

OF MICE AND MEN by John Steinbeck first takes place a few miles south of Soledad. There were two men by the names of George and Lennie who became life long partners. George thought Lennie needed support because Lennie was mentally retarded. Later, George and Lennie moved to a ranch nearby Soledad.

George and Lennie got into trouble a few miles south of Soledad in a town called Weed. The men were hiding out along a river called Salinas, across from the Gabililan mountains. Trouble occurred in Weed when Lennie grabbed a hold of a ladies dress, because he was curious about the texture of the fabric. The woman took it the wrong way and became upset and frightened. Curdling screams caused some men to come rushing to the aid of the woman.

Lennie then became frightened and ran away. George was such a supportive and understanding friend that he ran away with him. Running together, the two frightened men hid out in the Salinas River waiting for dusk to come. When dusk arrived, the two men gathered wood and built a fire. Luckily, George had three cans of pork and beans with him in his backpack. They stayed there until morning to start walking again.

George told Lennie that he heard of a ranch that was four miles ahead of them and they could get a job there. George told Lennie that if he would get into trouble at the ranch, that he should come back and hide in the bush. Sunrise had come and the two men began their walk to the ranch. When George and Lennie arrived, they saw a huge long rectangular building where the bunks were inside, the walls were white and the floor was wood. The old swamper showed Lennie and George to their assigned bunks.

While George and Lennie were getting settled in, a stocky man stood in the doorway. He had on blue jeans, a flannel shirt, a vest, a coat, boots and spurs. George and Lennie quickly knew that the man in the doorway was their boss. With a deep voice, the boss asked, "You got your workslips?" George quickly reached in his pocket and pulled out their slips and handed them to the boss. The boss then told them to go out after dinner and help out with the team by picking up barley at the threshing machine.

After the boss left, the old swamper came in with his broom in his hand, and was followed by an old sheep dog with blind eyes and struggling just to get to the other side of the room. Suddenly, a young man with dark curly hair came into the room wearing high heeled boots and spurs on them. It was the boss's son, named Curley. After Curley left, a girl with large lips, beautiful sparkling eyes, and red

fingernails appeared in the doorway. She said, "I'm looking for Curley", but, all the guys just stood there and admired her except George. He turned his head and said, "He was in here a minute ago, but he went."

Slim and Carlson began to talk, and Carlson asked Slim if his female dog had her pups. Carlson thought that Slim could give up one of his pups so he could give a pup to Candy the old Swamper and get rid of Candy's dog. The poor dog smelled, could barely see, and had trouble walking without pain. Later that night, when Candy was lying in bed, Carlson asked, "Do you want me to put the old devil out of his misery right now, Candy?" Making excuses Candy said, "You ain't got no gun." Then Carlson told Candy that he does have a Luger. Candy sure didn't know what to think or what to say, so he gently said, "Oh, maybe tomorrow." As the night went on, Candy finally told Carlson to take the puppy.

Curley came flinging open the door as he walked inside. The boys knew there was going to be trouble. Lennie began laughing at something Candy said to Curley. Curley then got angry and raged at Lennie for laughing and told him to get up and fight like a man. Lennie wouldn't hurt a fly on purpose. So he just stood up and stared at him. Curley was a small statured man, but he went ahead and took a swing at Lennie and broke his nose. While all of this was taking place, George was

yelling, "Get him Lennie! Get him!" So Lennie took it upon himself to do what was right and when Curley took the second swing, Lennie grabbed his hand and then Curley hit the ground, whining like a baby. The other men immediately took Curley to the hospital because his hand was crushed.

George promised Lennie that he would get him a pup when they got to the ranch. Slim gave Lennie one of his and was so excited that he finally got to have a

pup of his own. Every night Lennie would go out and lay by his little pup and stroke

him. Slim told Lennie that if he wasn't careful, he would kill the little puppy because he was handling him too much. It happened!...Lennie was playing with his little pup and the puppy began gnawing on his hand so Lennie hit him. Lennie didn't intentionally try to hit him hard, but he did, resulting in his pup's death. The pup

was kept in the barn where Lennie tried to bury it in the straw. Without Lennie knowing, before him stood Curley's wife watching him, but not knowing what he was doing. Lennie knew he was not supposed to talk to her because George didn't want any trouble between Lennie and Curley. She quietly sat down beside him and started talking to him. He told her how and why the pup died. She gently soothed him by telling him the pup was only a mutt and it wasn't anything to worry about.

