

Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck
Possible Exam Questions



Questions about Characters

What do we learn about— in the novel?

Possible subjects =

George,

Lennie,

Candy,

Curley,

Curley's Wife,

Slim,

Crooks

or minor characters like Carlson, Whit or the Boss.

What do we learn of the relationship between— and - - in the novel?

**To what extent do we sympathise with—
- in the novel.? Explain your view.**

In each case ,select key incidents, use specific references (and brief quotes if you can) and explain what they show about the character(s).

Imagine that - - looks back over the events of the novel. Write what he would say.

Here select events which would concern the character in question.

Aim to convey his view of events.

Try to echo the character's style and attitude.

Prepare for the exam

Jot down points about the key characters in the novel, along with short quotes.

Think which points you'd use to answer which questions.

Practise analysing specific passages from the text.

Questions about themes and issues in the novel.

Prepare points and quotes on possible themes.

These could include;

Dreams,

the significance of the title

loneliness,

friendship,

Relationships,

Racism,

The role of women

What we learn of life on the ranch

The significance of animals in the novel.

The use of setting and place in the novel.

Characteristics which make it easy to adapt the novel into a play.

Consider aspects of Steinbeck's writing style and the novel's structure.

Consider the way chapters are structured

Consider how we're prepared for the disaster ahead.

