

Of Mice and Men

Questions for Essay and Discussion

1. Make a list of the incidents that foreshadow the dangers coming to George and Lennie. Explain what you believe is the effect that the foreshadowing has on the reader's interpretation of events.
2. Explain Steinbeck's purpose in including women and African-Americans in the novel. What functions do these characters serve?
3. Analyze the relationship between George and Lennie. Explain how this relationship is a contradiction to the typical relationships that one might find during the Depression. Focus on both the positive and negative aspects of the friendship.
4. Explain how the structure of the novel contributes to the reader's understanding of the events that happen.
5. Discuss how the novel encompasses characteristics of both a narrative and a play.
6. Explain Steinbeck's use of language and what it contributes to the characterization and meaning of the text.
7. Steinbeck's story does not focus solely on the negative emotions that the Depression suggests. At certain points in the story, he writes about events that give the characters hope. Chronicle both the events and the emotions that the characters have in trying to achieve their dreams. What do you think Steinbeck is trying to convey about the nature of a person's dreams.
8. How does Steinbeck demonstrate the cruel side of human nature? Describe the rhetorical and narrative techniques that he uses.
9. The title, *Of Mice and Men*, alludes to one of the novel's themes. Read the poem "To a Mouse" by Robert Burns. Note how the theme of the poem is developed throughout the novel.
10. Animal imagery is used throughout the novel to characterize certain people. Trace the appearance of the imagery and what it comes to symbolize.
11. Trace the pattern of death that is developed in the novel.
12. Steinbeck uses violence throughout the novel to relate to George and Lennie. Discuss the importance of the violence as a necessity in illustrating the theme of the novel.

13. Identify the characteristics of Naturalism that are portrayed in the novel, and explain how these characteristics help define the story.
14. Discuss how the ranch can be seen as a microcosm of the United States. How is George and Lennie's dream representative of the dreams of the migrant worker?
15. Steinbeck uses a woman, Curley's wife, to advance the conflict in the novel. However, despite her purpose, Steinbeck does not give her a name. What comment does Steinbeck seem to be making about the role of women in the 1930s?
16. Loneliness is a theme in the novel. In fact, "Soledad" means loneliness. Explain how this theme is related throughout the novel.
17. Steinbeck goes to great lengths to make Lennie a sympathetic character. Discuss the techniques Steinbeck employs in order to accomplish this. Then, explain why you believe he did.
18. Compare and contrast the instance in which Carlson takes Candy's dog away to kill it, and the scene in which George shoots Lennie. What do each of the instances add to the novel's theme of a person's responsibility to another person?
19. The final scene in the novel allows Steinbeck to explore the morality of a mercy killing. Using specific references in the text, discuss the ways in which you believe the novel explores mercy killings.
20. Using evidence from the text, discuss whether or not you believe Lennie's death was justified.

Free-Response (Essay) Items