ON STAGE AT PARK SQUARE THEATRE
October 12 - October 30, 2015

Of Mice and Men

Study Guide

Written by JOHN STEINBECK
Directed by RICHARD COOK
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Two migrant workers, George, a small, dark man with “sharp, strong features,” and Lennie, a giant of a man with a “shapeless” face, have been let off of a bus miles away from the California farm where they are due to start work. As the two converse, it becomes clear that Lennie has a mild mental disability and is deeply devoted to George and dependent upon him for protection and guidance. George often complains loudly that his life would be easier without having to care for Lennie, yet George’s actions often demonstrate that their friendship and devotion is mutual. He and Lennie share a dream of buying their own piece of land, farming it, and, much to Lennie’s delight, keeping rabbits. George ends the night by treating Lennie to the story he often tells him about what life will be like in such an idyllic place.

The next day, the men report to the nearby ranch where they meet their Boss, Candy (an old “swamper” or handyman), and Curley, the boss’s mean-spirited son. Curley is newly married, possessive of his flirtatious wife, and full of jealous suspicion. Once George and Lennie are alone in the bunkhouse, Curley’s Wife appears and flirts with them. Lennie thinks she is “purty,” but George, sensing the trouble that could come from tangling with this woman and her husband, warns Lennie to stay away from her.

The next day, George confides in Slim that he and Lennie are not cousins, but have been friends since childhood. He tells how Lennie has often gotten them into trouble. For instance, they were forced to flee their last job because Lennie tried to touch a woman’s dress and was accused of rape. Slim agrees to give Lennie one of his newly born puppies, and Carlson badgers Candy to kill his old dog.

Candy overhears George and Lennie discussing their plans to buy land, and offers his life’s savings if they will let him live there as well. The three make a pact to let no one else know of their plan. Slim returns to the bunkhouse and berates Curley for his suspicions. Curley, searching for an easy target for his anger, finds Lennie and picks a fight with him. Lennie crushes Curley’s hand in the altercation. Slim warns Curley that if he tries to get George and Lennie fired, he will be the laughingstock of the farm.

CONTINUED...
The next night, most of the men go to the local brothel. Lennie is left with Crooks, the lonely, black stable-hand, and Candy. Curley's Wife flirts with them, refusing to leave until the other men come home. She notices the cuts on Lennie's face and suspects that he, and not a piece of machinery as Curley claimed, is responsible for hurting her husband. The next day, Lennie accidentally kills his puppy in the barn. Curley's Wife enters and consoles him. She admits that life with Curley is a disappointment, and wishes that she had followed her dream of becoming a movie star. Lennie tells her that he loves petting soft things, and she offers to let him feel her hair. When he grabs too tightly, she cries out. In his attempt to silence her, he accidentally breaks her neck.

Lennie flees back to a pool of the Salinas River that George had designated as a meeting place should either of them get into trouble. As the men back at the ranch discover what has happened and gather together a lynching party, George joins Lennie. Much to Lennie's surprise, George is not mad at him for doing “a bad thing.” George begins to tell Lennie the story of the farm they will have together. As he describes the rabbits that Lennie will tend, the sound of the approaching lynching party grows louder. George shoots his friend in the back of the head.
Character Descriptions
FOR OF MICE AND MEN

Lennie - A large, lumbering, strong and childlike migrant worker. Due to an apparent mental disability (that Steinbeck never names), Lennie completely depends upon George, his friend and traveling companion, for guidance and protection. The two men share a vision of a farm that they will own together, a vision that Lennie believes in wholeheartedly. Gentle and kind, Lennie nevertheless does not understand his own strength. He loves petting soft things such as small animals, dresses, and people's hair.

George - A small, wiry, quick-witted man who travels with and cares for Lennie. Although he frequently speaks of how much better his life would be without his caretaking responsibilities, George is obviously devoted to Lennie. George's behavior is motivated by the desire to protect Lennie and, eventually, deliver them both to the farm of their dreams. Though George is the source for the often-told story of life on their future farm, it is Lennie's childlike faith that enables George to actually believe his account of their future.

Candy - An aging ranch handyman, Candy lost his hand in an accident and worries about his future on the ranch. He has a dog that is equally as old and seemingly as useless as a one-handed ranch worker. Fearing that his age and physical disability are making him expendable, he seizes on George's description of the farm he and Lennie will have, offering his life's savings if he can join George and Lennie in owning the land.

Curley's Wife - Young and recently married, Curley's Wife is the only woman on the ranch. Unable to find what she needs in her relationship with Curley, she is continuously looking for someone with whom to talk. Like the ranch-hands, she is desperately lonely and dreams of a better life.

Crooks - Crooks, the black stable-hand, gets his name from his crooked back. Proud, bitter, talented, smart, and caustically funny, he is isolated, both physically and emotionally, from the other men because of the color of his skin. Despite himself, Crooks becomes fond of Lennie, and though he derisively claims to have seen countless men following empty dreams of buying their own land, he asks Lennie if he can go with them and hoe in the garden.

Curley - The Boss's son, Curley, diminutive in stature, wears high-heeled boots to make himself appear taller. Rumored to be a champion prizefighter, he is a confrontational, mean-spirited, and aggressive young man who seeks to compensate for his size by picking fights with larger men. Recently married, Curley is plagued with jealous suspicions and is extremely possessive of his flirtatious young wife.

Slim - A highly skilled mule driver and the acknowledged leader of the ranch hands, Slim is the only character who seems to be at peace with himself. The other characters often look to Slim for advice. A quiet, insightful man, Slim alone understands the nature of the bond between George and Lennie.

Adapted from SparkNotes (sparknotes.com/lit/micemen/characters.html).

Adapted by Charles Ellenbogen
THE BLAKE SCHOOL
Directions
Using the Dorothea Lange photograph below, complete the Think-Pair-Share Activity.

Activity: Think-Pair-Share and Analyzing Visuals

1. **Think alone**
   Look at the photo. What images do you notice? What might they mean?

2. **Pair up**
   Discuss with your partner the images you noticed and what you think they mean.

3. **Share**
   Discuss the placement of the two men vs. the billboard. What might the message be?
**Historical Context**

**FOR OF MICE AND MEN**

*Of Mice and Men* is set in 1937, in the midst of one of the bleakest periods in U.S. History. Only five years earlier, Franklin Delano Roosevelt had begun his presidency with the famous words “we have nothing to fear but fear itself,” in a largely successful attempt to fend off the overwhelming sense of despair that was so prevalent before he took office. Despite the best effort of FDR’s New Deal, however, the Great Depression lasted in the United States from the late 1920s until the army and the war industry began to create jobs in the mid-1940s. Americans had a great deal to fear, including the very real threats of homelessness and starvation.

**Widespread Unemployment**

In 1937, one out of every four Americans was jobless. This is a substantial rate of unemployment, even compared to the economic downturn in 2009 during which one out of every ten Americans was without work. The current system of Social Security, although instituted in 1935 along with Unemployment Insurance, did not include farmers and many other unemployed Americans until the 1950s. Not until 1957, with the Disability Insurance program, were totally disabled workers given some form of financial support, and then only for those over 50 years old. Before that time, the families of the unemployed, elderly and disabled were expected to care for them, regardless of their financial ability to do so. If they had no “people” who were willing and able to provide them care, these unfortunates were either institutionalized or were forced to wait in long lines for bread or the chance of employment. These lines usually stretched for blocks, often consisting of those who had slept there the night before to get a good spot.

