

Of Mice and Men

by John Steinbeck

Teacher's Guide

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LIVING
LITERATURE
SERIES

A Perma-Bound Production

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Synopsis

Editor's Note: Since the novel is broken into unnumbered sections, the section numbers have been determined and provided along with the pagination for each section; brackets are used to designate sections and pages without numbering.

Of Mice and Men is a compact, dramatic paean to the outsider. The action is set on a ranch near the Gabilan mountains and the banks of the Salinas River about four miles south of Soledad, California, sometime in the 1930s. The story begins late on a Thursday afternoon and extends to Sunday afternoon.

[Section 1, p. 1]-16.

On a hot day, George Milton and Lennie Small, departing a stint on a ranch near Weed, California, travel south with work cards and bus tickets from Murray and Ready's. They arrive near Soledad and camp prior to reporting at a nearby ranch. Because the bus driver deceived them, they had to walk ten miles. George, small and wiry, looks after his strong, retarded companion, who delights in soft animals. George, who became chief caretaker after Lennie's Aunt Clara died, cooks beans over the fire. Lennie wishes they had catsup. George reminds him that they are on the run because Lennie stroked a girl's dress. Lennie changes the subject and begs to hear about the rabbits on the little farm they plan to buy.

[Section 2, p. 17]-37.

Reporting at ten o'clock Friday morning, George asks Candy, the one-armed swamper, if the bunk house is clean and free of vermin. The boss, a short, fat-legged man, requests the men's work slips.

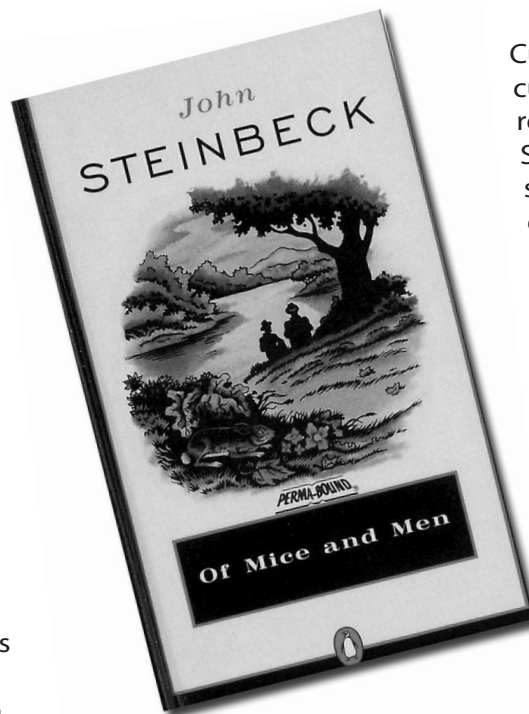
George explains that a kick by a horse made Lennie slow-witted. He insists that Lennie can load barley bags. The boss suspects that George may be cheating Lennie. He assigns them to Slim's team. George scolds Lennie for speaking and accuses Candy of eavesdropping. Curley, the boss's son, searches for his wife. A small, belligerent bully, he frightens Lennie. Candy warns George that Curley picks fights with big men. Lennie is afraid, but George reminds him that they need this job. He instructs Lennie to go to the riverbank if there is trouble.

Curley's wife, wearing sausage curls, a cotton house dress, and red slippers, looks for Curley. She greets Slim, the jerkline skinner and most respected employee. Because she attracts Lennie, George instructs him to stay away. More men arrive. Slim talks with George. Carlson enters and asks about Slim's dog, which had nine pups the previous night. Carlson suggests that Slim give a pup to Candy to replace his aged sheepdog. George tells Curley that his wife left a half hour earlier.

[Section 3, p. 38]-65.

That night, Slim gives Lennie a pup. George and Slim discuss Lennie's mental defect. George admits having tricked Lennie, his chief companion. He confesses how they escaped a lynch party after a girl in Weed claimed Lennie raped her. Lennie tries to hide a pup from George, who makes him return it to its mother.

Carlson urges Candy to shoot his toothless, crippled dog because it stinks. Slim agrees that the dog should be put out of its misery; Candy reluctantly consents. Carlson shoots the dog. Curley



returns to the bunkhouse in search of his wife. He rages that she is in the barn with Slim; the rowdy workers follow him. Lennie begs to hear about the place they plan to buy. Candy overhears their plans and offers \$350 of his own money.

Curley and the others return. The men humiliate Curley because his wife began wandering only two weeks after he married her. Curley takes out his frustrations on Lennie. At George's instruction, Lennie effortlessly crushes Curley's hand. Slim, who prepares to take Curley to a doctor in Soledad, advises him to claim that he caught the hand in a machine.

[Section 4, p. 66] - 83.

On Saturday night, the employees go to town. Lennie, Candy, and Crooks, the Negro stable hand, remain behind. In Crooks's private quarters, Lennie tells him about the farm that he, George, and Candy plan to share. Crooks at first jeers at the notion, then takes interest. Curley's wife enters the conversation. She indicates that Curley is less beligerent since the hand injury. Lennie inadvertently admits that he hurt Curley. Crooks tries to eject the woman; she hints that she could have him lynched.

[Section 5, p. 84] - 98.

On Sunday around four o'clock, Lennie remains in the barn while the other men pitch horseshoes. He accidentally kills his puppy by petting it too hard and hides it under straw. Curley's wife talks with Lennie and lets him stroke her hair. When his caresses grow rough, she screams. Terrified, Lennie breaks her neck and flees to the riverbank. Candy discovers the body. Knowing that Lennie must have killed her, he alerts George. When Curley learns that his wife is dead, he vows to shoot Lennie. George sends the search party south and goes north toward the prearranged meeting place.

[Section 6, p. 99] - 107.


At the riverbank, Lennie is sorry for disobeying George. He considers running to escape George's anger. He fantasizes that he is being scolded by his Aunt Clara. The fantasy is replaced by a vision of a huge rabbit, which blames Lennie for undervaluing George's kindness. George hears Lennie's confession and soothes him with descriptions of the rabbits they will raise, then shoots Lennie in the head. To cover his act, he claims that Lennie had the gun. Carlson and Curley fail to understand Slim's compassion toward George.

