

Of Mice and Men



By

John Steinbeck

A Novel Study
by Joel Michel Reed

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Table of Contents

Suggestions and Expectations	3
List of Skills	4
Synopsis / Author Biography	5
Student Checklist	6
Reproducible Student Booklet	7
Answer Key	47

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Suggestions and Expectations

This curriculum unit can be used in a variety of ways. Each chapter of the novel study focuses on one chapter of **Of Mice and Men** and is comprised of five of the following different activities:

- Before You Read
- Vocabulary Building
- Comprehension Questions
- Language Activities
- Extension Activities

Links with the Common Core Standards (U.S.)

Many of the activities in this unit are supported by the Common Core Standards. For instance the *Reading Standards for Literature, Grade 5*, makes reference to the following

- a) determining the meaning of words and phrases. . . including figurative language;
- b) explaining how a series of chapters fits together to provide the overall structure;
- c) compare and contrast two characters;
- d) determine how characters ... respond to challenges;
- e) drawing inferences from the text;
- f) determining a theme of a story . . . **and many others.**

A principal expectation of the unit is that students will develop their skills in reading, writing, listening and oral communication, as well as in reasoning and critical thinking. Students will also be expected to provide clear answers to questions and well-constructed explanations. It is critical as well that students be able to relate events and the feelings of characters to their own lives and experiences and describe their own interpretation of a particular passage.

A strength of the unit is that students can work on the activities at their own pace. Every activity need not be completed by all students. A **portfolio cover** is included (p.7) so that students may organize their work and keep it all in one place. A **Student Checklist** is also included (p.6) so that a record of completed work may be recorded.

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List of Skills

Vocabulary Development

1. Locating descriptive words/phrases
2. Listing synonyms/homonyms
3. Identifying/creating *alliteration*
4. Use of capitals and punctuation
5. Identify *foreshadowing*.
6. Identify *personification*
7. Use of singular / plural nouns
8. Listing compound words
9. Identifying parts of speech
10. Identifying syllables
11. Identify/create *similes*
12. Identify anagrams

Setting Activities

1. Summarize the details of a setting

Plot Activities

1. Complete a *time line* of events
2. Identify conflict in the story
3. Complete Five W's Chart
4. Identify *cliffhangers*
5. Identify the climax of the novel.

Character Activities

1. Determine character traits
2. Identify the protagonist
3. Relating personal experiences
4. Compare two characters

Creative and Critical Thinking

1. Research
2. Write a newspaper story
3. Participate in a talk show
4. Compare the book and movie.
5. Write a description of personal feelings
6. Write a book review
7. Complete an Observation Sheet
8. Complete a KWS Chart

Art Activities

1. A Storyboard
2. Create a collage
3. Create an Information Card
4. Design a cover for the novel
5. Create a comic strip

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Synopsis

They are an unlikely pair: George is “small and quick and dark of face”; Lennie, a man of tremendous size, has the mind of a young child. Yet they have formed a “family,” clinging together in the face of loneliness and alienation.

Laborers in California's dusty vegetable fields, they hustle work when they can, living a hand-to-mouth existence. For George and Lennie have a plan: to own an acre of land and a shack they can call their own. When they land jobs on a ranch in the Salinas Valley, the fulfillment of their dream seems to be within their grasp. But even George cannot guard Lennie from the provocations of a flirtatious woman, nor predict the consequences of Lennie's unswerving obedience to the things George taught him. (Publisher – Penguin Books)

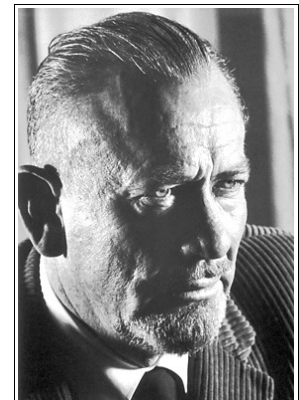
A complete synopsis and other helpful reviews can be found on the following website:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Of_Mice_and_Men

Author Biography

John Steinbeck

John Ernst Steinbeck, Jr. (February 27, 1902– December 20, 1968) was an American author of twenty-seven books, including sixteen novels, six non-fiction books, and five collections of short stories. He is widely known for the comic novels *Tortilla Flat* (1935) and *Cannery Row* (1945), the multi-generation epic *East of Eden* (1952), and the novellas *Of Mice and Men* (1937) and *The Red Pony* (1937). The Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), widely attributed to be part of the American literary canon, is considered Steinbeck's masterpiece. In the first 75 years since it was published, it sold 14 million copies.