**The Desperate Hunt for Work**

The documented lengths to which the unemployed would go rather than receive welfare became legendary: an Arkansas man walked 900 miles to find work; men set forest fires in Washington state so they would be hired to put them out; and for the only time in our country’s history, the number of people leaving America exceeded the number of new immigrants. Amtorg, a Russian trading agency in New York, received 350 applications a day from Americans who wanted to settle in Russia, and when they advertised for six thousand skilled workers, one hundred thousand people applied (Documented in William Manchester’s *The Glory and the Dream*).
George and Lennie’s Dream
This is the world that George, Lennie and the migrant farmers in *Of Mice and Men* uneasily inhabit. The Salinas Valley region of California was hit particularly hard because of the immigration of thousands of jobless men, many with their families, who were driven westward to seek work by a lingering drought in the Great Plains. In just five years, 350,000 of these “bindle-stiffs” left their homes in the Dust Bowl states of Oklahoma and Arkansas and journeyed to California. All of them shared the same dream: to live “offa the fatta the lan” like they had back home. It seems a modest enough goal: a few acres of land for farming, to grow just enough food to be self-sufficient. But in the 1920s, thousands of tons of grain were left un-harvested because reaping it would cost more money than could be earned selling it. Whole herds of livestock were slaughtered and left in ditches to rot because they weren’t worth the price of feed. George and Lennie represent thousands upon thousands for whom the American Dream would remain out of reach.

Questions for Discussion
1. Is it important to have dreams even if it is unlikely that they will ever be fulfilled? Why or why not? Using *Of Mice and Men* and the history of the 1930s in America, discuss your answer.
2. Why do you think that families trying to find work during the Great Depression were sometimes seen as “freeloaders” (someone who takes advantage of others) for accepting welfare money? How does the welfare system help people who use it? How might people who are not on welfare view people today who are on welfare? What is your opinion?

Writing Assignment
1. Find someone in your family or community who lived through the Great Depression of the 1930s and ask him/her to describe life during that time. Be specific. Ask the prices of familiar items and compare them with prices today. Ask about transportation, technology, community spirit, and what they did for entertainment. Ask them to describe what it has been like to witness the last 60 years.

By Matt Sciple
Park Square Theatre Literary Manager, 1995-2000
John Steinbeck was born on the most fashionable street of Salinas, California in 1902. Although he briefly attended prestigious Stanford University when he was 17, Steinbeck dropped out and returned home:

Once in college I went flibbertigibbet and got to going to the library and reading what I wanted instead of what was required. I got so far behind I could not possibly catch up.

—Steinbeck in Journal of a Novel

Steinbeck left a note for his roommate that said, “gone to China,” and requested that, as he was setting himself free, all his pets, too, should be released into the wild. Freedom, however, had a steep price. Having never gotten along well with his family, Steinbeck soon left for the open road. He wandered from job to job scraping up enough money to pay his fellow “hoboes” for their stories, which he saved on scraps of paper. Although he returned periodically to Stanford, Steinbeck, who never graduated, considered himself largely a student of life, learning more wandering Salinas Valley than in the halls of academia.

Early Work

I know that Cup of Gold is a bad book, but on its shoulders I will climb to a good book.

—Steinbeck, in a letter to Kate Beswick, April 10, 1928

Even as he was writing them, Steinbeck thought of his first few novels as mere preparation for the masterpieces he knew would follow. Although the notoriously critical writer spoke dismissively of his early books, Cup of Gold (1932), The Pastures of Heaven (1932), and To a God Unknown (1933) managed respectable reviews and decent sales. Steinbeck once stated that the only reason Cup of Gold sold as well as it did was because its “ridiculous” dust jacket made it look like a swashbuckling pirate story for children. Even at this early stage, his career was recognized as one to watch, and these early novels suggest many of the themes that Steinbeck would develop with subtlety and power in his later novels. The crushed idealism of youth, the interrelation of human beings and their environment, and the abuse of power and the conflict between the sexes—all are present here in embryonic form.

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Turning Point

In 1935, *Tortilla Flat*, with its bawdy, comic dialogue and salt-of-the-earth characters, brought Steinbeck success beyond his wildest dreams. After every major publisher and several minor ones had rejected it, Steinbeck’s story about Mexican *paisanos* was optioned by Ron Covici, a struggling publisher, who so admired *Tortilla Flat* that he offered to reissue Steinbeck’s first three novels. Although he was warned against the dire financial straits of Covici’s publishing house, Steinbeck took a leap of faith for which he was spectacularly rewarded. *Tortilla Flat* reached the bestseller list and was sold immediately to Paramount Pictures to be adapted for the screen. But, perhaps most importantly, Steinbeck had found the man who would serve as his editor for the next 30 years. Ron Covici’s influence on Steinbeck’s life and literary career cannot be understated. In the eulogy he wrote for Covici’s funeral, Steinbeck claimed, “Ron was my collaborator and my conscience. He demanded of me more than I had and thereby caused me to be more than I should have been without him” (Steinbeck in *John Steinbeck: A Biography* by Jay Parini).

The Uneasy Celebrity

In preparing for his first major interview, John Steinbeck, author of the best-selling *Of Mice and Men*, walked into the office of his publisher today with a tall bottle of brandy under his arm, plunked it down on a wide table, and said— ‘All right, bring ’em on.

——“More a Mouse than a Man” *New York Telegram*, 1937

From the beginning of his career Steinbeck had shunned publicity of any kind, refusing even to be photographed except on rare occasions. Submitting to interviews only when forced, he displayed an ornery wit that, ironically, only made him more popular with the press. When asked to comment on a comparison between D.H. Lawrence and himself because they “each recognize the inscrutable law of the instincts,” Steinbeck replied, “We’re also comparable because I have two legs, and research will show this to be the identical number Lawrence had” (*Conversations with John Steinbeck* edited by Thomas Fensch).

There was nothing coy about this; Steinbeck was an intensely private man and, around all but his closest friends, almost painfully shy. Of course Steinbeck’s reticence only increased the mystique that surrounded him; he was passionate and larger than life in an era that needed heroes.
This business of being a celebrity has no reference to the thing I am interested in. And that is my work. I know of no sadder people than those who believe their own publicity. I have my own vanities, but they have changed their face. Also, it’s nobody’s damn business how I live.

—Steinbeck, after receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature

While doing research for *The Grapes of Wrath*, Steinbeck stayed with his best friend “Dook” Sheffield, whose career disillusionment was magnified by Steinbeck’s newfound fame. Sensing his friend’s discomfort and desperate to prove he was still the same person, Steinbeck offered to pay Sheffield’s way through any graduate program he wanted to attend. To Steinbeck’s dismay, Sheffield not only refused the offer but, for a time, withdrew his friendship. Whether he liked it or not, Steinbeck’s literary reputation carried a painful cost.

“Poet of the Dispossessed”

I’m sick of workingmen being gelded of their natural expression until they talk with a fine Oxonian flavor... A working man bereft of his profanity is a silent man.

—Steinbeck on *In Dubious Battle*

Steinbeck’s reputation has been tarnished over the years by his understandable inability to repeat the epic brilliance of *The Grapes of Wrath*. Even this masterpiece has lost some of its favor in literary circles now that the immediacy of the Depression is gone. But his readers will always know the power of his work because of its great passion, keen intelligence, and gentleness of spirit. John Steinbeck was able to find poetry and hope in human misery, crafting illuminating details to create powerfully universal stories. Long after he wrote *Of Mice and Men*, Steinbeck considered buying a “little place” near the shore in Sag Harbor. His eight-year-old son John, who loved the ocean, said, “Pop, you just gotta tell me you bought it.” And when Steinbeck asked, “Why?” his son, unconsciously echoing voices his father had so movingly captured years before responded, “Because then I can dream about it.”

