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Advanced Placement in
English Literature and Composition

Teaching Unit
Individual Learning Packet

Of Mice and Men

by John Steinbeck

Written by Michelle Ryan

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Of Mice and Men

Objectives

By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:

1. discuss the techniques Steinbeck uses to convey character and character relationships to his audience.
2. analyze the importance of literary elements like dramatic irony, foreshadowing, and suspense on the development of the story.
3. analyze character dialogue to guide interpretation of a character's thought process.
4. respond to multiple choice questions similar to those that will appear on the Advanced Placement in English Literature and Composition exam.
5. respond to writing prompts similar to those that will appear on the Advanced Placement in English Literature and Composition exam.
6. offer a close reading of *Of Mice and Men* and support all assertions and interpretations with direct evidence from the text, from authoritative critical knowledge of the genre, or from authoritative criticism of the play.
7. discuss the dramatic development of the novel in terms of exposition, conflict, climax, and resolution.
8. demonstrate a personal, interpretive, and critical understanding of the text.
9. analyze the main characters in the novel and discuss their relationships to each other.
10. understand how the Depression influenced the lives of American men and women.
11. explain the central conflicts in the novel, and explain the nature of the internal and external conflicts with which various characters cope.
12. explore the importance of the title and its relationship to one of the major themes in the novel.
13. identify and discuss the following themes in the play:
 - A. the impossibility of the American dream;
 - B. loneliness and isolation during the Depression;
 - C. friendship and camaraderie;
 - D. nature;
 - E. violence.
14. trace and discuss recurring imagery.
15. discuss how the setting functions as a microcosm of American society.
16. explain how the literary movement of Naturalism is reflected in the text.

I. Features of Steinbeck's Novel

1. Naturalism

John Steinbeck is considered one of America's greatest Naturalist writers. The Naturalist literary movement is characterized by literature that employs the following features:

- Naturalist writing is devoid of many poetic features that authors might use. The prose uses few descriptions that provide images for the reader, and instead, focuses on the explanations and details. While *Of Mice and Men* contains passages of description (specifically the beginnings of chapters one, five, and six), a majority of the text is free from metaphor. Naturalist writing explores sociological conditions in a mostly objective manner, rather than focusing on the beauty of the language and story.
- Naturalist writing explores conflicts between social classes, particularly the exploitation of workers by those in positions of power. For example, in *Of Mice and Men*, Steinbeck examines a microcosm of America by creating George and Lennie as characters who are trying to survive on a ranch, while at the same time creating a story that reflects the larger societal conflicts at hand—the lack of public policy to aid those afflicted by poverty and homelessness. Steinbeck's examination of both the microcosm and macrocosm describe American politics in the 1930s.
- Similar to the social commentary provided by Naturalist literature, *Of Mice and Men* is also a document of migrant workers in the 1930s. Naturalist writers create stories that tend to focus on one specific occupation or trade in order to document society, gathering specific data about actual life before writing. Also, because the literature focuses on one occupation or trade, the setting is usually limited to one less-than-ideal place, in the case of *Of Mice and Men*, a ranch. The setting provides a detailed look at the most brutal aspects of life that accompany self-preservation and basic human needs. Steinbeck used his ranching experience, as well as his experience in the Salinas Valley in order to create a novel that is almost more textbook than literature.
- Naturalist writers create stories in which the narrator or reader is an observer in the story. The characters created in the story, devoid of free will, are inserted into specific plots and observed as they cope with what fate presents. In *Of Mice and Men*, many of the characters strive for the American Dream. Lennie and George want only to make enough money to buy their own land; however, the characters are robbed of their dream by circumstances that seem beyond their control.

2. Genre Conventions

The novel is written as a play-novel, or a cross between a novel and drama. Each of the six chapters is an extended episode: action takes place in one scene and opens with a description of that scene. In each of the six chapters, characters enter and exit the scene with what seems like stage directions. Because of the large amount of dialogue, when the novel was actually rewritten as a play, much of the dialogue remained the same. The novel is economical: the language is simple, the dialogue tightly-knit, the most complex vocabulary is about farm equipment. There are very few characters in the novel and any symbolism or foreshadowing deliberately points to the inevitable end.

3. Use of Figurative Language (simile, metaphor, foreshadowing)

While a Naturalist writer, Steinbeck still employs literary and figurative devices from time to time for the sake of tone, mood, and meaning:

Simile

Be certain not to miss the “like” or “as” when reading the descriptions. For example, when Steinbeck describes the setting he writes: “On the sand banks the rabbits sat as quietly as little gray, sculptured stones.” (p. 2)

The comparison not only establishes the peacefulness of the scene, but also suggests the lifelessness of it. As events in the novel transpire, the dream of the “rabbits” will, in a sense, turn to stone.

Metaphor and Imagery

Throughout the novel, Steinbeck uses animal imagery to describe his characters. For example, when George and Lennie are by the pond, “Lennie dabbled his big paw in the water and wiggled his fingers so the water arose in little splashes....” (p. 3) The image of the paw suggests that Lennie is a very large and powerful man.

Foreshadowing

There are quite a few incidents of foreshadowing in *Of Mice and Men*. The examples are not subtle, but instead directly lead the reader to the conclusion. For example, the comparison of the rabbits to lifeless stone sculptures foreshadows the death of George and Lennie’s dream. Also, in the first chapter, George warns Lennie that if anything happens while they are at the ranch, Lennie should return to the clearing (p. 15), clearly suggesting that something will indeed happen. Likewise, Lennie’s accidental killing of his puppy foreshadows his accidental killing of Curly’s wife.

II. Censorship Issues

Since its original publication in 1937 and its subsequent inclusion in school and public libraries and on high school reading lists, *Of Mice and Men* has been one of America's most challenged books.

The novel was the second most frequently banned book in the 1990s. It has been called "vulgar," "offensive," "blasphemous," and "racist."

In 1993 a high school in Arizona removed it from the curriculum citing its "profane language, moral statement, treatment of the retarded, and the violent ending."

One school superintendent in Tennessee simply said, "We just can't have this kind of book being taught".

Steinbeck's use of the words: "Jesus Christ" "God" and "Nigger" have triggered many of the complaints and challenges.

According to the organization, People for the American Way, the novel was one of the ten most frequently challenged books of 2001. Due to its use of offensive language and violence, it is often criticized as being "non age-appropriate."

The book speaks frankly of sexual intercourse, as the men on the ranch discuss visiting a house of prostitution. Not only do the men on the ranch have frank discussions about sex, but the impetus for the two main characters to join the ranch is the result of a sexual accusation against Lennie.

The novel deals with gender and racial prejudice—and has been called both racist and misogynist

Finally, the very nature of the central conflict and moral issue in the novel challenges society's notion of murder and justice.

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

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 1:

Read the passage beginning on page 1 and ending at the top of page 2 with the sentence, “In front of the low horizontal limb of a giant sycamore there is an ash pile made by many fires; the limb is worn smooth by men who have sat on it.” Then write a well-organized essay in which you discuss the techniques Steinbeck uses to establish the setting. Include in your discussion such considerations as the impact of word choice and imagery on mood.

Do not merely summarize the passage.

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 2:

The passage that begins on page 66 and ends at the bottom of page 67 is the audience’s introduction to where Crooks lives. Read the passage carefully and then write a well-organized essay in which you discuss how Steinbeck succeeds in characterizing Crooks for the reader. Point to instances when language used to describe the setting emphasizes Crooks’ isolation and how Steinbeck uses setting to illustrate the way African-American men and migrant workers were treated during the Depression.

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 3:

Read two passages: the description of the setting from the first two pages of the novel; the second from the beginning of the last chapter of the book pages 99-100. Then write a well-organized essay in which you explain the purpose of each scene and how it fits into the overall structure of the novel.

Do not merely summarize or analyze each scene.

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 4:

Often in literature, a character will undergo a spiritual journey that coincides with the narration of the plot. In *Of Mice and Men*, George and Lennie are in the middle of a journey to achieve their dream. Explain the characters' ability or inability to achieve their dream by discussing the events that either move them toward or take them away from their goal.

Do not merely summarize the plot.

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 5:

Many writers use setting to establish values within a work of literature. For example, the country may be a place of virtue and peace or one of primitivism and ignorance. Write an essay in which you analyze how the setting of *Of Mice and Men* functions in the work as a whole.

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 6:

Of Mice and Men has been successfully produced on the stage. Many critics have asserted that, when Steinbeck composed this novel, he incorporated qualities of both genres. Discuss the techniques that Steinbeck uses in his novel that enabled it to be easily adapted to the stage.

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 7:

In literature, an author will often create characters and relationships in order to contrast the main character or the main character's relationship with other people, much the same way a foil works in a piece of literature. In a well-written essay, discuss the nature of the relationship between George and Lennie and how it is contrasted or reflected in the other relationships in the novel. Do not merely summarize the plot.

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 8:

The most important themes in literature are sometimes developed into scenes in which one or more deaths take place. Write a well-organized essay in which you show how *Of Mice and Men* incorporates death scenes that help to illuminate the meaning of the work as a whole.

Avoid mere plot summary.

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 9:

Often the significance of the title of a work is clear, such as Dickens's *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby*, or Shakespeare's *The Tragedy of Macbeth*. The significance of other titles (*Great Expectations*, *Lost Horizon*) however, is revealed more gradually. How is the significance of the title *Of Mice and Men* revealed through the author's use of devices such as symbolism, imagery, and theme?

Do not merely offer an interpretation of the significance of the title.

PRACTICE FREE RESPONSE QUESTION 10:

Freytag's pyramid, the typical graphic for showing the rise and fall of plot events in a story, does not end simply with the falling action, but requires a dénouement, a full and satisfactory wrapping up and conclusion of all plotlines. Some critically-acclaimed novels and plays, however, conclude in twists, surprise endings, or ambiguous actions. Write a well-organized essay in which you argue that the final paragraphs of *Of Mice and Men* either provide a satisfactory conclusion to the novel or not.

Do not merely summarize the plot.

MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS 1-5:

Carefully read the passage that begins on page one with, "A few miles south of Soledad," and ends at the bottom of page two before you choose your answers:

1. In the context of the passage, the word "recumbent" most likely means
 - (A) resting.
 - (B) parallel.
 - (C) twisted.
 - (D) beautiful.
 - (E) worn.
2. "The water is warm too, for it has slipped twinkling over the yellow sands in the sunlight" in lines 3 and 4 is an example of
 - (A) simile.
 - (B) irony.
 - (C) metaphor.
 - (D) personification.
 - (E) understatement.
3. The animal imagery that is used in the passage could symbolically represent
 - (A) nothing since Steinbeck is describing nature.
 - (B) the ranch hands.
 - (C) the migrant workers.
 - (D) the dead.
 - (E) the owners of the ranches where the men work.
4. "To jungle-up near water" is an idiom that describes
 - (A) men who work in the rain forests of South America because there is no work at home.
 - (B) the area around a pond or stream that is thick with vegetation.
 - (C) the animals that inhabit the area next to the Salinas River.
 - (D) the way the hobos would camp together in the evening as they were migrating from ranch to ranch.
 - (E) camping in the wilderness.
5. The tone of the passage can best be described as
 - (A) peaceful.
 - (B) reflective.
 - (C) ominous.
 - (D) lonely.
 - (E) pessimistic.

PRACTICE MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS 6-10:

Before you choose your answers, carefully read the passage that begins on the bottom of page 9 with the line “Lennie sat down on the ground and hung his head dejectedly,” and concludes on page 15 with the line, “From his side pocket he brought out two spoons and passed one of them to Lennie.”

6. Lennie does not remember that his Aunt Clara is the woman who gave him the mouse because
 - (A) he was young when he lived with her.
 - (B) he had an accident afterward and has lost all memory.
 - (C) he is mentally challenged and unable to remember.
 - (D) George does not want Lennie to remember and does not remind him of her name.
 - (E) he associates bad memories with Aunt Clara, so his brain does not allow him to remember her.
7. “A dove’s wings whistled over the water” (p. 10) is an example of
 - (A) personification.
 - (B) simile.
 - (C) allusion.
 - (D) imagery.
 - (E) alliteration.
8. George’s reaction to Lennie in this passage indicates that
 - (A) Lennie relies solely on George for his survival.
 - (B) Lennie is unable to work on his own.
 - (C) George has conflicting emotions toward Lennie.
 - (D) George feels that he can make fun of Lennie because he has been taking care of him for several years.
 - (E) George feels obligated to care for Lennie because Lennie is not as smart as other people.
9. When George says, “We’re gonna get the jack together” (p. 14), “jack” refers to
 - (A) land.
 - (B) animals.
 - (C) other men.
 - (D) a woman.
 - (E) money.
10. All of the following are possible purposes of this episode *except* to
 - (A) illustrate the loneliness of migrant men.
 - (B) demonstrate the nature of the relationship between Lennie and George.
 - (C) highlight Lennie’s violent nature.
 - (D) illustrate the importance of using dreams to help people survive depressing conditions.
 - (E) foreshadow events that will happen later in the novel.

MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS 11-15:

Carefully read the passage that begins on page 44 beginning with the line, “He stopped and sniffed the air,” and ending on page 49 with the line, “Then he rolled slowly over and faced the wall and lay silent” before choosing your answers to the questions below.

11. Candy’s interaction with Carlson as they discuss the fate of the dog is important because
 - (A) it illustrates the nature of the strong to prey on the weak.
 - (B) it advances the exposition.
 - (C) the reader learns that Carlson is cold-hearted.
 - (D) George admits to the rest of the group that he was in Weed with Lennie.
 - (E) it emphasizes the importance of having a pet.
12. What effect is Steinbeck creating when he describes the scene in which Carlson shoots Candy’s dog?
 - (A) suspense
 - (B) humor
 - (C) morbidity
 - (D) empathy
 - (E) apathy
13. Which of the following best demonstrates Candy’s internal conflict when it comes to the decision to let Carlson shoot his dog?
 - (A) “I’m so used to him,” he said softly. “I had him from a pup.”
 - (B) “Maybe it’d hurt him,” he suggested. “I don’t mind takin’ care of him.”
 - (C) “You wouldn’t think it to look at him now, but he was the best damn sheep dog I ever seen.”
 - (D) Candy lay rigidly on his bed staring at the ceiling.
 - (E) “Maybe tomorra. Le’s wait till tomorra.”
14. The paragraph that begins, “They took places opposite each other at the table,” (p. 49) is an example of
 - (A) metaphor.
 - (B) isocolon.
 - (C) extended allusion.
 - (D) pacing.
 - (E) allegory.
15. In the paragraph that begins, “Slim said loudly” (p. 48), which rhetorical device does Steinbeck use to establish mood?
 - (A) anaphora
 - (B) repetition
 - (C) polysyndeton
 - (D) apposition
 - (E) apostrophe

MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS 16-25:

Carefully read the passage that begins on page 86, beginning with the line, “Curley’s wife came around the end of the last stall,” and ending on page 93 with the line, “Outside, the men’s voices became louder and clearer” before choosing your answers.

16. “She wore her bright cotton dress and the mules with the red ostrich feathers. Her face was made up and the little sausage curls were all in place.” (p. 86)

Steinbeck uses the above description to

- (A) emphasize the differences between Curley’s wife and the men.
 - (B) illustrate the sexual way in which the men see her.
 - (C) allow Steinbeck to create empathy for her.
 - (D) explain why Curley might be distrustful of her.
 - (E) explain why Lennie finds her attractive.
17. Curley’s wife wants to have a conversation with Lennie because
- (A) she is obeying her husband’s order to talk to George and Lennie.
 - (B) she likes Lennie in a romantic way.
 - (C) she wants Lennie to take her away when he and George start their farm.
 - (D) she is lonely.
 - (E) she thinks that Lennie is easy to talk to.
18. “The whole country is fulla mutts” could be metaphorical for
- (A) pure-bred dogs that people keep as pets.
 - (B) the ranch owners who pay the migrant men to come and work.
 - (C) the hobos who travel the country looking for work.
 - (D) women like Curley’s wife.
 - (E) the African-Americans who also must find work across the country.
19. The focus of Curley’s wife’s dream is to
- (A) be in the pictures.
 - (B) own her own farm.
 - (C) go to New York.
 - (D) raise a family with Curley.
 - (E) tend rabbits like Lennie.
20. While Curley’s wife is talking to Lennie, he angers her by
- (A) playing with the dead puppy.
 - (B) trying to touch her hair.
 - (C) leaving the barn in the middle of their conversation.
 - (D) interrupting her.
 - (E) not really listening to her.

21. This section of the story represents the
(A) exposition.
(B) climax.
(C) dénouement.
(D) inciting incident.
(E) main conflict.
22. “[H]er body flopped like a fish” is an example of
(A) hyperbole.
(B) metaphor.
(C) simile.
(D) allusion.
(E) idiom.
23. Which of the following statements demonstrates Lennie’s inability to recognize the severity of what he has done after he kills Curley’s wife?
(A) “I’ll throw him away,” he said. “It’s bad enough like it is.”
(B) “I done a real bad thing,” he said.
(C) “George gonna say I done a bad thing.”
(D) “I don’t want ta hurt you,” he said, “but George’ll be mad if you yell.”
(E) “In the brush till he come. Tha’s what he said.”
24. “And the meanness and the plannings and the discontent and the ache for attention were all gone from her face” (p. 92) is an example of (a/n)
(A) apposition.
(B) apostrophe.
(C) shortened sentence
(D) asyndeton.
(E) polysyndeton.
25. “The curls, tiny little sausages, were spread on the hay behind her head, and her lips were parted.” (p. 93)

In the above line, “tiny little sausages” is an example of

- (A) irony.
(B) simile.
(C) hyperbole.
(D) metaphor.
(E) allusion.
26. “Then gradually time awakened again and moved sluggishly on” (p. 93) is an example of
(A) irony.
(B) personification.
(C) allusion.
(D) idiom.
(E) aposiopesis.

MULTIPLE CHOICE ANSWERS WITH EXPLANATIONS

1. In the context of the passage, the word “recumbent” most likely means
(A) **resting.**
(B) parallel.
(C) twisted.
(D) beautiful.
(E) worn.

The word recumbent suggests a person laying down, i.e. resting.

2. “The water is warm too, for it has slipped twinkling over the yellow sands in the sunlight” is an example of
(A) simile.
(B) irony.
(C) metaphor.
(D) **personification.**
(E) understatement.

Of the choices, only (D) makes sense. While one may argue that the movement of the water, as described, does not necessarily *personify* it, clearly, the other devices are not at work in the lines.

3. The animal imagery that is used in the passage could symbolically represent
(A) **nothing since Steinbeck is describing nature.**
(B) the ranch hands.
(C) the migrant workers.
(D) the dead.
(E) the owners of the ranches where the men work.

Steinbeck is a student of Naturalism. While much of his character descriptions involve animal imagery, the animal imagery in the descriptions of the setting are included in order to provide a backdrop for the story.

4. “To jungle-up near water” is an idiom that describes
(A) men who work in the rain forests of South America because there is no work at home.
(B) the area around a pond or stream that is thick with vegetation.
(C) the animals that inhabit the area next to the Salinas River.
(D) **the way the hobos would camp together in the evening as they were migrating from ranch to ranch.**
(E) camping in the wilderness.

The idiom refers to the way in which men who were traveling the country would tend to gather in groups in order to camp. The areas in which they camped were known as hobo jungles.

5. The tone of the passage can best be described as
- (A) peaceful.
 - (B) reflective.
 - (C) ominous.
 - (D) lonely.**
 - (E) pessimistic.

While the setting is very peaceful (A), the images suggest the countless men who have beaten the path to come to the area. There are not many men gathered there now, just the remnants of men in the past. Steinbeck uses the idea of “weary men” to suggest that the area next the river is a sanctuary, but more importantly, it is a sanctuary for lonely men who have no other place to be.

6. Lennie does not remember that his Aunt Clara is the woman who gave him the mouse because
- (A) he was young when he lived with her.
 - (B) he had an accident afterward and has lost all memory.
 - (C) he is mentally challenged and unable to remember.**
 - (D) George does not want Lennie to remember and does not remind him of her name.
 - (E) he associates bad memories with Aunt Clara, so his brain does not allow him to remember her.

The reader should understand the tone from the passage that Lennie is mentally incapable of understanding very much. George’s dialogue with Lennie suggests that Lennie is child-like. There is no indication in the text that he has been abused or would have any bad memories of Aunt Clara. In fact, the text states that Aunt Clara treated Lennie well. There is also no indication of an accident, and the reader has no indication that Lennie was too young to remember.

7. “A dove’s wings whistled over the water” (page 10) is an example of
- (A) personification.
 - (B) simile.
 - (C) allusion.
 - (D) imagery.
 - (E) alliteration.**

While (A) might be tempting, the “whistled” could be a literal description of the sound the wings make. There is, however, no comparison to anything else (B) or reference to any other piece of literature, work of art, etc. (C). (D) might be tempting, but the sound alone—possibly a literal description—is not strong imagery, while the repetition of the “w” sound (wings, whistled, water) is clearly alliterative.

8. George's reaction to Lennie in this passage indicates that
- (A) Lennie relies solely on George for his survival.
 - (B) Lennie is unable to work on his own.
 - (C) **George has conflicting emotions toward Lennie.**
 - (D) George feels that he can make fun of Lennie because he has been taking care of him for several years.
 - (E) George feels obligated to care for Lennie because Lennie is not as smart as other people.

This passage demonstrates George's two sides. Choice E is tempting, but more importantly this passage illustrates George's conflicting emotions. He is angry with Lennie because he feels as if he has to repeat himself all of the time, but at the same time, George feels bad if he treats Lennie meanly.

9. When George says that "We're gonna get the jack together" (p. 14), "jack" refers to
- (A) land
 - (B) animals
 - (C) other men
 - (D) a woman
 - (E) **money**

"Jack" is used in reference to the land that they are going to buy. Obviously "jack" would refer to the money that they are going to need in order to purchase the land.

10. All of the following are possible purposes of this episode *except* to
- (A) illustrate the loneliness of migrant men.
 - (B) demonstrate the nature of the relationship between Lennie and George.
 - (C) **highlight Lennie's violent nature.**
 - (D) illustrate the importance of using dreams to help people survive depressing conditions.
 - (E) foreshadow events that will happen later in the novel.

More than violence, this passage highlights the misunderstanding that Lennie has with people who do not understand his intentions. This passage does not discuss Lennie getting angry at the mouse or at the girl in Weed; instead, the passage discusses that Lennie did not mean any harm.

11. Candy's interaction with Carlson as they discuss the fate of the dog is important because
(A) **it illustrates the nature of the strong to prey on the weak.**
(B) it advances the exposition.
(C) the reader learns that Carlson is cold-hearted.
(D) George admits to the rest of the group that he was in Weed with Lennie.
(E) it emphasizes the importance of having a pet.

Choice (C) is tempting, but when comparing choice (A) with choice (C), the reader should recognize that the situation is used to highlight one of Steinbeck's themes: the strong prey on the weak.

12. What effect is Steinbeck creating when he describes the scene in which Carlson shoots Candy's dog?
(A) suspense
(B) humor
(C) morbidity
(D) **empathy**
(E) apathy

This scene is not suspenseful (A) because the reader knows that the dog is going to be shot. While the scene deals with death, the reader is not supposed to feel sorry for the dog but rather feel empathy for Candy who feels remorse at losing his pet.

13. Which of the following best demonstrates Candy's internal conflict when it comes to the decision to let Carlson shoot his dog?
(A) "I'm so used to him," he said softly. "I had him from a pup."
(B) "Maybe it'd hurt him," he suggested. "I don't mind takin' care of him."
(C) "You wouldn't think it to look at him now, but he was the best damn sheep dog I ever seen."
(D) **Candy lay rigidly on his bed staring at the ceiling.**
(E) "Maybe tomorra. Le's wait till tomorra."

An internal conflict suggests that Candy is weighing his decision in his mind. All of the choices involve Candy thinking about the repercussions of letting Carlson take his dog, but only choice D deals with the struggle he has without sharing it with anyone else.

14. The paragraph that begins, "They took places opposite each other at the table," (p. 49) is an example of
- (A) metaphor.
 - (B) isocolon.
 - (C) extended allusion.
 - (D) pacing.**
 - (E) allegory.

