

Knowledge Organiser: Of Mice and Men

Writer's Intent		Key Idea	Explanation	How it's seen in the text	
<p>John Steinbeck wrote <i>Of Mice and Men</i> in 1937 to highlight how life was during the Great Depression. Steinbeck wanted to highlight the way the depression effected people's lives and the things they had to do, and go through, in order to survive. Steinbeck drew attention to the hardships of life – particularly for some of the marginalised characters – and in doing so showed the futility of the American Dream.</p>		Discrimination	The unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on the grounds of race, age, sex, or disability.	Through the treatment of marginalised characters (Crooks, Curley's Wife) as different and other.	
		Hierarchy and Power	A system in which members of an organisation or society are ranked according to relative status or authority.	The ranch has a clear hierarchy which determines how characters can act and the freedoms they are given.	
		The American Dream	The American Dream is the belief that anyone, regardless of where they were born or what class they were born into, can attain their own version of success in a society where upward mobility is possible for everyone.	George and Lennie's dream of owning their own ranch is their American Dream. Steinbeck examines the plausibility of this belief – particularly in the context of the Great Depression.	
Key Characters		Loneliness	The emotional reaction to being isolated – be it perceived or actual.	It is woven throughout the novella in the Men's actions, as well as George playing Solitaire and the name of the town which translates to solitude.	
Lennie Small	A migrant worker who is mentally handicapped, large, and very strong. He depends on his friend George to protect him in situations he does not understand. He shares the dream of owning a farm with George,	The Destructive Nature of Man	The concept that mankind always seeks to destroy or bring down others in order to gain something for themselves – this is often power be that actual or symbolic.	The treatment of Lennie by both Crooks and Curley's Wife. Both characters belittle Lennie in order to feel some degree of power themselves.	
George Milton	A migrant worker who protects and cares for Lennie. George dreams of some day owning his own land, but he realizes the difficulty of making this dream come true.	Writer's Methods			
		Method	Definition	Example	Purpose
Slim	The leader of the mule team whom everyone respects. Slim becomes an ally to George and helps protect Lennie. Slim has compassion and insight.	Cyclical Structure	When conditions at the end of a story are in many ways similar to those at the start.	The novella begins and ends in the same setting with George telling Lennie the story of their dream.	It shows the futility of the American Dream and highlights how ruthless the world is.
Curley's Wife	The only character in the novel who is given no name, she is Curley's possession. She taunts and provokes the ranch hands into talking with her. She is portrayed unsympathetically until the final scene, in which the reader hears about her earlier dreams and current life	Biblical Allusion	an expression designed to call the Bible to mind without mentioning it explicitly; an indirect or passing reference.	The opening setting being presented as an idyllic natural setting (The Garden of Eden) which is then destroyed by the entrance of the men (The Fall of Man).	This highlights the cruelty and destructive nature of man, resulting in an idyllic peaceful life being unattainable.
		Symbolism	An object which represents an abstract idea.	Candy's dog represents those who are old and weak in society.	His outcome shows the fate of those like him and highlights the cruelty of society.
Curley	A very aggressive and violent character, whose small stature and insecurities make him pick fights with others. He takes advantage of his elevated position and power as the son of the Boss.	Allegory	A story that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one.	Each character in the ranch is representative of a group in society. For Example: Curley's Wife represents women.	It allows the readers to see the connection between the novel and the real world, enabling Steinbeck's moral to be clearly communicated.
Crooks	The black stable worker who cares for the horses. A symbol of racial injustice, Crooks is isolated from the other hands because of his skin color.	Microcosm	A community, place, or situation which encapsulates in miniature the characteristics of something much larger.		



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Key Word Glossary			
Word	Definition	Example	Word in Action
Coercive	Using force or threats to control a person or group.	Curley seeks to keep his power through his <i>coercive</i> behavior.	
Dialect	A particular form of a language which is used by people in a specific region or social group.	People from South America have a different <i>dialect</i> to those from North America.	
Dialogue	A conversation between two or more people as a feature of a book, play, or film.	The <i>dialogue</i> shows how the characters interact with one another.	
Disempower	To make a person or group less powerful or confident.	Crooks seeks to <i>disempower</i> Lennie.	
Disillusioned	The condition of being dissatisfied or defeated in expectation of hope.	Curley's Wife is <i>disillusioned</i> with her marriage.	
Empower	To make a person or group more powerful or confident.	Slim <i>empowers</i> George.	
Foreshadowing	A device in which the writer gives an advance hint of what is to come later in the story.	The incident in Weed <i>foreshadows</i> what happens with Lennie and Curley's Wife.	
Fragility	The quality of being delicate or vulnerable.	There is a <i>fragility</i> to Lennie because of his mental disability.	
Futility	Pointlessness or hopelessness	Steinbeck uses Of Mice and Men to show the <i>futility</i> of the American Dream.	
Imagery	A way of describing something <i>symbolically</i> , using words to represent objects, actions, and ideas in such a way that it appeals to our physical senses.	Steinbeck uses animal <i>imagery</i> to describe Lennie.	
Influential	Having great influence on someone or something.	Slim is <i>influential</i> in the bunkhouse – people look to him for decisions.	
Itinerant	A person who travels from place to place, often to seek work.	George and Lennie are <i>itinerant</i> ranch hands.	
Marginalise	To treat someone or something as if they are not important.	Curley's Wife is <i>marginalised</i> by not having a name.	
Motif	A dominant or recurring idea in an artistic work.	Light is a <i>motif</i> throughout the novella.	
Novella	A novella is a short novel or a long short story, categorised by having a story with a compact plot.	Of Mice and Men is a <i>novella</i> .	
Omniscient	Knowing everything.	The <i>omniscient</i> narrative perspective allows for foreshadowing.	
Predatory	Seeking to exploit others.	Curley is presented as a <i>predatory</i> character.	
Setting	The time and place in which the story takes place in a piece of literature. Setting can establish the mood or atmosphere of a scene or story.	The <i>setting</i> at the start of the novella is reminiscent of the Garden of Eden.	
Subjugate	To bring under domination and control.	Curley attempts to <i>subjugate</i> his wife.	
Third person narrative	A type of narrative in which the story is related by an <i>omniscient</i> narrator who knows the thoughts and feelings of all the characters in the story.	The <i>third person narrative</i> means we get insight into how all of the characters feel and some of the reasoning behind their actions.	
To ostracise	To exclude from a society or group.	Crooks is <i>ostracised</i> by the other workers because of his race.	

