



Novel Study Guide

Title

Of Mice and Men

Author John Steinbeck

Plot Summary: *Of Mice and Men* is the story of two men, George Milton and Lennie Small, living a hardscrabble existence as migrant workers during the Great Depression. Smart and practical, George has spent years looking after Lennie. Lennie is hardworking and kind, but he is feeble minded. Each man is the only “family” the other one has. As George and Lennie move from place to place and job to job, they hope to save enough money to buy a place of their own. Soon their dream seems within reach. But forces beyond their control threaten to ruin their hopes forever.

Setting

The story takes place on a ranch in the Salinas Valley in California in the 1930s.

Major Characters

- **George Milton**, a migrant worker
- **Lennie Small**, George’s friend since childhood
- **Aunt Clara**, Lennie’s kindhearted aunt, now deceased
- **The Boss**, a man who owns the ranch where George and Lennie have come to work **Curley**, the Boss’s jealous, hot-tempered son
- **Curley’s wife**, who is unhappy and flirtatious
- **Candy**, an aging ranch hand who fears becoming unable to work
- **Carlson**, a fellow ranch hand
- **Whit**, a fellow ranch hand
- **Crooks**, a lonely, embittered black stable hand on the ranch
- **Slim**, a confident mule driver who is greatly respected

Lesson Review Questions

This study guide will act as your Assessment/Portfolio for Unit 3. Respond to these questions by copying them into a document and answering them. I suggest Google Doc or Word. You will submit the completed Study Guide at the end of the unit. . Some of the questions require you to express an opinion or describe your reaction to events in the novel. In these instances, there is no right or wrong answer, and responses will vary.

Vocabulary: For any of the vocabulary words, if you do not know the definition please use a dictionary to find the definition. This will help you in comprehending the book.

Lesson 1

Vocabulary: junctures, debris, mottled, recumbent, bindle, morosely, periscope, thrashing, pantomime, imperiously, brusquely, dejectedly, cat house

1. In your own words, briefly describe the place where George and Lennie are camping as the novel begins.
2. As Steinbeck introduces George and Lennie on p. 3, what are they talking about? What does this conversation reveal about both men?
3. Why does George instruct Lennie not to say anything when they get to the ranch?
4. Why does Lennie sneak the dead mouse back into his pocket? How does George react?
5. What can you infer about why the two men left their previous job in Weed?
6. What is George and Lennie's dream?
7. What does George instruct Lennie to do if he ever gets into trouble on the ranch?

Lesson 2

Vocabulary: burlap ticking, vials, blacksmith, skeptically, liniment, stable buck, cultivator, cesspool, mollified, calculating, pugnacious, ominously, derogatory, tart, plaintively, contorted, rouged, bridled, apprehensive, gravity, profound, complacently

1. When the old swamper (Candy) tells George and Lennie about the other men on the ranch, he uses a derogatory racial term to describe the stable buck, but also says the stable buck is “a nice fella.” What does his attitude reveal about the separation of races on the ranch?
2. How does the boss react to George and Lennie upon meeting them? What lies does George tell in order to manage the situation?
3. How does the boss’s son, Curley, treat George and Lennie? How does Candy explain his behavior?
4. According to Candy, what is Curley’s wife like? How does she act when she comes into the bunkhouse?
5. What problems does George foresee after Lennie’s encounter with Curley and his wife? What does he tell Lennie to do?
6. How is Slim described, and how do the other men regard him? What does George tell Slim about his friendship with Lennie?
7. What news do the two men learn at the end of this section? What promise does George make to Lennie?

Lesson 3

Vocabulary: derision, receptive, lynch, rheumatism, euchre, kewpie doll, hoosegow, alfalfa, subsided, entranced, reprehensible, reverently, bemused, whimpering

1. What attitude does Slim have toward George and Lennie's friendship? How does George react?
2. What details does George provide about his and Lennie's childhood? Why does George still continue to look after Lennie?
3. What is the full story behind George and Lennie's departure from Weed? Based on this story, what kind of trouble might Lennie get into on the ranch?
4. How has Lennie disobeyed the directions he was given about how to care for his puppy? What does his behavior toward the puppy reveal about his character?
5. Why does Carlson want to put Candy's dog to death? Why does Candy resist the idea? What makes him finally give in?
- 6.. Why do George and Lennie want to have their own farm?
7. What events lead to the confrontation between Lennie and Curley at the end of this section?

Lesson 4

Vocabulary: harness, riveter, aloof, fawning, disarming, conceal, sullenly, contemptuously, averted, appraised, crestfallen

1. Where does Crooks stay on the ranch? What are his responsibilities?
2. Based on the description of Crooks's possessions and his appearance, what conclusions can you draw about him?
3. How does Crooks initially react when Lennie enters his room? Why does he react this way? How does his manner change as the encounter continues?
4. When Crooks was a child, how did his father react when he played with white children? How do the adult Crooks feel toward whites?
5. How does Crooks react when he learns about George, Lennie, and Candy's plan to get their own house and farm?
6. Why does Curley's wife come by the stable? How does she behave toward the men?
7. How does Crooks respond at first when Curley's wife attacks them? What makes him change his demeanor?
8. What does Crooks change his mind about at the end of this section? Why?

Lesson 5

Vocabulary: consoled, earnestly, contorted, muffled, writhed, bewildered, hovered, sluggishly

1. What incident is Lennie upset about as he sits in the barn? How does this incident serve to remind the reader of Lennie's weaknesses?
2. Why does Curley's wife come to talk to Lennie? How does he respond?
3. What does Curley's wife reveal about her youthful hopes and dreams? How do these hopes and dreams compare with the actual circumstances of her adult life?
4. Why does Curley's wife invite Lennie to touch her hair? What happens as a result?
5. How does the incident in the barn echo other incidents in Lennie's life?
6. Throughout the novel, the reader never learns Curley's wife's name. Why do you think John Steinbeck made this choice as an author?

Lesson 6

Vocabulary: gingham, haunches, belligerently, monotonous, quivering

1. What advice of George's does Lennie follow after he leaves the barn?
2. What details illustrate the emotional stress Lennie is experiencing?
3. How does George respond to Lennie's expectation that George will yell at him? What does George's response show about how he feels?
4. Describe the moments immediately before Lennie's death. What is the purpose of George's conversation with Lennie in these final moments?
5. Why does Slim tell George, "You hadda. I swear you hadda"? Do you agree? Why or why not?
6. How do the other workers respond to Lennie's death? What does their response reveal about them?