The section uses pacing to show the way in which the men deal with the knowledge that Candy's dog is being euthanized. Some of the sentences are longer to emphasize the uneasy tension that the men have sitting together. Then, when Steinbeck describes the way the silence fell over the room, the sentences are shorter to show the immediate impact of the silence.

15. In the paragraph that begins, "Slim said loudly" (p. 48), which rhetorical device does Steinbeck use to establish mood?
- (A) anaphora
 - (B) repetition**
 - (C) polysyndeton
 - (D) apposition
 - (E) apostrophe

Steinbeck uses the repetition of the word "silent" (or a form of the word) to emphasize the significance of the animal's permanent silence and the gravity of the situation.

16. "She wore her bright cotton dress and the mules with the red ostrich feathers. Her face was made up and the little sausage curls were all in place." (p. 86)

Steinbeck uses the above description to

- (A) emphasize the differences between Curley's wife and the men.
- (B) illustrate the sexual way in which the men see her.**
- (C) allow Steinbeck to create empathy for her.
- (D) explain why Curley might be distrustful of her.
- (E) explain why Lennie finds her attractive.

Steinbeck uses this description to emphasize the way the men look at Curley's wife. The men describe her as a tramp, and also mention that she seems to look at other men even though she is married. Steinbeck describes her differently in this passage than she is in any other passage. In this section he stresses the fact that she is a woman.

17. Curley's wife wants to have a conversation with Lennie because
- (A) she is obeying her husband's order to talk to George and Lennie.
 - (B) she likes Lennie in a romantic way.
 - (C) she wants Lennie to take her away when he and George start their farm.
 - (D) she is lonely.**
 - (E) she thinks that Lennie is easy to talk to.

The passage specifically states that she is lonely (D), which is why she is talking to Lennie: "I get lonely," she said. "You can talk to people, but I can't talk to nobody but Curley. Else he gets mad. How'd you like not to talk to anybody." (p. 87)

18. "The whole country is fulla mutts" could be metaphorical for
- (A) pure-bred dogs that people keep as pets.
 - (B) the ranch owners who pay the migrant men to come and work.
 - (C) the hobos who travel the country looking for work.**
 - (D) women like Curley's wife.
 - (E) the African-Americans who also must find work across the country.

Mutts are dogs of such a variety of mixed breeds that, often, one cannot identify the specific breeds that contribute to the combination. In the same way, the hobos are a "mixed breed" of men from a variety of racial, religious, geographic, and economic backgrounds.

19. The focus of Curley's wife's dream is to
- (A) be in the pictures.**
 - (B) own her own farm.
 - (C) go to New York.
 - (D) raise a family with Curley.
 - (E) tend rabbits like Lennie.

On page 88, Curley's wife tells Lennie that a man once told her he was going to put her in the movies. She was unable to achieve her dream because she believed her mother stole the letter the man said he was going to write.

20. While Curley's wife is talking to Lennie, he angers her by
- (A) playing with the dead puppy.
 - (B) trying to touch her hair.
 - (C) leaving the barn in the middle of their conversation.
 - (D) interrupting her.
 - (E) not really listening to her.**

Curley's wife confides her dream of being in the movies, but is angered by Lennie's obvious preoccupation with the dead dog and whether or not he'll be allowed to care for the rabbits. (p. 89)

21. This section of the story represents the
- (A) exposition.
 - (B) **climax.**
 - (C) denouement.
 - (D) inciting incident.
 - (E) main conflict.

The novel has been foreshadowing this exchange between Curley's wife and Lennie. There have been smaller situations throughout the story that have led the reader to infer that Curley's wife is going to be the cause (or at least involved) in whatever struggle Lennie and George have. We have also seen ample evidence of Lennie's disastrous strength to suspect that something like this was going to occur. It is also at this point that we know that Lennie and George are *not* going to achieve their dream.

22. "[H]er body flopped like a fish" is an example of
- (A) hyperbole.
 - (B) metaphor.
 - (C) **simile.**
 - (D) allusion.
 - (E) idiom.

The comparison is made between Curley's wife's lifeless body and a fish. The comparison uses like or as in its structure.

23. Which of the following statements demonstrates Lennie's inability to recognize the severity of what he has done after he kills Curley's wife?
- (A) **"I'll throw him away," he said. "It's bad enough like it is."**
 - (B) "I done a real bad thing," he said.
 - (C) "George gonna say I done a bad thing."
 - (D) "I don't want ta hurt you," he said, "but George'll be mad if you yell."
 - (E) "In the brush till he come. Tha's what he said."

All of the choices describe Lennie's reaction to what he has done when he killed Curley's wife. However, only choice A illustrates the way in which Lennie compares her death to the death of the puppy—clearly an indication that he is unable to recognize the difference between accidentally killing a puppy and killing a human being.

24. “And the meanness and the plannings and the discontent and the ache for attention were all gone from her face” (p. 92) is an example of a(n)
- (A) apposition. The writer places two elements side by side; the second element is used to define or modify the first.
 - (B) apostrophe. Addressing the speaker’s speech to an imaginary person or abstract quality of idea
 - (C) shortened sentence. Compared to the other sentences in the text, this sentence is much shorter.
 - (D) asyndeton. Conjunctions are omitted from the text in order to speed up the rhythm of the passage. Writers use this technique to make an idea more memorable.
 - (E) **polysyndeton**. Using conjunctions in close succession in order to slow the rhythm of the passage and add solemnity.
25. “The curls, tiny little sausages, were spread on the hay behind her head, and her lips were parted.” (p. 93)

In the above line, “tiny little sausages” is an example of

- (A) irony.
- (B) simile.
- (C) hyperbole.
- (D) **metaphor**.
- (E) allusion.

The curls are being compared to sausages. The comparison does not use the qualifiers “like” or “as” which would make the comparison a simile (B). As “sausages” most likely refers to the shape of the curls and not to their make-up or any statement of the woman’s build, the metaphor is not intentionally ironic (A). If the image were focused on the size of the curls, we might have hyperbole (C), but this is clearly not the case, as the sausages are “tiny” and “little.” Also, there is no reference to any other famous literary sausage, thus ruling out allusion (E).

26. “Then gradually time awakened again and moved sluggishly on” (p. 93) is an example of
- (A) irony.
 - (B) **personification**.
 - (C) allusion.
 - (D) idiom.
 - (E) aposiopesis.

The sentence is an example of personification (B). Time does not literally awaken. There is nothing so unexpected in the figure to be considered ironic (A), nor is the concept of time moving sluggishly an allusion to a known text (C). The expression makes literal syntactic sense, so it cannot be considered idiomatic (D), and, clearly, the speaker arrives at the end of his thought and does not stop short, thus eliminating aposiopesis (E).

Of Mice and Men

Advanced Placement in English Literature and Composition Teaching Unit

Study Guide Teacher's Copy

Chapter One

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

The novel begins with a rich description of the setting. Steinbeck uses descriptive language to indicate that the area is a place of rest. The specific colors, foliage, and animals that are mentioned create a respite, even for those boys and men from the ranches who beat a path to the water. For example, Steinbeck uses the following images to suggest that this place is a place of comfort and that the Salinas River is a sanctuary.

Examples:

- “The water is warm too, for it has slipped twinkling over the yellow sands in the sunlight before reaching the narrow pool” (p.1).
 - “On the sandy bank under the trees the leaves lie deep and so crisp that a lizard makes a great skittering if he runs among them”(p. 1).
 - “There is a path through the willows and among the sycamores, a path beaten hard by boys coming down from the ranches to swim in the deep pool, and beaten hard by tramps who come wearily down from the highway in the evening to jungle-up near water” (p. 1-2.)
2. Explain the rhetorical strategies used in the following line: “There is a path through the willows and among the sycamores, a path beaten hard by boys coming down from the ranches to swim in the deep pool, and beaten hard by tramps who come wearily down from the highway in the evening to jungle-up near water.” (pp. 1-2)

One rhetorical strategy is the repetition of the image of “the path.” If the Salinas River is established as a place of solace, the path might indicate that the men are coming from a place that is the opposite—a place that is dreary and desolate. The path is the bridge between the two worlds. The second rhetorical strategy is the use of the idiom “jungle-up.” Of Mice and Men is set during the Great Depression, when hobos traveled across the United States. In the evening, the hobos would settle in camps that were referred to as Hobo Jungles. To “jungle-up” is to camp in an area in which other men are settling for the evening. Steinbeck is giving the reader information about the characters in the novel without actually introducing them specifically.

3. 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?

The two men who come into the clearing are similar in the way in which they are dressed and what they carry with them. For example, the two men are “dressed in denim trousers and in denim coats with brass buttons.” (p. 2) They also both carry blanket rolls with them. Physically the men are very different. One man is “small and quick, dark of face, with restless eyes and sharp, strong features.” (p. 2) The other man is huge and fair-skinned.

Steinbeck uses the descriptions to establish the leader and the follower. Steinbeck begins the description by stating that the men are dressed the same, going in the same direction, and yet, they are two very different men. The smaller man is the leader. Because he is described as “small and quick” with “restless eyes,” the reader can infer that the man is determined and the one navigating their way through the area. The reader can infer that the other man is more absent-minded and slow because he “nearly ran over” the other man when he stopped in the path, and he walked heavily and flung himself on the ground when they stopped.

4. In the section of text from page 3 to page 4, Steinbeck uses several animal images to describe Lennie. Cite two examples of images that are used and explain their effect on Lennie's characterization.

Examples: “dragging his feet a little, the way a bear drags his paws” (p. 3); “drank with long gulps, snorting into the water like a horse.” (p. 4)

Steinbeck is highlighting Lennie's size. Lennie is physically cumbersome and mentally has the same qualities as does an animal or a small child. He is like the animal that lumbers through the forest without thinking about the consequences or dangers. Mentally Steinbeck could be comparing Lennie's mental ability to that of an animal.

5. When George and Lennie reach a clearing, George gives Lennie instructions about the water. The scene on page three serves two purposes: explain each.

First, the scene illustrates the migrant nature of the men. George and Lennie are two men who are traveling the United States. The reader can assume that the men would be familiar with the type of water that they can drink. However, the reader should notice that George must reinforce the rules to Lennie, which might cause the reader to question Lennie's ability to survive if it were not for George.

Second, the scene illustrates the tone of the relationship between George and Lennie. The narration describes that George responded “hopelessly” to Lennie. George feels hopeless because he has probably given the same instructions many times. If we can assume that Lennie and George have traveled a lot together, we can also assume that there have been several occasions where George has had to talk to Lennie about the water. George repeats the instructions “hopelessly” because he knows that eventually he will have to give them again.

6. When Lennie and George sit by the river to rest, what do they talk about? What does Steinbeck achieve through the conversation? What can we learn about Lennie from their conversation? What can we learn about George?

George explains to Lennie where they are going. Lennie has forgotten about “watchin’ that blackboard.” (p. 5) The reader can infer from their conversation that Lennie is simple. He may be a large man, but he cannot remember things as basic as where he is going. George is obviously Lennie’s protector; George even keeps track of Lennie’s work card. Steinbeck is continuing to establish the interdependent relationship between Lennie and George.

7. Read the following line from the novel and explain the phrase “watchin’ that blackboard.” How does it contribute to the characterization of George and Lennie?

“You remember settin’ in that gutter on Howard street and watchin’ that blackboard?” (p. 5)

“Watchin’ that blackboard” refers to the Depression era when employers would post jobs in front of their offices. Those men who were seeking work would check the blackboards to find any new jobs. Steinbeck is emphasizing the characters’ economic status, as well as the mindset that George and Lennie must have after moving across the country looking for work.

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

The reader learns that Lennie is pacified through simple things. He likes the touch of soft items. The reader also learns that Lennie is not bothered by the idea that the mouse is dead, but he is worried that George will think that he killed it.

9. Describe George’s plan for getting the job at the ranch. What do we learn about Lennie from this plan?

George tells Lennie that he does not want Lennie to speak. George is going to give the boss their work tickets, while Lennie stands in the background. George wants Lennie to be quiet because he is afraid that the boss will not hire them if he knows that Lennie is “a crazy bastard.” The reader can infer that Lennie is a hard worker (perhaps because of his size), but he is likely to say the wrong thing.

10. Why does Steinbeck mention on page 7 that George and Lennie had problems in Weed but then not develop the story?

Steinbeck is creating dramatic interest and foreshadowing by mentioning Weed without divulging the details of what happened there. The reader can assume that the specific information will be revealed later.