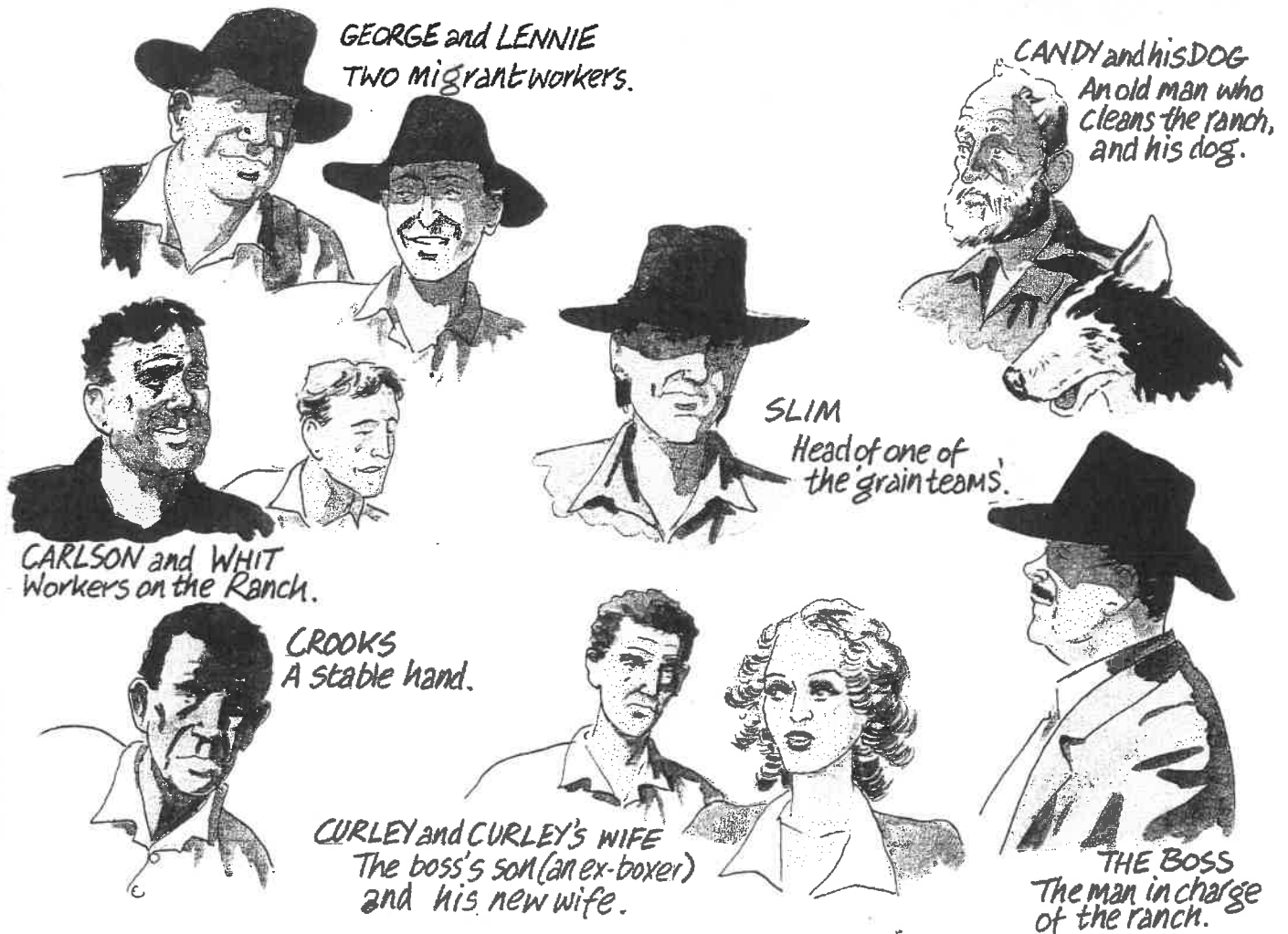
Explore word use,

Discuss how mood is created ,

Note hints of a threat even in idyllic nature scenes,

Discuss metaphors, similes, use of light and sound to create atmosphere. etc.

CHARACTERS: WHO'S WHO



JOHN STEINBECK: AUTHOR AND CONTEXT

- 1902 John Ernst Steinbeck born 27 February in Salinas, California
- 1917 USA enters First World War
- 1925 Steinbeck leaves university without a degree and goes to New York
- 1929 'Great Crash' on Wall Street, start of the Great Depression; Steinbeck publishes his first novel, *Cup of Gold*
- 1930 Steinbeck marries Carol Henning
- 1937 *Of Mice and Men* published
- 1939-45 Second World War
- 1940 Steinbeck's first marriage breaks up; *Grapes of Wrath* wins Pulitzer Prize
- 1962 Steinbeck awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature
- 1968 Steinbeck dies of heart disease



Of Mice and Men—John Steinbeck

The Title

Be aware of the significance of the title, taken from a Robbie Burns poem, which warns us that the best laid plans of mice and men often go wrong.

Chapter One

Note the description of the pool at the start. The scene seems peaceful but there are threatening touches. Identify these. and consider what they might suggest about the future.

George and Lennie appear. What do we learn of their relationship? Who is the leader? How do you know?

Identify the animal images used to describe Lennie. What do these images suggest about him? Identify times when the two get along as well as times when they irritate each other..

What is George and Lennie's dream and what does it tell us about them? Be aware of the situation in the 1930s when many people lost property because of the economic situation.

The two men have had to escape from Weed. because of Lennie's behaviour. How does this affect the likelihood of the dream coming true? Look for signs in the novel that the dream is constantly threatened.

Chapter Two

George and Lennie arrive at the ranch. They meet Candy, the boss, Curley, Curley's Wife and Slim.

Make notes on each of these characters. What do they look like? How do they treat George and Lennie? How do they respond to each other? What are their good qualities and what are their less pleasant aspects? Remember to select key words and phrases to use as quotes.

What do we learn of life on the ranch in this chapter?

Consider the references made about Crooks, the negro stable hand. What do these tell us about attitudes to race on the ranch?

What do we learn of the role of women on the ranch from Curley's Wife?

What aspects of authority are introduced in this chapter? How do the boss, Curley, George and Slim use or misuse authority?

What signs are there of conflict which could threaten George and Lennie and their dream? Note these and explain the threat.

Chapter Three

What do we learn of George and Lennie's relationship from George's conversation with Slim? What does the way Slim draws out the confidence from George tell us about him and his role on the ranch?

Discuss their views on loneliness here also.

We learn more about what happened in Weed. This warns us of the likelihood that something similar could happen between Lennie and Curley's Wife. .

What do we learn of life on the ranch from Whit's comments about western magazines and brothels?

