

George

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Introduction

John Steinbeck portrays his version of 1930s America in his novel 'Of Mice and Men'. It is a society devastated by the economic and social effects of the Great Depression and one in which prejudice, loneliness and isolation have replaced the hopes of The American Dream. His characters are very much a reflection of this society, and it is through the character of George that he portrays the hardships of migrant workers during the Great Depression. This is reflected in his first name, George, which is derived from Greek word for farmer, so it associates him with ranch work.

Character Description: average worker of the 1930s America

- Show the hardship faced by migrant workers at the time.
- Carrying 'bindle', wearing 'denim trousers and denim coat' and 'travelling from ranch to ranch'
 - The semantic field of typical migrant worker life: George = representative of the migrant workers of the time → his troubles and experiences are similar for others
 - Context: overlap between the experience of George and other migrant workers at the time: left their homes in search for job, due to Wall Street Crash + GD causing many to lose their job. Both migrated to California
 - Morality play structure: different characters represent different values → George = vast majority of society at the time
 - This helps to create a person that the audience can connect with and hence learn the Steinbeck's messages from

Motif of hands: skilled for survival

- Shows cruelty of society in the 1930s
- 'small, strong hands'
 - Small = connotations of weakness, juxtaposed with 'strong' capability, therefore suggesting that his power is not limited by his physical size, shows intelligence
 - Context: Hand is symbolic of one's ability to work, as in the 1930s workers were valued solely based on their ability to work. Therefore, George might be a strong worker, due to his strong hands, so that he will be valued by the ranch owners and can hence find employment
- A semantic field of skill and speed: 'snapped', 'quick', 'sharply', and 'defined'
 - Presents him as being aggressive and hostile, as if he was an animal in the wild
 - Context: due to fierce competition between workers in the 1930s society for jobs, 'survival of the fittest' society. Easily get fired if not capable enough or not needed anymore. No unemployment benefits → a sense of insecurity amongst the workers
 - Steinbeck uses this to criticise society's lack of care toward the unprivileged ones.

Repeated motif of solitaire

- Loneliness
 - Solitaire = played by one person only and does not require help from others → a metaphor for the loneliness that many of the characters feel in the novel
 - When George is playing solitaire, Lennie is never asked to play solitaire with George, as he is considered incapable of playing such intellectually demanding game
 - It reveals George's loneliness, in that George does not trust Lennie to be a true companion that can cooperate with him, so that he is essentially still dealing with the difficulties on his own, not with Lennie.
 - Steinbeck uses this to show the pervasive loneliness in society
- Lack of control over fate
 - Solitaire = a game about chances
 - Reveals the lack of control that workers had over their own fate
- Title: 'Of Mice and Men'

- Taken from the poem "To a Mouse, On Turning Her Up in Her Nest with a Plow" by Robert Burns
- From the line 'The best laid schemes o' mice and men Gang aft a-gley'
 - About the destined failure of dreams
- This resembles the failure of American Dreams for many, that it is impossible for people to achieve success through hard work
- 'solitaire hand'
 - Suggests the intensity of him playing the game of solitaire, that his hand is being equated to the solitaire game, further showing how many aspects of George's life was dictated by luck.

Dream: different to others', seeking for more control of his fate + companionship

- Contrasts to the pessimistic attitude to life during the Great Depression + loneliness
- 'gonna have a little house and a couple of acres', 'just say to hell with goin' to work'
 - Allows George and Lennie to gain more control over themselves, dictate over their work
 - Ownership with the land contrasts with the norm of ranch workers: quickly spend all their wage on entertainment
 - Context: Hollywood films were extremely popular in the 1930s, 60 to 80 million people going to cinema at least once every week. Thought as a way of escaping the harshness of life under the Great Depression
- 'I got you to look after me, and you got me to look after you'
 - Syndetic parallelism = creates a sense of equality in their relationship
 - Not the real situation as Lennie constantly needs to be looked after by George
 - Shows how unrealistic their dream is and foreshadows the failure of their dream
- Differs from other characters' dream (focused on their own benefits only)
 - Context: many men left their children and wife behind for work, being separated from the family, cause society to be egocentric
 - Such companionship in he and Lennie's special dream is what makes George stand out from the rest of the workers despite their similar physical appearances
- After Lennie's death: dream destroyed and he then bears the same dream as the other workers
- 'take [his] fifty bucks' and 'stay all night in some lousy cat house' or 'set in some poolroom till ever'body goes home'
 - Semantic field of entertainment ('cat house' and 'poolroom') = he also starts to simply choose to paralyse himself from the harshness of life like what everyone else does
 - Shows the impact of the companionship from Lennie that has on the thoughts of George which makes him different from others

Settings: Waterhole at start

- Paradise-like: to show people's lack of control over their fate
- A list of animals living in the waterhole, 'lizard', 'rabbit', 'dogs', and 'deer'
 - This shows how different animals live together in harmony, contrasting to the 'survival of the fittest' nature of society in the 1930s
- Despite the Waterhole being a paradise-like place, George is still forced to leave the place
 - Context: shows the lack of choice for many of the migrant workers at the time
 - In 1930 a series of droughts in the central states of Oklahoma, Kansas, Tennessee and Arkansas
 - Led to crop failures, so the soil dried out so when the wind blew huge dust storms were created, AKA 'dust bowl'
 - Forced farmers to leave their home
- Path 'beaten hard'
 - Many migrant workers have also experienced this