11. 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 so 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?

George is frustrated with Lennie because he requires so much care. It is understandable that Lennie’s handicap sometimes interferes with their friendship. George’s attitude is ironic, considering how most men in their situation are lonely and long for a companion, a friend. We learn that George is the same as most people; he dreams about settling down and getting married, something that most transients are unable to do.

12. Even though Lennie’s mentality keeps him from fully understanding the world around him, he is very sensitive to George’s feelings. Describe an incident that shows Lennie’s compassion for George.

Example: While warming beans over the fire, Lennie says how he would like to have ketchup with his supper. This statement provokes George and he erupts with anger, wishing he could be alone, without having to watch over Lennie. Following the episode, Lennie makes his way closer to George and says, “I was only foolin’, George. I don’t want no ketchup. I wouldn’t eat no ketchup if it was right here beside me. ...I wouldn’t eat none, George. I’d leave it all for you. You could cover your beans with it and I wouldn’t touch none of it.” (p. 12)

13. After George erupts in anger about the responsibility of taking care of Lennie, Lennie offers to run away and leave George alone. Why do you think George does not take Lennie up on his offer?

Answers will vary. George seems to regret the way he talks to Lennie. He even asks Lennie if he has been mean to him. Because George has taken care of Lennie for so long, George feels a great responsibility for Lennie’s well-being. George is worried that Lennie would not survive if he was not with him.

14. What literary techniques does Steinbeck use in the passage on page 11 that begins “You crazy son-of-a-bitch. You keep me in hot water all the time.” The passage ends with “He looked across the fire at Lennie’s anguished face, and then he looked ashamedly at the flames.”

Steinbeck employs several literary techniques. First, Steinbeck uses George’s character to fill in narrative gaps. The reader does not know what happened in Weed, but through George’s conversation with Lennie, Steinbeck is able to relate a few of the details without using a flashback. Second, Steinbeck is establishing some foreshadowing of events to come. The reader should pay attention to the fact that Weed has now been mentioned twice, which would imply that it is a fairly significant event. Finally, Steinbeck is able to reveal part of George’s personality. The reader learns that George is sympathetic to Lennie and remorseful for making Lennie feel badly. This revealing characteristic comes after George berates Lennie.

15. 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?

Lennie, having the mentality of a child, is reassured by George's retelling. George does not mind telling the story because it reinforces their dreams and the fact that they have a solid relationship. Lennie likes feeling the reassurance that George will look after him and he will look after George. Steinbeck uses George and Lennie's dream to illustrate the nature of the American dream. The characters throughout the novel discuss the dreams that they have to be able to be free to pursue their own happiness.

16. Explain the expression "live off the fatta the lan'." (p. 14)

To live off of the fat of the land implies that the land will offer people whatever they need to survive. Lennie and George discuss this because they are hopeful that eventually they will be prosperous and will not have to travel and work various, temporary jobs in order to survive.

17. Why does George tell Lennie to remember the spot where they are camping? What might this conversation foreshadow?

George tells Lennie to remember where they are in case something happens at the camp. George specifically suggests that Lennie may get in trouble as he did at a previous job site. This conversation might foreshadow that something bad is going to happen.

18. By the end of Chapter 1, there are two themes that are easily identified. Using specific examples, describe these themes.

Examples may vary, but the themes should be specifically recognized.

Example: Friendship is a theme that is very prominent throughout the novel. In this first chapter, George tells Lennie about their future together, about how they are different from other men. Lennie, having heard the story so many times, breaks in and excitedly states, "I got you to look after me, and you got me to look after you" (p. 14). Loneliness is also a main theme, and is alluded to when George states, "Guys like us, that work on ranches, are the loneliest guys in the world. They got no family. They don't belong no place" (p.13). Finally, both men have dreams that they want to achieve.

Chapter Two

1. 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?

In the first section of the novel, Steinbeck begins with a pleasant description of the lush area along the Salinas River. The reader is introduced to the book through a calming setting. At the beginning of this section, the reader sees the living quarters that Lennie and George will share. The reader is awakened to the realities of George and Lennie's life, and better understands Lennie and George's dreams of a better life.

2. What happens when George and Lennie arrive at the camp? What do they learn?

When George and Lennie arrive at the camp, they are shown to their bunks. They learn that the boss is already angry with them because he was expecting them the night before.

3. Explain the purpose of including the story about the blacksmith who used to work at the ranch.

Steinbeck includes the story of the blacksmith to illustrate the nature of the men who come to work at the ranches. The blacksmith suddenly quits. Candy says, "Why...he...just quit, the way a guy will.... Just wanted to move" (p. 19). These men have no ties, so they come and go on a whim; they are without roots.

4. How does the old man describe the boss? What seems unusual about the boss?

The old man uses the words, "a nice fella." (p. 20). He tells Lennie and George that the boss gives them whiskey at Christmas. George is surprised to hear that the boss brought a whole gallon of whiskey into the bunkhouse as a Christmas present for the ranch hands. Most of the men who owned the ranches did not take time to get to know the men who came to work for them.

5. 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?

The boss suspects that George is trying to take advantage of Lennie because George will not let Lennie speak. He thinks that George is trying to steal Lennie's pay. George explains to the boss that Lennie is his cousin and that he was injured as a child so he is not very smart. He also explains that Lennie is a strong worker to make up for his lack of intelligence. The reader knows that George is simply trying to ensure that they get to work on the ranch. George is worried that if Lennie speaks, the boss will not give them a chance.

6. Explain the irony in Lennie's last name.

Lennie's last name is Small. Lennie's name is ironic because he is a very large man, not small like his name suggests; however, Lennie is "small" in the way he thinks. Lennie's thinking resembles the thinking of a small child.

7. Who is Curley, and what does it mean when Candy says he is "handy"?

Curley is the boss's son. He is called "handy" because he likes to fight with people.

8. 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)

The tone of the passage is aggressive. Steinbeck emphasizes Curley's physical reaction to the men. Steinbeck describes Curley as calculating and pugnacious. Curley is an abusive, cruel person who, because he is the boss's son, seems to throw his weight around. The old man describes him as someone who picks fights with big guys and small guys, but whether he wins or loses he always comes out on top.

"Never did seem right to me. S'pose Curley jumps a big guy an' licks him. Ever'body says what a game guy Curley is. And s'pose he does the same thing and gets licked. Then ever'body says that the big guy oughtta pick somebody his own size, and maybe they gang up on the big guy. Never did seem right to me. Seems like Curley ain't givin' nobody a chance." (pp. 26-27)

9. What is suggested about Curley's character when he reacts to George and Lennie the way that he does?

Curley seems insecure. Curley might act the way he does because he is embarrassed about his size and jealous of men who are stronger and bigger than he is. George does not like Curley and warns the old man that Curley should not mess with Lennie. He states, "I don't like mean little guys." (p. 27)

10. Explain the significance of the following passage: “The old man was reassured. He had drawn a derogatory statement from George. He felt safe now...” (p. 27) What does this passage illustrate about the relationships between men during the Depression?

The old man might feel that, if all of the men working for Curley made disrespectful remarks, they would all be on the same playing field. The old man might not want George and Lennie to have the upper hand at the camp. If George had not made any derogatory statements about Curley, George might be able to blackmail the old man or tell Curley what the old man had said. This passage illustrates the men's loneliness. They do not even trust one another to speak openly without trying to trap the other person. Men were not capable of supporting one another, but instead wanted to be sure to have an advantage on the other person.

11. What does the reader learn about Curley's wife? Why might this be important to the story?

The reader learns that Curley's wife (according to the old man) has a wandering eye, which means that she is looking at other men even though she has been married for only two weeks. This information, and the reaction that Curley and George have with one another, might foreshadow some later tension and conflict in the novel.

12. What is important about the way in which Steinbeck refers to the “Stable Buck” on page 29? What does it imply?

Steinbeck refers to the Stable Buck as a “nigger.” This appellation is important because it illustrates the racial attitudes even among the lowest classes of society in the early decades of the Twentieth Century.

13. How does the following passage serve as foreshadowing in the novel?

“If he tangles with you, Lennie, we're gonna get the can. Don't make no mistake about that. He's the boss's son. Look, Lennie. You try to keep away from him, will you? Don't never speak to him. If he comes in here you move clear to the other side of the room.” (p. 29)

George is worried that Curley will try to pick a fight with Lennie, and then the two men will lose their jobs at the ranch. The reader might suspect that something is going to happen between Lennie and Curley that will either cause the men to lose their jobs, or will force Lennie to return to the clearing as George had instructed him in the previous chapter.

14. Explain how the following line from the novel might be symbolic.

Both men glanced up, for the rectangle of sunshine in the doorway was cut off. (p. 31)

In the novel, Steinbeck is careful to use descriptions of the setting to establish certain moods. In this case, George and Lennie have been talking about the danger of interfering with Curley and his wife. At this particular moment, Curley's wife steps into the doorway. If the reader thinks of the sunshine as light and promise, the lack of sunshine (caused by Curley's wife's entrance) could symbolize that Curley's wife is dangerous.

15. Describe what happens to George after Curley's wife comes to the barn looking for Curley.

George is angry at Lennie because Lennie keeps talking about how pretty Curley's wife is. George does not want Lennie thinking about her, especially when Curley is already apprehensive about Lennie.

16. Explain the foreshadowing in the following lines from the novel:

Lennie cried out suddenly—"I don't like this place, George. This ain't no good place. I wanna get outa here." (p. 32)

Lennie and George come to the ranch for work. They have not even been at the ranch a full day, and they are (1) already in trouble with the boss for being late, and (2) the boss's son has already taken a disliking to Lennie. (3) Curley's wife seems to be a catalyst for trouble. Lennie fears they are in a "bad place," suggesting that something "bad" will happen.

17. Steinbeck is careful to provide direct and indirect characterization for the characters in the novel. Describe Slim by using specific references from the novel. Is this direct or indirect characterization? What do the descriptions of Slim indicate about his character?

Steinbeck uses direct characterization to describe Slim. Slim is the muleskinner and crew chief, who comes across as a tough, fair, and likable person.

- "long, black, damp hair..." (p. 33)
- "wore blue jeans and a short denim jacket." (p. 33)
- "moved with a majesty only achieved by royalty and master craftsmen." (p. 33)
- "the prince of the ranch" (p. 33)
- "capable of killing a fly on the wheeler's butt with a bull whip without touching the mule." (p. 33)
- "gravity in his manner and a quiet so profound that all talk stopped when he spoke." (p. 33)
- "His hatchet face was ageless." (p. 33)
- "slow speech..." (p. 34)
- "His hands, large and lean, were as delicate in their action as those of a temple dancer." (p. 34)

Many of the words and images associated with Slim portray him as kingly. He embodies qualities that are elevated from the other men on the ranch, and the other men respect him.

18. What metaphor is used to describe Slim?

Steinbeck compares Slim to a prince, which elevates him to royalty. (p. 33)

19. What literary device does Steinbeck use in the following passage? Explain its purpose.

Lennie, who had been following the conversation back and forth with his eyes, smiled complacently at the compliment. Slim looked approvingly at George for having given the compliment. He leaned over the table and snapped the corner of a loose card. "You guys travel around together?" His tone was friendly. It invited confidence without demanding it. (p. 34)

Steinbeck carefully uses the alliteration of the hard "c" sound in this passage. The word "complacent" and the repetition of the word "compliment" give the impression that the exchange between the men is friendly. In fact, Steinbeck even describes Slim's tone as friendly; however, the hard "c" sound should remind the reader that under the surface there is always competition and skepticism between the men.

20. What happens to Slim's dog and her puppies? How does this function as a parallel to survival as a migrant worker? How is this an example of Social Darwinism?

Slim's dog bears nine puppies. Instead of keeping all of the puppies, Slim drowns four of them, keeping only the healthiest and largest five. These actions illustrate the competitive nature of survival during the Depression. Only the strong will survive, and the weak will perish.

Social Darwinism was the theory that human societies functioned in the same way that Nature did. Therefore, the socially-strongest (i.e., those who wielded political and/or economic power) would survive, while the weak (the ill, elderly, handicapped) would perish.

21. 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.

The first time that George and Lennie are asked about traveling together, the boss of the ranch is skeptical that the two men are traveling together simply because they want to. The boss believes that George is using Lennie for his money. His response suggests that he cares only about the men in terms of the work they will complete and the financial gain they will help provide.