Timeline

- Feb. 27, 1902** Steinbeck is born in Salinas, California.
- 1914** The Federal Reserve System is created to prevent panics.
- spring 1919** Steinbeck graduates from Salinas High School.
- fall 1920** Steinbeck enters Stanford University. America enjoys a post-World War I prosperity, except for agriculture, which is in decline.
- spring 1925** Steinbeck leaves Stanford and moves to New York City to become a journalist.
- fall 1926** Steinbeck gives up on newspaper work and returns to California.
- 1928** The construction boom ends.
- 1929** Steinbeck publishes *Cup of Gold*.
- October 1930** The stock market crashes. Steinbeck marries Carol Henning and moves to Pacific Grove.
- 1931** The international monetary system is in crisis. Deflation leads to bank failures throughout Europe.
- March 1933** Franklin D. Roosevelt becomes president.
- November 1934** Steinbeck publishes *The Red Pony* in the *North American Review*. Steinbeck publishes "The Murder" and wins an O. Henry prize, the first of three.
- 1935** Steinbeck publishes *Tortilla Flat*. The Wagner Act encourages unions. The Social Security Act creates retirement pensions and unemployment insurance.
- 1936** Steinbeck publishes *In Dubious Battle*.
- May 1937** Steinbeck publishes "The Harvest Gypsies" in the *San Francisco News*. Steinbeck publishes *Of Mice and Men*.
- August 1939** Steinbeck goes west with migrant Okies to gather material for *The Grapes of Wrath*. Music Box Theatre produces a stage version of *Of Mice and Men*. *The Grapes of Wrath* is published. *Of Mice and Men* is made into a movie.
- 1940** Steinbeck wins a Pulitzer Prize for *The Grapes of Wrath*.
- March 1941** Steinbeck and Ed Ricketts study marine invertebrates in the Gulf of California. Steinbeck goes to Mexico to make a documentary film, *The Forgotten Village*.
- 1941** Steinbeck publishes *Sea of Cortez*.
- May 27** President Roosevelt declares an unlimited state of emergency.
- August 3** Gasoline rationing begins.

- December 7** Japanese planes bomb Pearl Harbor.
- December 8** The United States declares war on Japan.
- December 11** Germany and Italy declare war on the United States.
- 1942** Steinbeck publishes *The Moon Is Down* and *Bombs Away*. *Tortilla Flat* is filmed.
- March 1943** Steinbeck marries Gwendolyn Conger and moves to New York.
- June** Steinbeck spends six months in Europe covering the war for the *Herald Tribune*.
- 1944** Steinbeck writes *Lifeboat*, an Alfred Hitchcock film.
- December** *Cannery Row* is published.
- 1945** *The Red Pony* is expanded to four chapters. "The Pearl of the World" appears in the *Woman's Home Companion*.
- May 7** Germany surrenders to the Western Allies at Rheims.
- August 6** The United States drops an atomic bomb on Hiroshima.
- August 9** A second atomic bomb is dropped on Nagasaki.
- August 14** Japan surrenders.
- 1947** *The Wayward Bus* and *The Pearl* are published.
- 1948** Steinbeck is elected to the American Academy of Letters. Steinbeck writes the screenplay of *The Pearl*.
- December**
- 1950** Steinbeck marries his third wife, Elaine Scott.
- 1952** *East of Eden* is published. Steinbeck writes the screenplay for *Viva Zapata!*; he receives an Academy Award nomination.
- 1954** Steinbeck publishes *Sweet Thursday*.
- 1955** *East of Eden* is filmed.
- 1957** Steinbeck publishes *The Short Reign of Pippin IV*. *The Wayward Bus* is filmed.
- 1958** *Once There Was a War* is published.
- 1961** Steinbeck publishes *The Winter of Our Discontent* and *America and Americans*.
- 1962** *Travels with Charley* is published.
- December** Steinbeck journeys to Stockholm, Sweden, to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature.
- December 20,**
- 1968** Steinbeck dies of heart disease in his New York home.

Author Sketch



Born in Salinas, California, February 27, 1902, John Ernst Steinbeck published his first fiction in 1929 and continued writing short stories, screenplays, essays, speeches, and novels until his death from heart disease on December 20, 1968. His peak years extended from 1932-1945. He was named for his father, John Ernst Steinbeck, Sr., a county magistrate. His mother, Olive Hamilton Steinbeck, a public school teacher, encouraged him by reading to him. He attended school in Salinas, played sports, wrote for the school paper, and worked on neighboring ranches, the source of his humanism. A reader of *Morte d'Arthur* and *Crime and Punishment*, he later drew on his literary background for extensive writings.

In 1920, Steinbeck enrolled at Stanford University to study English, but took only courses that interested him and wrote for the *Spectator*, the campus literary magazine. He failed to complete a degree in marine biology and left in 1925 to take menial jobs, including hod carrier, construction worker, and caretaker of a mountain lodge in the Sierras. While trying to launch a career as a journalist, he lived in New York City, but returned to his home state. His friendship with biologist Ed Ricketts blossomed into a partnership, which led Steinbeck to explore the Baja peninsula.

Through realism, Steinbeck accused land owners, labor organizers, communists, police, and big government of exploiting workers. *Tortilla Flat* (1935) produced the first serious critical attention and recognition from American readers. He interrupted literary work in 1942 to write as a correspondent for the *Herald Tribune* and as propagandist for the war department, then completed a short story, "The Pearl of the World," and *Cannery Row* (1945), both set in Monterey. He drew heavily on his training as a marine biologist and his friendship with Ed Ricketts.

After having lived in many sections of California, Steinbeck settled with third wife Elaine in Sag Harbor, New York. During this period, he wrote political speeches for President Lyndon Johnson as well as Hollywood screenplays, including *Lifeboat* and *Viva Zapata!* After his death at his New York home, his remains were cremated and the ashes interred in the Hamilton family plot in the Garden of Memories Memorial Park in Salinas.

Critic's Corner

Steinbeck is best remembered for novels about the poor and, particularly *Of Mice and Men* (1937) and his Pulitzer Prize-winning saga of migrant workers, *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940). To prepare for writing about the laboring class, he traveled and lived with migrants.

He achieved immediate success with *Of Mice and Men* and the stage version, which he and George Kaufman adapted. Readers identified with the loneliness and victimization of the wandering farmhands, who dream of an idyllic farm. The book earned him a Book-of-the-Month Club selection; Steinbeck was chosen one of 1937's Ten Outstanding Young Men in America. The Broadway version of *Of Mice and Men* won him a New York Drama Critics' Circle award.

After publishing *Travels with Charley: In Search of America* (1961), Steinbeck became the sixth American to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature. The honor was greeted with some derision; Steinbeck himself stated that he didn't deserve it. Critic Edmund Wilson disagreed. In his words, "There remains behind the journalism, the theatricalism and the tricks, a mind which does seem first-rate in its unpanicky scrutiny of life." *Of Mice and Men*, which was filmed in 1939, was reprised in a television movie in 1981, and again on screen in 1992. The home where Steinbeck was born is now a museum. Nearby, the John Steinbeck Library houses 30,000 items of memorabilia, photos, first editions, and taped interviews.