The shooting of Candy's dog is important because it shows attitudes on the ranch -unsentimental? Harsh? Anything that is no longer useful will be got rid of.. Carlson especially doesn't recognise Candy's dog as a companion but just sees it as old and useless. Candy fears that he will soon be viewed this way.

The fact that Candy reluctantly accepts that his dog will be shot once Slim agrees to it, highlights Slim's authority on the ranch.

The shooting of the dog also foreshadows the shooting of Lennie at the end of the novel.

George and Lennie's dream of owning a small farm appears closer when a specific farm is available and Candy is keen to invest. This is the closest they get to their dream.

Research what they have to say about how they will live and why it's important to them.

The dream is threatened by Lennie's fight with Curley, Consider what we learn here of Curley, Lennie and George and how they relate to each other. This reminds us how dangerous Lennie's strength is and of the threat to happiness posed by Curley and his wife.. Slim's authority is shown when he takes control at the end.

Consider how quieter sections and those with dramatic tension are included in this chapter..

Chapter Four

This chapter is set in Crooks's room, part of the barn. This shows that his status is only slightly higher than the animals as he is black. How does his pain effect our view of him?

Note what we learn of Crooks' background and consider how this might contribute to his bitterness and lack of trust of white people.

Crooks deliberately provokes Lennie and enjoys watching him suffer. Is this because, for once he feels that he is not the lowest in status and takes advantage of his temporary command? As Crooks discusses loneliness, do we feel sympathy with Crooks' comments that, unlike George and Lennie, he has nobody to talk to?

On Candy's arrival, Crooks gets drawn in to the dream of owning a farm.. This is in spite of the fact that he has seen so many men pass through with the same dream. Does this show the power of the dream? The fact that these three are the most helpless men on the ranch might suggest that the dream won't happen but there's a brief sense of hope.

Once more, dreams are threatened as Curley's Wife enters. Consider how she is portrayed. Is she lonely or a troublemaker? To what extent do we sympathise with her? She is nasty to the men when asked to leave and threatens to make false accusations against Crooks to have him hanged. Because of this ,Crooks withdraws from the dream and the chance for happiness and companionship is lost. We realise how helpless he is.

The chapter ends as it started with Crooks still alone and in pain.

Chapter Five

The chapter is set in the barn and seems peaceful at the start until we find that Lennie has killed the puppy he was given. We've already heard that Lennie has killed several mice, now a puppy. This makes us fear what could happen next.

Curley's Wife arrives and sympathises with Lennie. She tells him of her dream of being a film star. In what way does her dream differ from George and Lennie's. How do we feel about her when she talks of her relationship with Curley? Remember what the title warns us of the best laid plans. Like George and Lennie her chances of succeeding are slender. Like many characters in the novel, Curley's Wife is lonely.

Be aware of how the peacefulness turns to panic as Lennie won't let go of Curley's Wife's hair. Trace how word use changes and how Lennie's response to her struggles changes from fear to anger then back to fear when he realises that he has killed her.

Consider how Curley's Wife is portrayed in death. Steinbeck once said that the reader should feel some sympathy for her.

Think of George and Candy's responses to her death. Was Candy fair in blaming her for her own death?

What are George's fears for Lennie now?

How does Curley respond to his wife's death? What does this show us about him?

What does George decide to do?

Chapter Six

This chapter returns to the pool in the Salinas River, showing that events seem to have come full circle. Last time Lennie was escaping from Weed after an incident with a girl. This escape is worse as he has not just scared but killed. Although the scenery seems the same, there are more sinister undertones. Nature seems more aggressive and Lennie seems much more wary. Find examples of these changes.

Lennie hears and sees his Aunt Clara, who raised him, telling him he's done a bad thing. He also sees a giant rabbit which is angry with him. These images reflect his fears. Aunt Clara is an authority figure from his youth and the rabbit represents his dream of caring for rabbits on the farm.

