship to him: flirting, the desire to leave him, her past. He tries to control everything she does, but in one moment of strength, she threatens Crooks with a lynching. Her need to speak to a man leads to her own and Lennie's death. Steinbeck refers to her as "jailbait" and "poison." Essentially, the only other women mentioned work in whore houses, or Aunt Clara, who is dead.