

## **'Of Mice and Men' – National 5 Revision Notes**

### **Things to learn up! (PRIORITY!)**

The importance of dreams: what the rabbit farm means to George and Lennie; how it helps them; how others – Candy and Crooks – react to it; how fragile the dream is.

The harshness of life in that time and place: the problems Lennie faces due to disability; George's burden of care; Candy's age and his dog; Crooks's race; Lennie's death at George's hands.

The importance of companionship: how Lennie needs George; how George cares for Lennie; how George resents Lennie; how Crooks has become bitter with loneliness; Candy's dog; Lennie's death at George's hands.

### **The Title**

Steinbeck took the novel's title from Robert Burns's poem 'To a Mouse':

*The best-laid schemes o' mice an' men  
and men*

*Gang aft agley,*

*An' lea'e us nought but grief an' pain,  
pain,*

*For promis'd joy!*

The best-prepared plans of mice

Often go awry/wrong,

And leave us with only grief and

Instead of promised joy!

**Critical Essay Questions (Prose)**

1. Choose a novel or a short story or a work of non-fiction which explores an important theme.

By referring to appropriate techniques, show how the author has explored this theme.

2. Choose a novel or a short story in which the author creates a fascinating character.

By referring to appropriate techniques, show how the author has created this character and why you found him/her so fascinating.

3. Choose a novel or short story with an ending which you find satisfactory.

By referring to appropriate techniques, explain why you find the ending satisfactory in bringing to a conclusion the main concerns of the text as a whole.

4. Choose a novel or a short story or a work of non-fiction which deals with an important human issue (such as the abuse of power, conflict between good and evil, loss of freedom or hatred between individuals or groups).

By referring to appropriate techniques, show how the author reveals the issue through the portrayal of people and events throughout the text, and show how your understanding of the issue has deepened.

5. Choose a novel or a short story in which a character is in conflict with his or her friends or relatives or society.

By referring to appropriate techniques, show how the conflict arises and what effect it has on the character's fate in the novel or short story as a whole.

6. Choose a novel or a short story or a work of non-fiction in which setting is an important feature.

By referring to appropriate techniques, explain how the writer creates the setting, and then go on to show how this feature contributes to your understanding of the text as a whole.

**Chapter One Quotations**

"...and he walked heavily, dragging his feet a little, the way a bear drags his paws." **This narration describes how Lennie walks.**

"You'd drink out of a gutter if you was thirsty." **George says this to Lennie to show how childlike Lennie can be.**

"Slowly, like a terrier who doesn't want to bring a ball to its master, Lennie approached, drew back, approached again." **This narration explains how Lennie acted when George asked him to hand over the dead mouse.**

"'Well, we ain't got any,' George exploded. 'Whatever we ain't got, that's what you want. God a'mighty, if I was alone I could live so easy. I could go get a job an' work, an' no trouble....An' whatta I got,' George went on furiously. 'I got you! You can't keep a job and you lose me ever' job I get. Jus' keep me shovin' all over the country all the time. An' that ain't the worst. You get in trouble. You do bad things and I got to get you out.'" **George says this to Lennie before they arrive on the ranch to show how angry George can get and how much better his life would be without Lennie.**

"Guys like us, that work on ranches, are the loneliest guys in the world. They got no family. They don't belong no place....With us it ain't like that. We got a future. We got somebody to talk to that gives a damn about us." **George says this to Lennie to show how important being together is and how most people that work on ranches are horribly lonely.**

"An' why? Because...because I got you to look after me, and you got me to look after you, and that's why." **Lennie says this to George to emphasise how much they need each other.**

"'Well,' said George, 'we'll have a big vegetable patch and a rabbit hutch and chickens. And when it rains in the winter, we'll just say the hell with goin' to work, and we'll build up a fire in the stove and set around it an' listen to the rain comin' down on the roof...'" Chapter 1, **George says this to Lennie. It shows their simple dream and is repeated several times throughout the novel.**

### Chapter Two Quotations

"Curley's like a lot of little guys. He hates big guys. He's all the time picking scraps with big guys. Kind of like he's mad at 'em because he ain't a big guy." **Candy says this to George and Lennie. This helps us see how mean Curley is and how he picks on people because of his height.**