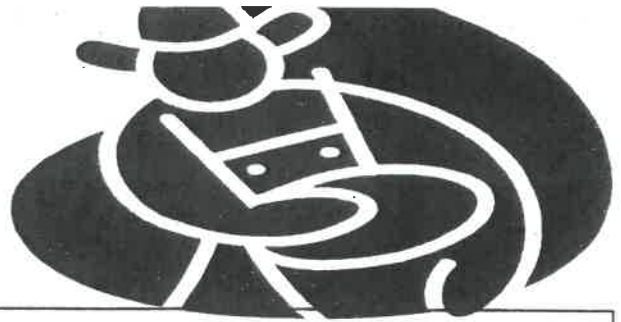
George arrives and talks to Lennie about their dream as he prepares to shoot him. Consider how suspense is built here as every stage is described. Select words which show how George feels as he prepares to shoot his friend.

Lennie is shot, just like Candy's dog was as the bunkhouse guys want him dead. Unlike Candy, with the dog, George shoots his friend himself as he wants it to be as humane as possible.

Consider how each of the characters reacts to Lennie's death.

The dream is now dead. George is free to live a life without Lennie as he has so often told him but this now seems so empty. Nobody's dream has come true and George is now alone.

Does the novel offer a pessimistic view of life? Is there hope for ordinary people?



Dreams in Of Mice and Men

The American Dream

Since its discovery, America has attracted people who wanted a new start and to own a plot of land.

By George and Lennie's time, in the 1930s, all land was already taken but the collapse of the stock market (Wall Street Crash) of 1929 meant that thousands lost their jobs and properties and often had to sell land to pay bills.

The 1930s were a time of great uncertainty, with many workers having to travel from place to place to find work, as George and Lennie did.

George and Lennie's dream

As they travel from place to place, George and Lennie share a dream of owning a small farm of their own. It is not a dream of grandeur but of comfort and permanence.

Lennie asks George to repeat the details of it over and over so that it becomes almost like a fairy tale told to a child;

"We're gonna have a little house and a couple of acres and a cow and some pigs" (Chapter 1)

"We'd have our own place where we belonged—" (Chapter 3)

Lennie's desire to tend the rabbits on this farm shows a need to express affection.

This dream sustains them as they work long hours, harvesting crops for others rather than themselves.

The appeal of the dream draws in Candy, who feels that he will be sacked as soon as he is unable to help on the ranch. (Chapter 3)

For a short while it seems as if the dream could come true when a specific farm is found, the men have almost enough money and even the cynical Crooks is tempted to join. (Chapter 4)

Other Dreams

Curley's Wife has a grander dream than George and Lennie. She dreams of becoming a Hollywood star.

"Coulda been in the movies and had nice clothes—"

Rather than simple comfort and sensible working conditions, hers is a dream of glamour. The frustration of her dream has led to her rushed marriage to Curley, with disastrous consequences..

Whit (Chapter 3) reads cowboy magazines and admires the cowboy life.

Why the dream won't be realised

Throughout the novel, we are given warnings that George and Lennie's dream won't come true. The title, Of Mice and Men, reminds us that, in the Robbie Burns poem from which the words are taken,

The best laid plans of mice and men gang aft a-gley
(often go wrong)

We are repeatedly warned of the dangerous consequences of Lennie's behaviour.

Tensions between Curley and his wife lead George and Lennie to realise that their dream could be in danger.

Crooks warns Lennie and Candy

"Nobody never gets to Heaven and nobody gets no land"

Lennie is shot by George at the end of the novel, seeing the farm of his dreams in his head as George recites it to him one last time. George knows, as he recites this, that the dream is over for him too.

Consider

How do the characters' failed dreams make us feel about them? Do we sympathise or blame them for being unrealistic? What impression does Steinbeck give of life if dreams always fail?

Animals in *Of Mice and Men*

The Title

The phrase *Of Mice and Men* is taken from a poem by the Scottish poet Robbie Burns. Burns had just discovered that he had accidentally ploughed over a field mouse's home, so destroying all the mouse's hard work.

In his poem to the mouse, Burns told the creature;
"the best laid plans of mice and men gang aft aglei"
(the best laid plans of mice and men often go wrong)

In the novel, George and Lennie's plans for a home and stability are destroyed by forces partly out of their control. The dreams of several other characters are also destroyed. They are like the mouse in the poem.