Settings - Bunkhouse

- Shows the dehumanisation of workers at the time
- Semantic field of being dilapidated: 'unpainted', 'whitewashed', and 'burlap sticking out'

- Shows how the owner of the ranch is unwilling to improve the conditions for the workers
- Context: common for many migrant workers at the time, squatter camps + poor hygiene + scared by the deputy sheriff
- Steinbeck uses the bunkhouse to show the lack of care towards workers in the 1930s America
- 'small square windows' and 'solid door'
 - Adjectives 'square' and 'solid' connotes a sense of restrictedness → bunkhouse = prison-like
 - The prison-like feeling hence suggests the lack of choice that George has, unable to leave such place
 - Context: loan + land taken by the bank, 'dust bowl'
 - Steinbeck shows how many workers were forced into such conditions as they lacked an alternative.
- (Can also compare with unhomeliness of bunkhouse + harmony in waterhole to show how they were forced to leave a paradise)

Conclusion

The inevitable failure of George's dream is hinted by Steinbeck through the title 'Of Mice and Men'. 'Men' is compared with 'mice', which is a small and weak animal, suggesting the individuals' inability to change the situation of society during the Great Depression. He uses this to show how dreams in American society at the time are doomed to failure, due to the consequences of the Great Depression.

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Lennie

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Introduction

John Steinbeck portrays his version of 1930s America in his novel 'Of Mice and Men'. It is a society devastated by the economic and social effects of the Great Depression and one in which prejudice, loneliness and isolation have replaced the hopes of The American Dream. His characters are very much a reflection of this society, and it is through the character of Lennie that he portrays those who suffer from the prejudice in society due to disabilities. This is reflected in the character's name, as Lennie is a nickname for Leo, which resembles of a lion. The brave, powerful connotations of lion is juxtaposed with his childish behaviours, foreshadowing his mental disability in his inability to control his strength.

Character description: mentally handicapped + dependent on George

- Show American society's lack of care and understanding towards those that are disabled
- Semantic field of strong animals: 'bull', 'horse', and 'bear'
 - Present Lennie as being less intelligent than others by comparing his actions to animals rather than human
 - 'bull' and 'horse' = common animals on ranch to help with labour work → illustrates how Lennie is viewed by his work capabilities
 - Context: reflect how disabled workers found it difficult to survive in society, as their lack of ability to work would have rendered them as worthless individuals
- 'imitated George exactly'
 - 'Imitated' suggests Lennie's trust in George
 - 'exactly' = connotes the imitation being solely Lennie copying George, not having his own solution → Lennie was unable to survive on his own since he could only copy others
 - Context: shows his absolute dependency on George for survival, which Steinbeck shows is due to the lack of social care in American society in the 1930s, that Lennie could not rely on society or the government for help, only able to depend on his close friend, George.

Motif of hand: unable to control strength

- 'the way a bear drags his paws'
 - 'bear': connotes Lennie being powerful yet unintelligent
 - 'paws': connotation of being clumsy, to further show Lennie's disability
 - The strength of his hands would have made him be appreciated by other characters (Slim)
 - Context: in Lennie's case: still described in a slightly pejorative manner, showing how his strength is ignored by others due to his mental disability.
 - Steinbeck tries to show how people are constantly undermined due to disabilities.
- 'pinched their heads a little and then they was dead'
 - 'A little' connotes the strength he used is thought to be weak
 - In reality the mouse was 'dead' = applying huge power to the mice
 - It shows how Lennie is unable to control his strength, being unable to realise the power that he exerts
- Dead mouse + 'bear' metaphor
 - Lennie is a danger to others as he does not know his own huge strength
 - Context: this reveals the harsh and unforgiving society of 1930s America, where necessity has made society cruel and selfish and even those naïve people like Lennie can be dangerous
 - Steinbeck uses Lennie's actions to present how such society can lead to devastating consequences as people lose their minds for survival.

Animal-like

- 'bull', 'horse', and 'bear'
- 'the way a bear drags his paws'

- Analysis same as before
- Show how disabled people is discriminated

Dream

- Different to all other characters'
- Contrasts to the pessimistic attitude to life during the Great Depression + loneliness
- 'gonna have a little house and a couple of acres', 'just say to hell with goin' to work'
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- 'I got you to look after me, and you got me to look after you' **(If have time)**
 - Syndetic parallelism = creates a sense of equality in their relationship
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Settings - Waterhole