By Matt Sciple
Park Square Theatre Literary Manager, 1995-2000
An Excerpt from John Steinbeck’s Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech

Literature is as old as speech. It grew out of human need for it and it has not changed except to become more needed. The skalds, the bards, the writers are not separate and exclusive. From the beginning, their functions, their duties, their responsibilities have been decreed by our species...the writer is delegated to declare and to celebrate man's proven capacity for greatness of heart and spirit—for gallantry in defeat, for courage, compassion and love. In the endless war against weakness and despair, these are the bright rally flags of hope and of emulation. I hold that a writer who does not passionately believe in the perfectibility of man has no dedication nor any membership in literature.

—John Steinbeck, 1962

Watch the Speech Online!
Visit the link below to see John Steinbeck’s acceptance speech.

When he was still a young, struggling writer, Steinbeck worked as an itinerant laborer in Salinas, California. Deeply moved by the hardship he encountered there, Steinbeck later wrote a series of articles about the plight of the California migrant workers for the *San Francisco News*, which would later be reprinted under the title “Their Blood is Strong.” Many of his characters and observations in *Of Mice and Men* are taken directly from these experiences. In *Conversations with John Steinbeck*, he explains the origin of the character Lennie:

I was a bindle-stiff for quite a spell. I worked in the same country that the story is laid in. The characters are composites to a certain extent. Lennie was a real person. He’s in an insane asylum in California right now. I worked alongside him for many weeks. He didn’t kill a girl. He killed a ranch foreman. Got sore because the boss had fired his pal and stuck a pitchfork right through his stomach. I hate to tell you how many times I saw him do it. We couldn’t stop him until it was too late.

—John Steinbeck

**An Experiment in Form**

Originally conceived as a story for children, *Of Mice and Men* was developed as an experiment in form, a cross between a novel and a play, a novella that could be performed verbatim on stage. Its descriptions are lean and clinical, almost like stage directions, and most of the story is told through dialogue in compressed, dramatic scenes that form a relentless, inevitable arc towards a tragic conclusion. The novel was completed fairly quickly, written in a sustained five-month stretch between April and August of 1936. Steinbeck was originally quite ambivalent about his “tricky experiment for the theatre,” saying, “I think the novel is painfully dead. I’ve never liked it. I’m going into training to write for the theatre, which seems to be waking up” (*John Steinbeck: A Biography* by Jay Parini). Even when his dog Otis ate the original manuscript, Steinbeck didn’t consider it a great loss: “The poor little fellow may have been acting critically. I didn’t want to ruin a good dog for a [manuscript] I’m not sure is good at all.” *Of Mice and Men* was published in February 1937 and the public was swift and overwhelmingly positive in its response, buying 117,000 books by mid-month.

CONTINUED...
OF MICE AND MEN:

From Page to Stage

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The Novel Performed
In October of 1937, Steinbeck’s experiment in form was put to the test. His experimental novel was staged by the Theatre Union in San Francisco, exactly as Steinbeck intended, word for word, without revision. Although the dialogue seemed natural on the page, the overall effect of watching this production was that of hearing a novel read aloud: an interesting experience, but without the drive and—ironically—theatricality of the novel. Steinbeck considered this version a failure, and might never have pursued a dramatic adaptation except for the insistent urging of theatrical director and playwright, George S. Kaufman.

Changing the Novel into a Play
Kaufman, whose own famed writing by then included classics like You Can’t Take it With You and The Man Who Came to Dinner, was convinced that Of Mice and Men would make a wonderful play. Armed with Kaufman’s keen theatrical impulses and the assistance of Steinbeck’s theatrical agent, Anne Laurie Williams, who helped him format the play, Steinbeck rewrote approximately 15% of the novel’s dialogue, altered a couple of scenes and made several subtle changes throughout. After a particularly successful session with his collaborators, Steinbeck slapped his big hands on the table, stood, pronounced the play “damn good,” and his work was complete. Steinbeck left New York before rehearsals had even begun. The draft of the play that Steinbeck left on the table was the version performed on Broadway and the play we see today. Of Mice and Men opened on November 23, 1937 at the Music Box Theatre in New York, and ran for 207 performances. Steinbeck, who had by then moved on to writing The Grapes of Wrath, never saw his play performed.

Go Further
Hollywood producers make books into movies, but readers are often disappointed.

In a journal, think about book-movies you have seen and read and answer the following questions:
  1. Which were better? Why?
  2. What would you have done differently?
  3. What book would you like to see made into a movie?
  4. How would you make this book into a movie?
  5. What might be a difficulty in taking a book and making it a movie (or a play)?
Differences between the play and the novel
The Characterization of Curley’s Wife

While helping John Steinbeck adapt *Of Mice and Men* for the stage, George S. Kaufman, a famous New York playwright, told Steinbeck that the characterization of Curley’s Wife would not be sufficient for a stage adaptation. He urged Steinbeck to draw her as a more fully developed character. Steinbeck obliged, softening her considerably in her scene with Crooks and sharing more details of her past in her final scene with Lennie. To examine some specific ways Steinbeck accomplished this, it is helpful to look at the scene in the barn where Curley’s Wife comes in to ask Crooks how Curley hurt his hand.

**In the Novel**
Curley’s Wife walks in on a conversation among Crooks, Lennie, and Candy—three people to whom she feels superior. Her intense loneliness translates into cruelty. At first this cruelty is casual:

Sat’iday night. Ever’body out doin’ som’pin’. Ever’body! An’ what am I doin’? Standin’ here talkin’ to a bunch of bindle stiffs—a nigger an’ a dum-dum and a lousy old sheep—an’ likin’ it because they ain’t somebody else.

When Crooks politely asks her to leave, she grows increasingly vindictive and threatens him with lynching:

Listen, Nigger...You know what I can do to you if you open your trap?...Well, you keep your place then, Nigger. I could get you strung up on a tree so easy it ain’t even funny.

Her conversation with Lennie is brief and direct:

I’m glad you bust up Curley a little bit. He got it comin’ to him. Sometimes I’d like to bust him myself.

CONTINUED...
In the Play
George is already present in Crooks’ room when Curley’s Wife enters, and she doesn’t take the offensive as she did in the novel. She becomes very emotional, but her outbursts are in response to the men’s treatment of her and she is far less cruel than in the novel:

CANDY. You got a husband, you got no call to come foolin’ around with other guys, causin’ trouble.

CURLEY’S WIFE. I try to be nice an’ polite to you bindle bums—but you’re too good. I tell ya I could of went with shows. An’—an’ a guy wanted to put me in the pitchers right in Hollywood.

In attempting to figure out who hurt her husband, she settles first on George:

Maybe you ain’t scared of him no more. Maybe you’ll talk to me sometimes now. Ever’body was scared of him.

Then she turns to Lennie, to whom she expresses real gratitude:

Well maybe you’re dumb like they say…an’ maybe...you’re the only person on this ranch with guts. (She strokes his shoulder.) You’re a nice fella.

Curley’s Wife and the Critics
George S. Kauffman’s opinion that Curley’s Wife was underdeveloped was shared by critics of the novel.

[She is] one of a long tradition of wax-figure women, bright, hard, treacherous, unreal—whether a Lady Brett [from Hemingway’s *The Sun Also Rises*]...or Curley’s Wife, these are all essentially hateful women, women from who it is a virtue to flee to masculine companionship.