Curley is the second person to question George and Lennie about why they are traveling together. His response, "Oh, so it's that way." (p. 25) suggests that Curley believes the two men have a sexual relationship. His response demonstrates his crass nature.

The final man to ask George and Lennie about their travel is Slim. When Slim asks the question, his response to the answer echoes the sentiments of all of the migrant men who must travel alone. Slim demonstrates that he is friendly and understanding.

22. Throughout the chapter, the reader is introduced to a majority of the characters who will play a role in the novel. How are the characters connected to one another? What can we learn about migrant workers during the Great Depression through the narration of this chapter?

This chapter connects characters in various ways. First and most obviously, George and Lennie are connected because they travel together. This is unusual during this era because the life of a migrant worker is lonely. Ranch hands are typically transient, migrant, traveling wherever they might find work, staying only as long as the work lasts. However, in this chapter George is also connected to Slim in that they are both leaders. George leads Lennie, and Slim seems to be the unofficial leader of the entire group. Curley and his wife are connected—not just in the sense that they are married—but they both are menacing to George and Lennie. Curley is a menace because of his violent and cruel nature; Curley's wife is a menace because of her seductive, predatory nature. Candy and Crooks are connected by their separation from the rest of the group: Candy is an old man, and Crooks is black, both trying to fit in at the ranch. One of the most important connections at this point in the novel is the connection between George and Candy. Both men are responsible for others who are incapable of taking care of themselves. George is responsible for Lennie, and Candy is responsible for his old dog.

23. How does Curley serve as a foil to Lennie?

Curley thrives on his strength, or appearance of strength, even though he is a small man. On the other hand, Lennie is a gentle man, even though he is the largest man in the group.

24. Steinbeck introduces the reader to Curley's wife in this chapter. What seems to be her role? What might this indicate about the way women were viewed during the Depression?

Curley's wife is not given a name, even though she has several interactions with the men. She is talked about only in light of her sexuality and her relationship with Curley. This suggests that, for Steinbeck, she is more a type than an individual. The roles Steinbeck assigns to women are the caretakers, like Lennie's Aunt Clara, and the seductress, like Curley's wife

Chapter Three

1. Throughout the novel to this point, Steinbeck has used several occasions to comment on the relationship between George and Lennie. How does Steinbeck comment on the relationship at the beginning of this passage? Why do you think he feels that it is necessary to revisit the nature of relationships between men in the Depression?

Slim comments to George that it is odd how the two men seem to travel together. Again, someone mentions the way in which men seem to migrate between camps after only spending a month at each. Steinbeck uses this novel to comment on American society. Part of his comments focus on the way in which men isolate one another when they need each other the most. The interesting note about the relationship between Lennie and George is that eventually the fact that they care so much about each other will be the reason that their relationship ends.

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

George used to pick on Lennie by playing jokes on him. For George, it was easy to pick on Lennie because he is so gullible, "Why he'd do any damn thing I tol' him. If I tol' him to walk over a cliff, over he'd go." (p. 40) This torment went on for some time, until one day, by the Sacramento River, George told Lennie to jump in. Lennie, unable to swim, nearly drowned. George pulled Lennie to safety, and Lennie was grateful, "he was so damn nice to me for pullin' him out. Clean forgot I told him to jump in." (p. 40) George realized then, that he was not treating Lennie like a person, and he never tormented Lennie again. George and Lennie depend on each other for different reasons. George depends on Lennie because Lennie gives him a purpose. George is in charge of Lennie (as is demonstrated through the stories he tells Slim at the beginning of the chapter). Lennie is dependent on George because he needs him to survive.

3. Why does George reveal to Slim what happened to them in Weed? What is Slim's response? Explain the irony in George's confession.

George tells Slim about what happens because he finds it easy to talk to Slim. He also slips and mentions Weed because Slim is talking about what a nice person Lennie is. When Slim hears the story, he again recognizes that Lennie does not have a violent nature. Slim states, "He ain't mean. I can tell a mean guy a mile off" (p. 42). The irony in the confession is that George has warned Lennie from the moment they arrived at the camp that he is not to talk about anything. George is worried that, because Lennie is not smart, he will say something that will get the men in trouble. Ultimately, however, it is George who opens up and shares their secrets.

4. What do George and Lennie talk about when Lennie comes into the bunk house? How are Lennie's actions similar to the events that happened earlier when Lennie and George were coming to camp?

George and Lennie are discussing a puppy that Lennie is given. Lennie tries to hide the puppy in his jacket when he comes in the bunk house. When George asks him about the puppy, Lennie tries to conceal the fact that he has it, just as he tried to do with the dead mouse in his pocket earlier.

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

The author spends time developing Lennie's kind character because there may be some sort of misunderstanding later in the story. The reader may not know the type of conflict that is going to occur, but a reasonable guess would be that the conflict will center around someone misinterpreting Lennie's actions, similar to what happened to Lennie and George in Weed. Steinbeck needs to create sympathy so the reader will have an understanding of the circumstances behind what happens. Yes, Steinbeck is successful; the reader has no reason to believe that Lennie is a dangerous person. In fact, George is the person who talks about getting into fights.

6. How does Steinbeck use a discovery in a pulp magazine to reinforce one of the themes of the novel?

Slim and Whit discover a letter that a man who used to work the camp has written to a magazine. The letter is important because it represents a dream for something that one of them was able to achieve. Getting a letter published in a magazine may not seem important to some, but it was something that William Tenner (the man who wrote the letter) had looked forward to as he was working. Seeing the letter in the paper gave William hope. This experience emphasizes the importance of dreams.

7. 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?

Steinbeck focuses on silence to highlight the mood. Literally, Candy's dog is being silenced by Carlson. The silence heightens the sense of anticipation and dread that Candy must feel while he is waiting to hear the sound of the gun. Metaphorically, the men at the ranch are being silenced. Just as the dog is an example of a weakness being destroyed by strength, the men on the ranch are powerless as well. Each man, whether because of age, race, or intelligence, is silenced in a world where he is forced to travel and work. Lennie is silenced because he thinks like a child. Literally George does not let him speak to people who have more power. Crooks, the black stable hand, is silenced because he is not allowed to even come inside the bunk house. All of the men are silenced by Curley because Curley is in charge of the ranch.

8. On page 51, Whit asks George if he has seen Curley's wife. What do you believe is Steinbeck's purpose in re-introducing her to the narrative?

This is important because each time Curley's wife is mentioned, George has a negative reaction to her. The reader might infer that she is going to be responsible for a problem between Curley, Lennie, and George.

9. Explain the following passage and its function in the story:

"She's gonna make a mess. They's gonna be a bad mess about her. She's a jail bait all set on the trigger. That Curley got his work cut out for him. Ranch with a bunch of guys on it ain't no place for a girl, specially like her." (p. 51)

The passage foreshadows later events in the novel—some sort of conflict between Curley's wife and the men. Because George and Lennie have already had conflict with Curley, the reader can assume that the conflict will involve Lennie and Curley as well.

10. Where does Whit invite George and Lennie to go? What type of establishment is it? What is George's response, and what does this tell you about George's belief in his dream?

Whit invites the men to go to Susy's place, a local bar and house of prostitution. George is interested in going, but only for a drink. While most men might be interested in the easy comforts of alcohol and women, George is more concerned about what he is going to be able to save.

11. 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?

Curley comes in the bunk house to find his wife. When he discovers that Slim is not in the bunk house either, he assumes that his wife and Slim are together, showing that Curley does not trust his wife. The first place we see this is when Curley assumes that his wife would be hanging out in the bunk house with the men. Curley is a jealous man, and this could spark problems between Curley, George, and Lennie later in the novel.

12. Describe the conversation George and Lennie have after the men go in search of a fight between Curley and Slim.

George asks Lennie what he was doing in the barn. Lennie tells him that he was petting his new puppy. George is concerned about Slim and Curley's wife being in the barn together. Lennie insists that he did not see Curley's wife in the barn. George reminds Lennie that if there is fighting at the ranch, Lennie is supposed to stay out of it. The conversation between George and Lennie is still more foreshadowing of a conflict involving the men, Curley's wife, Curley's jealousy, and how a woman can send a man to jail.

13. What do you suppose Lennie's statement might suggest, allegorically, when he says, "... live offa the fatta the lan'... an' rabbits," especially in light of the way George goes on to describe it (pp. 57, 58)?

The way George describes living "offa the fatta the lan'..." for Lennie, is that their dream ranch is lush and abundant in food, providing work, money, and food for the men, as well as stability and safety. As an allegory, the dream ranch seems to represent both men's personal Garden of Eden in which everything Adam and Eve needed was provided with minimal effort on their parts.

14. How does Lennie, sensitive by nature, reveal a violent streak while George tells the story of their future ranch? How does his statement add to the violent nature of the novel?

While describing their future, George tells Lennie that they will own a dog and a couple of cats, but Lennie will have to make sure that the cats do not get a hold of the rabbits. In response to this, Lennie states, "You jus' let 'em try to get the rabbits. I'll break their God damn necks. I'll...I'll smash 'em with a stick" (p. 58). This statement shows how irrational Lennie can be, which helps to explain why he is unable to survive on his own. Also, Lennie's statement reflects the violence of the men's society. Lennie's first impulse is to kill the cats, just as Carlson's is to shoot Candy's dog.

15. Why do Lennie and George continue to talk about their dream? Who is also interested in the story of George and Lennie's dream? Why?

Talking about the dream gives Lennie and George the drive they need to make it through each day at the ranch. Lennie and George have something to look forward to, a reason to work. Talking about the dream—especially after the conflict with Curley, his wife, and Slim—provides a way for the men to calm down. Candy is interested in the dream because he wants a reason to go on as well. He tells George that he would be a good person to take care of the little chores.

16. Explain how the theme of survival is highlighted on page 60.

When Candy is talking about sharing the dream with Lennie and George, he mentions that he was hurt a few years ago on the farm. He believes that he will be let go because he can no longer do any work. This emphasizes the idea that people who are weak are destroyed or removed from those who are stronger, similar to the way Carlson wanted to destroy the dog. Candy believes that Lennie and George would still allow him to work, even if he was not as strong as he used to be. Perhaps he thinks this way because of the way George takes care of Lennie.

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?

Both of the relationships started in childhood. Candy had his dog since it was a pup, and George knew Lennie from childhood. Second, both men (George and Candy) are in positions to take care of their partners. Candy must take care of his dog because the dog is no longer capable of taking care of itself. According to Carlson, the dog is not worth the time and effort it takes to take care of it. George must take care of Lennie because Lennie is too simple-minded to take care of himself. The interesting foreshadowing is that Candy wishes that he had taken care of his dog rather than someone else; later in the novel, George will shoot Lennie because he does not want some stranger to do it.

18. Describe the conflict that ensues at the end of the chapter. Why might Steinbeck have chosen to end the chapter this way?

Slim is angry because Curley keeps asking him if he is involved with Curley's wife.

"Slim said, 'Well, you been askin' me too often. I'm gettin' God damn sick of it. If you can't look after your own God damn wife, what you expect me to do about it?'" (p. 62.)

After Slim yells at Curley for picking on him, Carlson joins in by talking about how frightened Curley is. Then, Candy joins the argument by making fun of Curley's glove. Curley gets angry, and tells the men that they can step outside to fight. Curley is demonstrating his power over the men; he knows that they will not fight him because he is their boss.

Curley has to back down in the argument with Slim and Carlson. Feeling embarrassed, Curley attempts to boost his own ego by picking on Lennie who is the easiest target. The reader should remember that earlier in the story, Curley is described as a person who picks on people who are unfairly matched with him.

George encourages Lennie to fight back, perhaps because he does not like Curley. From their first encounter, there has been some animosity between George and Curley. George also might want Lennie to take care of himself. After taking a few blows from Curley, Lennie literally does what George asks and crushes Curley's hand.

Steinbeck chooses to end this chapter with the greatest amount of conflict between the men. The reader remembers that George has been warning Lennie to stay away from Curley.

19. 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?

Steinbeck uses animal imagery to describe the characters in the fight. The images help solidify the reader's characterization of Lennie and Curley.