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Settings - Bunkhouse

- Shows the dehumanisation of workers at the time
- Semantic field of being dilapidated: 'unpainted', 'whitewashed', and 'burlap sticking out'
 - Shows how the owner of the ranch is unwilling to improve the conditions for the workers
 - Context: common for many migrant workers at the time, squatter camps + poor hygiene + scared by the deputy sheriff
 - Steinbeck uses the bunkhouse to show the lack of care towards workers in the 1930s America
- 'small square windows' and 'solid door'
 - Adjectives 'square' and 'solid' connotes a sense of restrictedness → bunkhouse = prison-like
 - The prison-like feeling hence suggests the lack of choice that Lennie has, unable to leave such place
 - Context: loan + land taken by the bank, 'dust bowl'
 - Steinbeck shows how many workers were forced into such conditions as they lacked an alternative.
- (Can also compare with unhomeliness of bunkhouse + harmony in waterhole to show how they were forced to leave a paradise)

Conclusion

'Of Mice and Men', follows the structure of a Morality play, with each character being representation of different aspects of society so that the audience can learn a moral lesson from it. Through the novel, Steinbeck hopes to portray the devastating effect The Great Depression had on people – the crushing of their hopes and dreams, the isolation and prejudice they suffered from, and the lack of control people had over their lives. Lennie embodies all of these aspects.

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Slim

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John Steinbeck portrays his version of 1930s America in his novel 'Of Mice and Men'. It is a society devastated by the economic and social effects of the Great Depression and one in which prejudice, loneliness and isolation have replaced the hopes of The American Dream. His characters are very much a reflection of this society, and it is through the character of Slim that he portrays people who are treated with respect in society. This is reflected in the name of the character, Slim, which has connotations of being stripped of anything unnecessary, suggesting him being free from all prejudices, which allows him to act as a judge for any conflicts between the workers on the ranch.

Steinbeck presents Slim as a God-like figure

- Show the qualities valued in American society during the Great Depression
- 'word was taken on any subject, be it politics or love'
 - The wide variety of topics (politics = public, love = private matters) → Slim's omniscience
 - Morality play structure: Slim represents someone who is free from prejudice (shown through his name)
 - Steinbeck tries to promote such behaviour by making him seem respected by other workers in the novel
- 'his ear heard more than was said to him, and his slow speech had overtones not of thought, but of understanding beyond thought'
 - Premodifiers of 'more' and 'beyond' + physical action of something being 'said' → highly perceptive, understanding the reasons behind the words
 - 'beyond' + abstract noun 'thought' = his understanding exceeding the normal reasoning and knowledge in human brains
 - Context: due to GD, many have become unemployed and had no means to rely upon for their difficulties. View Slim as someone who can provide them guidance and support them through such a period of difficulty
 - Steinbeck therefore tries to reveal the lack of social care for those that are in hardship through Slim

Motif of hands: skilled worker

- (Add on to God-like aspect)
- Shows the dehumanisation of workers in the 1930s
- Hands 'large and lean'
 - Factual adjectives 'large' and 'lean' = connotes his hand having huge power and being in a good shape respectively, presented to be suitable for work on ranch
 - Context: in the 1930s America, workers were solely valued by their ability to work on farm, which is represented by their hand that are used to work, so Slim is viewed as a valuable individual due to his strong skills
- 'capable of killing a fly on the wheeler's butt with a bull whip without touching the mule'
 - Juxtaposition between the extremely small size of 'fly' and the large 'mule' = extremely difficult, requiring high precision
 - 'bull whip' = unsophisticated tool, further elevating the difficulty of such task
 - Slim's ability to do so therefore present him as being a competent worker that can complete even the hardest tasks
 - Context: Slim is presented at the top of the hierarchy of a society that represent 'the survival of the fittest', where workers compete for job opportunities and were often fired as soon as they lost their ability to work, due to his exceptional working ability.

Setting - clothing + bunkhouse

- Slim has similar dressing to other migrant workers at the time, in 'denim trousers and coats'

- Seem similar to other migrant workers, but he stands out for his actions
- ‘move[s] with a majesty only achieved by royalty and master craftsmen’ and is ‘the prince of the ranch’
 - Semantic field of nobility, ‘majesty’, ‘royalty’ and ‘prince’ connotes elegance
 - Contrasts to the rudeness of the other ranch workers, who often argue and fight with each other
- Elegance is juxtaposed with the poor condition of the bunkhouse: ‘small square windows’ and ‘solid door’
 - Adjectives ‘square’ and ‘solid’ connotes a sense of restrictedness, hence presenting the bunkhouse as prison-like
 - The prison-like feeling = unable to leave such place
 - Context
 - Land taken + dust bowl
 - The restrictedness hence suggests that even able workers such as Slim cannot escape the fate of being a ranch worker subject to exploitations
 - Steinbeck uses to show how little control individuals had over their fate.

Settings - just bunkhouse

- Shows the dehumanisation of workers at the time
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Dramatic device: makes moral judgements

- The morality play structure that Steinbeck adopts often emphasises certain messages about morality, so Slim’s judgements also help Steinbeck to set up these messages to the readers
- Judgment about shooting Candy's dog: ‘I wisht somebody'd shoot me if I got old an' a cripple.’
 - Use first person: applying the same principle to himself → free of prejudice
 - He makes judgement without any prejudice = uncommon at the time due to the institutional racism in the 1930s.
- Context: Many black Americans were falsely accused of crime, e.g. Scottsboro Boys (where nine black teenagers were accused of rape by a white woman in 1931)
- Steinbeck highlights the difference between Slim and the other judges at the time to show the unfairness of the court trials and condemn the racism towards African Americans.

