Of MICE AND MEN

Study Guide

**Summer Assignment 2.** Directions: CAREFULLY READ ALL DIRECTIONS! In complete sentences, thoroughly answer these study questions to the best of your ability. Complete responses are required, especially in reference to two-part questions. It is to your benefit to read the entire novel first, and then to answer the study questions by re-reading each chapter. You are welcome to research some of the themes and ideas related in this novel, however, it is imperative that you personally answer these questions in your own words. **NO PLAGIARISM or COPYING** will be tolerated. You may hand write OR type your responses, but be sure to properly label with the chapter and number of each response. Be prepared to turn in your responses on the first day of school and to test over the novel within the first week. It will be an essay test so you may also want to brush up on your writing skills. **Happy Reading!**

**Chapter 1**

1. Begin this novel by briefly researching the historic time period of “The Great Depression” in America. What was the main problem during this time period? What does the term “migrant worker” mean? Why were many men traveling from place to place?

2. Next, research the author, John Steinbeck. List 5 interesting facts you discovered about this author’s life and style of writing.

3. Reread the first paragraph of the novel. How does the passage function? What purpose does Steinbeck fulfill by beginning the novel in this way?

4. Compare and contrast the two men who come into the clearing by the river. What do you think Steinbeck wants the reader to infer about the two men based on their descriptions?

5. What information about Lennie’s character is revealed to the reader through George’s discovery of the dead mouse in Lennie’s pocket?

6. As George and Lennie are waiting to go to the camp, George states, “God, you’re a lot of trouble. I could get along so easy and son nice if I didn’t have you on my tail. I could live so easy and maybe have a girl.” (p. 7) Explain what this statement illustrates about George’s feelings toward Lennie. How is George’s statement ironic given the time period in which the novel is set? What does the reader learn about George and his dreams?

7. Why does Lennie like George to tell the story of the ranch, even though he already knows it by heart? Why does George so readily agree to tell the story, even though he has just gotten angry with Lennie a few minutes before? What does this story reveal about one of the themes in the novel?

**Chapter 2**

8. In this chapter, Steinbeck again begins with a description of the setting. Explain how this description is different from the description at the beginning of the previous chapter. What does this description tell us about George and Lennie’s life?
9. In the scene between the boss, George, and Lennie that begins on page 22, how does the boss misinterpret what is going on between George and Lennie? What does the boss think is taking place? What does the reader know about the conversation between the three men?

10. Explain the irony in Lennie’s last name.

11. Describe the tone in the following passage. How does Steinbeck create the tone? What does it reveal about Curley?

   “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. His glance was at once calculating and pugnacious. Lennie squirmed under the look and shifted his feet nervously. “(p. 25)

12. Throughout this chapter, Lennie and George are questioned three times about traveling together. Describe the three encounters and what we learn about the characters through their responses to George’s answer.

Chapter 3

13. What does the reader learn about the relationship between George and Lennie as George talks to Slim?

14. Why does Steinbeck try to create sympathy for Lennie? Is he successful?

15. Read the following passage found on page 48. This is just one of the several images of silence that Steinbeck uses:

   “His voice trailed off. It was silent outside. Carlson’s footsteps died away. The silence came into the room. And the silence lasted.”

Why does silence play an important role at this point in the novel? Who is literally being silenced? Who is metaphorically being silenced, and what role does each man play in the silence?

16. Describe the situation that occurs when Curley comes into the bunk house. What does this situation illustrate about Curley’s character and his relationship with his wife?

17. After George, Lennie, and Candy make a pact not to tell anyone about their dream, Candy makes the following statement: “I ought to of shot that dog myself, George. I shouldn’t ought to of let no stranger shoot my dog” (p. 61). Explain the parallelism between the relationship Candy had with his dog and George has with Lennie. How might this statement be an example of foreshadowing?

18. Explain (through specific examples in the text) the rhetorical devices Steinbeck uses in the fight scene, and analyze their purpose. How do the descriptions of Curley change throughout the fight?