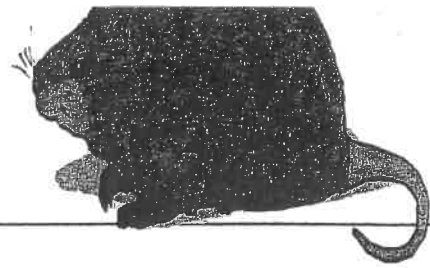
Candy's Dog

Candy's dog has been his companion for many years and is described as grey and slow, like its owner (Chapter 2)

When Carlson insists that Candy's dog should be shot as it is too old to be useful, he doesn't take into account the fact that the dog is a companion for Candy. Carlson thinks of usefulness but not emotional ties. The fact that Slim agrees could reflect the harsh, totally practical life lead on the ranch. Everything must have a purpose..

The way in which the dog is shot in the back of the head by a pistol is later echoed in the shooting of Lennie by George..
(Chapter 6)

Candy tells George and Lennie that he fears the boss will also get rid of him once he serves no useful purpose (Chapter 3) so he compares himself to his dog..



Lennie and Animals

Lennie is described as if he were an animal at several points in the book.

Chapter 1 "- dragging his feet a little, the way a bear drags his paws" His clumsiness is conveyed here.

Lennie also threatens that he'll go and live in a cave, so talking as if he were an animal.

At the pool, Lennie "- drank with long gulps, snorting into the water like a horse"
This shows his lack of forethought. He behaves instinctively, like an animal.

"- slowly, like a terrier who doesn't want to bring a ball to its master—"
George's dominance and Lennie's stubbornness are shown in this quote.

The fact that Lennie keeps killing mice accidentally shows that he doesn't learn from his mistakes, an ominous warning of later disaster.

A more serious incident occurs when Lennie kills his puppy. Once more, he hasn't learnt to control his physical strength and has grabbed the puppy too hard, as he did to the mice. This then leads to the tragic death of Curley's Wife.
(Chapter 5)

Lennie's desire to look after these animals stems from a need to show affection (as does his dream of keeping rabbits on the farm) This makes the disastrous results seem even sadder.

Other Animal References

Although the description of the pool in the Salinas River at the start of the novel seems idyllic, there are references to animals being preyed upon. when we return to the same scene in the last chapter. At the start of Chapter 6, a heron pounces on a little water snake just like Burns destroyed the mouse's nest or George and Lennie's dream was destroyed.

The sounds of the horses in the stable on the ranch reflect the mood in that section of the text.

Steinbeck's use of language in Of Mice and Men

Descriptive Style

The novel includes several descriptive passages, often but not exclusively, at the start of a chapter. In these sections he pays close attention to detail e.g. The description of the pool in the Salinas River at the start of the novel in which he describes the leaves, tracks of animals etc. These descriptions set the scene for the action which will take place.

These descriptive sections make use of similes and metaphors. Lennie is often compared to animals. e.g. "snorting into the water like a horse." We're also told that he walks "the way a bear drags his paws" These similes convey his great strength but also suggest clumsiness both of mind and body.

Slim is described as having a "hatchet face." This metaphor makes his face seem sharp and clearly defined, like his mind.

Be aware of how the characters' personalities are reflected in their appearance, words and movement e.g. George has "sharp strong features." Curley moves and speaks very aggressively. He is described as bursting into the room and as whipping his body round etc.

Everything about Candy is grey and slow. Curley's Wife moves seductively, framing herself in the doorway etc. By describing her blocking the light, Steinbeck suggests her threat to herself and others. Be aware of the significance of light and shadow in the novel. Lennie is killed as the light fades.

Sometimes Steinbeck describes very simply. e.g. In describing the death of Curley's Wife, "She was still for Lennie had broken her neck." The bluntness of the statement makes the situation seem even more shocking. Steinbeck goes on to describe her lying in the hay as beautiful and innocent. The language here is almost poetic and pauses the action in a kind of freeze frame. Steinbeck once said that he intended the reader to feel some sympathy for Curley's Wife and this description invites the reader to pause and realise that her dreams have come to nothing and that she has been unhappy and lonely. The freeze frame provides a pause before the frenzy of discovery and hunting for Lennie.