—Dorothea Brande Collins, *American Review*

Even in the play, however, Curley’s Wife is still often either pigeonholed as a one-dimensional man-trap or dismissed as a plot device. In the reviews of the original Broadway and London productions, she was referred to variously as: “a pathetic little nymphomaniac,” “a wild carnation of a woman,” “a brazen hussy,” “a vixe- tramp,” and a “poor little flosey of a girl.” And even those who recognized her intentions found Curley’s Wife simply pathetic:

CONTINUED...
She is simply a stupid young girl with a good-sized dash of the tart in her. Tens of thousands of technically ‘good’ girls are no better...[She is] a cheap, not very bright little thing, not vicious in the true sense at all but just, so to put it, a poor little tart, as Steinbeck meant her to be and knows she is. And if you miss his understanding of the girl and tenderness with her, then you may as well miss it elsewhere, and so come to wonder...whether there is really any tenderness in the play.

—Joseph Henry Jackson, San Francisco Chronicle

Questions for Discussion

1. Compare the scene in Crooks’ room in the play (on page 35 of this guide) with the scene in the novel. How does George’s presence or absence affect the other characters in the scene? How did Steinbeck soften Curley’s Wife?
2. Think about the scene between Curley’s Wife and Lennie. What information does Steinbeck give the audience about her past in the play? How does this information affect the way you see her?
3. In the play, Curley’s Wife attempts to leave the ranch; in the novel, she does not. How does her attempt to escape change your opinion of her? Why do you think it was so important to George S. Kaufman that Steinbeck rewrite the character of Curley’s Wife? Do characters in a play need to be more fully developed than characters in a novel? Why or why not?
4. Do you agree with the critics that Curley’s Wife is a plot device? If so, are there other characters in the novel that serve the same type of function? Why would some of the characters be less developed than others?
5. Why do you think Curley’s Wife goes unnamed in the play?
### Glossary of Terms and Phrases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bed-tick</td>
<td>the fabric case of a mattress, or the mattress made from a tick and its filling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bindle-stiff</td>
<td>hobo who carries clothes or bedding in a bundle, usually tied to the end of a stick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>booby hatch</td>
<td>mental institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buck</td>
<td>male animal; man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buckers</td>
<td>those who move or load heavy objects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>canned</td>
<td>fired from employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cultivator</td>
<td>machine for turning farmed soil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>drippin’ at the mouth</td>
<td>talking too much</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>et</td>
<td>dialect pronunciation of “ate”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>field trial pointer</td>
<td>a pointer (a large, strong slender smooth-haired gundog that hunts by scent and indicates the presence of game by pointing) who competes for sport in the field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fifty an’ found</td>
<td>salary; fifty dollars and change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flapper</td>
<td>mouth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>floozy</td>
<td>tawdry or immoral woman; prostitute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>flop</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Photograph by Dorthea Lange*
Glossary of Terms and Phrases

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frisco</td>
<td>hire a prostitute, slang for “San Francisco”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>game</td>
<td>eager to fight; (“what a game guy Curley is”) from “game-cock,” a rooster bred for fighting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gray backs</td>
<td>bugs with gray backs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gum up the works</td>
<td>get in the way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>handy</td>
<td>good with his hands, especially at fighting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jack</td>
<td>slang for money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>licked</td>
<td>beaten, usually in a fight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>luger</td>
<td>German pistol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lulu</td>
<td>a sexy woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mule skinner</td>
<td>driver of draft or team animals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pants rabbits</td>
<td>slang for head or body lice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pillow pigeons</td>
<td>slang for bedbug</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pitchers</td>
<td>dialect pronunciation of “pictures,” short for “moving pictures” or “movies”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poke</td>
<td>bag, sack, or wallet; (“a few dollars in the poke”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>roll up a stake</td>
<td>save up some money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slang</td>
<td>dialect pronunciation of “slung,” meaning to give birth to (“she slang her pups last</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pants rabbit (head or body louse)

Pillow pigeon (bedbug)

Mission Liberty Hill 1930, San Francisco

CONTINUED...
## Glossary of Terms and Phrases

### snooker
a variation of pool played with 15 red balls and 6 balls of various colors

### string along
travel with

### swampin’
mopping, cleaning

### swing
manage; (“I bet we could swing ‘er”)

### tart
a promiscuous woman

### tenement
dialect pronunciation of “tournament”

### thraslin’
dialect pronunciation of “threshing”: separating the edible parts of grain from the chaff

### took a powder
left hurriedly

### trace chains
two chains, straps, or lines of harness used to attach an animal to a wagon or machine it is going to pull

### tules
bulrushes; cattails

### valise
traveling bag

### welter
short for “welterweight,” a boxer weighing between 135 and 147 pounds.

### wheeler
a draft animal (as a horse or mule) pulling in the position nearest the front wheels of a wagon

### whing ding
usually a party that is wild and
The title of Steinbeck’s novel is an allusion to the poem “To a Mouse” by Robert Burns. Though written in the eighteenth century and in the dialect of the Scottish Highlands, Burns’ poem resonates with the frustration experienced by the working class in rural America during the Great Depression. The poem appears difficult in its written form, but when read aloud it sounds quite musical and is easier to understand.

To the Teacher
Hand out a copy of Burns’ poem on the following page to your students. Have them read over the poem silently to get an understanding of the style and dialect. Then, divide your students into pairs or small groups and have them read the poem aloud. Have them trade off reading by stanza so that everyone gets a chance to read. Once the poem has been read by everyone, have your students answer the questions below, either in large or small group discussion, or in journal entries.

Questions
1. What does the speaker in the poem have in common with the characters in Of Mice of Men?
2. In what ways is the plight of the mouse similar to that of the characters in the novel?
3. Restate Stanza 7 in your own words. Why do you think Steinbeck chose Of Mice and Men as the title for his novel?
4. There are a number of thematic connections between the poem and Steinbeck’s novel, especially in stanzas 2, 5, 7 and 8. Look for and discuss these connections.
5. Steinbeck’s original title for Of Mice and Men was Something That Happened. After studying the poem, do you think this is a better title? Why or why not?

CONTINUED...
To a Mouse

On Turning Her up in Her Nest with the Plow, November, 1785
BY ROBERT BURNS

5
Wee, sleekit, cow’rin, tim’rous beastie
O, what a panic’s in thy breastie!
Thou need na start awa sae hasty,
Wi’ bickering brattle!
I wad be laith to rin an’ chase thee,
Wi’ murd’ring pattle!

10
I’m truly sorry man’s dominion
Has broken Nature’s social union,
An’ justifies that ill opinion,
Which makes thee startled,
At me, thy poor, earth-born companion,
An’ fellow-mortal!

15
I doubt na, whiles, but thou may thevie;
What then? poor beastie, thou maun live!
A daimen icker in a thrave
’S a sma’ request:
I’ll get a blessin’ wi’ the lave,
An’ never miss’t!

20
Thy wee bit housie, too, in ruin!
Its silly wa’s the win’s are strewin’!
An naething, now, to big a new ane,
O’ foggage green!
An’ bleak December’s winds ensuin’,
Bait snell an’ keen!

25
Thou saw the fields laid bare and waste,
An’ weary winter comin’ fast,
An’ cozie here, beneath the blast,
Thou thought to dwell,
Till crash! The cruel coult’r past
Out thro’ thy cell.

30
That wee bit heap o’ leaves and stibble,
Has cost thee mony a weary nibble!
Now thou’s turned out, for a’ thy trouble,
But house or hald,
To thole the winter’s sleetly dribble,
An’ cranreuch cauld!

35
But, Mousie, thou art no thy lane,
In proving foresight may be vain:
The best-laid schemes o’ mice and men
Gang aft a-gley,
An’ lea’e us nought but grief and pain,
For promised joy.

40
Still thou art blest, compar’d wi’ me!
The present only toucheth thee:
But, och! I backward cast my e’e
On prospects drear!