19. Why will Curley keep quiet about what Lennie did to him and not try to get George and Lennie fired? How does this reflect on Curley’s character?
Chapter 4

20. 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 point to 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:

21. Explain the implications of Steinbeck’s not giving Curley’s wife a name.

22. How is Crook’s loneliness different from the other characters on the ranch?

23. When Curley’s wife comes to Crooks’ door, how is her initial response to the men parallel to the way in which Crooks initially responds to Lennie?

24. When Curley’s wife sees Lennie, Candy, and Crooks talking together, how does she characterize them? What do you think is the real reason behind her visit?

25. Characterize Curley’s wife as she is presented in the novel. How is the reader supposed to feel about her?

26. Why does Steinbeck diverge from his narration to focus a chapter on two different characters in the novel, Crooks and Curley’s wife?

27. When Curley’s wife is asked to leave Crooks’ room, she begins to threaten Crooks. Cite examples from the imagery that indicate Crooks feels defeated.

28. Dialect is a big part of this novel. Explain the following expressions from chapter four:

- “They’ll take ya to the booby hatch.” (p. 72);
- “...and listen how Curley’s gonna lead with his left twist, and then bring in the ol’ right cross?” (p. 78);
- “What you think you’re sellin’ me?” (p. 78);
- “Caught in a machine—baloney!” (p. 78);
- “I could get you strung up on a tree so easy it ain’t even funny.” (p. 79).

Chapter 5

29. Despite the descriptive setting of the barn and the quiet Sunday afternoon, Chapter Five begins with an accident. Explain what happened and why Lennie is so worried. What are the larger implications that Steinbeck wants the reader to consider?

30. How is Curley’s wife described when she comes into the barn? Why do you think Steinbeck describes her
in this way?
31. When Lennie is explaining to Curley’s wife what happened to the puppy, she responds, “Don’t you worry none. He was jus’ a mutt. You can get another one easy. The whole country is fulla mutts” (p. 87). Explain the symbolism in her statement.

32. Throughout the book, the reader learns about Lennie and George’s dream. What does the reader learn about Curley’s wife’s dream? How does her dream influence her life?

33. Why does Curley’s wife fail to recognize the danger in Lennie’s behavior? Why does Steinbeck portray her as almost sympathetic and comforting to Lennie?

34. Why does Lennie panic, and what happens as a result of his panic? How is this similar to an event earlier in the story?

35. Compare the events at the beginning of the chapter with the events that happen at the end of the chapter.

36. What evidence in the novel has suggested that something tragic was going to happen to Curley’s wife?

37. Explain the following description from the novel: “And the meanness and the plannings and the discontent and the ache for attention were all gone from her face. She was very pretty and simple, and her face was sweet and young” (pp. 92-93). Do you think that Steinbeck is purposefully taking a misogynistic attitude toward women, or is Curley’s wife simply a representation of a woman’s life during the Depression?

38. What do the men suppose happened to Carlson’s gun? Why is this hard to believe? What is the greater implication of the missing gun?

39. Steinbeck could have concluded the chapter with the men headed off in search of Lennie. Instead, Steinbeck returns to the barn where Candy is staying with the dead body. Why do you think Steinbeck chose to close the chapter in this way?

Chapter 6

40. Compare the beginning of Chapter Six with the beginning of the novel. Explain why Steinbeck would begin this chapter in the same way that he began the first?

41. What delusion does Lennie experience as he is waiting for George? Why do you think he remembers this experience?

42. When George finds Lennie, what does Lennie expect him to do? How does George actually respond?

43. How does the reader know that Lennie does not realize that he has done something wrong?

44. How does George’s responsibility in killing Lennie parallel the situation between Candy and his dog?

45. What is George trying to accomplish by shooting Lennie before the other men come to do it?

46. Who ultimately understands what happened between Lennie and George? Why are the other men unable to understand?

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

48. Explain the significance of the title of this novel. It is from a poem by Robert Burns containing this line: “The best laid schemes o’ Mice an’ Men, gang aft agley” which loosely translates to “The best laid schemes of Mice and Men, often go awry.” How does this fit into the theme(s) of the novel?