Examples:

- *"Curley stepped over to Lennie like a terrier."* (p. 62)
- *"Lennie covered his face with his huge paws and bleated with terror."* (p. 63)
- *Slim about Curley – "The dirty little rat."* (p. 63)
- *"Curley was flopping like a fish on a line."* (p. 63)
- *"He stood crying, his fist lost in Lennie's paw."* (p. 64)
- *"Slim turned to the whimpering Lennie."* (p. 64)

The image of Curley changes throughout the fight from attack dog to coward who has been injured by something bigger and stronger. The animal images associated with each man, the power-hungry image of Curley and the timid and child-like nature of Lennie are emphasized by the animals that represent them. Lennie's images are associated with animals that cry (bleat), indicating that Lennie is the weaker of the two men.

20. How does Steinbeck maintain the integrity of Lennie's character after he violently injures Curley?

Lennie is upset by what he has done, but he tells George that George told him to do it. It seems that Lennie does not understand what has happened. The reader can feel comfortable feeling sorry for Lennie, as the reader knows that Lennie was simply protecting himself.

21. 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?

Lennie, unjustly provoked, crushes Curley's hand, breaking nearly every bone. As the men prepare to take Curley to the doctor, George wonders whether he and Lennie will be fired. Slim, who witnessed the entire event, knows Curley is in the wrong and assures George that the secret is safe from the boss. Slim tells Curley, "I think you got your han' caught in a machine. ...But you jus' tell an' try to get this guy canned and we'll tell ever'body, an' then will you get the laugh" (p. 64). To avoid becoming a laughing-stock, Curley agrees not to tell. Curley is a man who relishes in his reputation. His reputation would be ruined if people knew what happened.

Chapter Four

1. 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:

On a literal level, the name represents Curley's curly hair. However, Steinbeck could have also chosen the name because "cur" means coward. Curley is a coward throughout the story, constantly picking on those who are weaker than he is, either physically or emotionally.

Whit:

The reader does not know much about Whit except that he is a ranch hand. He has limited involvement in the story. His name comes directly from the Old English word meaning "from the white field," or it could be a play-on-words. Whit's name could also be a reference to his ability to notice the details. For example, he was the person who noticed that an article in a magazine had been written by a man who worked for the ranch three months prior. Whit could be a play on "wit" which means "keenness" or "quickness."

Candy:

The obvious meaning of this name could be because he is so sweet to his old dog. This name does, however, suggest a woman's name, suggesting a perceived weakness and worthlessness.

2. Explain the implications of Steinbeck's not giving Curley's wife a name.

Primarily, Of Mice and Men is a novel that strives to explain the lives of men. Notice that throughout the novel the women serve only as functionaries to the men. Aunt Clara is a woman who seemingly has a significant role in Lennie's life, and yet Lennie cannot remember her. Curley's wife is simply an object of desire. The men in the novel think about Curley's wife only as "Curley's wife." She serves no other purpose to them, is not even, a full-fledged person.

A second implication of leaving Curley's wife nameless is the fact that one of the themes of Steinbeck's novel is loneliness. The reader needs to understand that the men are not the only people who are lonely. Like the men in the novel, alienated from each other for one reason or another, Curley's wife is alienated by the fact that she is a woman. She is a lonely and seeks the attention of men, which ultimately leads to her death.

Finally, it is important for Steinbeck to maintain sympathy for Lennie throughout the novel. If Steinbeck were to give Curley's wife a name, the reader might sympathize with her more and with Lennie less. The climax in the novel is Lennie's murder of Curley's wife. Steinbeck does not want the reader to pay more attention to her death than to Lennie's being a victim of his circumstances.

3. Often, the setting is not just “where the story happens,” but instead is a geographical, historical, social, economic, or philosophical setting. Steinbeck spends a great deal of time describing Crooks’ living quarters at the beginning of this section. What does the reader gain through this description? What do we learn about Crooks?

The reader learns two things. First, the reader learns that Crooks, because he is black, is forced to live outside of the bunk house. In fact, he has his own space in which he can do whatever he wants. Second, we learn that Crooks is almost a permanent fixture of the ranch. He has many more possessions than a typical person would have because he does not need to worry about transporting those possessions. The reader also learns that Crooks takes pride in his space, but he also enjoys the fact that he lives alone. He does not need to worry about picking up after himself. The setting helps isolate the characters and comments on the role the characters allow their circumstances to play in their lives.

4. How does Crooks respond when Lennie comes to visit him? Explain the irony in the situation.

Lennie wants to see the newborn puppies being kept in the stable, but when he gets there he notices Crooks’ light is on and decides to pay him a visit. Crooks is unhappy about Lennie’s visit. He states, “You got no right to come in my room. This here’s my room. Nobody got any right in here but me” (p. 68). His response is ironic in light of the men’s loneliness. The reader would expect that Crooks would be happy to have someone who would visit with him.

5. Contrast Crooks’ initial response to Lennie and his later response. Why does he change?

Initially, Crooks does not want Lennie to come into his space. He yells at Lennie and tells him to leave. Moments later, Crooks relents and asks Lennie to come in. Crooks has grown accustomed to being a mistreated minority, forced to defend himself in any situation. Lennie’s innocence and simple-minded manner assure Crooks, “A guy can talk to [Lennie] an’ be sure [he] won’t go blabbin” (p. 70).

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

Crooks’ loneliness stems from lessons he learned as a child.

“I was born right here in California. My old man had a chicken ranch, ‘bout ten acres. The white kids come to play at our place, an’ sometimes I went to play with them, and some of them was pretty nice. My ol’ man didn’t like that. I never knew till long later why he didn’t like that. But I know now. ... There wasn’t another colored family for miles around. And now there ain’t a colored man on this ranch an’ there’s jus’ one family in Soledad. ... If I say something, why it’s just a nigger sayin’ it.” (p.70)

Crooks has been isolated because of his race, therefore his loneliness is deeper than the loneliness of the other men.

7. Why does Lennie become upset with Crooks? Why does Steinbeck include this interchange between Lennie and Crooks?

Crooks begins asking Lennie, "S'pose George don't come back no more. ...What'll you do then?" (p. 71) Lennie, at first, is confident George will always return, but Crooks continues to provoke Lennie until he begins to doubt his confidence in his good friend and companion. These thoughts infuriate Lennie, making him angry with Crooks.

Steinbeck includes this interchange because it demonstrates two important themes in the novel. First, Crooks enjoys tormenting Lennie. Steinbeck is highlighting the predatory nature of all of us, even though at the same time one person is torturing another, he or she may be the victim of someone else's power. Second, this instance further highlights Lennie's emotional immaturity. Lennie is quick to anger when he feels as if he is being threatened or George is being threatened.

8. What explanation does Crooks give for upsetting Lennie?

Crook explains to Lennie that he wants Lennie to understand what it is like to believe that he has no one, just as Crooks has no one. "A guy needs somebody—to be near him. ...A guy goes nuts if he ain't got nobody. Don't make no difference who the guy is, long's he's with you" (p. 72).

9. Compare the way Candy responds to George and Lennie's dream, and the way Crooks responds to the dream.

Candy comes in Crooks' room to talk to Lennie about their dream. It is obvious that Candy has spent some time thinking about what Lennie and George shared with him. He is inspired by the thought of having a piece of land some day. On the other hand, Crooks is quick to squelch their enthusiasm. Crooks' life has been dictated by poverty. He is a poor man and has lost his hope. Even though they are also poor, George and Lennie persist in remaining optimistic. Crooks deals with his poverty by protecting what he already has, making other people feel the loneliness he feels, and by refusing to believe that life can get any better.

10. 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?

Curley's wife attacks the men, just as Crooks took the opportunity to attack Lennie. Curley's wife is one of the weak characters at the ranch, but her weakness is her gender. She takes the opportunity to hurt the men by saying, "They left all the weak ones here," before they have the opportunity to hurt her first. (p. 77)

11. Who comes to visit Lennie, Candy, and Crooks? What is the real reason behind the visit?

Curley's wife stops at Crooks' bunk claiming to be looking for Curley. She admits, however, that she already knows where he is, and the real reason behind her visit is because she is as lonely as the other men. "Think I don't like to talk to somebody ever' once in a while? Think I like to stick in that house alla time?" (p. 77).

12. When Curley's wife sees Lennie, Candy, and Crooks talking together, how does she characterize them?

Curley's wife characterizes the men as "weak" because they have not gone into town drinking and whoring.

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

The reader's first impression of Curley's wife seems to be that she is a mean-spirited person, not very intelligent, and a flirt, who wears too much make-up and dresses provocatively. However, the more Curley's wife is given the opportunity to speak in the novel, the reader learns that her anger is motivated by her loneliness, similar to the way Crooks' loneliness motivates his anger. She is embarrassed that she is so lonely that she has resorted to talking to Crooks, Lennie, and Candy. "Ever'body out doin' som'pin'. Ever'body! An' what am I doin'? Standin' here talkin' to a bunch of bindle stiffs—a nigger an' a dum-dum and a lousy ol' sheep—an' likin' it because they ain't nobody else." (p. 78)

14. How is the theme of power and powerlessness developed at the beginning and in the final section of this chapter?

At the beginning of the chapter, Crooks tries to exert his power over Lennie, and then Candy, as they try to come to his bunk to talk to him. Because Crooks is powerless most of the time, he takes control of his space and has the power to let people in or keep them out. At the end of the chapter, Curley's wife exerts her power as a white woman over Crooks. She knows that she can say or do anything and that Crooks is unable to retaliate. Whereas Curley's wife may be powerless on the ranch and in her relationship with her husband, she has power over those who are also powerless.

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

Steinbeck uses this opportunity to develop Crooks' character. Crooks offers the reader a glimpse of another person who is marginalized in society. Crooks' anger, as he relates to Lennie through stories about his childhood, stems from his isolation due to his race. The rest of the characters in the novel are isolated and lonely for other reasons: economics, age, and gender.

Steinbeck also uses this chapter to provide more information about Curley's wife. Thus far in the novel, her characterization has been through the other characters' words and actions. Curley's wife explains how she also has a dream. The reader learns the reasons for her behavior.

Curley's wife and Crooks are similar in the way they relate to the other characters in the novel. They are both quick to snap at the other people, probably because they have spent their lives on the outside of every situation—Crooks because he is African-American, and Curley's wife because she is a female.

16. 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.

"Crooks seemed to grow smaller, and he pressed himself against the wall." (p. 80)

"Crooks had reduced himself to nothing. There was no personality, no ego—nothing to arouse either like or dislike." (p. 81)

17. Explain the circular nature of the chapter and what it implies about Crooks.

The chapter begins and ends with Crooks rubbing liniment on his back. Crooks was, for a short time, drawn into the dream ranch and the company of others, but after Curley's wife berates him, he is back to his previous isolation. The chapter's ending emphasizes that the loneliness felt by the men is destined to continue, as Curley's wife continues on her own, and Crooks is left in his bunk to fend for himself.

18. Explain the following expressions from chapter four:

- "They'll take ya to the **booby hatch**." (p. 72): *insane asylum*
- "...and listen how Curley's gonna lead with his left twict, and then bring in the **ol' right cross**?" (p. 78): *a punch thrown with the right arm*
- "What you **think** you're sellin' me?" (p. 78): *trying to make me believe*
- "Caught in a machine—**baloney**!" (p. 78): *nonsense*
- "I could get you **strung up on a tree** so easy it ain't even funny." (p. 79): *lynched*

Chapter Five

1. 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?

Lennie kills the pup that Slim gave him. According to the text, Lennie was playing too roughly with the puppy. “Why do you got to get killed? You ain’t so little as mice. I didn’t bounce you hard.” (p. 85) Lennie is worried that George will not let him tend to the rabbits on the farm if he has killed the puppy. Steinbeck begins the chapter with this incident for two reasons. First, Steinbeck wants to be sure that the reader does not forget what Lennie is capable of. Steinbeck uses smaller incidents throughout the story to remind the reader that Lennie is capable of violence, but the dead puppy also illustrates that Lennie does not always understand the consequences of his actions. Second, Steinbeck is also using this incidence to foreshadow problems to come. In terms of the exposition of the story, Steinbeck has gone to great lengths to develop the rising action that will eventually lead to the climax.

2. Describe the instance where the reader sees Lennie’s irrational anger when he does not understand what is going on, or when he is worried about something that is going to happen.