By Cheryl Hornstein
FREELANCE THEATRE AND MUSIC EDUCATOR
Exploring the Imagery 
IN OF MICE AND MEN

The Imagery of Hands
Authors often make use of imagery to reinforce their main themes. In the novel Of Mice of Men, Steinbeck uses imagery related to hands over 100 times. He often even mentions hands as separate entities from the character him/herself, e.g.: “Lennie’s closed hand slowly obeyed,” or George “looked at his right hand that had thrown the gun away.” Students who are studying the novel in addition to attending the play might find it engaging to search for these references and explore their thematic implications as well as the way the descriptions inform character. To help them get started, the following descriptions of characters’ hands should be helpful:

- Lennie: “paws”
- George: “small, strong hands”
- Curley: one hand in a glove of Vaseline
- Candy: missing a hand
- Curley’s Wife: hands described as fingers and red nails
- Slim: large, capable hands “delicate in their action as those of a temple dancer”

Students should also be informed that the common use of the word “hand” on a ranch is a workman whose usefulness is related to what his hands can do (metonymy), and this may be the source of all these hand images, i.e. the men are hands more than complete individuals. They are thought of in terms of their functions instead of as actual human beings.

The Symbolism of Names
Steinbeck selected the names of his characters very carefully. Consider the names of the following characters and why the author may have chosen them (noting that some are actual given names, some are nicknames and some are references to a position or relationship):

- George: means “husbandman”
- Lennie: from Leonard meaning “lion” and thus “strength”
- Crooks
- Candy
- Slim
- Curley
- Curley’s Wife
- Boss
- Soledad (the name of the town)

By Marcia Aubineau
ST. THOMAS UNIVERSITY
The Importance of Dreams in *Of Mice and Men*

QUESTIONS FOR WRITING AND DISCUSSION

Many of the characters in *Of Mice and Men* dream of better times to come or of what they will do when they save enough money. Dreams shape each character in a different way. The following questions and activities look at the role of dreams in the novel as a way of understanding the characters, their relationships, and the meaning Steinbeck seeks to convey. Use evidence from the book to support your answers.

A. In **Chapter One**, the dream that Lennie and George have is discussed in detail.
   1. What part of the dream is each character most excited about?
   2. Discuss whether George believes the dream or not. If not, why does he keep repeating the dream to Lennie?
   3. How does the dream change when George and Lennie tell Candy about it?
   4. Why does Candy buy into Lennie and George’s dream so quickly? What do his hopes and fears reveal about him?
   5. The description of the dream is repeated in Chapter Three and again at the end of the book. What prompts George to repeat the dream to Lennie each time? What state of mind is Lennie in when he asks George to repeat the dream? What does this say about Lennie’s character?
   6. Each time George repeats the dream, his description grows more detailed. What details are added each time? What effect do the details have on Lennie? On George? On the reader?

B. In **Chapter Four**, Crooks daydreams about his past.
   1. What can you envision about what his life used to be like from the daydream? What is Steinbeck trying to show about Crooks?
   2. Discuss how Crooks responds when Lennie begins to tell him about the dream of getting a place of his own with George. Does he believe it can come true? What can you tell about Crooks’ life from his reaction to Lennie’s dream?
   3. Explain what proves that Crooks begins to believe in the reality of Lennie and George’s dream of getting their own place.

C. In **Chapter Five**, Curley’s Wife reveals her dream about becoming an actress.
   1. What makes her start talking about it? What does it tell you about her life prior to coming to the farm?
   2. How is her dream different from those of the men? Is hers any more or less likely to come true? Why or why not?
   3. After the death of Curley’s Wife, Candy asks George if “you an’ me can still get that little place.” What is George’s reaction to this question? What does this indicate about his dream?

D. At the **end of the book** Lennie daydreams (or hallucinates) when he gets to the side of the river.
   1. What does he see? What do the visions tell him?
   2. What is Lennie’s reaction to the visions?
   3. Why would the author include this (third) kind of “dream” at this point in the novel?

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By Maggie Burggraaff

MATH & SCIENCE ACADEMY
Discussing Social Injustice and Discrimination
IN OF MICE AND MEN

1. Several characters suffer a loss of dignity in the story. Identify them.
   - Who or what takes each character’s dignity away?
   - How does each person react when his/her dignity is compromised?
   - What might be a connection between a character’s sense of dignity and their sense of isolation?
   - How does the story express the human need to be considered of value or worth? What appears to be Steinbeck’s message?

2. How is Candy treated by the other men? Is Candy given a choice about how to deal with his aging dog’s decline? Why do the men allow Candy’s dog to be killed? What does this action tell you about the rules of the bunkhouse? How do these rules compare to the social mores of America during the Great Depression? How do they compare to the mores of American society today?

3. How do the men treat Lennie? In what terms do they describe him? Do they call him names? How does Lennie’s size and relationship with George affect how others treat him?

4. Why is Crooks made to live separately from the rest of the men? Why does Crooks say he is forced to live separately? Why does John Steinbeck show Crooks living in a barn stall like the animals?

5. How does Curley’s wife differ from the novel to the play? Why do you think Steinbeck changed this?

6. How does Crooks’ possession of books and a rifle or his talent at horse-shoes indicate Steinbeck’s possible stance toward racism? In what way does Crooks respond to the racist comments made about him?

7. Both Crooks and Curley’s wife are called names by the other characters. List all of the derogatory terms the men use to refer to Curley’s wife. Are these characters called names to their faces or behind their backs? Does it matter if racism or sexism is overt or covert?

8. Compare and contrast Curley’s Wife and Crooks. Who is the less powerful? How are they treated by the group of men? Why are the men so afraid of Curley’s Wife? What is it exactly they are afraid of? Which is more prevalent on the ranch, racism or sexism?

9. Is the 1937 world of the Soledad ranch more or less racist than the community you live in today? Is it more or less sexist? Is there more or less age discrimination now than there was then? How has society’s perception and treatment of those with special needs changed? How much progress has our society made in the years since the novel was written?

10. When a character expresses anger as retaliation, it is often upon those that are weaker. Find examples from the novel or play where this is done.

By Marcia Aubineau, Maggie Burggraaff & Mary Finnerty
PARK SQUARE TEACHER ADVISORY BOARD
Journal Questions
FOR OF MICE AND MEN

Pre-Play Journal Questions For Classes Who Have Read the Novel
1. Many of the characters in the book dream of better times to come or of what they will do when they have enough money. Dreams shape each character in a different way. Think about Lennie, George, Candy, Crooks, Curley’s Wife.
   - What are their dreams?
   - What effect do these dreams have on their personalities and their actions?
   - How achievable are their dreams?
   - Why do people need to have dreams?
   - What are your dreams for the future?
2. Identify two incidents of foreshadowing in the novel and state how each of these incidents helped to create suspense. How do you think foreshadowing might be illustrated in a play?
3. How do you suppose George will get along without Lennie? Will George ever get the place he has talked about?
4. Go back through the novel and give each chapter a title and explain why you chose it.
5. When literature is turned into a play or a film, adaptations are usually required. Think of your own experience with this. Predict how this play will differ from the novel. Consider characters and events. Give at least four different examples.

