

# Knowledge Organiser— OF MICE AND MEN Year 9



## Events Time Line

**Chapter 1:** We meet George and Lennie on their way to the ranch. They are forced to stay the night outside by a stream. They discuss their dream for the future and how this makes them different from other workers.

**Chapter 2:** George and Lennie make it to the ranch where they meet old Candy and his dog. The boss is cross with them for their lateness. They learn about Crooks, the “stable buck”, and they meet Curley, the boss’s aggressive son—who has recently married. When Lennie sees Curley’s Wife his thinks she is pretty. George thinks she will bring trouble. We also meet the calm, authoritative Slim.

**Chapter 3:** Slim gains George’s trust — so George tells him about the problems Lennie has caused in the past. The bunk house pressurises Candy into allowing his precious old dog to be shot. George and Lennie discuss their dream; Candy overhears and asks to join them. Lennie is smiling at the idea of their dream ranch when an angry Curley picks on him. Lennie, terrified, crushes Curley’s hand in self-defence.

**Chapter 4:** Crooks and Lennie spend the evening talking. We discover how racism has ruined Crooks’s life. Crooks is intrigued by the idea of the dream; however, the vicious racist threats of Curley’s Wife make him retreat back into his lonely world.

**Chapter 5:** In the barn alone, Lennie accidentally kills his pet puppy. When Curley’s Wife comes in, we tells Lennie that she also had dreams of her own. Unfortunately, Lennie is too rough with her and accidentally breaks her neck. Lennie runs off. Candy finds the body and tells George. Soon, an angry Curley has raised a group to hunt down Lennie.

**Chapter 5:** Lennie runs to the clearing where he and George slept at the start of the novel. Upset about what he has done, and the likely loss of his dream of raising rabbits, he has hallucinations of his angry Aunt Clara and a giant rabbit. George finds him. As the group hunting Lennie gets closer and closer, George soothes Lennie by telling him about their dream again. He shoots Lennie. The hunting party arrive. Slim tries to console George—but others fail to see why he is so upset.

## Some Context

**Of Mice and Men:** published in 1937

**set in 1930s California:** unskilled workers, looking for temporary jobs

**The Great Depression:** a period of economic decline, poverty and unemployment from 1929 until the mid 1930s

**migrant workers:** people who travelled from place to place for work, rarely staying in the same place for long

**The American Dream:** a desire for home ownership and opportunity gained through hard work not birth right; a sense that America is the land of opportunity

**women’s role in the 1930s:** tending to be limited to domestic duties, getting married, rearing children

**racism:** America was a place of legalised racism, using what were called Jim Crow laws; the Ku Klux Klan and other racist organisations lynched black people who were seen as threats to white power

## Key Characters



GEORGE MILTON



LENNIE SMALL



THE BOSS



SLIM



CANDY



CURLEY



CURLEY'S WIFE



CROOKS



CARLSON



WHIT

## Some Key Themes

hopes and dreams

authority

loneliness and isolation

friendship

violence

prejudice

inequality

## Some Useful Words

- **Arcadia:** (noun) a perfect place of peace and rural tranquillity
- **haven:** (noun) a place a shelter
- **itinerant:** (adjective *and* noun/type of person) travelling around, constantly journeying
- **transient:** (adjective *and* noun/type of person) not staying long, temporary
- **destitute:** (adjective) without any means of support; lacking food, clothes, money
- **inequity:** (noun) unfairness, bias, favouritism

## Some Key Techniques

- **foreshadowing:** when an event or detail hints to a future event or detail
- **irony:** can be when what happens is the opposite to what was expected or intended; eg Lennie is smiling about his dream of the rabbits when Curley picks on him and ruins the dream.
- **character archetypes:** in some ways, some characters represent a kind of person and the prejudice they suffer: Candy for ageism, Crooks for racism, Curley’s Wife for sexism, Lennie for disablist prejudice. A character like Curley could represent “the bully”, Slim “the wise”.
- **narrative voice:** the perspective of the person telling the story; eg why does the narrator not show emotions or outrage at the events?
- **settings:** the clearing as an escape, Crooks’ room as a prison, the farm as a microcosm of American society.
- **dialogue:** much of what we learn about the characters is from what they say. Steinbeck himself said he wanted the novel to be able to be read like a play.
- **characterisation:** this is how a writer creates our sense of the characters. As well as dialogue, Steinbeck is fond of using small, suggestive details: Crooks’ gold glasses, Curley’s Wife’s poorly curled hair, the Western Magazines they read.
- **symbolism:** what might the rabbits symbolise? Or Candy’s unwanted dog? Or the dream farm?



