

Of Mice and Men ~ Study and Discussion Questions

CHAPTER 1

Comprehension

1. In what part of the country does the novel take place? Time period?
2. List words that describe Lennie.
3. List words that describe George.
4. To what animal is Lennie compared?
5. To what animal would you compare George? Why?
6. Why were George and Lennie run out of Weed?
7. What things does Lennie do and say that make him like a child?
8. Where does George tell Lennie to hide if he gets in trouble?

Interpretation

1. How does Steinbeck convey Lennie's animal-like qualities? (#4 above)
2. Why does Steinbeck describe the actions of Lennie's hands (foreshadowing their importance)
3. What is George's attitude toward Lennie in this section? Why does he stay with Lennie?
4. Explain the connection between Lennie's mouse and what happened in Weed.
5. Describe George's dreams in this section.
6. What suggests that the dream of the farm is unrealistic?
7. Give some examples of foreshadowing in this section.

CHAPTER 2

Comprehension

1. Who greeted George and Lennie at the bunkhouse?
2. What unusual habits did Whitey have?
3. Whom did the boss punish because George and Lennie were late? Why?
4. Why does George answer all the questions directed to Lennie?
5. How does the boss react to George's friendship with Lennie?
6. What excuse does George give for Lennie's slowness?
7. How does Curley react to Lennie's silence?
8. What does Curley think about George and Lennie's traveling together?
9. What does the swamper mean by the statement "Curley's pretty handy"?
10. What uneasy feeling does George have about Curley's wife?

Interpretation

1. Most of the opening paragraphs of this section consist of a realistic description of the bunkhouse. What detail suggests that the ranch hands have a "romantic" side?
2. How does the account of Whitey's quitting contribute the book's mood of alienation?
3. Why is the stable buck set apart from the other men? (not just race)
4. Which character names from this section have symbolic importance?
5. Why is the boss suspicious of George and Lennie?
6. Who or what seems to be a source of tension in this chapter that may foreshadow future conflicts?
7. Is Candy's opinion of Curley's wife justified?
8. What qualities does the description of Slim suggest?
9. What is the significance of Slim's and Carlson's remarks about the dogs?
10. Give examples of foreshadowing.

CHAPTER 3

Comprehension

1. Who is Slim?
2. What kind act does Slim do for Lennie?
3. How does Slim react to Lennie and Goerge's traveling together?
4. Why do you think George told Slim about what happened in Weed?
5. From Carlson's point of view list words that describe Candy's dog.
6. What is Carlson's solution to the problem of the dog?
7. Describe how Carlson shoots Candy's dog.
8. What role does Candy play in helping George and Lennie try to buy land?
9. Why does Curley attack Lennie? What happens to Curley?

Interpretation

1. What does George's conversation with Slim reveal about his past treatment of and present feelings toward Lennie?
2. Why does George trust Slim?
3. Does George's analysis of Lennie's attack on the girl in Weed seem probable?
4. Analyze Carlson's reasons for and Candy's reasons against shooting Candy's dog. How do they touch on the central issues of the novel?
5. Why does George decline Whit's invitation to visit the brothel?
6. Relate George's description of the farm to a romantic Eden.
7. Does George's dream seem any more realistic now? Explain.
8. What comparisons does Candy make between his own condition and his dog's? How does this relate to the idea of responsibility (mercy killing)?
9. What does Lennie's fight with Curley show the ranch hands? What does the description of this fight suggest about the nature of violence?
10. Foreshadowing?

CHAPTER 4

Comprehension

1. Name four of the possessions that Crooks has in his room.
2. What does Crooks say happens to a guy if he gets too lonely?
3. What does Crooks offer in return for joining George, Lennie, and Candy on the dream farm?
4. What is Crooks' reaction to the threats of Curley's wife?
5. What does Curley's wife say is her husband's main topic of conversation?
6. At the end of this chapter, what has Candy to make George angry?

Interpretation

1. What does the description of Crooks' room reveal about its occupant?
2. Why is Crooks' name appropriate?
3. Why does Crooks allow Lennie to enter his room?
4. How do Crooks' words to Lennie about loneliness reinforce this theme of the novel?
5. What is Crooks' reaction to the dream of the farm?
6. Show how Candy's comments to Crooks and Lennie relate the dream of the land to Steinbeck's theme of economic exploitation.
7. How does the behavior of Curley's wife seem deliberately designed to provoke the men?
8. What motives does Steinbeck suggest for her behavior?

9. How is her nature as a destructive character most clearly revealed?
10. In what ways does Crooks retreat before her attack?
11. Give some examples of foreshadowing in this section.

CHAPTER 5

Comprehension

1. What did Lennie do to the puppy?
2. In what ways does Lennie show that he is confused and nervous?
3. When Curley's wife asks Lennie why he likes rabbits so much, what is his response?
4. What reason does Curley's wife give Lennie for wanting to talk to him?
5. Where does Lennie go right after he kills Curley's wife?
6. Whom does Candy blame for the murder?
7. Why is Candy so angry at what has happened?

Interpretation

1. How is Lennie's treatment of his dead puppy typical of his character?
2. In what ways is Curley's wife also a dreamer? Is her dream any more realistic than George and Lennie's?
3. How does Curley's wife feel about him?
4. How does she entice Lennie into touching her?
5. What is the true nature of his attack?
6. How does Lennie react to what he has done? Are you surprised? Why/why not?
7. How does George's reaction to the murder relate to his belief in the dream?
8. Compare the reactions of Curley and Slim.

CHAPTER 6

Comprehension

1. While he is waiting for George in the clearing, what two hallucinations does Lennie have?
2. What does George tell Lennie to calm him down before he shoots him?
3. How do Curley and Carlson assume that Lennie met his death?
4. Why did George lie to the others about what really happened?

Interpretation

1. Describe Lennie's state of mind as he goes to hide in the brush.
2. The description of Lennie's death recalls another event in the novel. What is it?
3. What does this parallel reveal about George's motives?
4. Explain George's last remarks to Lennie?
5. Why does George lie about the gun?
6. Why does Slim treat George as he does?
7. Explain the significance of the last line in the novel.