Post-Play Journal Questions
1. Review the last chapter of the novel and reflect on the production you saw. Then, consider the following: the play ends with the fatal gunshot, whereas the novel reveals what happens immediately after Lennie’s death.
   - What effect is achieved with each ending?
   - Are your feelings about George different in the two versions?
   - Do you prefer one ending to the other?
   - Which ending is more tragic?
   - Which is more hopeful?
2. One director of Of Mice and Men said this about George:
   The whole play hinges on George.... George doesn’t relate well to other people...partially because he isn’t comfortable in his own skin.... Lennie brings out the best in George. Lennie eases George’s demons. Like a child he gives George unconditional love that George is responsible for protecting. Lennie gives George laughs, hope, and the ability to be kind. When Lennie dies, it’s George’s—and our own—innocence getting shot.
   Do you agree or disagree? Explain.
3. Steinbeck wanted to tell us something through the story’s ending. Give three messages that he was perhaps trying to send.
4. The play, which was written during the Great Depression, was like many other plays of the time in that it dealt with a current social problem in a realistic fashion. Unlike most of these other “problem plays” of the 1930s, however, this play is as popular today as it was when it was first performed. What is there about George, Lennie and their dream that accounts for the story’s enduring popularity?

By Maggie Burggraaff
MATH & SCIENCE ACADEMY
Writing Assignments
FOR OF MICE AND MEN

1. In 1962, the Nobel Prize Committee honored Steinbeck by awarding him its prize for literature, commending his efforts to expose the truths about America, no matter how painful those truths may be. Write a list of “truths” you feel Steinbeck exposes in Of Mice and Men. Do you think these truths make a comment about the human condition in general or about the United States specifically? Write an essay defending your position.

2. George was faced with a difficult moral choice and chose to kill Lennie because it seemed like the more humane thing to do. You need to take a position on George’s decision. Was killing Lennie really the right thing to do? What might have happened if George had been put on trial?

   Assume that George has been arrested and faces trial for murdering Lennie. You are either a member of a team of defense attorneys or prosecuting attorneys. Your task is to create and present your closing argument to the jury. A closing argument is the way an attorney summarizes his/her case in order to persuade the jury.

   - Choose a side.
   - Build an essay that is well-supported and persuasive.
   - Dramatize your argument for the class as if they are the judge and jury.

3. Create a sequel to the story that begins after Lennie’s death. Make sure your sequel answers the following questions:

   - What happens to George circumstantially? Does he go to court? If so, does he go to jail? Does he get his farm? If not, does he stay a bindle-stiff for the rest of his life?
   - What happens to George psychologically?
   - What happens to Candy? Curley? Crooks? Slim?

   Note: Your sequel should contain some dialogue in the dialect spoken by the farm workers.

4. At the end of the story, two people are dead—Curley’s wife and Lennie—and by the 21st century, all the characters would have died and been buried. Pretend you are visiting Soledad, California, during the summer after your senior year and you come upon a graveyard. Create a Salinas River Anthology in which you include the epitaphs of 6 of the following:

   - Lennie
   - George
   - Candy
   - Curley
   - Curley’s wife
   - Crooks
   - Slim
   - Lennie’s puppy
   - Candy’s dog
   - The dead mouse in Lennie’s pocket
   - Aunt Clara

5. Write an alternate ending to the story—a new chapter which would take the place of the original Chapters 5 and 6 in the novel (i.e., the events of Sunday). Include the following:

   - New outcomes for Lennie, George, Curley’s Wife, Candy, Crooks.
   - Specific details from the actual play/novel as your background.
   - As much of the novel’s/play’s vocabulary as you can. Some dialogue should be in the dialect of the individual characters.

By Marcia Aubineau & Maggie Burggraaff
PARK SQUARE TEACHER ADVISORY BOARD
Tossing Lines
A PRE-PLAY CLASS ACTIVITY

Objective
The purpose of this activity is to familiarize students with *Of Mice and Men* by exposing them to lines spoken in the play. Based on these lines, students are to make predictions about the play’s characters and central conflicts and discuss these predictions with the rest of the class. This activity helps students form questions, gain insight, and build excitement for seeing and hearing these lines acted out on stage. “**Tossing Lines**” serves the students best if completed before they attend the play.

Time Allotted
20-30 minutes

Materials
- Tennis ball or hackey sack
- Ten slips of paper, cut from Tossing Lines Resource on the following page

Procedure
Cut out the slips of paper printed on the following page and distribute them to ten volunteers. Give students a few minutes (or overnight, if appropriate) to memorize or practice their lines. When they’re ready, have these ten students form a circle and give one student the ball. After she speaks her line, the student tosses the ball to another student who speaks his assigned line. Students toss the ball throughout the circle until all lines have been heard a few times. Encourage students to speak lines with varying emotions, seeking out a variety of ways to perform the lines.

Optional
Re-assign lines within the group (or to other students in the classroom) and continue for another round.

Writing/Discussion
After lines have been tossed, allow students five minutes to write their ideas and questions about the content of the play. The following questions may be used to guide writing and/or discussion.

1. How did it feel to use the dialect and slang out loud?
2. Did the words or your character’s attitude affect how you used your voice, posture or body movement?
3. How does hearing and speaking these lines have an effect that is different from just reading them silently on the page?

Adapted from Peggy O’Brien’s
*Shakespeare Set Free* (1993)
To the Teacher:
Cut these apart and distribute to students.

“What, George? I ain’t got no mouse.”

“God Almighty, if I was alone, I could live so easy.”

“I’m jus’ lookin’ for somebody to talk to. Don’t you never jus’ want to talk to somebody?”

“Jest seems kinda funny. A cuckoo like him and a smart guy like you traveling together.”

“Well, hell, I had him so long! Had him since he was a pup. I herded sheep with him.”

“Tell me – like you done before. About the rabbits.”

“You seen a girl around here?”

“I think you got your hand caught in a machine. If you don’t tell nobody what happened, we won’t.”

“This here’s my room. Nobody got any right in here but me.”

“Guys like us got no families. They ain’t got nobody in the world that gives a hoot in hell about ‘em!”
SLIM. (Enters. He is tall, dark man in blue-jeans and short denim jacket. Carries a crushed Stetson hat under his arm and combs his long dark hair straight back. Stands and moves with a kind of majesty. Finishes combing his hair. Smoothes out his crushed hat. Creases it in the middle and puts it on. In a gentle voice.) It’s brighter’n a bitch outside. Can’t hardly see nothing in here. You the new guys?

GEORGE. Just come.

SLIM. Goin’ to buck barley?

GEORGE. That’s what the boss said.

SLIM. Hope you get on my team.

GEORGE. Boss said we’d go with a jerk-line skinner named Slim.

SLIM. That’s me.

GEORGE. You a jerk-line skinner?

SLIM. (In self-disparagement.) I can snap ‘em around a little.

GEORGE. (Terribly impressed.) That kinda makes you Jesus Christ on this ranch, don’t it?

SLIM. (Obviously pleased.) Oh, nuts!

GEORGE. (Chuckles.) Like the man says, “The boss tells you what to do. But if you want to know how to do it, you got to ask the mule skinner.” The man says any guy that can drive twelve Arizona jack rabbits with a jerk line can fall in a toilet and come up with a mince pie under each arm.

SLIM. (Laughing.) Well, I hope you get on my team. I got a pair a punks that don’t know a barley bag from a blue ball. Your guys ever bucked any barley?

GEORGE. Hell, yes. I ain’t nothin’ to scream about, but that big guy there can put up more grain alone that most pairs can.

SLIM. (Looks approvingly at George.) You guys travel around together?

GEORGE. Sure. We kinda look after each other. (Points at Lennie with thumb.) He ain’t bright. Hell of a good worker, though. Hell of a nice fella too. I’ve knowed him for a long time.

SLIM. Ain’t many guys travel around together. I don’t know why. Maybe everybody in the whole damn world is scared of each other.

GEORGE. It’s a lot nicer to go ‘round with a guy you know. You get used to it an’ then it ain’t no fun alone any more. (Enter Carlson. Big-stomached, powerful. His head still dripping water from scrubbing and dousing.)

CONTINUED...
CARLSON. Hello, Slim! *(Looks at George and Lennie.)*

SLIM. These guys just come.

