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## *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck

### Chapter 1

#### Study Questions

1. What element of the setting does Steinbeck describe in detail at the beginning of the novel? How does it relate to George and Lennie?
2. Describe how George is depicted in the opening chapter.
3. Describe how Lennie is depicted in the opening chapter. To what animals is he compared?
4. Describe the relationship between George and Lennie.
5. What does Lennie have in his pocket that George throws away? Why does Lennie retrieve it?
6. George mentions the trouble that Lennie gets into: "You do bad things and I got to get you out." What "bad things" is he alluding to specifically?
7. George repeatedly complains about being saddled with Lennie; he laments how much better off he would be without him. How does George reveal how he really feels?
8. What does George mean when he says they're not like other ranch hands? What do they have that the others don't?
9. What does each man contribute to their relationship?
10. What specific details foreshadow trouble at George and Lennie's new job?

11. Why does Lennie ask George to tell him about the rabbits? What do they symbolize for Lennie? What part do they play in George and Lennie's dream?

## **Chapter 2**

### **Study Questions**

1. What does George find on the shelf above his bed in the bunk house that disturbs him? Why does it worry him?
2. Candy (the old man) tells George and Lennie that the boss is mad at them already. Why is he angry? On whom did the boss take out his frustrations?
3. How do the boss and his son respond to a quiet Lennie? Why? What does this indicate about their characters?
4. What two lies does George tell the boss about Lennie? Why does he lie?
5. What is George's reaction to Curley? Does he like him or not, and why?
6. How does Candy explain Curley's behavior, and what does he think of Curley's new wife?
7. What two seemingly contradictory directives does George give Lennie when it comes to dealing with Curley?
8. When George tells Lennie to remember their meeting spot in the brush by the river, what does his reminding Lennie suggest?
9. Describe Lennie's reaction to Curley's new wife. How does George respond upon witnessing his friend's reaction to her, and why?
10. Lennie says, "It's mean here." What is he trying to express?
11. Describe Slim as seen through George's eyes.

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**Chapter 3**

**Study Questions**

1. As the chapter opens, George says to Slim, "It wasn't much to you, maybe, but it was a hell of a lot to him." To what is he referring?
2. Why does Slim find it so funny that George and Lennie "string along together"? What reason does he give George for finding this odd?
3. Why does George make a point of noting to Slim that Lennie is "dumb as hell, but he ain't crazy"?
4. George tells Slim a story about the last time George was cruel to Lennie, making a confession of sorts, and explains what made him change his ways. Describe the story that George tells and the impact the event had on him.
5. In this and other chapters, the men like to play the card game solitaire with each other. How is this ironic, and what theme does it develop?
6. For the most part, Lennie remains in the background in this chapter. In what two instances does he come to the forefront, and how do these characterizations of him contrast? To what themes do they relate?
7. Describe what happens to Candy's old dog. What argument does Carlson make to the old man, and how does Candy ultimately respond? Describe Candy's mood from the beginning of the chapter to the end, focusing on what outside elements impact it.
8. To what does this statement refer? "This thing they had never really believed in was coming true." Why is it significant?

9. Describe the violent confrontation between Curley and Lennie. Why does Curley pick a fight with him? What do we learn about Lennie from this incident? What literary device is the author employing in this scene?
10. Why does Curley agree to not tell anyone about what happened with Lennie? What reason will he give for his shattered hand?

## **Chapter 4**

### **Study Questions**

1. Describe Crooks. Is he lonely like the other men on the farm?
2. What does Lennie want from Crooks? How does Crooks react to Lennie?
3. Where does Crooks come from? Why does he make a point of saying he's not "a southern Negro"?
4. How does Crooks scare Lennie, and why does he toy with him in this way?
5. Why does Crooks think George and Lennie will not achieve their dream? Describe the progression of Crooks's reaction to their dream.
6. What does Curley's wife think happened to her husband's hand? What does she say to Lennie about her husband immediately before she leaves?
7. When Crooks stands up to Curley's wife and tells her to leave his room, how does she respond? How does this affect Crooks and the other men? How does she threaten Crooks?
8. When Candy says that Curley's wife shouldn't have threatened him as she did, Crooks replies, "It wasn't nothing. . . . You guys comin' in and settin' made me forget. What she says is true." What does Crooks mean? What theme does this passage develop?

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**Chapter 5**

**Study Questions**

1. As the chapter opens, where do we find Lennie and what is he doing? What mood is he in?
2. Why is Lennie reluctant to talk with Curley's wife when she enters the barn?
3. Why does Curley's wife insist on talking with Lennie despite his protests?
4. What does Lennie confess to Curley's wife about the puppy?
5. What is the difference between the dream that Curley's wife aspires to and Lennie's dream? Are they deluding themselves? Why or why not?
6. What reason does Lennie give Curley's wife for being "so nuts about rabbits"? Can she understand his feelings? Explain.
7. What is Lennie referring to when he says, "I done a bad thing. I done another bad thing"? Describe the scene leading up to this statement.
8. What miscalculations does Curley's wife make about Lennie?
9. The author develops a strong parallel between the puppy and Curley's wife. Explain the similarities between them in relation to Lennie and to events as they unfold.
10. How does the author describe Curley's wife in death? What does the imagery suggest?
11. Time, especially at the end of this chapter, is described very specifically. How is it described? Why might it be described here so specifically?
12. After Candy discovers Curley's wife's body and shows George, he then speaks his greatest fear. What is Candy's greatest fear at this moment? How does Candy respond to her death?

13. After discovering the body, what do the men at the ranch decide to do? What is Curley's reaction and what is George's specifically?

## **Chapter 6**

### **Study Questions**

1. Describe how Steinbeck creates both parallelism and foreshadowing in the opening scene of this chapter.
2. As he is sitting by the river, what two characters emerge from Lennie's mind, and what do they say to him? What do they represent?
3. What does this scene between Lennie and the figments of his imagination tell us about Lennie's capacity for self-awareness and remorse?
4. Why isn't George mad at Lennie when he joins him at the river?
5. Why has George stolen Carlson's Luger? What other killing does this parallel?
6. What story does George tell Lennie before he kills him?
7. Do you think George's actions are defensible? Did he have another option? What influences did George have in making his decision?
8. The last line of the book is a snippet of conversation between Carlson and Curley. Carlson says of George and Slim just after the killing of Lennie, "Now what the hell ya suppose is eatin' them two guys?" Why do you think the author chose to end with this line? What does it tell us about the four men? What theme does it allude to?