General Objectives

1. To define the novella
2. To describe the physical, mental, and emotional effects of caregiving
3. To pinpoint sources of fear and despair
4. To characterize the lifestyle of a "bundle stiff"
5. To analyze intimidation and cruelty
6. To justify survivalism
7. To assess causes of bullying
8. To isolate moments of foreboding
9. To account for unintentional harm
10. To define euthanasia

Specific Objectives

1. To characterize Lennie and George as migrant laborers
2. To compare George, Candy, Crooks, Lennie, and Slim as workers
3. To characterize the relationship between Curley and his wife
4. To comprehend the cause of mob violence in Weed
5. To account for Lennie's emotional instability
6. To explain how and why George replaced Aunt Clara
7. To parallel the two shootings
8. To contrast George's roles as rescuer and executioner
9. To analyze George's objectivity
10. To characterize the laborers' entertainments

Steinbeck's Published Works

A Cup of Gold, 1929
The Pastures of Heaven, 1932
To a God Unknown, 1933
Tortilla Flat, 1935
In Dubious Battle, 1936
Of Mice and Men, 1937
Their Blood Is Strong, 1938
The Long Valley, 1938
The Red Pony, 1938
The Grapes of Wrath, 1939
The Sea of Cortez (with Edward F. Ricketts), 1941
Bombs Away!, 1942
The Moon Is Down, 1942
Lifeboat, 1944
Cannery Row, 1945
The Pearl, 1947
The Wayward Bus, 1947
A Russian Journal, 1948
Burning Bright, 1950
East of Eden, 1952
Sweet Thursday, 1954
The Short Reign of Pippin IV, 1957
Once There Was a War, 1958
The Winter of Our Discontent, 1961
Travels with Charley: In Search of America, 1962
America and Americans, 1966
Acts of King Arthur and His Noble Knights, 1976

Related Reading

Isabel Allende, *House of the Spirits*
 Harriette Arnow, *The Doll-Maker*
 Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee*
 Robert Burns, "To a Mouse"
 Robert Frost, "The Death of a Hired Man"
 Ernest Gaines, *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* and
A Lesson Before Dying
 John Howard Griffin, *Black Like Me*
 Brett Harte, "The Outcasts of Poker Flat"
 Esther Hautzig, *The Endless Steppe*
 Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston and James Houston,
Farewell to Manzanar
 Daniel Keyes, *Flowers for Algernon*
 Theodora Kroeber, *Ishi*
 Emma Lazarus, "The New Colossus"
 Ruthanne Lum McCunn, *Thousand Pieces of Gold*
 Anne Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi*
 Katherine Anne Porter, "He"
 John Steinbeck, *The Grapes of Wrath* and *The Pearl*
 Richard Wright, "Almos' a Man"

Cross-Curricular Sources

For more information about mental retardation, farming, the homeless, the Nobel Prize, and John Steinbeck's sources, consult these sources:

Agribusiness, Guidance Associates
The Homeless, Rourke Books
Independent Living for Retarded Adults: Free to Grow, National
 Public Radio
Mental Retardation, Chelsea House

Also, consult these websites:

John Steinbeck and the Writing of *Of Mice and Men*
<http://www.heinemann.co.uk/windmill/sbeck.shtml>.
 The Nobel Prize Internet Archive
<http://nobelprizes.com/nobel/peace/1986a.html>.
 "To a Mouse"
<http://library.utoronto.ca/www/util/rp/poems/burns6.html>.

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 Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1984.
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 Life in Letters*. New York: Viking, 1975.
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 the Road Taken*. Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press,
 1986.

Literary Terms and Applications

For a better understanding of the novella, present the following terms and applications to Steinbeck's novel, *Of Mice and Men*:

Existentialism: a loosely defined philosophy that contrasts the random nature of the universe with the inadequacy of human control or intelligence, for example, George and Lennie, who must flee their jobs because George is unable to stifle Lennie's need to caress soft objects.

Foreshadowing: an object, statement, action, or motif that anticipates, prefigures, or predicts a significant event, as in the shooting of the old dog to end its suffering which parallels Lennie’s death to forestall the terror and torture others would inflict on him.

Novella: a shortened form of fictional development lying between novel and short story, ranging from 30,000-50,000 words, as demonstrated by *Of Mice and Men*. In John Steinbeck’s brief fiction, he focuses on events leading up to a single merciful execution. The intensity of the limited action and character development maintains the author’s control over the emerging theme of compassion.

The Importance of Setting

The action of the novel takes place in mid-state California, a lush coastal region heavily farmed and devoted to orchards and livestock.

References to Weed, Salinas, the Salinas River, and Soledad particularize the action to a microcosm, the rural canvas on which George and Lennie’s story takes place. Mention of Weed implies a connection between wandering laborers and unwanted growth, a parallel to unwanted human beings. A separate notice of San Quentin suggests criminality, which could deprive Lennie of his freedom if he continues harming women and animals. The irony of

verdant California territory and the lack of promise to marginalized drifters pinpoints Steinbeck’s intent—to depict wanderers on the land who find no place in which to thrive. The mental landscape of a snug little farm, fields of alfalfa, and hutches of rabbits remains an idyll, the reverie that soothes Lennie and compensates him for being homeless, parentless, and unwanted among community members. Among rootless men like himself and George, Lennie takes what amenities are offered and lives briefly in the expanded hope of sharing their dream farm with unexpected investors. However, the sojourn as spare farm labor ends the dream abruptly, reducing Lennie to a hunted animal and George to an executioner. In the end, Lennie’s dream farm becomes a grave.



Themes and Motifs

A study of the central issues and situations in John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* should include these aspects:

Themes

- compassion
- loyalty
- dependence
- vulnerability
- need
- longing
- violence
- intimidation
- euthanasia

Motifs

- caregiving to the handicapped
- migrating from job to job
- following orders
- the powerlessness of the dispossessed
- dreaming of an idyllic place
- accepting the weaknesses of others
- avoiding trouble

Meaning Study

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have particular meaning in the novella. Explain the meaning of each. Chapter and page numbers are given so that you can note the context from which the item is taken.

1. Explain the title *Of Mice and Men*.
(The title, taken from Robert Burns's poem "To a Mouse," is a literary allusion. The poem deals with a plowman's accidental destruction of a mouse's nest shortly before the onset of winter. As Burns summarizes the predicament of the homeless animal in lines 39-40: "The best laid schemes o' mice an' men/Gang aft agley." The last phrase of the Scottish dialect means that the plans often go awry.)

The allusion is appropriate to Lennie and George. Like the mouse in the poem and the bedraggled corpse of a mouse in Lennie's pocket, the two men are lowly and unimportant in the world's eyes. Yet they too have ambitions and the desire to build until fate intervenes and destroys their modest plans.)

2. There is a path through the willows and among the sycamores, a path beaten hard by boys coming down from the ranches to swim

in the deep pool, and beaten hard by tramps who come wearily down from the highway in the evening to jungle-up near water.

(Section 1, pp. 1-2)

(Steinbeck, who studied in detail the vegetation and animal life of California and the Baja Peninsula, describes an Edenic setting along the Salinas River. He contrasts the enjoyment of the riverbank from the point of view of carefree boys coming for a swim with the respite of weary hoboes, who "jungle-up" or share their fortunes around a single campfire. The use of jungle suggests two meanings—a thick, interwoven growth of trees and a baffling, frustrating tangle, which foreshadows George's attempt to make a life for himself alongside his simple-witted, trouble-prone companion.)