Conclusion

- ‘Of Mice and Men’ follows the structure of a Morality play, with each character being representation of different aspects of society so that the audience can learn a moral lesson from it
- Slim is a perfect representation of a role model in the morality play, so Steinbeck tries to use Slim to criticise problems of American society and point out the correct values and beliefs. Slim is the only character that avoids talking about his dream, considering it with his God-like omniscience, Steinbeck might be using him to point out that dreams are doomed to fail, which is foreshadowed by the title of the book, ‘Of Mice and Men’, where ‘men’ is juxtaposed with ‘mice’ to show their vulnerability and insignificance, so he has decided to give up those illusions.

Candy

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Introduction

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Character description: old and worn out

- Show the hardship that individuals faced during GD
- 'Stoop-shouldered'
 - Connotations of being broken and weighed down
 - Showing the impacts of working and age on him
 - Context: many migrant workers had to work for very long hours for low wage so body became worn down by heavy labour
- 'Stick-like' wrist
 - 'stick' = weakness of his hand, chremamorphism = he is objectified
 - Context: workers reduced to their ability to work, treated like machines
 - Loss of right hand = symbolises his lack of use as a worker, viewed incomplete and useless in society
- Mode of address: 'the old swamper'
 - Reinforces his identity being tied up with his menial role as a 'swamper'
 - Showing others' discrimination towards him
 - Context: further shows how men were only treated as instruments of work, thought useless as soon as they lost their ability to work + likely to be kicked out of the ranch, treated like a faulty tool
- Steinbeck explores how workers were dehumanised in the 1930s America through the description of Candy.

Character description: subject to prejudice from other characters + prejudice towards other characters

- Show the lack of care in society
- Caught by George to be eavesdropping ('say, what the hell you doin' listening?') + he is quick to gossip about other characters including the Curley and his wife
 - Referring to CW with pejorative noun 'tart' = disrespectful, sexist views
 - Context: explore the lack of loyalty and respect which the Great Depression brought about as families were broken up due to men leaving their home for work elsewhere
- Views Crooks as a 'nice fella' + refers to crooks with a repeated use of the n-slur + 'must be nice to have a room all to [himself] this way'
 - Complementary juxtaposes the isolation that Crooks feel from others
 - Own discriminating use of the n-slur
 - Shows Candy's inability to understand the plight of other
 - Context: entrenched racism in the 1930s America, use of the n-slur was considered to be acceptable + the segregation between races was still maintained in the South by the Jim Crow Laws
 - Show how the social environment in the 1930s have led to the prominence of prejudice and betrayal in society.

Setting: Candy's dog

- Show the cruelty of the 1930s society
- 'since he was a pup'
 - Strong emotional connection
 - Despite Candy's emotional link with his dog, Carlson still insists to shoot the dog
 - Context: Steinbeck demonstrates the 'survival of the fittest' nature in society at the time, that the weak individuals (Candy's dog is symbolic of) must be get rid of for the benefit of others
- Used to show good strength and ability ('herded sheep with him')
 - Still got ridden after it has lost its strength
 - Steinbeck hence shows how cruel such 'survival of the fittest' rule is
- After his dog is shot: a semantic field of a lack of energy: 'lay still', 'then he rolled over slowly and faced the wall and lay silent', 'lay rigidly on his bed and stared at the ceiling'
 - Metaphorical death due to the loss of his companionship
 - The death of his dog also warned him of what he might face
 - Being kicked out of the ranch due to his disability
 - As his dog and him are both considered as being useless to the ranch

Settings - Bunkhouse

- Shows the dehumanisation of workers at the time
- Semantic field of being dilapidated: 'unpainted', 'whitewashed', and 'burlap sticking out'
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Dream: shared with George + Lennie but wants different things

- George and Lennie = companionship, share prosperity: 'I got you to look after me, and you got me to look after you'
 - (if get time analyse)
- Candy's = what himself could do: 'cook and tend the chickens and hoe the garden some'
 - The semantic field of labouring = he still identifies himself as a worker + still afraid of the possibility of being kicked out of the ranch, even though it will be owned by himself
 - Context: Steinbeck is reflecting the pervasive selfishness in society, and the lack of trust towards others.
- Controlled by the thought of pursuing the dream after seeing a possibility of achieving it
 - After Lennie's death, Candy repeatedly asks George 'you and me can get that little place, can't we?'
 - Repetition = Candy's obsession with the dream, desperate to seek confirmation from George that the dream can still be achieved
 - Context: common belief of the American Dream (about achieving economic success through hard work). The idea of American Dream has driven Candy to be determined to pursue his dream, leading to his sole focus being his dream
 - Steinbeck uses Candy's dream to show how dreams can both empower and consume people in a time with pessimistic thoughts of future.

Conclusion

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representation of different aspects of society so that the audience can learn a moral lesson from it. Through the novel, Steinbeck hopes to portray the devastating effect The Great Depression had on people – the crushing of their hopes and dreams, the isolation and prejudice they suffered from, and the lack of control people had over their lives. Candy embodies all of these aspects.