Tension and Suspense

There are several sections in which suspense is built and tension increases..

Remember to study the build up to the fight between Curley and Lennie and to identify words and phrases which show their feelings and actions ending with Curley flopping like a fish in Lennie's grasp.. Suspense is created also by the repeated warnings of the danger posed by Curley.

Consider how delaying the shooting of Candy's dog by describing the tension of the men in the bunk house creates suspense.

Trace the build up from calm to panic when Lennie kills Curley's Wife.

Consider how suspense is created by describing every detail of George's unwilling preparation to kill Lennie at the end of the novel/and by describing the voices of the others getting progressively closer.

Quarrels between the characters also raise tension and make the reader concerned as to their consequences. as does the use of foreshadowing to warn of potential danger points.

Dialogue

Steinbeck makes extensive use of dialogue in the novel. The characters use the colloquial American which ranch hands would have used in the 1930s. This makes their talk more immediate and realistic. Racist language is used to reflect current attitudes. Characters often swear and use disrespectful language. E.g "son of a bitch" or in reference to Curley's Wife.

There is also use of ranch terms e.g. Jerk line skinner." "bucking grain" to add realism.

Of Mice and Men -Structure

The novel is short and is sometimes referred to as a novella because of this.

The events happen over a short space of time, a weekend, and are in chronological order with flashbacks filling in any background information e.g. Events at Weed. This gives the story a sense of pace.

The novel starts and ends at the pool by the Salinas River. This gives a sense of balance but could also suggest that the characters are no better off. In fact things get worse and the more aggressive touches in nature in chapter 6 convey this e.g. The heron kills the snake.

Throughout the novel, we are given warnings which suggest that the characters have very little hope of achieving their dreams. e.g. Lennie's past behaviour. This is known as foreshadowing and creates a sense of the characters' helplessness.

As we move through the novel, the damage caused by Lennie gets progressively worse. First he kills mice, then a puppy, then Curley's Wife.

The title provides a constant reminder that the men are probably destined to fail too by reminding us that the best laid plans of mice and men often go wrong.

Moments of calm and happiness are often followed by conflict. e.g. Candy joining George and Lennie's dream leads to Curley misinterpreting Lennie's joy and attacking him.. Varying the mood keeps the reader engaged and the sudden change could surprise the reader but also reinforces the fact that the characters' happiness is always short-lived.

Play like Qualities

Steinbeck wrote *Of Mice and Men* with the intention of later adapting it into a play.

The novel has many play-like qualities;

Each chapter is set in one location.

Each setting is simple, very visual and is described at the start of the chapter. These descriptions almost feel like instructions to a stage designer.

The chapters often return to the quiet description as they close.

There are comparatively few characters in the novel. This would make it easier to stage, especially in a smaller theatre.

The novel makes frequent use of dialogue. This makes the portrayal of the characters feel authentic as they talk in colloquial American as manual workers would. e.g. "A guy goes nuts if he ain't got nobody." This is also easily transferrable onto the stage..

Entrances and exits are key parts of the action. e.g. Characters often appear in doorways. This would be very effective in the theatre.

Steinbeck often describes the light and how it shines. This is again very visual and could be easily interpreted on stage..

Lennie's huge size compared to Curley, Curley's Wife's red accessories etc are all very visual touches.