"'Ain't many guys travel around together,' he mused. 'I don't know why. Maybe ever'body in the whole damn world is scared of each other.'" **Slim says this to George and Lennie. This highlights the fact that it was not common for two men to be so close in those days.**

### Chapter Three Quotations

"He don't give nobody else a chance to win--", **Carlson says this when talking about how Crooks always wins at horseshoes. This shows the racist attitudes of the time; if a white man always won he would have been considered an expert.**

"Well, you ain't bein' kind to him keepin' him alive." **Carlson says this to Candy while trying to convince him to kill his dog. This foreshadows Lennie's death at the end of the novel.**

"Carl's right, Candy. That dog ain't no good to himself. I wisht somebody'd shoot me if I got old an' a cripple." Chapter 3, **Slim says this to Candy about his old dog. Slim usually represents common sense in the novel, so him saying this suggests it is the right thing to do to put someone or something out of their misery.**

"You seen what they done to my dog tonight? They says he wasn't no good to himself nor nobody else. When they can me here I wisht somebody'd shoot me. But they won't do nothing like that. I won't have no place to go, an' I can't get no more jobs." Chapter 3, **Candy says this to George. He is discussing how old people were viewed as being useless and discarded when they have ceased to be able to work.**

"I ought to of shot that dog myself, George. I shouldn't ought to of let no stranger shoot my dog." **Candy says this to George. This shows that he feels it was his responsibility to his old friend (the dog) and that a stranger should not have done it for him.**

"Lennie covered his face with huge paws and bleated with terror." **This narration explains how Lennie acted when he was being attacked by Curley.**

'Lennie watched in terror the flopping little man whom he held. Blood ran down Lennie's face, one of his eyes was cut and closed... 'I didn't wanta,' Lennie cried. 'I didn't wanta hurt him.' **When Lennie defends himself against Candy (only when George tells him too) he's still upset, helpless, and distressed.**

#### Chapter Four Quotations

"I seen it over an' over-a guy talkin' to another guy and it don't make no difference if he don't hear or understand. The thing is, they're talkin', or they're settin' still not talkin'. It don't make no difference, no difference....It's just the talking." **Crooks says this to Lennie while they are talking about being lonely.**

"Want me to tell ya what'll happen? They'll take ya to the booby hatch. They'll tie ya up with a collar, like a dog." **Crooks says this to Lennie when he is trying to frighten him.**

"A guy needs somebody-to be near him.' He whined, 'A guy goes nuts if he ain't got nobody.'" **Crooks, again, says this to Lennie while discussing loneliness.**

"Nobody never gets to heaven, and nobody gets no land." **Crooks says this to Lennie after Lennie explains the dream about the ranch.**

#### Chapter 5 Quotations

"Why can't I talk to you? I never get to talk to nobody. I get awful lonely." **Curley's wife says this to Lennie when they start to speak in the barn.**

"Listen, Nigger," she said. "You know what I can do to you if you open your trap?"

Crooks stared hopelessly at her, and then he sat down on his bunk and drew into himself.

She closed on him. "You know what I could do?"

Crooks seemed to grow smaller, and he pressed himself against the wall. "Yes, ma'am."

"Well, you keep your place then, Nigger. I could get you strung up on a tree so easy it ain't even funny." **Curley's wife and Crooks have this exchange after Crooks tells her to leave his room.**

"Don't you go yellin', he said, and he shook her; and her body flopped like a fish. And then she was still, for Lennie had broken her neck." **This narration explains what happens when Lennie kills Curley's wife.**

"He pawed up the hay until it partly covered her." **This narration explains what Lennie did after he has accidentally killed Lennie's wife.**

"-I think I knowed from the very first. I think I knowed we'd never do her. He usta like to hear about it so much I got to thinking maybe we would."

"Then – it's all off?" Candy asked sulkily.

**George says this to Candy after they discover Curley's wife's body.**

### Chapter 6 Quotations

"No, Lennie. I ain't mad. I never been mad, an' I ain't now. That's a thing I want ya to know." **George says this to Lennie just before he shoots him.**

"Sure, right now. I gotta. We gotta." **These are George's last words to Lennie. He says them after Lennie says "We gotta go."**

"Never you mind," said Slim. "A guy got to sometimes." **Slim says this to George after he has killed Lennie. This line reassures George that he had no real choice but to shoot Lennie.**