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Curley

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Character description - constantly undermined by others

- Curley's obsession of fighting 'like a lot of little guys' as 'he hates big guys' because 'he ain't a big guy'
 - Adjective 'little' = physical weakness of Curley, juxtaposed with the 'big guys' that Curley dislikes, which connotes of strength and power
 - Suggests Curley's cowardice, don't challenge stronger people
 - Context: such cowardice would have been undermining Curley's masculinity and leading to a negative perception of Curley
- Observed that it "seems like Curley is cockier'n ever since he got married."
 - The adjective 'cocky' connotes showing off a possession
 - Context: reflecting on the objectification of women in the 1930s, where women were simply treated as a possession that is used to show the status of men
 - 'Cocky' = pejorative, showing off her new wife in an overly confident and annoying way → dislike
- Steinbeck uses Curley to present the negative aspect of society at the time, showing the excessive violence and bitterness in society.

Character description - pursuing acknowledgement from others

- Criticise those who were in power's abuse of power
- 'thin' and has 'brown face'
 - Shows impacts of labouring under the sun
 - It shows how Curley still works despite his high status on the ranch
 - Context: fit into the expectation that men should work in the 1930s to take care of their family
 - Doing unnecessary labouring = shows how he was desperate to prove himself as a real man, due to how other characters regard him as lacking masculinity
- Repeated motif of boxing
- 'his arms gradually bene at the elbows and his hands closed into fists'
 - The body language suggests that his obsession of violence = a way of compensating for his small stature and establish his masculinity
- A sense of threat towards other character: 'he'd slough me', and 'don't tell Curley I said none of this'
 - The semantic field of threat = reveals fear and distrust from others
 - Context: due to his social standing as the son of the ranch owner, that he can easily fire the workers if distressed by them (common at the time)
- Steinbeck uses Curley's failure to establish a positive image for him through authority and power to criticise how people power and authority was unsupported despite their high status due to their abuse of their power.

Settings - isolated from others

- Demonstrate the strong social hierarchy at the time
- Soledad
 - Spanish word for loneliness → symbolising the loneliness that Curley experiences due to his aggressive behaviour

- Irony: his violence is used to gain respect, but it only pushes people away from him
- Lives in his own 'two-by-four house'
 - Shows his privileged status on the ranch that he is able to enjoy privacy
 - Small size, only 'two-by-four': shows how insignificant his privilege is, and how uncomfortable living in the house would be
 - Still decides to use his privilege = shows how he has actively chosen to be isolated from other lower-class workers, identifies himself belonging to a higher class
 - Context: Steinbeck uses this to show how there was clear social classes at the time
 - Add to loneliness by preventing connections between people of different classes, as people instinctively discriminate against people of lower classes

Dream as a boxer

- Show the inevitable failure of the American Dream
- 'got in the finals for the Golden Gloves'
 - 'Golden Gloves' = a prestigious boxing competition amongst amateur boxers in the USA → considerable experience and skill as a boxer
- 'got newspaper clippings about it'
 - Very much values this experience, using 'newspaper clippings' to keep his memories about it
- He fought Lennie, he lost as he 'flopped like a fish'
 - Comical imagery of Curley losing, highlighting his embarrassment
- His 'fist lost in Lennie's paw' and got crushed by Lennie's huge strength
 - Symbolises the end of his dream as a boxer in an embarrassing manner
 - Steinbeck uses to show the inevitability of the futility of the American dream, being hinted in the title of the novel, 'Of Mice and Men' (...)
 - Despite his privilege and skill, Curley still failed to overcome the inevitable failure of his dream, which further suggest how the American society needed a thorough change in order to restore its prosperity in the 'Roaring Twenties'.

Conclusion

'Of Mice and Men' follows the structure of a Morality play, with each character being representation of different aspects of society so that the audience can learn a moral lesson from it. Curley represents all the negative aspects of society: violence, bitterness, isolation and so much more. It is through the character of Curley that Steinbeck portrays the devastating effect The Great Depression had on people – the crushing of their hopes and dreams, the isolation and prejudice they suffered from, and the lack of control people had over their lives.

Crooks

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Introduction

- Portray discrimination + racism
- Crooks = defined by inability to work ('crooked spine'), show dehumanization of human

Character description: suffering from prejudice from others

- Show the entrenched racism
- Repeated use of the n-slur
 - Used even when not insulting
 - Context: entrenched racism in 1930s, used casually, not questioned
- 'Lean face lined with deep black wrinkles'
 - Lean = connote thinness and restriction, hardship, not enough food
 - Deep = intensity of hardship
 - Wrinkles = constant struggles, anxiety and tension, show racism giving Crooks profound problems for a long term
 - Context: show how black Americans suffer from racism, received low wages, fired to make space for unemployed white Americans

