

## Year 9 Knowledge Organiser-Autumn Term.

### Of Mice and Men

#### Context

In the 1930s America was a mess. Poverty, social inequalities and depression were rife. This was all due to the American stock market crashing in 1929 which led to high levels of unemployment, drought and over-farming, bankruptcy and homelessness. This time period is often referred to as the **Great Depression**. Many farmers who had lost their farms travelled to California where the climate and soil were better. They only took what they could carry on their backs. George and Lennie are examples of traveling farm workers.

#### Key Vocabulary

- Steinbeck
- American Dream
- Immigrants
- The Great Depression
- Inference
- Characterisation
- Hierarchy
- Contextual
- Segregation

**Make sure you understand the definition of any words you do not understand.**

#### About the author

John Steinbeck was born in 1902 in California. *Of Mice and Men* was published in 1937. His novel is partly based on his own experiences working on ranches while he was at university. He died aged 66 in 1968.

#### Characters

**George**- a small, fairly intelligent worker. He travels around with Lennie.

**Lennie**- is a big, strong, slow-witted man who travels with George. He likes stroking soft things.

**Candy**- is an old, one-handed rancher who sweeps the bunk house. He has an old, smelly dog.

**Crooks**-a crippled man who is picked on because he is black. He is very bitter about life.

**Slim**-the most respected man on the ranch. Everyone looks up to him.

**Curley**-a small, aggressive man, who hates "big guys". He is the boss's son and no one likes him.

**Curley's Wife**-is young, pretty and a bit of a flirt. She hates her life on the ranch and is very lonely.

**Slim**-insensitive and aggressive. He is always complaining and stirring up trouble.

#### Plot Summary

- George and Lennie are spending the night by a pool before starting work at a new ranch.
- George is annoyed with Lennie because they had to leave in a hurry from their last job. Lennie has a habit of getting into trouble.
- Lennie persuades George to him about their dream farm.
- George and Lennie arrive at the ranch. Curley tries to pick a fight with Lennie. Curley's wife flirts with the ranchers and catches Lennie's attention.
- We find out a little more about what happened at George and Lennie's last job.
- Carlson wants to shoot Candy's dog because it is no longer useful. Candy is eventually pushed into agreeing and Carlson takes the dog away and shoots it.
- Candy overhears George and Lennie talking about their dream farm. He offers his money so he can join them.
- Curley starts a fight with Lennie. Lennie crushes Curley's hand but Slim convinces Curley to say it got caught in a machine.
- Lennie wanders into Crooks' room. At first, Crooks tries to get rid of him but in the end he lets him stay.
- Candy joins them and eventually they all start talking about the "dream".
- Curley's wife arrives, and is unkind to Crooks.
- The other men return from town and Curley's wife leaves.
- Lennie is in the barn-he has accidentally killed his puppy given to him by Slim.
- Curley's wife finds him and they talk about their dreams. We find out she wanted to be a movie star.
- They find out that they both like soft things. Curley's wife lets Lennie stroke her hair but she gets angry when he strokes it too hard. Lennie panics-breaking her neck.
- Lennie runs away and Candy finds Curley's wife in the barn. The other men decide to hunt Lennie down.
- Lennie goes back to the pool where he and George stayed the night before they went to the ranch.
- George finds Lennie and calms him down by telling him about the dream.
- George knows that Curley wants to kill Lennie in a really painful way, so he shoots Lennie himself before the other men arrive.

#### Key Quotations

George (C1) "Guys like us...that work on ranches, are the loneliest guys in the world. They got no family. They don't belong no place..."

Lennie (C1) "Slowly, like a terrier who doesn't want to bring a ball to his master, Lennie approached, drew back, approached again,"

Slim (C2) "Aint many guys travel around together, he mused. I don't know why. Maybe ever'body in the whole damn world is scared of each other."

Crooks (C4) "A guy needs somebody to be near him. He whined, a guy goes nuts if he ain't got nobody."

Curley's wife (C5) "And the meanness and the plannings and the discontent and the ache for attention were all gone from her face"