Upon realizing that he has killed one of the puppies, Lennie knows George will be upset with him: “...Maybe George won’t care... This here God damn little son-of-a-bitch wasn’t nothing to George” (p. 86). The choice of language here seems uncharacteristic of Lennie. Lennie becomes angry and throws the puppy away from him. The anger that he transfers to the puppy would be unreasonable for someone like George, but because Lennie is upset and does not understand what will happen, he takes his anger out on the puppy.

3. How is Curley’s wife described when she comes into the barn? Why do you think Steinbeck describes her in this way?

Steinbeck describes Curley’s wife as follows: “She wore her bright cotton dress and the mules with the red ostrich feathers. Her face was made up and the little sausage curls were all in place” (p. 86). This description of Curley’s wife confirms the reputation she has among the men. She is dressed provocatively. One reason Steinbeck might describe her in this way is to hold her in part responsible for what happens between her and Lennie

4. 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.

Just like the men at the ranch, Curley's wife feels insignificant. A mutt is an animal that has no significant lineage, unlike an animal that is purposefully bred. Perhaps Curley's wife recognizes that, like the puppy, those on the ranch are mutts, common and disposable. Throughout the novel, Steinbeck highlights the idea that America is filled with people who are lonely and desperate. No one has a real family, similar to how a mutt does not have a distinguishable breed. Because most men during the Depression spent time traveling around the country, the image of there being mutts all over the country could also refer to the number of homeless men who are traveling from coast to coast to find work.

5. Describe the similarities between Lennie and Curley's wife's conversation and the conversation between Lennie and Crooks.

In both instances, the conversation is one-sided. Lennie's child-like mentality hinders the discussion from progressing. Both Crooks and Curley's wife attempt to talk about the past, but Lennie's primary concern is with what will happen if he does not follow George's rules.

6. Why does Curley's wife become angry at Lennie?

Curley's wife becomes angry because Lennie will not talk to her. When she is trying to soothe him, he tells her that he cannot talk because George will be upset. Curley's wife is angry because she is lonely and feels as if she does not have the right to talk to anyone. The men on the ranch have taken her rights away.

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

Curley's wife dreams about being in motion pictures. When she was young, she had an opportunity to meet a man who was going to put her in motion pictures, but he never sent her a letter. As a result, she married Curley.

8. How does the reader know that Curley's wife does not understand Lennie's mental challenges?

Curley's wife is very angry at Lennie because she has shared her dreams with him and how she feels about her husband. In response, Lennie only wants to talk about the rabbits that George is going to let him farm. If she understood Lennie's mentality, she would treat him as Crooks did, understanding that Lennie is a nice person and is not going to tell her any of his secrets.

9. What is Lennie's explanation for why he likes rabbits? How does Curley's wife respond?

Lennie explains, "I like to pet nice things. Once at a fair I seen some of them long-hair rabbits. An' they was nice, you bet. Sometimes I've even pet mice, but not when I could get nothing better" (p. 90). At first, Curley's wife is worried by Lennie's explanation, but soon she realizes that Lennie is not unlike other people who like nice things.

10. 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?

When Lennie is talking about liking to touch soft things, she does little more than think that he is crazy. She likens his behavior and his attitude to that of a child. Steinbeck could intentionally be trying to indicate that Curley's wife is only cruel in the way that the other men see her. She did mention in an earlier scene that the men seem to treat her much differently when they are alone than when they are with a group. This interaction between her and Lennie could be an example of that behavior. However, Steinbeck could also be pointing out Curley's wife's inability to focus on anything other than her own needs. She stays with Lennie because she can talk to him, fulfilling a need that she has at the moment. She is so consumed with her desire to not feel lonely, that she is willing to allow Lennie to touch her, even though she has just witnessed what he can do if he becomes too rough.

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

Curley's wife invites Lennie to touch her hair because it is soft. When he does, he begins to rub her hair more harshly than she likes. Lennie panics after Curley's wife screams because Lennie has a tight grip on her hair. Covering her mouth to stop her screaming, Lennie accidentally kills her. This event is similar to when Lennie crushed Curley's hand. Because Lennie panics, he does not know how to let go of what is causing him the panic.

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

Lennie's response to what he has done is the same, regardless of the fact that in the second instance he has killed a human being. Lennie is unable to show remorse for what he has done; instead, he is worried about George's reaction to what has happened. At the beginning of the chapter, Lennie tries to cover the puppy with hay once he realizes that he has killed it. At the end of the chapter, when he realizes that Curley's wife is dead, he tries to cover her with hay.

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

Readers know that Lennie likes to pet soft things and that women have panicked in the past when he has tried to touch them, like in Weed. The reader also knows that George reiterated several times that Curley's wife was going to "be the death of" him and Lennie. Given Lennie's strength and the situation between Lennie and Curley's wife (without George around to intervene), it is not surprising when Curley's wife is killed.

14. 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?

The image describes Curley's wife and her contented appearance after her death. Steinbeck seems to imply that her escape from powerlessness is death. While all indications in the novel support a misogynistic attitude, there is no evidence that Steinbeck would have purposefully portrayed women in a negative manner. The more interesting analysis of Curley's wife's death is the fact that she seems more at peace in death than she did in life. As the reader considers each of the characters in the novel, characters who cannot find peace except through their seemingly unattainable dreams, death could offer each of them the same peace.

15. How do Curley's wife's and Lennie's dreams both die with the accidental death?

Curley's wife's dream literally dies with her. Lennie's dream dies because, as the reader knows, he will have to face legal consequences for his actions. While he cannot fathom these consequences and can think only that George will not let him tend the rabbits because he is too rough, he will certainly not be able to tend them when he is in prison, probably on death row.

16. How does Candy misinterpret Curley's wife's appearance in the barn?

When Candy first discovers Curley's wife's body, he believes that she is sleeping. In fact, the text states that he looks at her "disapprovingly" (p. 93).

17. Compare George's and Candy's responses to the situation. How is George's response surprising given what the reader knows about his relationship with Lennie?

George decides that they must tell Curley about his wife. George is concerned that if he lets Lennie go, Lennie will not know how to fend for himself. This in itself is not surprising, but George has to know that Lennie will face the negative consequences of murder. The reader might expect that George would be more sympathetic and try to escape with Lennie before anyone finds out what happened. On the other hand, Candy wants to let Lennie get away. He is worried that Curley will kill Lennie when he finds out.

18. What image does Steinbeck use to describe George's physical reaction to Curley's wife's death? What does his reaction indicate? Why do you think this might be his reaction?

Steinbeck uses the following image: "And finally, when he stood up, slowly and stiffly, his face was as hard and tight as wood, and his eyes were hard" (p. 94). The image suggests that George is angry rather than sad. The reader might expect that George would be saddened by Lennie's actions; however, based on the image used to describe George's face, the reader might instead think that George is angry at Lennie's actions because he knows that Lennie has killed any chance the two men have of achieving their dream.

19. How does the reader know that Candy recognizes the greater implications of Lennie's actions? What is George's response to Candy's questions?

Candy asks George about the farm and if they are still going to be able to go. George seems defeated as he replies that he always believed that the farm was an impossible dream.

20. Describe Candy's reaction after he learns that their dream of the farm is no longer a reality? Why do you think he reacts this way?

When Candy speaks to Curley's wife's dead body he says, "You God damn tramp... You done it, didn't you? I s'pose you're glad. Ever'body knowed you'd mess things up. You wasn't no good" (p. 95). Candy's statement shows his disappointment that his chance of leaving the ranch is over. He blames Curley's wife for the disappointment.

21. How does George try to protect Lennie after the men have found the body? How do we know that this is not where Lennie would have gone?

George tells the men that Lennie would have gone south because they came from the north. The reader should remember that at the beginning of the story, before they even came to the ranch, George told Lennie that if anything happened, he should go to the clearing where they stayed the night before they went to the ranch.

22. 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?

The men think that Lennie took Carlson's gun, but this is out of character for Lennie, who most likely would not know how to operate it if he had it. George has taken the gun. He is the one person who had the opportunity and the time to take the gun. The reader should begin to understand what George is going to have to do in order to save Lennie. The men want to kill Lennie, but George realizes that it is his duty to kill him first.

23. Why do the men want George to come with them?

The men want George to come so they do not think that he has anything to do with the murder.

24. 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.

The ending is a morose look at what happens to men when their dreams are taken away. Steinbeck does not want to focus on the violence and vengeance that might define this incident, but instead he focuses on Candy's defeated expression. While a theme in the novel suggests that the weak attack the weaker, the reader should recognize that Steinbeck is trying to point out that all the men are weak as they try to survive the Depression. They are all victims of their situation.

25. How does the focus of the narration change at the end of the chapter?

The focus of the narration shifts to explore George's actions and reactions to what has happened.

Chapter Six

1. 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?

The story has come full circle—not just in where the story begins and ends, but also in how Lennie’s pattern of hurting something innocent is repeated. Steinbeck repeats many of the same images that introduce the novel. Nature is delightful and peaceful, but ultimately, men and their inhumane, violent actions threaten nature. Lennie seems to find solace in nature; he wants to escape to nature when he thinks about how angry George is going to be. This is the one time that Lennie remembers what George has told him.

2. On pages 99 and 100, Steinbeck uses an image of nature to comment on the action at the ranch. Describe the image and explain its connection to the themes in the novel.

The images Steinbeck presents at the beginning of the chapter suggest that nature is peaceful and calming. He describes mountains, sunlight, and silver leaves. However, in the midst of this natural beauty, the image of a large bird trying to catch its dinner looms over the serenity. The image of the heron suggests that, despite the idyllic surroundings, for any weaker creature death can come in a second, just as death came to the mouse, Candy’s dog, the pup, and Curley’s wife.

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

As Lennie is waiting for George, he remembers a “little fat old woman. She wore thick bull’s-eye glasses and she wore a huge gingham apron with pockets, and she was starched and clean” (pp. 100-101). The woman is Aunt Clara who used to try to help Lennie. He remembers being scolded and reminded that he was keeping George from accomplishing his dreams. While Lennie does not usually remember his Aunt Clara, or even the instructions that George has given him, he has just experienced a traumatic event. This event has triggered memories that he has of making mistakes in the past. Lennie also has a vision of a large rabbit. The large rabbit is symbolic of Lennie’s fear that George will not let him take care of the rabbits on the farm. The vision of the rabbit is similar to the conversation that Lennie had with Crooks when Crooks tried to tell him that George might not come back for him.

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

Lennie thinks that George is going to yell at him for what he has done. Lennie needs the reassurance and the repetition of how George responded in the past so he can feel as if everything is going to be all right. George goes through the motions and repeats the words that Lennie knows by heart and tells him the story of the farm one more time. However, this time, George goes through the motions without any emotion. George is too sad, and being angry with Lennie is useless. George knows what must be done in order to save Lennie from the wrath of the other men.

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

Lennie does not seem to realize that he has done something as serious as killing a human being. He treats Curley's wife's death the same as the puppy's death. He thinks that everything will be the same once George has yelled at him.

6. How is the fact that George tells Lennie the story of the farm significant?

As George tells the story of the farm, he is basically giving up on his dream. He realizes that his dream of owning a farm is never going to come true, and he is going to be the same kind of man he bunks with at the ranch. He uses this last telling of the story as a catharsis, a release of the hope he has held on to for years.

7. The story of the ranch seems to embody the main theme of the novel. What does Steinbeck emphasize through the dream of the ranch?

At the ranch the men will be sure to have each other around to take care of each other. They will have a companion, which is something that many of the men do not have now. A main theme in the novel is about the loneliness of these men on the road. By assuring each other that they will be together on the farm, they are ensuring that they will never be lonely. Lennie needs this assurance so he can die peacefully, with the dream still fresh in his mind.

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

Earlier in the novel, Candy tells George that he would rather have been the one to shoot his old dog. Candy feels badly because he let Carlson kill his dog, especially since he had the dog since it was a pup. George is in the same position. He knows that the men are going to kill Lennie, but he cannot let someone else hurt him because he has been taking care of Lennie for most of his life.

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

George sees shooting Lennie as the only alternative since the other men want to kill Lennie. George sees his actions as a mercy killing—what one friend would do for another if in the same situation.

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

Slim is the only man on the ranch who seems to have a greater understanding of the relationships that people have between one another. The other men, probably because of their continued isolation from one another, are unable to understand the bond that Lennie and George have. They do not understand why George would need to be consoled, especially after he just told them that he shot Lennie out of self-defense.