3. George unslung his bindle and dropped it gently on the bank. (Section 1, p. 3)
(Bindle is an alternate form of bundle and originated in 1901 as a specific term for the bedroll of a bindle bum or bindle stiff. Inside the rolled blanket, the hobo carries what few personal belongings could be managed across the shoulders. Most rootless, wandering workers move from job to job carrying everything that is important to their lives. On page 78, Curley's wife uses the term in a pejorative, demeaning sense when she sneers, "An' what am I doin'? Standin' here talkin' to a bunch of bindle stiffs—a nigger an' a dum-dum and a lousy ol' sheep—an' likin' it because they ain't nobody else.")
4. I seen thrashin' machines on the way down. That means we'll be bucking grain bags, bustin' a gut. (Section 1, p. 8)
(Lennie and George have taken positions as ranch hands without knowing what their tasks will include. George deduces that their work will involve lifting grain bags after the tops of each stalk are harvested by threshing machines. The job is crucial to a ranch, for stockmen depend on sacks of grain to fatten their livestock during droughts and winter months. Lennie, as simple as the mouse in Burns's poem, wants to hurry on to the ranch to eat supper; George, like the plowman, is capable of foreseeing his immediate future. He wants to loll on the riverbank and enjoy a bit of freedom and relaxation before going to work.)
5. Slowly, like a terrier who doesn't want to bring a ball to its master, Lennie approached, drew back, approached again. George snapped his fingers sharply, and at the sound Lennie laid the mouse in his hand. (Section 1, p. 9)
(Steinbeck repeatedly depicts Lennie through animal imagery. At first, Lennie walks like a bear and paddles his paws in the water. He tries to deceive George about the dead mouse. Then, like a trained terrier, he obeys the snap of George's fingers and

does as he is told. The comparison is apt, for Lennie resembles a terrier in many ways. They are feisty, frisky animals with gentle playful ways, but stubborn and resilient when they face a challenge. When trained by competent masters, terriers can perform complex tasks and tricks.

Lennie, who appears to belong to the category of trainable mentally handicapped, can function in society as long as he is well supervised. His main weakness is the inability to make subtle decisions regarding propriety and danger. Because of his attentions to a young girl, he and George fled Weed to avoid trouble with the law. Likewise, Lennie cannot be trusted to handle small animals without harming them because he does not accurately gauge his own strength.)

6. And these shelves were loaded with little articles, soap and talcum powder, razors and those Western magazines ranch men love to read and scoff at and secretly believe. (Section 2, p. 17)

(The stories in Western magazines romanticize and glorify life on a Western ranch. The men of the bunkhouse know that the stories are unrealistic. Their lives are dull, lonely, and repetitive—hardly heroic. They scoff at the stories because they present a view of the West that neither exists nor ever existed. Their secret belief grows out of the human tendency toward wishful thinking. Believing that their lives are exciting and heroic is an ego defense mechanism that protects them from too close an examination of reality.

George's summation on pages 13-14 comes closer to reality than the dreams of pulp fiction: "Guys like us, that work on ranches, are the loneliest guys in the world. ... They come to a ranch an' work up a stake and then they go into town and blow their stake, and the first thing you know they're poundin' their tail on some other ranch. They ain't got nothing to look ahead to.")

7. What the hell kind of bed you giving us, anyways. We don't want no pants rabbits. (Section 2, p. 18)

(George is suspicious that the bed to which he is assigned may contain vermin. He fears that "pants rabbits" will invade his pubic area, causing itching, disease, and general discomfort. The swamper or handyman explains that Whitey, the last occupant of the bunk, placed insecticide on the box shelf to ward off any infestation rather than to kill vermin that were already there.

The swamper's detailed description of Whitey's fastidiousness gives another picture of bunkhouse life. Whitey stood out among ordinary ranch hands because he was fussy about his food and about cleanliness. He took pride in his appearance and dressed up on Sundays, even when there was no one special to see him.

The swamper thinks that Whitey's departure was not unusual. The blacksmith just quit his job without warning, "the way any guy would.")

8. Yes sir. Jesus, we had fun. They let the nigger come in that night. Little skinner name of Smitty took after the nigger. Done pretty good, too. (Section 2, p. 20)
(To George's questions about the boss and the general atmosphere of the ranch, the swamper replies that the boss was generous at Christmas and gave the men a gallon of whisky. Without qualm, the swamper describes the general uproar that erupted when Smitty attacked Crooks. The enjoyment of their deadly battle lingers in the teller's mind, causing him to regret that he "ain't got the poop no more."

The incident creates an atmosphere charged with malice, prejudice, and latent violence which, when unleashed, lashes out of control. The lack of sensitivity in his story foreshadows later developments, notably the death of Candy's dog, Crooks's resentment, and the men's inability to understand why Slim comforts George after Lennie's death.)

9. "Glove fulla vaseline . . . An' I bet he's eatin' raw eggs and writin' to the patent medicine houses." (Section 2, p. 32)

(George, who sizes up the situation between Curley and his wife, understands the need of a small man to appear macho. He shows contempt for Curley's methods of increasing his sex appeal and libido. One myth about sexual potency is that raw eggs will increase it. Patent medicine houses play on the ignorant man's wish for enhanced sexual prowess by concocting phony medicines and tonics.)

10. He was a jerkline skinner, the prince of the ranch, capable of driving ten, sixteen, even twenty mules with a single line to the leaders. He was capable of killing a fly on the wheel-er's butt with a bull whip without touching the mule. (Section 2, p. 33)

(Slim, the ranch teamster, earns respect for his expertise. He is strong enough to manage a large team with only one guideline. His accuracy with a bull whip enables him to flick an insect off the lead animal's rump without touching its hide. He takes on mythic proportions to the men, who accept his opinion on a variety of subjects. Ironically, Slim's strength belies a humanity and warmth of personality. The only clue to his sensitivity are his hands, which are "as delicate in their action as those of a temple dancer." The metaphor also suggests the reverence that the men feel for Slim.)

Comprehension Study

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important. Be ready to defend your answers with quotations from the novella.

Questions 1 - 5 (Literal Level)

1. What trouble did George and Lennie encounter in Weed?

(George discusses with Lennie and later confides in Slim the trouble in Weed: Lennie likes to touch pretty things. When he saw the girl in the red dress, he reached out to touch it. The girl screamed, frightening and confusing Lennie so that he was unable to let go of the dress. George had to hit Lennie on the head with a fence picket to force him to release his grip. Then the girl told the authorities she was raped.)

The incident quickly escalated beyond George's control. The men of Weed formed a mob to lynch Lennie, but he and George hid in the grass underwater at the edge of an irrigation ditch. The next day they escaped. The near tragic event in Weed prepares the reader for Lennie's response to and killing of Curley's wife.)

2. How does Curley's wife die?

(While the men are engaged in a game of horseshoes, Curley's wife comes to the barn and finds Lennie talking to his dead pup. While conversing with Lennie, she offers to let him feel the softness of her hair. When Lennie begins to mess up her sausage curls, she tries to jerk away. Lennie, excited and frightened, holds tighter to her hair. Curley's wife screams. Lennie puts his hand over her nose and mouth. He tries to get her to stop screaming so that he won't get into trouble for disobeying George. While dangling her in the air, he breaks her neck. Her death is the result of Lennie's great uncontrolled strength, which he activates to ward off George's anger.)