Courtesy of Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Steinbeck

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Student Checklist

Student Name _____

Assignment	Grade / Level	Comments

Of Mice and Men



By John Steinbeck

Name: _____

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Chapter 1



Before you read the chapter:

The **protagonist** in most novels features the main character or “good guy”. Think back on some of your favorite characters from past novels you have read or movies you’ve seen. What do you think makes for an especially interesting **protagonist**?



Vocabulary:

Draw a straight line to connect the vocabulary word to its definition. Remember to use a straight edge (like a ruler).

1. Recumbent
2. Stilted
3. Companion
4. Morose
5. Pantomime
6. Reluctant
7. Irrigation
8. Dejected
9. Elaborate
10. Sycamore

- A. A person who shares experiences with another.
- B. Sad and depressed; dispirited.
- C. Stiff and self-conscious or unnatural.
- D. An American plane tree.
- E. Moody and ill-tempered.
- F. Unwilling and hesitant; disinclined.
- G. A person or thing lying close to the ground.
- H. Involving many details, or complicated designs.
- I. A type of musical comedy stage production.
- J. The supply of water to land or crops to help growth, typically by means of channels.

Questions



1. Describe the setting of the story as Chapter One begins.

2. Circle the correct narrative that the novel follows, and the reason for your choice.

First Person Second Person Third Person

3. Why do you think George told Lennie not to drink still water?

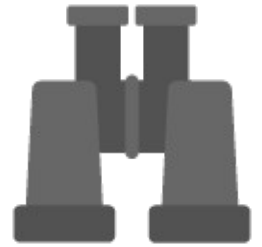
4. Why did George and Lennie have to flee the town of Weed, California?

5. What were George and Lennie planning to do when they saved enough money?

Language Activity



A. Foreshadowing is a literary device used by authors to provide clues for the reader so they are able to predict what might occur *later* in the story. How might the following statement taken from Chapter One be considered an example of this literary device: *Lennie droned to himself softly, "I ain't gonna say nothin" ... I ain't gonna say nothin' ... I ain't gonna say nothing'."* "O.K.," said George. *"An you ain't gonna do no bad things like you done in Weed, neither."* Lennie looked puzzled. *"Like I done in Weed?"*



B. PERSONIFICATION is giving human qualities to something that is not human. We find an example of this in our novel: *"A dove's wings whistled over the water."*

Why do you think personification is a popular literary device used by many authors?

Create your own example of personification.

C. The Eight Parts of Speech

Find at least four examples of each of the eight parts of speech from the last chapter of our novel and list them in the appropriate section of the chart below.

Interjections		
Nouns		
Pronouns		
Conjunctions		
Prepositions		
Adjectives		
Adverbs		
Verbs		

Fascinating Facts

Of Mice and Men has been the inspiration for countless writers throughout the last century. One such example comes from a popular **Looney Tunes** short called **The Abominable Snow Rabbit**. The main character was written specifically to resemble Lennie from our story. He even shares many of the same personality traits! The most memorable attribute of the Abominable Snowman was his catchphrase: *"It's just what I always wanted, my own little bunny rabbit! I will name him George, and I will hug him and pet him and squeeze him!"*



Extension Activity



Storyboard

A storyboard is a series of pictures that tell about an important event in a story. A storyboard can tell the story of only one scene - or the entire novel.



Complete the storyboard below illustrating the events described in the first chapter of our novel. You may wish to practice your drawings on a separate piece of paper.

1	2
3	4
5	6