

Of Mice and Men



The Plot

1. George and Lennie are best friends. They have a dream of owning their own little house and land. At the river, they eat their supper, and George tells Lennie to come back to that spot if there is trouble.

6. Back at the river, Lennie imagines being told off. George finds him and comforts him by telling him about their dream. To protect him from worse punishment at the hands of Curley, George shoots Lennie.

2. George and Lennie arrive at the ranch and meet The Boss, Slim, Candy, and the Boss' Son, Curley. Candy warns George and Lennie about Curley, and Curley's Wife.

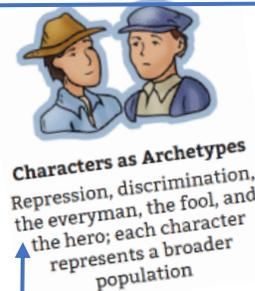
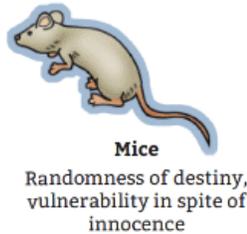
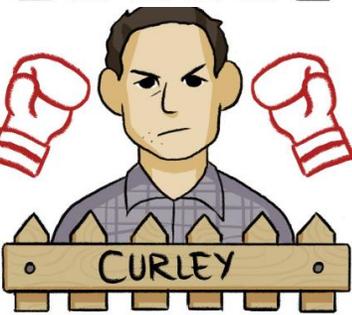
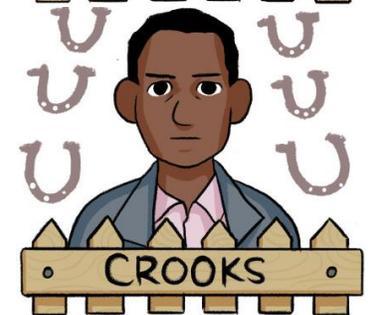
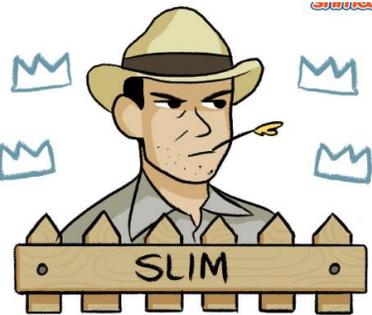
5. In the barn, Lennie accidentally kills one of his pups. Curley's wife comes in and tells Lennie her life story. Lennie accidentally kills Curley's Wife. The men find Curley's Wife's body, but Lennie is gone

3. Slim gives Lennie one of his pups. Carlson persuades Candy to shoot his old dog. George and Lennie let Candy in on their plan to buy land. Curley picks a fight with Lennie and gets his hand crushed.

4. Lennie visits Crooks, the stable buck, in his room. Candy and Lennie let Crooks in on their plan to buy their own farm. Curley's wife comes in and intimidates them all.

Key Words

- American Dream
- Hope
- Racism
- Gender
- Segregation
- The Great Depression
- Itinerant Workers
- Hollywood
- Ageism
- The Dust Bowl
- Unemployment
- Loneliness
- Friendship
- Weakness



Symbolism

Tasks:

1. What is Candy's Dog symbolic of?
2. Most of the settings in OMAM are symbolic of an idea. What is Steinbeck symbolizing with the:
 - A) River pool
 - B) The little house and their land
 - C) The bunk house
3. Can you add any other symbols to the mindmap?

Context

- ☞ *Of Mice and Men* was published in 1937.
- ☞ The novel is set in Soledad, which is Spanish for 'loneliness'.
- ☞ The novel is set during the Great Depression, a period of significant poverty following the Wall Street Crash in 1929.
- ☞ The Great Depression lasted for 10 years worldwide, and didn't end until 1941 in the USA.
- ☞ The Dust Bowl – drought and dust storms – swept across several states in mid-west America.
- ☞ Many farmers migrated to California to look for work, but because so many moved, work was not easy to find.
- ☞ Ranch workers like George and Lennie moved from place to place – they were called 'Itinerant Workers.'
- ☞ Steinbeck was not poor but was inspired by his time working on the ranches near his home in California.
- ☞ The lives of Itinerant Workers inspired both *Of Mice and Men* and *The Grapes of Wrath*.
- ☞ African Americans were hit the hardest by the Great Depression, and racism increased during his time.

Key themes in *Of Mice and Men*

Task: Find a quote from the novel for each box, which you think 'sums up' the theme. Add to the grid.



The American Dream

The American Dream that everyone can make it sustains the farm workers, but ultimately proves impossible.

Fraternity/ Male Friendship

The men of the novella come together to protect and help each other in the harsh world.

Innocence

Lennie has the innocence of a child, but he never understands the reality of his actions. Should we be more like George, pragmatic and realistic?

Loneliness

Everyone on the Ranch is lonely. George and Lennie stand out because they have a friendship. Steinbeck shows that this lifestyle is damaging for the men and their relationships, making them lack compassion for each other.

Justice

The Ranch operates by its own set of rules, dictated over by Slim. The people around Slim accept his word as best.

Women and Femininity

On the Ranch, women are reduced to sexual objects. Curley's wife is trapped by this degradation, and conforms to these expectations as her only source of power.

Prejudice

Of Mice and Men offers insights into racism, sexism, ageism and ableism. Does Steinbeck speak out against these prejudices, or does he accept them?

Weakness

All the novel's different characters display weakness in some way. Some are morally weak, while others are physically weak. Does George and Lennie's friendship make them weaker or stronger? Which characters are strong?

Man and the Natural World

In both the Ranch and the Natural World instincts trump goodness and cruelty is natural. Lennie loves animals but kills them; Candy loves his dog, but can't stand up for it. How different is Lennie from Candy's old dog, and how different is Carlson from George?