3. Why does Crooks want to join George and Lennie on their farm?

(Crooks resides in the harness room instead of in the bunk house with the rest of the hired men because local prejudice prohibits black stable hands from mixing socially with whites. Being the only Negro in the area, he is consequently condemned to a lonely, isolated life. Even when he begins an evening with a congenial game of horseshoes, by the arrival of dark his only choice of entertainment is reading alone in his room.)

Since the other men do not associate with Crooks, he becomes proud, aloof, and bitter. He snaps at people who intrude on the privacy of his inner sanctum. The pain in his back, which was crippled by the kick of a horse, does not improve his disposition.

He cruelly taunts Lennie by suggesting that George may not come back from town. However, he, like Candy, gets caught up in George and Lennie's dream of a place of their own and wants to go along so that he can belong somewhere.)

4. Why is Slim important to the novella?

(Slim is a mule driver, "the prince of the ranch," and the most competent of the hired men. According to Steinbeck, "His ear heard more than was said to him, and his slow speech had overtones not of thought, but of understanding beyond thought." A recurrent theme in Steinbeck's stories is that the simple life unencumbered by material possessions may be the best life. Men like Slim are often idealized. They have a basic wisdom that grows out of their closeness to the earth and the quiet competence of their labor. [Billy Buck in Steinbeck's The Red Pony has these same qualities of earth wisdom and competence.] It is significant that only Slim, who earlier drowned four of his dog's pups because she couldn't feed them, understands why George must kill Lennie.)

5. What is the significance of the death of Candy's dog?

(Candy's old and toothless dog is stiff with rheumatism. Because the dog suffers and smells bad, the men feel it would be merciful to shoot him. Candy resists the suggestion because he has become so attached to the dog, which he has raised from a pup. The animal is his only true companion—the only creature who really cares about him.)

The men are not being cruel when they advise shooting the dog. They are simply realistic about the limits to the dog's use. Candy finally agrees that it would be best to put the dog out of its misery. Carlson takes his Luger pistol, ties a thong around the dog's neck, and leads him away from the bunk house. The air is tense as the men await the report of his pistol. Candy suffers in silence after he hears the shot. Later Candy regrets that he did not kill the dog himself. He says, "I ought to of shot that dog myself, George. I shouldn't ought to let no stranger shoot my dog."

The death of Candy's dog symbolizes the alienation Candy feels and the harshness of undeserved suffering. For these reasons, the dog's death foreshadows Lennie's death. George shoots Lennie in the back of the head with the same Luger. Unlike Candy, George accepts the responsibility of pulling the trigger to protect Lennie from suffering.)

Questions 6 - 8 (Interpretive Level)

6. Is Curley's wife a victim or victimizer?

(Although Curley's wife is hardly likable, she is not evil. Her lost opportunity of a career in the movies sounds like fantasy, but it also suggests the emptiness of her life with Curley, whom she

doesn't like. Being married to Curley, who is by nature mean and possessive, cannot be easy for her. Like Crooks, a woman on the ranch is an anomaly. The fact that she persistently seeks people to talk to indicates that she is lonely.

Curley's wife's main flaw is in taunting the single men and hanging around the bunk house, a place not suited to visits from lone females. The fact that she is married to the boss's son sets her above the grasp of the men, even the ones who are drawn by her allure. Her suggestive clothing and painted face are also unacceptable to the men, who label her a temptress. They recognize that Curley has taken on a precarious position as husband to so aggressive a siren.

Steinbeck's description of Curley's wife after her death suggests his sympathy for the character: "And the meanness and the plannings and the discontent and the ache for attention were all gone from her face. She was very pretty and simple, and her face was sweet and young." Like the dead mouse in Lennie's pocket and the dead pup under the straw, the innocence of death relieves each from the oppression of earth.)

7. Describe George's relationship with Lennie.

(The relationship between George and Lennie is clearly established in the opening scenes. Lennie follows George like a faithful dog. His imitation of George's actions is a testimony to his devotion. George complains about Lennie being a nuisance. He claims that if he were not saddled with Lennie, he could go into town on payday, get drunk, and have a good time.

Obviously, George is not being honest about his devotion to Lennie. Going into town and getting drunk would be a pointless existence for George. It is the dream he shares with his companion that gives his life purpose. Being needed fulfills a basic human desire in George. As Crooks says, "A guy needs somebody—to be near him."

Unlike George, most of the ranch hands are loners. When they move on, they go alone. The Boss, who finds George's alliance with Lennie suspicious, implies that George is taking advantage of the simple-witted man. Slim, a wiser observer, notes: "Ain't many guys travel around together . . . I don't know why. Maybe ever'body in the whole damn world is scared of each other." After George kills Lennie, Slim is the only person at the scene who understands what the execution cost George.)

8. What is the dream and why is it important?

(The dream appears early in the novella. It is a modest ambition based on ownership and pride. Part of its charm is that it endows the men with an independence that they cannot know as they wander from job to job on another person's land. The desire is particularly intense among bindle bums, the rootless,

wandering laborers whose entire property can be rolled into a blanket and slung over the shoulder.

Lennie and George want a small house, a small plot of land, a cow, some pigs, and—most important of all to Lennie—some rabbits. Lennie delights in the vision of taking care of soft, furry animals, which he once saw at the fair in Sacramento. Lennie summarizes the rewards of home ownership as living off the fat of the land and enjoying cream so rich that you can cut it with a knife.

It is clear that George has voiced their mutual dream many times and the telling has taken on the quality of ritual: "George's voice became deeper. He repeated his words rhythmically as though he had said them many times before." Ironically, as he prepares to kill Lennie, he repeats the familiar phrases, urging Lennie to visualize the dream one last time in his mind.

When Candy overhears the plan, he too falls prey to the dream. He shares the need to belong—to have a place of his own. In fact, he has saved \$300, which is almost enough to make the dream a reality. When Crooks asks to join Lennie and George, it becomes evident that the hunger for roots—the need to belong—appeals universally to the lonely and disenfranchised.)

Questions 9 and 10 (Critical Level)

9. Why does George kill Lennie?

(George knows that Lennie is devoid of guile and malice. Therefore, he must have killed Curley's wife accidentally. However, George also knows that Curley will not be merciful to Lennie. Curley demonstrates his innate meanness when he says, "I'm goin'. I'm gonna shoot the guts outa that big bastard myself, even if I only got one hand. I'm gonna get 'im." George knows that Lennie would die a terrible death if Curley shoots him in the stomach.

Even if Lennie were captured instead of shot, he would be terrified and suffer miserably behind bars. Lennie is too simple-minded to understand the reason for his punishment or his suffering. George obviously believes that it would be better for his companion to die happy. By telling Lennie the story of their dream for the last time and then shooting him so that he won't suffer, George makes Lennie's death as merciful as possible.

Whether or not George is justified in his act is a knotty moral question. From the early days, when George taunted Lennie, George carries guilt for taking advantage of the retarded man. His dedication is obvious in the daily frustration of caring for a mentally handicapped person. Shooting Lennie is a type of euthanasia—the only solution that George can devise for his dilemma of how to protect Lennie from further harm. The author obviously exonerates George for the act by the words which he assigns to Slim: "You hadda, George. I swear you hadda.")