CARLSON. Glad to met ya! My name’s Carlson.

GEORGE. I’m George Milton. This here’s Lennie Small.

CARLSON. Glad to met you. He ain’t very small. *(Chuckles at his own joke.)* He ain’t small at all. Meant to ask you, Slim, how’s your bitch? I seen she wasn’t under your wagon this morning.

SLIM. She slang her pups last night. Nine of ‘em. I drowned four of ‘em right off. She couldn’t feed that many.

CARLSON. Got five left, huh?

SLIM. Yeah. Five. I kep’ the biggest.

CARSON. What kinda dogs you think they gonna be?

SLIM. I don’t know. Some kind of shepherd, I guess. That’s the most kind I seen around here when she’s in heat.

CARLSON. *(Laughs.)* I had an airedale an’ a guy down the road got one of them little white floozy dogs, well, she was in heat and the guy locks her up. But my airedale, named Tom he was, he et a woodshed clear down to the roots to get her. Guy come over one day, he’s sore as hell, he says, “I wouldn’t mind if my bitch had pups, but Christ Almighty, this morning she slang a litter of Shetland ponies…” *(Takes off hat, scratches his head.)* Got five pups, huh! Gonna keep all of ‘em?

SLIM. I don’ know, gotta keep ‘em awhile, so they can drink Lulu’s milk.

CARLSON. *(Thoughtfully.)* Well, looka here, Slim, I been thinkin’. That dog of Candy’s is so goddamn old he can’t hardly walk. Stinks like hell. Every time Candy brings him in the bunkhouse I can smell him two or three days. Why don’t you get Candy to shoot his ol’ dog, and give him one of them pups to raise up? I can smell that dog a mile off. Got no teeth. Can’t eat. Candy feeds him milk. He can’t chew nothing else. And leadin’ him around on a string so he don’t bump into things… *(The triangle outside begins to ring wildly. Continue for a few moments, then stops suddenly.)* There she goes! *(Outside a burst of voices as men go by.)*

SLIM. *(To Lennie and George.)* You guys better come on while they’s still somethin’ to eat. Won’t be nothing left in a couple of minutes. *(Exits Slim and Carlson. Lennie watches George excitedly.)*

LENNIE. George!

GEORGE. *(Rumpling cards into a pile.)* Yeah, I heard ‘im, Lennie…I’ll ask ‘im!
LENNIE. *Excitedly.* A brown and white one.

GEORGE. Come on, Let’s get dinner. I don’t know whether he’s got a brown and white one.

LENNIE. You ask him right away, George, so he won’t kill no more of ‘em!

GEORGE. Sure! Come on now—let’s go. *(They start for door.)*

CURLEY. *(Bounces in, angrily.)* You seen a girl around here?

GEORGE. *(Coldly.)* ‘Bout half an hour ago, mebbe.

CURLEY. *(Insultingly.)* She said she was lookin’ for you.

GEORGE. *(Measures both men with his eyes for a moment.)* She said she was lookin’ for you.

CURLEY. *(Measures both men with his eyes for a moment.)* You seen a girl around here?

GEORGE. *(Coldly.)* ‘Bout half an hour ago, mebbe.

CURLEY. *(Insultingly.)* She said she was lookin’ for you.

CURLEY. *(Measures both men with his eyes for a moment.)* Which way did she go?

GEORGE. I don’t know. I didn’t watch her go. *(Curley scowls at him a moment, then turns and hurries out door.* You know, Lennie, I’m scared I’m gonna tangle with the bastard myself. I hate his guts! Jesus Christ, come on! They won’t be a damn thing left to eat.

LENNIE. Will you ask him about a brown and white one? *(They go out.)*
GEORGE. (Turns suddenly and looks out door into the dark barn, speaks savagely.) I s’pose ya lookin’ for Curley? (Curley’s wife appears in door.) Well, Curley ain’t here.

CURLEY’S WIFE. (Determined now.) I know Curley ain’t here. I wanted to ask Crooks somepin’. I didn’t know you guys was here.

CANDY. Didn’t George tell you before—we don’t want nothing to do with you. You know damn well Curley ain’t here.

CURLEY’S WIFE. I know where Curley went. Got his arm in a sling an’ he went anyhow. I tell ya I come out to ask Crooks somepin’.

CROOKS. (Apprehensively.) Maybe you better go along to your own house. You hadn’t ought to come near a colored man’s room. I don’t want no trouble. You don’t want to ask me nothing.

CANDY. (Rubbing his wrist stump.) You got a husband. You got no call to come foolin’ around with other guys causin’ trouble.

CURLEY’S WIFE. (Suddenly angry.) I try to be nice an’ polite to you lousy bindle bums—but you’re too good. I tell ya I could of went with shows. An’—an’ a guy wanted to put me in pitchers right in Hollywood. (Looks about to see how she is impressing them. Their eyes are hard.) I come out here to ask somebody somepin’ an’—

CANDY. (Stands up suddenly, knocks nail keg over backwards, speaks angrily.) I had enough. You ain’t wanted here. We tole you you ain’t. Callin’ us bindle stiffs. You got floozy idears what us guys amounts to. You ain’t got sense enough to see us guys ain’t bindle stiffs. S’pose you could get us canned—s’pose you could. You think we’d hit the highway an’ look for another two-bit job. You don’t know we got our own ranch to go to an’ our own house an’ fruit trees. An’ we got friends. That’s what we got. Maybe they was a time when we didn’t have nothing, but that ain’t so no more.

CURLEY’S WIFE. You damn ol’ goat. If you had two bits, you’d be in Soledad getting’ a drink an’ suckin’ the bottom of the glass.

GEORGE. Maybe she could ask Crooks what she come to ask an’ then get the hell home. I don’t think she come to ask nothing.

CURLEY’S WIFE. What happened to Curley’s hand? (Crooks laughs. George tries to shut him up.) So it wasn’t no machine. Curley didn’t act like he was tellin’ the truth. Come on, Crooks—what happened?

CROOKS. I wasn’t there. I didn’t see it.

CURLEY’S WIFE. (Eagerly.) What happened? I won’t let on to Curley. He says he caught his han’ in a gear. (Crooks is silent.) Who done it?

GEORGE. Didn’t anybody do it.
CURLEY'S WIFE. (Turns slowly to George.) So you done it. Well, he had it comin’.

GEORGE. I didn’t have no fuss with Curley.

CURLEY'S WIFE. (Steps near him, smiling.) Maybe now you ain’t scared of him no more. Maybe you’ll talk to me sometimes now. Ever’body was scared of him.

GEORGE. (Speaks rather kindly.) Look! I didn’t sock Curley. If he had trouble, it ain’t none of our affair. Ask Curley about it. Now listen. I’m gonna try to tell ya. We tole you to get the hell out and it don’t do no good. So I’m gonna tell you another way. Us guys got somepin’ we’re gonna do. If you stick around you’ll gum up the works. It ain’t your fault. If a guy steps on a round pebble an’ falls down an’ breaks his neck, it ain’t the pebble’s fault, but the guy wouldn’t of did it if the pebble wasn’t there.

CURLEY'S WIFE. (Puzzled.) What you talkin’ about pebbles? If you didn’t sock Curley, who did? (Looks at others, then steps quickly over to Lennie.) Where’d you get them bruises on you face?

GEORGE. I tell you he got his hand caught in a machine.

LENNIE. (Looks anxiously at George, miserably.) He caught his han’ in a machine.

GEORGE. So now get out of here.