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## Plot Questions

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| <b>One</b>   | <input type="radio"/> When the two main characters enter the clearing, who leads the way?<br><input type="radio"/> Name the town from which George and Lennie have just come.<br><input checked="" type="radio"/> What has Lennie already accidentally killed in this early chapter?<br><input checked="" type="radio"/> What does George tell Lennie would happen if Lennie was to try to live on his own in the undergrowth? |
| <b>Two</b>   | <input type="radio"/> Why is the boss angry with George and Lennie?<br><input type="radio"/> What did "Smitty" do to Crooks at Christmas?<br><input checked="" type="radio"/> What do the men read and "scoff at and secretly believe"?<br><input checked="" type="radio"/> Who does Candy describe as a "nice fella"?   |
| <b>Three</b> | <input type="radio"/> What does Slim give to Lennie?<br><input type="radio"/> What colour is the dress of the girl touched by Lennie in Weed?<br><input checked="" type="radio"/> What kind of pistol does Carlson use to shoot the dog?   |
| <b>Four</b>  | <input type="radio"/> Who lives with Crooks in his room by the barn?<br><input type="radio"/> Who interrupts the conversation of Crooks, Lennie and Candy?<br><input checked="" type="radio"/> As well as a tattered dictionary, what other book does Crooks own?<br><input checked="" type="radio"/> What precious, golden object does Crooks possess?  |
| <b>Five</b>  | <input type="radio"/> Two deaths occur in this Section: name both.<br><input type="radio"/> Whom is Curley's Wife discussing here: "He ain't a nice fella"?<br><input checked="" type="radio"/> What was Curley's Wife dream?<br><input checked="" type="radio"/> Who calls Curley's wife a "God damn tramp" and a "lousy tart" as she lies dead in the straw?   |
| <b>Six</b>   | <input type="radio"/> To where does Lennie run?<br><input type="radio"/> Lennie imagines being told off by his Aunt Clara. Who/what else does he imagine telling him off?<br><input checked="" type="radio"/> What are Lennie's last words?<br><input checked="" type="radio"/> Who gets to have the last words in the whole novel?  |

## Character Questions

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| <input type="radio"/> Who wears "high-heeled boots and spurs to prove he was not a labouring man"?<br><input type="radio"/> What colour are Curley's Wife's fingernails, shoes and ostrich feather decorations?<br><input type="radio"/> Who was once a prize boxer?<br><input type="radio"/> Who has hair "like sausages"?<br><input type="radio"/> What is the name of the Aunt who once looked after Lennie?<br><input type="radio"/> Who is described as a "little guy" who hates "big guys"?<br><input type="radio"/> Why is Crooks called "Crooks"?   |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> What is Curley's Wife's actual name?<br><input checked="" type="radio"/> Who is the only character to console George after he kills Lennie?<br><input checked="" type="radio"/> Who admits that he is so lonely he sees things he thinks might not really be there?<br><input checked="" type="radio"/> Who has a face filled with "discontent and the ache for attention"?<br><input checked="" type="radio"/> Who tells Lennie, "Books ain't no good"?<br><input checked="" type="radio"/> What is the name of the woman who runs the brothel in town—who shares her name with a relative of Lennie's?<br><input checked="" type="radio"/> Who lives his life hiding behind a "terrible protective dignity"?<br><input checked="" type="radio"/> Who adds to the pressure upon Candy to shoot his dog by commenting, "I wisht somebody'd shoot me if I get old an' a cripple"? |

## Ideas Questions

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| <input type="radio"/> Which word best describes Curley?<br><div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <span>courageous</span> <span>insecure</span> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <span>considerate</span> <span>inclusive</span> </div>                                |
| <input type="radio"/> Which word best describes Crooks?<br><div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <span>segregated</span> <span>sedentary</span> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <span>segmented</span> <span>sentimental</span> </div>                               |
| <input type="radio"/> Which word best describes George?<br><div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <span>frenetic</span> <span>fantastical</span> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <span>fragrant</span> <span>frustrated</span> </div>                                 |
| <input type="radio"/> Which word best describes the ending?<br><div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <span>farcical</span> <span>fateful</span> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <span>fanciful</span> <span>facetious</span> </div>                                  |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Which word best describes George and Lennie's dream?<br><div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <span>archaic</span> <span>artesian</span> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <span>Arcadian</span> <span>aristocratic</span> </div>     |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Which best describes the life and death of Curley's Wife?<br><div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <span>pathetic</span> <span>pejorative</span> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <span>pastiche</span> <span>pastoral</span> </div> |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Which character most fits the adjective <b>transient</b> ?<br><div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <span>Curley</span> <span>Crooks</span> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <span>George</span> <span>the Boss</span> </div>        |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Which character suffers most from <b>inequity</b> ?<br><div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <span>Curley</span> <span>Crooks</span> </div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <span>George</span> <span>the Boss</span> </div>               |