10. How does Steinbeck convey mood and theme?
(The mood of the novel is one of hopelessness. Very early the reader learns that Lennie's simple-mindedness, great strength, and love of pretty, soft things have constantly gotten him into trouble. After the appearance of Curley, who hates big men, and Curley's wife, who is a man-chaser, the reader is prepared for a cataclysm. The fact that the men are nearing the realization of their dream intensifies the tragedy. With Lennie's death, George becomes like all other ranch men—alone and trapped in a cycle of work, travel, and temporary resettlement.)

The novel's theme centers on a basic human requirement—the need to belong to someone and to belong somewhere. According to the novel, people need close friends and a place of their own. Steinbeck emphasizes that even the lowliest of drifters have dreams and that they have a right to achieve modest goals. However, the world beats down such people and dooms their dreams.)

Questions 11 and 12 (Creative Level)

11. Act out a scene in which George, Candy, and Crooks complete their plans for buying a little piece of land. Include information about the role and responsibilities of each. Add comments about the loss of Lennie and the departure from the ranch.
12. Write a travel brochure introducing a newcomer to the natural beauty of the area around Soledad, California. Stress details about the Gabilan Mountains and the Salinas River.

Across the Curriculum

History and Law

1. Launch an Internet web site detailing the sufferings of California's workers during the 1920s and 1930s. Comment on Hoovervilles, villages of shacks targeted by locals who overran homeless laborers, exiled them, and burned their belongings.
2. Read about uniquely American games and sports, particularly horseshoes, euchre, solitaire, rummy, and snooker. Learn how these pastimes were invented from simple beginnings.

3. Explain the tenor of politics during the McCarthy era. Discuss with a small group how the label of radical or Communist sympathizer destroyed the reputation of some of Steinbeck's colleagues known as the Hollywood Ten, particularly screenwriter Dalton Trumbo.
4. Compose an extended definition of euthanasia. Use examples from the novella to characterize how the word applies to everyday life. Research the legal ramifications of euthanizing animals and people.

Economics

1. Explain the financial, social, religious, and political ramifications of bullying a subgroup of the population. Contrast the plight of migrant workers with the plantation enslavement of blacks, sharecropping among poor whites, and the slaughter of native Americans during the 1870s and 1880s.
2. Characterize aloud the type of person who would prefer working on a farm and living in a bunkhouse to working in the military, at sea, or in factory, sales, or office work.

Cinema

1. Summarize orally the roles which actors Gary Sinese and John Malkovich's played in *Of Mice and Men*. Contrast their depiction of "Steinbeck's losers" with Henry Fonda's role as Tom Joad in *The Grapes of Wrath*.
2. Discuss the theme of oppression in these films: *Native Son*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Exodus*, *Places in the Heart*, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *The Ghosts of Mississippi*, *Glory*, *A Town Like Alice*, *Farewell to Manzanar*, *Mississippi Burning*, *The Pearl*, *Sarafina!*, and *The Power of One*. Discuss with a small group the causes and results of criminalizing the poor.

Science and Health

1. Compose a lecture on the decline in workers' health. Make a chalkboard list of inadequacies, including work amenities, rest, medical care, food, shelter, clothing, and pay.
2. Explain to a small group what survival techniques George employs to keep himself and Lennie safe, such as remaining together,

establishing a hiding place, doing all the talking for Lennie, and promising Lennie a place of their own. Discuss why and how he chooses to shoot Lennie before searchers find him.

3. Use a chart of human anatomy to show how shaking a person can cause instant death. Explain why “shaken child syndrome” must be investigated to protect children from violence and abuse.

Geography

1. Create a mural or web site that contrasts these settings: bunk house and barn, Soledad and Weed, Salinas River and the Gabilan Mountains, camp site and road, cultivator and horseshoe pit, and the bus and Murray and Ready’s.
2. Compose a paragraph detailing the studies of John Steinbeck and Ed Ricketts of the topography and biota of California and its shoreline.

Art

1. Using desk-top publishing or other artistic media, design a map of the Salinas River and environs, a placard supporting open hiring practices for migrant workers, a business card for Murray and Ready’s, a list of bunk house rules, instructions on acquiring a work card, Chamber of Commerce pamphlets on California’s produce, a bus schedule from Weed to Soledad, an advertisement for rabbits, a layout of a small farm, encyclopedia entry on mental retardation, or a news account of Steinbeck’s Nobel Prize.

Social Studies

1. Express in a paragraph Steinbeck’s concept of humanism, which makes ethical, social, and behavioral demands on the public to uplift people living on the margin.
2. List ways that political or economic upheaval threatens workers and other homeless people. Explain to a group why local people suspect farm laborers and drifters of petty theft, disease, and lowering work standards.

3. Make contrasting chalkboard definitions of discrimination and survival. Explain how the terms define segments of George’s life.

Mathematics and Computers

1. Using desktop publishing, compose an annotated timeline of United States farm history. Note the influx of ex-slaves, failed sharecroppers, and illegal immigrants into the work force.
2. Graph current census figures concerning the makeup of the United States work force. Highlight a map with graphs and data indicating what parts of the nation draw the most migrant labor. Note the percentage of drifters in Texas, Florida, Washington, Oregon, California, Georgia, Alabama, the Carolinas, and other agricultural areas.

Music

1. Work with a group to compose a laborer’s work song in either English or Spanish. Include recognition of Cesar Chavez and other speakers for oppressed migrants, especially nonwhites.

Language and Speech

1. Compose individual posters explaining the significance of these names and slang terms: kewpie doll, buck barley, cultivator, traces, hames, blowin’ our jack, Luger, dugs, gingham, cesspool, swamper, bindle stiff, four-taloned jack-pin, jackson fork, pulley, heron, vial, burlap ticking, graybacks, Stetson, mules, wheeler, fifty and found, bum steer, euchre, jail bait, hoosegow, Golden Gloves, alfalfa, San Quentin, tart, welter, booby hatch, took a powder, floozy, and jerklene skinner.
2. Compose a short speech in which you describe how poverty demoralizes, marginalizes, and encourages violence.

Literature

1. Read aloud “The New Colossus,” a poem by Emma Lazarus. Discuss its implications for migrant workers and the homeless.
2. Draw a character web representing the interconnectedness between Lennie and the girl in the red dress, George and the lynch mob in

Weed, Carlson and the aged dog, Curley and his wife, Candy and Crooks, Lennie and Curley's wife, and George and Aunt Clara.

3. Assign parts and read aloud the play *Flowers for Algernon*. Conclude your activity with a discussion of Charly Gordon's response to taunting and ridicule. Compare Charly with Lennie; decide which man is better equipped for coping with the stresses of a job.