Settings: isolated from others

- Show the segregation between races in 1930s America
- 'A little shed that leaned off the wall of the barn'
 - Others all live in the bunkhouse -> physically isolated
 - Barn = a place for animals -> Crooks inferior to other characters, associated with animals
 - Context: Jim Crow Laws maintained segregation in the south, 'white only' was legal
 - Steinbeck tries to condemn the mistreatment of black Americans
- 'Square four-panel window' and 'narrow plank door'
 - Semantic field of entrapment, room prison like
 - Context: black Americans forced into this due to systematic racism in society, impossible to avoid

Character description: defensive and cautious

- 'Mauled copy of the California Civil Code for 1905'
 - Civil code = right for black American, keeps it to remind himself and others about his right when attacked by racists
 - Mauled = excessive use, showing how frequently he needs to do so
 - Context: casual racism in 1930s America
- 'Single-barrelled shotgun'
 - Context: lynching often used as a punishment to black Americans
 - Possibly using the gun against lynchers
- Belongings: show how strong the discrimination was that they have to defend themselves through violence
- 'Kept his distance and demanded others keep theirs'
 - 'Demanded' = connotes power and authority, Only feel control when isolating himself voluntarily
 - Context: prejudiced legal system, Scottsboro Boys (black men falsely accused by a white woman and took years to justify their innocence)
 - Tries to maintain distance to not come into conflict and get into such situation
 - Criticize the injustice

Dream: without hope for future

- Dream of security, luxury, companionship and agency in the past
- Show devastation of GD
- 'Old man used a choaked ranch', 'ten acres'
 - Ten acres = good size for a chicken ranch, suggesting security and agency when little, family earned own income and in control of own land
 - Context: Many farmers lost their land and forced to migrate away, borrow money from bank to expand farm and cannot repay so farm taken, dust bowl due to drought and crop failure, cannot earn income
- Played with 'the white kids'
 - In the past no racism with other children, used to have companionship, contrast to isolation
 - Show how GD turned a once harmonious and prosperous society into a cruel, prejudiced society

Conclusion

- Morality play structure
- Crooks = those that are disabled and discriminated against
- Use Crooks to reveal society's discrimination against them, criticism against such norms

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Curley's wife

2024年3月8日 12:03

Introduction

John Steinbeck portrays his version of 1930's America in his novel 'Of Mice and Men'. It is a society devastated by the economic and social effects of the Great Depression, and one in which prejudice, loneliness and isolation have replaced the hopes of the American Dream. His characters are very much a reflection of this society, and it is through the character of Curley's wife that he explores the limitation of society on women. This is reflected in the name of the character, as she is always referred to as 'Curley's wife' only, instead of her own name, to show how society has viewed women as a dependency to their husband.

Character description: a threat to other male characters

- Show the discrimination and hostility towards women in 1930s America
- 'fingernails were red', 'full rouged lips'
 - The colour red = connotations of a romantic relationship → attractive figure
 - Context: reflects 1930s society's objectification of women, as they are remembered by their physical appearances only, as if they were only a possession of their husband for showing off
 - This shows the low position of women in the social and family hierarchy in the 1930s
- However, such attractiveness is treated by other male characters as a potential danger
- 'rat trap' and 'jailbait'
 - Disrespectful names
 - 'Trap' and 'bait' = connotes a lure that leads to problems
 - Shows the other characters' hostile belief that being dragged to Curley's wife's attractiveness would eventually lead to problems
 - Context: in the 1930s America, women were sexualised, which caused society to focus on the sexual attractiveness of women
 - Meanwhile, women were also blamed for luring men with their attractiveness
 - Steinbeck: show how irrational such logic is
 - The 'trap' is for 'rat' - the sort of animal Lennie likes to stroke → foreshadows Lennie accidentally killing Curley's wife, bringing himself into trouble

Character description: desperate for companionship and acknowledgement

- Due to the threat that other characters feel from her
- Explore the restrictions on women in the 1930s America
- 'wore her bright cotton dress and the mules with red ostrich feathers'
 - The adjective 'bright' and 'red' = visual sensory language + connotations of being eye-catching, suggesting the Curley's wife is actively seeking for attention
 - Context: this is because she is neglected by others due to her being treated as a threat, as her husband, Curley the son of the ranch owner, so workers would be punished for having relationships with his wife
- 'I never get to talk to nobody'
 - Adverb 'never' = shows her frustration at the limitations of her life
 - 'talk' = quick interactions that has no connection to romantic relationships.
 - Not allowed to even 'talk' → shows how limited the social life of Curley's wife is
 - Context: this is due to women in 1930s being limited to domestic roles, thus being confined to their husbands for their social life
 - Steinbeck therefore demonstrates the loneliness that the Great Depression caused for women as well as for migrant workers.

Character description: exert prejudice on others

- Show the effects of such a society on people
- Because of her dissatisfaction, she attacks others verbally → conforms to others' perception of she being a threat
- Describes Lennie and Candy as 'a dum-dum' and 'a lousy of sheep'
 - These are all words that have pejorative connotations
 - Context: disabled people, such as Lennie and Candy, are often discriminated against, as they are unable to work and can only depend on others
- Refers to Crooks using the n-slur + 'could get you strung up on a tree so easy it ain't even funny'
 - The serious image of death in 'strung up a tree' is juxtaposed with the playful language of 'funny' → showing how easy killing Crooks is for Curley's wife, not treating it seriously
 - It shows the abuse of African Americans at the time, that they can be easily tortured or killed in the favour of the white Americans.
 - Context: Lynching at the time was common, and the judicial system is also unfair towards black Americans, so Curley's wife had no fear of doing so
- Steinbeck uses this to show how prejudice in the 1930s have controlled every aspect of people's life
 - When people who are subject to discrimination from others also actively exert their own prejudice towards others, instead of being sympathetic towards others that are discriminated and attempt to stop such phenomenon.