Lennie then started to talk about how a nice lady gave him a piece of velvet to touch and feel, but he lost it. Curley's wife told Lennie he could touch her hair. She

told him the reason why her hair was so soft was because she brushed it so much.

Lennie then gently put his hand on her head to touch her hair. He began to stroke it.

He liked her hair so much that he stroked it harder and harder, until she yelled for

him to stop. She flung her head to the side and he still kept touching her hair. She

screamed out with fear until Lennie put his hand over her mouth and nose. "Please don't do that!", Lennie begged. She flopped and turned like a fish when he shook her. There was no movement coming from her. Lennie softly removed his hand and told her he didn't want to hurt her, but if she yelled George would be mad. After she was quiet, Lennie picked up her arm and let it drop. He knew he had done something very bad.

Lennie quickly covered up what he could of her body with hay. He heard people outside of the barn playing games, so he crept around the other side of the manger and disappeared silently. Looking for Lennie, Candy called out, "Lennie, Oh Lennie". Candy turned around and saw Curley's dead wife. Candy ran to George and told him about her. George knew deep down in his heart that Lennie killed her. George knew what he had to do. Dandy and George went and told the guys the horrible news. Curley immediately said, "I'll kill the big guy myself." Carlson ran

to get his Luger, but to find out it was already gone. Suspiciously, Curley accused

Lennie of taking it for protection. George knew where he disappeared. George silently left the group of men and went to where Lennie was hiding. He saw Lennie sitting beside the Salinas river where George told him to be if he got into any trouble. George went down and sat down beside Lennie and told him that they will get a home in the country, and they would get to tend the rabbits, chickens, and do chores together. Lennie was so excited to hear that George would still let him tend

to the rabbits.

In a distance George heard the screaming and yelling of the pack of men. Closer and closer the screams grew. George became tense as the men came closer. George was the one who took the Luger. He pulled it out of his coat and held it behind his back. George shivered and looked at the gun as he brought it from

around his back and raised it up to Lennie's head. Voices became louder, footsteps grew closer, George knew what he had to do. Sadly, George pulled the trigger on someone he cared for very deeply. He backed away as the men approached. Carlson asked how he killed him and George responded that Lennie had his gun, that he had tried to take it away from Lennie, and the gun went off and shot him.

The irony of this story happens when George unexpectedly took Carlson's gun. Not only taking his gun, George shot Lennie. You would not think that a friend

would kill another friend. Possible, George was only helping Lennie out.

Therefore,

the most ironic situation was when he killed his own best friend.

The theme of this book is, if a friend is true then one will stick by each other

through good times and bad times. George was a true friend. He displayed his friendship by risking his own life to help when Lennie was in trouble. Also,

George

let Lennie know that he was never man at him though all that took place that day.

The only reason why George shot Lennie himself was because he wanted to make the punishment less severe than it would have been if the men found Lennie first.

My evaluation of this book is that I thought it had a nice theme. I believe the

book could of been better if it did not use so much profanity. The overall book was

above average. I would recommend this to junior high school students as a group reading project, and the principal authorizes it.

John Steinbeck was born on February 27, 1902, in Salinas, Monterey County, California. He was an American author, who won the 1962 Nobel Prize for Literature. Steinbeck's best known fiction tells about the struggles of poor people.

His most famous novel, *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) won the 1940 Pulitzer prize.

The novel tells the story of the Joads, a poor Oklahoma farming family, who migrated to California in search of better life during the Great Depression in the 1930's. Steinbeck adequately demonstrated how the struggles of a family reflected the hardship of the entire nation. Through the labor the organizer, Jim Casy, taught

the Joads that the poor must work together in order to survive.

Steinbeck set much of his fiction in and around his birthplace of Salinas, California. His first novel, *Cup of Gold* (1929), is based on the life of Sir Henry Morgan, a famous English pirate of the 1600's. Steinbeck's next work, *The Pastures of Heaven* (1932), is a collection of stories about people in a farm community near Salinas. In this work, Steinbeck focused on the struggles between human beings and nature. *Of Mice and Men* (1937) is a short novel that Steinbeck made into a popular play in 1937. It is a tragic story about a physically powerful man, but mentally retarded farm worker and his best friend and protector.

I found this information in *The World Book Encyclopedia* So-Sz.

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