Student Involvement Activities

1. Sketch some of the machines that farm workers used in the first half of the twentieth century, particularly a threshing machine, tractor, combine, baler, scythe, cultivator, disc harrow, corn picker, and manure spreader.
2. List ways that retarded people can become self-sufficient, such as through halfway houses, where they take control for many aspects of normal life, particularly meal preparation, laundry, household chores, grounds care, child care, and pet ownership. Name species of pets that might benefit different ages and degrees of retardation.
3. Explain to a small group why pet ownership is important to Lennie, Slim, and Candy.
4. Join a discussion group to determine the type of farm Lennie and George would have enjoyed if they could have achieved their ambitions. Make a schematic drawing of the most important areas of the farm—animal pens, vegetable garden, water supply, barn, orchard, pasture, windmill, sheds, garage, and house.
5. Report on the methods by which your community gives dignity and meaning to the lives of the homeless and mentally handicapped adults.
6. List the causes of mental retardation, including genetic defects, anoxia, disease, fever, harmful drugs, fetal syndromes, and brain trauma. Note any effects that can be reversed by early intervention, surgery, medicine, or other treatment.

7. Locate examples of similes from the novel, such as "They'll tie ya up with a collar, like a dog," "He shook her; and her body flopped like a fish," and "His huge companion dropped his blankets and flung himself down and drank from the surface of the green pool; drank with long gulps, snorting into the water like a horse." Compose a paragraph explaining why each simile is effective in creating an implication or graphic mental image.
8. Explain in a short speech the effect of isolation and prejudice on female, handicapped, aged, or minority people like Curley's wife, Crooks, Lennie, and Candy.
9. Explain in a theme the source and importance of Lennie's dream.
10. Conduct a mock hearing to determine whether George should be charged with a crime such as manslaughter or murder. Assign fellow students roles as the other characters.

Alternate Assessment

1. List examples of friendship and camaraderie that lightens the lives of itinerant farm laborers. Include tangible gifts along with conversations and dreams of a better life.
2. Compose a list of details that reveal character strengths and weaknesses, particularly the dead mouse, hopes for rabbits, a glove and vaseline, recoil from a dog odors, shared food, and the softness of the farm's only appealing woman.
3. Propose a character to interact with the farm team as they harvest and store grain, for example, a farm equipment repairman, family friend, neighbor, farm cook, or grain merchant.
4. Compose a newspaper report of Lenny's death explaining his childhood, his arrival at the farm, his friendships with other laborers, and the unintentional murder that results in his sacrifice.

Vocabulary

A. Sentence Completion: Underline a word in parentheses to complete each of the following sentences.

1. George stared (**aptly, figuratively, morosely, gingerly, squeamishly**) at the water.
2. He laid them on his bed and then brought out the pistol, took out the (**magazine, breach, grip, hammer, stock**) and snapped the loaded shell from the chamber.
3. On pegs were also pieces of harness, a split collar with the horsehair stuffing sticking out, a broken hame, and a (**pommel, trace, ejector, awl, striker**) chain with its leather covering split.
4. A water snake glided smoothly up the pool, twisting its (**jaded, limpid, granular, inert, periscope**) head from side to side; and it swam the length of the pool and came to the legs of a motionless heron that stood in the shallows.
5. But by the pool among the (**tempered, leisurely, peremptory, mottled, recumbent**) sycamores, a pleasant shade had fallen.
6. The shoes (**ricocheted, caromed, veered, languished, thudded**) on the ground outside.
7. The dog struggled lamely to the side of the room and lay down, grunting softly to himself and licking his (**grizzled, perpendicular, wavering, spruce, transient**), moth-eaten coat.
8. Slim gazed at him for a moment and then looked down at his hands; he (**impaled, subdued, queried, plaited, skittered**) one hand with the other, and held it down.
9. His body was bent over to the left by his crooked spine, and his eyes lay deep in his head, and because of their depth seemed to glitter with (**din, emaciation, caress, intensity, ennui**).
10. Lennie gulped and his smile grew more (**immediate, lithe, fawning, competent, latent**).

B. Definition: Locate correct answers from Part A which are synonyms for these words:

1. gray _____
2. drearily _____
3. controlled _____
4. speckled _____
5. ingratiating _____
6. cache _____
7. harness _____
8. instrument _____
9. thumped _____
10. strength _____

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Completion (30 points)

Complete each of the following statements with a word from the list below.

Auburn	Carlson	hand	pup	stake
Aunt Clara	colored	hired	ranches	supper
barley	crippled	hoof	river	tar
black	Crooks	irrigation ditch	Salinas	thong
barn	Curley	mother	skinner	Weed
bunk house	eye	mouse	Soledad	Whit
bus driver	hair	pool		

1. "Me an' Lennie's rollin' up a _____," said George.
2. Your _____ wouldn't like you running off by yourself, even if she is dead.
3. Guys like us, that work on _____, are the loneliest guys in the world.
4. They play cards in there, but I can't play because I'm _____.
5. " _____ give us a bum steer," he said. "We hadda walk ten miles."
6. You guys gonna buck _____?
7. Hide in the brush by the _____. Say that over.
8. Him and me was both born in _____.
9. So we sit in a _____ under water all the rest of that day.
10. At last _____ said, "If you want me to, I'll put the old devil out of his misery right now and get it over with."
11. An' _____'s pants is just crawlin' with ants, but they ain't nothing come of it yet.
12. I lost my _____ right here on this ranch. That's why they give me a job swampin'.
13. And now there ain't a _____ man on this ranch an' there's jus' one family in Soledad.
14. He picked up the _____ and hurled it from him.
15. You can talk to people, but I can't talk to nobody but _____.

Part II: True/False (20 points)

Mark the following statements either T for true or F if any part is false.

- _____ 1. Lennie becomes angry when George throws away his dead mouse.
- _____ 2. George and Lennie run away from Weed after Lennie attempts to rape a young girl.
- _____ 3. The boss of the ranch is suspicious of Lennie and George because George does all the talking.
- _____ 4. Candy tells George that Curley's wife is a tart with a roving eye.
- _____ 5. Carlson takes Candy's dog outside the bunkhouse and shoots it in the back of the head.
- _____ 6. Slim is the most respected man on the ranch.
- _____ 7. George refuses to let Candy get in on his and Lennie's plan to buy a farm.
- _____ 8. Lennie crushes Curley's hand after Curley attacks George.
- _____ 9. Because Crooks is black, the other men on the ranch will not accept him as an equal.
- _____ 10. After killing Curley's wife, Lennie forgets that he is supposed to go to the riverbank where he and George camped.

Comprehension Test A (Page 2)

Part III: Identification (20 points)

Name the character who is described in each phrase below. Select your answer from the list that follows. You will have answers left over when you finish.

- | | | | | |
|-------------|---------|---------------|----------|--------|
| Aunt Clara | Carlson | Curley's wife | Old Susy | Smitty |
| Bill Tenner | Crooks | George | sheepdog | Whit |
| the boss | Curley | Lennie | Slim | Whitey |

- _____ 1. ... a proud, aloof man. He kept his distance and demanded that other people keep theirs.
- _____ 2. ... he moved with a majesty only achieved by royalty and master craftsmen.
- _____ 3. ... hell of a nice fella and as clean a guy as you want to meet. Used to wash his hands even *after* he ate.
- _____ 4. ... jarred, and then settled slowly forward to the sand, and he lay without quivering.
- _____ 5. ... small and quick, dark of face, with restless eyes and sharp, strong features.
- _____ 6. Stinks like hell, too. Ever' time he comes into the bunk house I can smell him for two, three days.
- _____ 7. For a moment he continued to stare at the ceiling. Then he rolled slowly over and faced the wall and lay silent.
- _____ 8. ... then he put out his huge hand and stroked it, stroked it clear from one end to the other.
- _____ 9. The curls, tiny little sausages, were spread on the hay ...
- _____ 10. ... he wore high-heeled boots and spurs to prove he was not a laboring man.