Dream

- Dreams of what she could have achieved in the past by becoming a Hollywood star
- Steinbeck uses to explore inevitable failure of the American dream
- 'could of went in shows' and 'not jus' one neither'
 - 'Not jus' one' suggests her possibility of being a successful Hollywood Star, being invited to multiple shows = very famous actress
 - Context: she might have dreamt such possibility due to the widespread popularity of Hollywood during the 1930s. Motivate people + 60 and 80 million Americans went to cinemas once a week or more
 - Appearing in those films was seen as an escape from the harshness of everyday life → escape the limitations of her life
- Repetition of 'coulda'
 - Suggesting Curley's wife's confidence in the certainty of the success of her dream
- However, such dream lacks realism
- 'never got that letter' from a man in Hollywood that invites her to become an actress and 'thought [her] ol' lady stole it'
 - Dramatic irony: the audience have realised that there was no such letter sent, and the man only wanted to flirt with Curley's wife → show the naivety of Curley's wife
 - Hint the inevitable failure of her dream → reflecting how the Great Depression have turned many people's American Dream impossible.

Settings

- Steinbeck explores the limitations placed on women
- Never enters the bunkhouse but stops at the doorway every time she visits the bunkhouse
- Unwelcomed by the other characters
- Candy: "go back to your house."
 - The possessive noun 'your' associates the 'house' only with Curley's wife → suggests the separation between Curley's wife and other male characters
 - Context: highlights the separation between male and female in the 1930s America, perhaps due to men leaving their wives and children behind in search of work, so they now lack an understanding between each other.

Conclusion

'Of Mice and Men', follows the structure of a Morality play, with each character being representation of different aspects of society so that the audience can learn a moral lesson from it. Through the novel, Steinbeck hopes to portray the devastating effect The Great Depression had on people – the crushing of their hopes and dreams, the isolation and prejudice they suffered from, and

the lack of control people had over their lives. Curley's wife embodies all of these aspects.

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George Lennie Relationship

2024年3月29日 15:19

Introduction

John Steinbeck portrays his version of 1930s America in his novel 'Of Mice and Men'. It is a society devastated by the economic and social effects of the Great Depression and one in which prejudice, loneliness and isolation have replaced the hopes of The American Dream. His characters are very much a reflection of this society, and it is through the character of George and Lennie that he portrays the impact that companionship have on people in such a hopeless situation.

Lennie: dependent on George

- Show American society's lack of care and understanding towards those that are disabled
- Semantic field of strong animals: 'bull', 'horse', and 'bear'
 - Present Lennie as being less intelligent than others by comparing his actions to animals rather than human
 - 'bull' and 'horse' = common animals on ranch to help with labour work → illustrates how Lennie is viewed by his work capabilities
 - Context: reflect how disabled workers found it difficult to survive in society, as their lack of ability to work would have rendered them as worthless individuals
- 'imitated George exactly'
 - 'Imitated' suggests Lennie's trust in George
 - 'exactly' = connotes the imitation being solely Lennie copying George, not having his own solution → Lennie was unable to survive on his own since he could only copy others
 - Context: shows his absolute dependency on George for survival, which Steinbeck shows is due to the lack of social care in American society in the 1930s, that Lennie could not rely on society or the government for help, only able to depend on his close friend, George.

George: motif of hand: skilled for survival → more dominant

- Shows cruelty of society in the 1930s and contrast with Lennie's mental disability
- 'small, strong hands'
 - Small = connotations of weakness, juxtaposed with 'strong' capability, therefore suggesting that his power is not limited by his physical size, shows intelligence
 - Context: Hand is symbolic of one's ability to work, as in the 1930s workers were valued solely based on their ability to work. Therefore, George might be a strong worker, due to his strong hands, so that he will be valued by the ranch owners and can hence find employment
- As a result, this makes him more dominant and controlling in their relationship
- 'hand remained outstretches imperiously'
 - Adverb 'imperiously' = connotes George stretching his hand in a domineering manner, almost forcing Lennie to hand over the mouse
- 'put his hand on Lennie's shoulder'
 - Putting his hand on Lennie's shoulder = assert his authority but also show a sign of closeness and care
 - It shows how George is a fatherly figure for Lennie, which is due to him being the sole person that Lennie can depend on
 - Steinbeck uses it to show the consequence of the lack of social care in American society in the 1930s, that Lennie could not rely on society or the government for help, only able to depend on his close friend, George.