GEORGE AND LENNIE

- * Different from the other ranch hands, "we got somebody to talk to that gives a damn about us" because they have each other.
- * George enjoys the dream of the two friends owning land together as much as Lennie. "An' if a fren' come along...we'd say "Why don't you spea' the night?"
- * George tells Slim, "I seen the guys that go around the ranches alone. That ain't no good", revealing that he benefits by avoiding their loneliness. He says that he and Lennie "got kinda used to each other" and "it's nicer to go around with a guy you know."
- * George tells Slim how he once used Lennie for fun but he learned his lesson after an incident in the river and "I ain't done nothing like that no more." He protects and defends Lennie, for example not allowing Slim to call him "cuckoo", proudly telling the Boss that "he can put up more grain alone than most pairs can" and not allowing Curley to beat him up.
- * Lennie, despite being slow and easily confused, is sure of this friendship, answering Crooks's threat that George might abandon him, "George wouldn't do nothing like that."
- * Lennie is also protective of George. "Ain't nobody goin' to talk no hurt to George."
- * When he kills Lennie, George makes sure that he dies happy, Lennie's last words being, "Let's get that place now" as George pulls the trigger behind his head.

CURLEY'S WIFE

- * In the first meeting, Steinbeck stresses how incongruous her clothes and appearance are, with her "full, rouged lips", "heavily made up" eyes, "red fingernails" and "red mules on the insteps of which were little bouquets of red ostrich feathers." She is immediately isolated, partly by being the only female here and also by being the sort of woman who would not easily fit in on a hard-working ranch. Steinbeck makes her seem more friendless and remote by never giving her a name.
- * This is the first of several visits to the bunkhouse, always claiming that she is looking for Curley but clearly she is looking for company.
- * The men know that, as Curley's wife, she is too dangerous to befriend and so they are never chatty, and just want her to leave. George has to teach this to Lennie, telling him to "leave her be."
- * On Saturday night, she wanders in to the barn where there is a gathering of those excluded from going into town. Though she knows Curley has gone to the cat-house, she asks if he is here; clearly, she is lonely.
- * She announces her isolation to these men, "Think I don't like to talk to somebody ever' once in a while? Think I like to stick in that house all a time?"
- * She lashes out viciously because they do not want her to talk to them, calling them "a bunch of bindle stiffs" and claiming that she is only here because "They ain't nobody else."
- * In the barn with Lennie she pleads, "I never get to talk to nobody. I get awful lonely." She is, perhaps, more friendless than anyone else.
- * As she realises that she can talk to Lennie, she confides that she only married Curley to get away from home. The dream world that she lives in, the belief that she could have been a film star only isolates her further; her real world is lonely and miserable whilst her dream is unattainable.

THE RANCH AND THE ITINERANT WORKERS

- * The ranch is isolated as suggested by Lennie and George's long walk to reach there and by the town's name Soledad, the Spanish for "loneliness."
- * This remoteness is further emphasised by the fact that the Steinbeck's location never changes; the reader hears of, but never sees, the men going "into town" and of Curley's going to a doctor when his hand is smashed.
- * The Boss is suspicious of George because he is unaccustomed to the idea of friendship among the men- Page 43, "I never seen one guy take so much trouble for another guy."
- * The workers are all nomadic and solitary, like the man used George's bed before him, "he just quit, the way a guy will....just wanted to move."
- * When telling the details of the dream to Lennie, George describes ranch workers as "the loneliest guys in the world" with "no family" and "nothing to look ahead to."
- * Slim talks to George of the rarity of guys travelling together and being friends "I don't know why. Maybe ever'body in the whole damn world is scared of each other."
- * The men on the ranch are all passing through except Candy and Crooks who are forced to stay because of their disabilities. No-one seems to have a family and they all go to town to pay for the temporary company of women.

CROOKS

- * He is segregated in the barn, demonstrating racial discrimination of the 1930s.
- * Candy tells a story from Christmas when "they let the nigger come in that night."
- * Excluded from the companionship that exists in the bunkhouse - no cards or chat. When he comes to speak to Slim about a mule's foot, he does not enter - "the stable buck put in his head."
- * At the beginning of Section 4, we see where and how he lives, his possessions including books as he reads instead of having company.
- * "Crooks was a proud, aloof man" because he has no choice but to endure this prejudice and isolation. Consequently, he bitterly guards his enforced privacy, saying to Lennie, "This here's my room...I ain't wanted in the bunkhouse, and you ain't wanted in my room."
- * He is regretting the way that he taunted Lennie, "A guy needs somebody - to be near him" and "a guy gets too lonely" and "A guy sets alone out here at night."