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

- 1. Explain why Curley's wife is discontent.
- 2. Discuss how the sheepdog's death foreshadows Lennie's execution.
- 3. Describe the lifestyle of a bindle stiff.

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Quotation Completion (30 points)

Complete each quotation below with a phrase from the list that follows.

- _____ 1. Jus' wanted to feel that girl's dress—
- _____ 2. His lean face was lined with deep black wrinkles, and
- _____ 3. The hand shook violently, but
- _____ 4. I seen guys nearly crazy with loneliness for land, but
- _____ 5. Ever' one of you's scared
- _____ 6. You get another mouse that's fresh and
- _____ 7. An' I coulda sat in them big hotels,
- _____ 8. Just says "gimme my time" one night,
- _____ 9. You know how the hands are,
- _____ 10. Around the last stall came a shepherd bitch,
- _____ 11. But you jus' tell an' try to get this guy canned and we'll tell ever'body,
- _____ 12. Standin' here talkin' to a bunch of bindle stiffs—a nigger an' a dum-dum and a lousy ol' sheep—
- _____ 13. I said s'pose George went into town tonight and
- _____ 14. A guy on a ranch don't never listen nor
- _____ 15. Aunt Clara was gone, and

- A. his face set and his hand steadied.
- B. an' likin' it because they ain't nobody else.
- C. an' had pitchers took of me.
- D. the way any guy would.
- E. jus' wanted to pet it like it was a mouse—
- F. the rest is goin' to get something on you.
- G. lean and long, with heavy, hanging dugs.
- H. you never heard of him no more.
 - I. from out of Lennie's head there came a gigantic rabbit.
 - J. he don't ast no questions.
 - K. he had thin, pain-tightened lips which were lighter than his face.
 - L. an' then will you get the laugh.
- M. I'll let you keep it a little while.
- N. ever' time a whore house or a blackjack game took what it takes.
- O. they just come in and get their bunk and work a month, and then they quit and go out alone.

Comprehension Test B (Page 2)

Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

Supply a word or phrase from the list below in answer to the following questions. You will have answers left over when you finish.

- | | | | | |
|------------|---------------|----------|----------|---------|
| Auburn | Curley's wife | hand | mouse | Soledad |
| Aunt Clara | face | head | rabbit | tar |
| back | Gabilan | hoof | Salinas | velvet |
| the Boss | George | Luger | sheepdog | Weed |
| Crooks | hair | magazine | Slim | Whit |

- _____ 1. What does George take from Carlson?
- _____ 2. Who once supplied Lennie with mice?
- _____ 3. Who comes to the bunk house in search of Curley?
- _____ 4. Whom does Curley's wife threaten if he tells that she came to his room?
- _____ 5. Who is too frightened to defend himself?
- _____ 6. What did Lennie lose that he once liked to rub?
- _____ 7. What part of Curley does Lennie crush?
- _____ 8. Who promises Candy a pup?
- _____ 9. Where did Lennie and George escape from?
- _____ 10. What is Lennie talking to when George comes up behind him?

Part III: True/False (20 points)

Mark each of these statements either T for true or F if any part is false.

- _____ 1. George looks after Lennie because they are cousins.
- _____ 2. Lennie is resentful when George orders him about.
- _____ 3. According to Candy, Curley is a bully who likes to pick fights with men bigger than he is.
- _____ 4. Lennie is afraid of Curley and wants to leave the ranch immediately.
- _____ 5. Candy regrets not shooting the sheepdog himself.
- _____ 6. George refuses to let Lennie have one of Slim's puppies because he knows that Lennie will kill it.
- _____ 7. Slim advises Curley not to tell his father that Lennie crushed his hand.
- _____ 8. Because he likes to read in his room, Crooks has no desire for companionship.
- _____ 9. Lennie becomes furious with Curley's wife for mocking him and deliberately breaks her neck.
- _____ 10. George shoots Lennie to save him from Curley's vengeance.

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

- 1. Discuss the theme of loneliness as it applies to Crooks, Candy, and Curley's wife.
- 2. Explain why the boss is suspicious of George when he first meets him.
- 3. Explain the social status of each of these positions: jerkline skinner, bindle stiff, son of the boss, swamper.

Answer Key

VOCABULARY

A. Sentence Completion

- | | |
|--------------|--------------|
| 1. morosely | 6. thudded |
| 2. magazine | 7. grizzled |
| 3. trace | 8. subdued |
| 4. periscope | 9. intensity |
| 5. mottled | 10. fawning |

B. Definition

- | | |
|-------------|---------------|
| 1. grizzled | 6. magazine |
| 2. morosely | 7. trace |
| 3. subdued | 8. periscope |
| 4. mottled | 9. thudded |
| 5. fawning | 10. intensity |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Completion (30 points)

- | | | |
|---------------|---------------------|-------------|
| 1. stake | 6. barley | 11. Curley |
| 2. Aunt Clara | 7. river | 12. hand |
| 3. ranches | 8. Auburn | 13. colored |
| 4. black | 9. irrigation ditch | 14. pup |
| 5. bus driver | 10. Carlson | 15. Curley |

Part II: True/False (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. T |
| 2. F | 7. F |
| 3. T | 8. F |
| 4. T | 9. T |
| 5. T | 10. F |

Part III: Character Identification (20 points)

- | | |
|-----------|------------------|
| 1. Crooks | 6. sheepdog |
| 2. Slim | 7. Candy |
| 3. Whitey | 8. Lennie |
| 4. Lennie | 9. Curley's wife |
| 5. George | 10. the boss |

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Quotation Identification (30 points)

- | | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. E | 6. M | 11. L |
| 2. K | 7. C | 12. B |
| 3. A | 8. D | 13. H |
| 4. N | 9. O | 14. J |
| 5. F | 10. G | 15. I |

Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

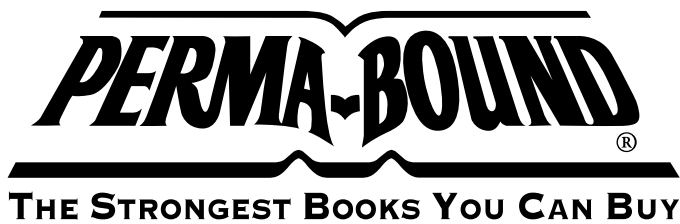
- | | |
|------------------|------------|
| 1. Luger | 6. velvet |
| 2. Aunt Clara | 7. hand |
| 3. Curley's wife | 8. Slim |
| 4. Crooks | 9. Weed |
| 5. George | 10. rabbit |

Part III: True/False (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. F |
| 2. F | 7. T |
| 3. T | 8. F |
| 4. T | 9. F |
| 5. T | 10. T |

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.



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