CURLEY'S WIFE. (Goes close to Lennie, speaks softly, note of affection in her voice.) So…it was you. Well...maybe you’re dumb like they say...an’ maybe...you’re the only guy on the ranch with guts. (Puts hand on Lennie’s shoulder. He looks up in her face and smile grows on his face. She strokes his shoulder.) You’re a nice fella.

GEORGE. (Suddenly leaps at her ferociously, grabs her shoulders and whirls her around.) Listen...you! I tried to give you a break. Don’t you walk into nothing! We ain’t gonna let you mess up what we’re gonna do. You let this guy alone an’ get the hell out of here.

CURLEY'S WIFE. (Defiant but slightly frightened.) You ain’t tellin’ me what to do. (Boss appears in door, stands legs spread, thumbs hooked over his belt.) I got a right to talk to anybody I want to.

GEORGE. Why, you— (George, furious, steps close—hand is raised to strike her. She covers a little. George stiffens, seeing Boss, frozen in position. Others see Boss, too. She retreats slowly. George’s hand drops slowly to side—he takes two slow backward steps. Hold the scene for a moment.)
Steinbeck uses the techniques of direct and indirect characterization as well as figurative language to allow us to get to know his characters better. Using the first few chapters of the novel, record in your own words what the reader learns about each character’s personality and appearance in the first two columns. In the last column, record quotations from the text that show examples of figurative language (simile, metaphor, imagery, hyperbole, etc.) used as characterization. Include page numbers.

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<th>Characters</th>
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By Kristin Wayne  
Brooklyn Center High School
Percentage of Guilt
A PRE- OR POST-PLAY CLASS ACTIVITY

Objective
The goal of this activity is to generate conversation about responsibility—responsibility to self, friends, the helpless, the mentally challenged, and the community. Compelling students to make choices about who is guilty for each death in the novel will provoke thoughtful conversations and writing about who is responsible for the novel's tragic ending. There are four major deaths in *Of Mice and Men*: Candy's dog, Lennie's puppy, Curley's Wife, and Lennie. After the students have read about each death, complete the following steps:

Procedure
1. Pass out the Student Worksheet on the following page and have students choose a character from one of the four major deaths in *Of Mice and Men*: Candy's dog, Lennie's puppy, Curley's Wife, and Lennie
2. Ask students to brainstorm, outside of the circle a list of which characters are responsible for that particular death.
3. Generate a class list on the board asking students for their contributions. For example, for the death of Candy's dog, students may list Carlson, Slim, Candy, and the rest of the men in the bunkhouse as a group.
4. Now, have students discuss the percentage of guilt they feel each of the characters bears for the death. For Candy's dog, students may want to divide the responsibility 50-50 between Slim and Carlson. But does Carlson deserve more because he does the actual killing? Does Slim because he approves of it? Does Candy deserve any responsibility? Do the other members of the bunkhouse (as a group) deserve any?
5. Next, ask the students what societal influences could be responsible for each death (sexism, ageism, lack of proper care for the mentally challenged, etc.).
6. Student should list these influences on their worksheets.
7. Ask the students, as individuals, to use as many or as few items as they wish from both lists to make a pie chart representing the percentage of guilt that each listed item (person or cause) bears for that particular death.

Suggestion
If you are going to do this activity with all four deaths, you may want to have students do it individually for the puppy, individually and in small groups for Candy's dog, individually, in small groups and as a class for Curley’s Wife, and as a class for Lennie. When students work in small groups or as a class, remind them that the discussion is more important than the actual answers.

Discussion
1. Ask students what earned the highest percentage. Have them justify their choices and respond to each other’s choices. (This could be done in writing below the graph if you want to prepare students for the discussion and/or to collect their work.)
2. Ask students to take note of George’s percentage of guilt. Does it increase each time? Should it? He alone knows Lennie’s full history. (Don’t forget the woman in Weed.) Is George predominantly responsible for the death of Curley’s Wife?
3. After seeing the play, did the students’ perception of responsibility change at all? Why or why not? What did the director do to make the students think that way?

By Charles Ellenbogen (THE BLAKE SCHOOL)
& Mary Finnerty (DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION)

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Percentage of Guilt
A PRE- OR POST-PLAY CLASS ACTIVITY  STUDENT HANDOUT

Procedure
1. Choose a character from one of the four major deaths in *Of Mice and Men*: Candy’s dog, Lennie’s puppy, Curley’s Wife, or Lennie
2. Brainstorm, outside of the circle, a list of which characters are responsible for that particular death.
3. Now think about the percentage of guilt you feel each of the character bears for the death. For example, for Candy’s dog, may want to divide the responsibility 50-50 between Slim and Carlson.
4. Next, list what societal influences could be responsible for the death (sexism, ageism, lack of proper care for the mentally challenged, etc.).
5. Use as many or as few items as you wish from both lists to make a pie chart representing the percentage of guilt that each listed item (person or society) bears for that particular death.

Who is responsible for the death of _____________________?

Character Influences  Societal Influences
The Films of John Steinbeck

1939  *Of Mice and Men*
This version, starring Burgess Meredith as George and Lon Chaney as Lennie, was directed by Lewis Milestone.

1940  *The Grapes of Wrath*
This classic adaptation of Steinbeck’s novel stars Henry Fonda and won two Oscars: Best Director (John Ford) and Best Supporting Actress (Jane Darwell for her portrayal of Ma Joad).

1941  *The Forgotten Village*
Steinbeck wrote the screenplay.

1942  *Tortilla Flat*
Directed by Victor Fleming, this adaptation stars Hedy Lemar, Frank Morgan, and Spencer Tracy as the *paisanos* in a small Mexican fishing village.

1943  *The Moon is Down*
Adapted from Steinbeck’s novel.

1944  *Lifeboat*
Steinbeck, whose story for this film was nominated for an Oscar, demanded that his name be removed from the credits because of what he perceived to be racism in the film. Widely regarded as a classic, the film, directed by Alfred Hitchcock, made a star of Tallulah Bankhead as a crassly wealthy matron stuck on a lifeboat during WWII.

1945  *A Medal for Benny*
Steinbeck co-wrote this film with Jack Wagner. It was nominated for two Academy Awards.

1948  *The Pearl/La Perla*
Steinbeck wrote this adaptation of his own story.

CONTINUED...
The Films of John Steinbeck

CONTINUED

1949  *The Red Pony*
Directed by Lewis Milestone, this film stars Beau Bridges, Robert Mitchum and Myrna Loy, and was remade for television in 1970. Steinbeck wrote the screenplay based on his story.

1952  *Viva Zapata!*
This film about a Mexican peasant’s rise to power, starring Marlon Brando and Anthony Quinn, was directed by Elia Kazan and featured Lewis Milestone (who directed the first screen version of *Of Mice and Men*).

1955  *East of Eden*
James Dean’s motion picture debut also featured Raymond Massey, Julie Harris, and Burl Ives in Elia Kazan’s screen version of Steinbeck’s novel.

1957  *The Wayward Bus*
Adapted from Steinbeck’s novel.

1960  *Of Mice and Men* (Television)
Starring George Segal as George and Nicol Williamson as Lennie.

1981  *Of Mice and Men* (Television)
Starring Robert Blake as George and Randy Quaid as Lennie.

1982  *Cannery Row*
Adapted from Steinbeck’s novels *Cannery Row* and *Sweet Thursday*, this unsuccessful film stars Nick Nolte and Deborah Winger.

1992  *Of Mice and Men*
Directed by Gary Sinise and adapted by Horton Foote, this version stars Sinise as George, John Malkovich as Lennie, Sherilyn Fenn as Curley’s Wife and Ray Walston as Candy.
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Thank you for giving the gift of theatre to your students, and the gift of your students to our theatre.

Yours sincerely,
The Staff at Park Square Theatre

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