Isolation and loneliness in Of Mice And Men

CANDY

- * His dog is his company and his equivalent of a friend, "I had 'im since he was a pup."
- * The other men, all loners and migrant workers, cannot understand the idea of friendship and simply want the dog shot because it is no longer useful and is a nuisance in the bunkhouse.
- * They do not recognise, nor sympathise with, Candy's affection for the dog as he pleads with them to let the subject drop, "I'm so used to him" and "he was the best damn sheepdog I ever seen."
- * He offers his money to George and Lennie to buy the property because "I ain't got no relatives nor nothing."
- * He knows that his future is more loneliness and then death, "They'll can me purty soon...I won't have no place to go to."
- * When Crooks sneers at the idea of owning their own place, his answer shows the comfort he gains from his new friends and the end to loneliness, "we gonna do it...Me and Lennie and George."
- * The importance of friendship and the self-esteem it now gives to him is also shown in the way that he answers back to Curley's wife when she insults him and Crooks and Lennie, "We got fren's, that's what we got." (Page 111)
- * Seeing the collapse of his dream, he takes out his anger on Curley's wife's corpse, "You wasn't no good...I could of hoed the garden and washed dishes for them guys" but now there is only his lonely old aged existence on the ranch.

SECTION A

1. *Of Mice and Men*

Answer part (a) and **either** part (b) **or** part (c).

You are advised to spend about 20 minutes on part (a), and about 40 minutes on part (b) or part (c).

(a) Read the extract on the opposite page. Then answer the following question:

Look closely at how Carlson speaks and behaves here. How does it affect your feelings towards him? [10]

Either,

(b) “Every character in *Of Mice and Men* can be regarded as a victim of one sort or another.” For which character do you think this is most true? Show how John Steinbeck presents your chosen character as a victim. [20]

Or,

(c) How are animals important in *Of Mice and Men*? [20]

The thick-bodied Carlson came in out of the darkening yard. He walked to the other end of the bunk-house and turned on the second shaded light. 'Darker'n'hell in here,' he said. 'Jesus, how that nigger can pitch shoes.'

'He's plenty good,' said Slim.

'Damn right he is,' said Carlson. 'He don't give nobody else a chance to win ...' He stopped and sniffed the air, and still sniffing, looked down at the old dog. 'God Awmighty that dog stinks. Get him outa here, Candy! I don't know nothing that stinks so bad as an old dog. You gotta get him out.'

Candy rolled to the edge of his bunk. He reached over and patted the ancient dog, and he apologized: 'I been around him so much I never notice how he stinks.'

'Well, I can't stand him in here,' said Carlson. 'That stink hangs around even after he's gone.' He walked over with his heavy-legged stride and looked down at the dog. 'Got no teeth,' he said. 'He's all stiff with rheumatism. He ain't no good to you, Candy. An' he ain't no good to himself. Why'n't you shoot him, Candy?'

The old man squirmed uncomfortably. 'Well – hell! I had him so long. Had him since he was a pup. I herded sheep with him.' He said proudly: 'You wouldn't think it to look at him now, but he was the best damn sheep dog I ever seen.'

George said: 'I seen a guy in Weed that had an Airedale could herd sheep. Learned it from the other dogs.'

Carlson was not to be put off. 'Look, Candy. This ol' dog jus' suffers hisself all the time. If you was to take him out and shoot him right in the back of the head' – he leaned over and pointed – 'right there, why he'd never know what hit him.'

Candy looked about unhappily. 'No,' he said softly. 'No, I couldn't do that. I had 'im too long.'

'He don't have no fun,' Carlson insisted. 'And he stinks to beat hell. Tell you what. I'll shoot him for you. Then it won't be you that does it.'

Candy threw his legs off his bunk. He scratched the white stubble whiskers on his cheek nervously. 'I'm so used to him,' he said softly. 'I had him from a pup.'

'Well, you ain't bein' kind to him keepin' him alive,' said Carlson. 'Look, Slim's bitch got a litter right now. I bet Slim would give you one of them pups to raise up, wouldn't you, Slim?'