Dream: shared together

- Contrasts to the pessimistic attitude to life during the Great Depression + loneliness
- 'gonna have a little house and a couple of acres', 'just say to hell with goin' to work'
 - Allows George and Lennie to gain more control over themselves, dictate over their work
 - Ownership with the land contrasts with the norm of ranch workers: quickly spend all their

- wage on entertainment
- Context: Hollywood films were extremely popular in the 1930s, 60 to 80 million people going to cinema at least once every week. Thought as a way of escaping the harshness of life under the Great Depression
- 'I got you to look after me, and you got me to look after you' **(If have time)**
 - Syndetic parallelism = creates a sense of equality in their relationship
 - Not the real situation as Lennie constantly needs to be looked after by George
 - Shows how unrealistic their dream is and foreshadows the failure of their dream
- Differs from other characters' dream (focused on their own benefits only) **(If have time)**
 - Context: many men left their children and wife behind for work, being separated from the family, cause society to be egocentric
 - Such companionship in he and Lennie's special dream is what makes George stand out from the rest of the workers despite their similar physical appearances
- After Lennie's death: dream destroyed and George then bears the same dream as the other workers
- 'take [his] fifty bucks' and 'stay all night in some lousy cat house' or 'set in some poolroom till ever'body goes home'
 - Semantic field of entertainment ('cat house' and 'poolroom') = he also starts to simply choose to paralyse himself from the harshness of life like what everyone else does
 - Shows the impact of the companionship from Lennie that has on the thoughts of George which makes him different from others

Settings: change in the Waterhole due to companionship

- Initially presented as a place of sanctuary
- List of animals living in the waterhole, 'lizard', 'rabbit', 'dogs', and 'deer'
 - Shows how different animals live together in harmony
 - Context: contrasts with the 'survival of the fittest' nature of society in the 1930s, where distrust towards others were common, as people were struggling to feed themselves and try to compete against others for jobs
- However, by the end of the novel, after their dream had been destroyed, we see the waterhole for how brutal it actually is
- As soon as a water snake exposed itself, a heron 'plucked it out by the head' and 'swallowed the little snake'
 - Contrast to the harmonious image at start
 - 'Pluck' and 'swallow' has violent connotations → showing how the Waterhole has become the same as the outside world, resembling the 'survival of the fittest' in the wild
 - The sceneries of the waterhole remained the same (the Salinas River is still 'deep green') but the atmosphere change
 - This happens alongside the destruction of the companionship between George and Lennie (George decides to kill Lennie himself)
 - Steinbeck uses this to point out the importance of companionship, that it prevents society from becoming a place of cruelty and egocentricity, which has become the case in the 1930s America.

Conclusion

The inevitable failure of George and Lennie's dream is hinted by Steinbeck through the title 'Of Mice and Men'. 'Men' is compared with 'mice', which is a small and weak animal, suggesting the individuals' inability to change the situation of society during the Great Depression. He uses this to show how dreams in American society at the time are doomed to failure, and how companionship still offer little help to the situation.

Carlson

2024年3月29日 17:31

Dramatic device

- Show the cruelty of American society in the 1930s
- Similar physical appearances as other migrant workers so he is a representative of them
- 'stinks up the bunk house'
 - 'Stink' = pejorative connotations of disgust, which shows how Carlson uses blunt and cruel wording towards Candy and his dog
 - Context: shows how society lacks understanding towards those who are disabled, as they are being constantly disrespected
- 'stepped back to let Slim precede him'
 - 'Stepped back' = showing his respect to Slim
 - Context: Steinbeck uses this to reflect how society judge people only on the basis of their ability to work, as the most able worker, Slim, gains the most respect, while the least able worker, Candy, is disrespected
- 'that dog ain't no good to himself. I wisht somebody'd shoot me if I got old an' a cripple.'
 - Shows how he lacks an understanding of the companionship between Candy and his dog, which have prevented Candy from shooting his own dog
 - Context: this is due to the separation of families as men migrate from their homeland in search for work, so companionship have become a rarity in society.

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Theme questions plan

2024年3月29日 17:31

Theme	Paragraphs	Antonym	Paragraphs
Hardship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candy - character description • Crooks - character description 	Comfort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • George + Lennie's dream • Curley's wife / Crooks' dream of the past
Authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curley - pursuing acknowledgement • Slim - God-like 	Powerlessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting - bunkhouse • Crooks - discrimination
Cruelty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crooks - discriminated • Candy - old and worn out • Candy / Curley's wife - prejudice on others 	Caring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lennie - dependent on George
Friendship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • George + Lennie • Candy + dog 	Loneliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curley's wife • Crooks
Loss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crooks - past • Waterhole 	Ownership	George + Lennie - dream
Memories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crooks - dream • Curley's wife - dream 	Future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • G+L - dream
Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curley - pursuing acknowledgement 	Weakness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lennie - mentally disabled • Candy - old and worn out
Prejudice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Candy / Lennie • Curley's wife • Crooks 	Equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • George + Lennie • Slim
Respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slim - God-like • Slim - dramatic device 	Discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curley's wife • Crooks
Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lennie + George 	Imprudent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curley's wife • Crooks
Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curley - pursuing acknowledgement • Lennie - motif of hand • Carlson 	Peaceful	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waterhole