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

Carlson says, “Now what the hell ya suppose is eatin’ them two guys?” (p. 107). Carlson represents an uncaring member of society who does not feel any compassion over the death of the two innocents. The final comment highlights the nature of men in the Depression, as well as the theme of loneliness and lack of camaraderie that exists between men.

Of Mice and Men

Advanced Placement in English Literature and Composition Teaching Unit

Study Guide Student Copy

Chapter One

1. Reread the first paragraph of the novel. How does the passage function? What purpose does Steinbeck fulfill by beginning the novel in this way?
2. Explain the rhetorical strategies used in the following line: "There is a path through the willows and among the sycamores, a path beaten hard by boys coming down from the ranches to swim in the deep pool, and beaten hard by tramps who come wearily down from the highway in the evening to jungle-up near water." (pp. 1-2)
3. 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?
4. In the section of text from page 3 to page 4, Steinbeck uses several animal images to describe Lennie. Cite two examples of images that are used and explain their effect on Lennie's characterization.
5. When George and Lennie reach a clearing, George gives Lennie instructions about the water. The scene on page three serves two purposes: explain each.

6. When Lennie and George sit by the river to rest, what do they talk about? What does Steinbeck achieve through the conversation? What can we learn about Lennie from their conversation? What can we learn about George?

7. Read the following line from the novel and explain the phrase “watchin’ that blackboard.” How does it contribute to the characterization of George and Lennie?

“You remember settin’ in that gutter on Howard street and watchin’ that blackboard?” (p. 5)

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

9. Describe George’s plan for getting the job at the ranch. What do we learn about Lennie from this plan?

10. Why does Steinbeck mention on page 7 that George and Lennie had problems in Weed but then not develop the story?

11. 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 so 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?

12. Even though Lennie's mentality keeps him from fully understanding the world around him, he is very sensitive to George's feelings. Describe an incident that shows Lennie's compassion for George.
13. After George erupts in anger about the responsibility of taking care of Lennie, Lennie offers to run away and leave George alone. Why do you think George does not take Lennie up on his offer?
14. What literary techniques does Steinbeck use in the passage on page 11 that begins "You crazy son-of-a-bitch. You keep me in hot water all the time." The passage ends with "He looked across the fire at Lennie's anguished face, and then he looked ashamedly at the flames."
15. 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?
16. Explain the expression "live off the fatta the lan'." (p. 14)
17. Why does George tell Lennie to remember the spot where they are camping? What might this conversation foreshadow?
18. By the end of Chapter 1, there are two themes that are easily identified. Using specific examples, describe these themes.

Chapter Two

1. 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?
2. What happens when George and Lennie arrive at the camp? What do they learn?
3. Explain the purpose of including the story about the blacksmith who used to work at the ranch.
4. How does the old man describe the boss? What seems unusual about the boss?
5. 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?
6. Explain the irony in Lennie's last name.
7. Who is Curley, and what does it mean when Candy says he is "handy"?

8. 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)

9. What is suggested about Curley's character when he reacts to George and Lennie the way that he does?
10. Explain the significance of the following passage: "The old man was reassured. He had drawn a derogatory statement from George. He felt safe now..." (p. 27) What does this passage illustrate about the relationships between men during the Depression?
11. What does the reader learn about Curley's wife? Why might this be important to the story?
12. What is important about the way in which Steinbeck refers to the "Stable Buck" on page 29? What does it imply?
13. How does the following passage serve as foreshadowing in the novel?

"If he tangles with you, Lennie, we're gonna get the can. Don't make no mistake about that. He's the boss's son. Look, Lennie. You try to keep away from him, will you? Don't never speak to him. If he comes in here you move clear to the other side of the room." (p. 29)

14. Explain how the following line from the novel might be symbolic.

Both men glanced up, for the rectangle of sunshine in the doorway was cut off.
(p. 31)

15. Describe what happens to George after Curley's wife comes to the barn looking for Curley.

16. Explain the foreshadowing in the following lines from the novel:

Lennie cried out suddenly—"I don' like this place, George. This ain't no good place. I wanna get outa here." (p. 32)

17. Steinbeck is careful to provide direct and indirect characterization for the characters in the novel. Describe Slim by using specific references from the novel. Is this direct or indirect characterization? What do the descriptions of Slim indicate about his character?

18. What metaphor is used to describe Slim?

19. What literary device does Steinbeck use in the following passage? Explain its purpose.

Lennie, who had been following the conversation back and forth with his eyes, smiled complacently at the compliment. Slim looked approvingly at George for having given the compliment. He leaned over the table and snapped the corner of a loose card. "You guys travel around together?" His tone was friendly. It invited confidence without demanding it. (p. 34)

20. What happens to Slim's dog and her puppies? How does this function as a parallel to survival as a migrant worker? How is this an example of Social Darwinism?
21. 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.
22. Throughout the chapter, the reader is introduced to a majority of the characters who will play a role in the novel. How are the characters connected to one another? What can we learn about migrant workers during the Great Depression through the narration of this chapter?
23. How does Curley serve as a foil to Lennie?
24. Steinbeck introduces the reader to Curley's wife in this chapter. What seems to be her role? What might this indicate about the way women were viewed during the Depression?

Chapter Three

1. Throughout the novel to this point, Steinbeck has used several occasions to comment on the relationship between George and Lennie. How does Steinbeck comment on the relationship at the beginning of this passage? Why do you think he feels that it is necessary to revisit the nature of relationships between men in the Depression?
2. What does the reader learn about the relationship between George and Lennie as George talks to Slim?
3. Why does George reveal to Slim what happened to them in Weed? What is Slim's response? Explain the irony in George's confession.
4. What do George and Lennie talk about when Lennie comes into the bunk house? How are Lennie's actions similar to the events that happened earlier when Lennie and George were coming to camp?
5. Why does Steinbeck try to create sympathy for Lennie? Is he successful?
6. How does Steinbeck use a discovery in a pulp magazine to reinforce one of the themes of the novel?

7. 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?

8. On page 51, Whit asks George if he has seen Curley’s wife. What do you believe is Steinbeck’s purpose in re-introducing her to the narrative?

9. Explain the following passage and its function in the story:

“She’s gonna make a mess. They’s gonna be a bad mess about her. She’s a jail bait all set on the trigger. That Curley got his work cut out for him. Ranch with a bunch of guys on it ain’t no place for a girl, specially like her.” (p. 51)

10. Where does Whit invite George and Lennie to go? What type of establishment is it? What is George’s response, and what does this tell you about George’s belief in his dream?

11. 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?
12. Describe the conversation George and Lennie have after the men go in search of a fight between Curley and Slim.
13. What do you suppose Lennie's statement might suggest, allegorically, when he says, "... live offa the fatta the lan'... an' rabbits," especially in light of the way George goes on to describe it (pp. 57, 58)?
14. How does Lennie, sensitive by nature, reveal a violent streak while George tells the story of their future ranch? How does his statement add to the violent nature of the novel?
15. Why do Lennie and George continue to talk about their dream? Who is also interested in the story of George and Lennie's dream? Why?

16. Explain how the theme of survival is highlighted on page 60.
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. Describe the conflict that ensues at the end of the chapter. Why might Steinbeck have chosen to end the chapter this way?
19. 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?
20. How does Steinbeck maintain the integrity of Lennie's character after he violently injures Curley?
21. 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 Four

1. 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:

2. Explain the implications of Steinbeck's not giving Curley's wife a name.
3. Often, the setting is not just "where the story happens," but instead is a geographical, historical, social, economic, or philosophical setting. Steinbeck spends a great deal of time describing Crooks' living quarters at the beginning of this section. What does the reader gain through this description? What do we learn about Crooks?
4. How does Crooks respond when Lennie comes to visit him? Explain the irony in the situation.

5. Contrast Crooks' initial response to Lennie and his later response. Why does he change?
6. How is Crook's loneliness different from the other characters on the ranch?
7. Why does Lennie become upset with Crooks? Why does Steinbeck include this interchange between Lennie and Crooks?
8. What explanation does Crooks give for upsetting Lennie?
9. Compare the way Candy responds to George and Lennie's dream, and the way Crooks responds to the dream.
10. 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?
11. Who comes to visit Lennie, Candy, and Crooks? What is the real reason behind the visit?
12. When Curley's wife sees Lennie, Candy, and Crooks talking together, how does she characterize them?

13. Characterize Curley's wife as she is presented in the novel. How is the reader supposed to feel about her?
14. How is the theme of power and powerlessness developed at the beginning and in the final section of this chapter?
15. Why does Steinbeck diverge from his narration to focus a chapter on two different characters in the novel, Crooks and Curley's wife?
16. 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.
17. Explain the circular nature of the chapter and what it implies about Crooks.
18. 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 twict, 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 Five

1. 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?
2. Describe the instance where the reader sees Lennie's irrational anger when he does not understand what is going on, or when he is worried about something that is going to happen.
3. How is Curley's wife described when she comes into the barn? Why do you think Steinbeck describes her in this way?
4. 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.
5. Describe the similarities between Lennie and Curley's wife's conversation and the conversation between Lennie and Crooks.
6. Why does Curley's wife become angry at Lennie?

7. 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?
8. How does the reader know that Curley's wife does not understand Lennie's mental challenges?
9. What is Lennie's explanation for why he likes rabbits? How does Curley's wife respond?
10. 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?
11. Why does Lennie panic, and what happens as a result of his panic? How is this similar to an event earlier in the story?
12. Compare the events at the beginning of the chapter with the events that happen at the end of the chapter.

13. What evidence in the novel has suggested that something tragic was going to happen to Curley's wife?
14. 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?
15. How do Curley's wife's and Lennie's dreams both die with the accidental death?
16. How does Candy misinterpret Curley's wife's appearance in the barn?
17. Compare George's and Candy's responses to the situation. How is George's response surprising given what the reader knows about his relationship with Lennie?
18. What image does Steinbeck use to describe George's physical reaction to Curley's wife's death? What does his reaction indicate? Why do you think this might be his reaction?

19. How does the reader know that Candy recognizes the greater implications of Lennie's actions? What is George's response to Candy's questions?
20. Describe Candy's reaction after he learns that their dream of the farm is no longer a reality? Why do you think he reacts this way?
21. How does George try to protect Lennie after the men have found the body? How do we know that this is not where Lennie would have gone?
22. 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?
23. Why do the men want George to come with them?
24. 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.
25. How does the focus of the narration change at the end of the chapter?

Chapter Six

1. 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?
2. On pages 99 and 100, Steinbeck uses an image of nature to comment on the action at the ranch. Describe the image and explain its connection to the themes in the novel.
3. What delusion does Lennie experience as he is waiting for George? Why do you think he remembers this experience?
4. When George finds Lennie, what does Lennie expect him to do? How does George respond?
5. How does the reader know that Lennie does not realize that he has done something wrong?

6. How is the fact that George tells Lennie the story of the farm significant?
7. The story of the ranch seems to embody the main theme of the novel. What does Steinbeck emphasize through the dream of the ranch?
8. How does George's responsibility in killing Lennie parallel the situation between Candy and his dog?
9. What is George trying to accomplish by shooting Lennie before the other men come to do it?
10. Who ultimately understands what happened between Lennie and George? Why are the other men unable to understand?
11. Explain the significance of the final statement in the novel.

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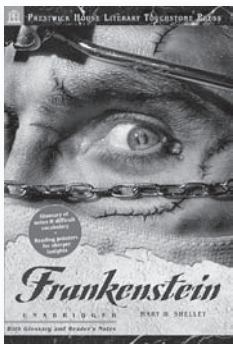
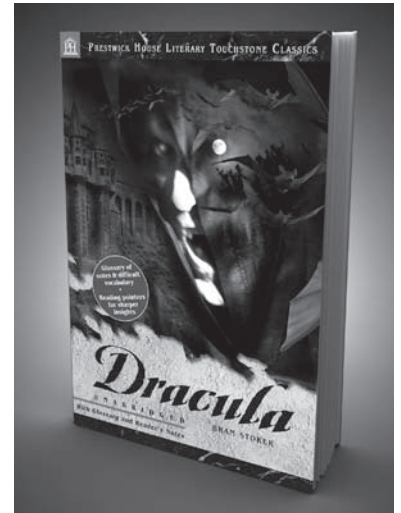
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