**Symbols and Imagery**

**‘Curley’s wife’ –**her nameless status represents women’s lack of voice

**Candy’s dog** – mirrors the treatment of Lennie and the killing of the dog foreshadows Lennie’s death

**Animal imagery** – Lennie is often compared to various animals to show that he is more closely aligned with nature rather than the ‘civilised’ society of the men. Also, the **mice and rabbits** represent Lennie’s false hope in his future with George.

**Soledad –** Spanish for loneliness

**Using key quotations**

In Steinbeck’s introduction of Curley’s wife, he states that ‘her fingernails were red’ and describes her ‘red mules’ and ‘red ostrich feathers’. This repetition of the adjective ‘red’, connotes danger and violence and therefore builds suspense around her role in the plot as the reader wonders what impact she will have on other characters. It could be said that in the character of Curley’s wife, Steinbeck is shining a spotlight on the consequences of misogyny. Her lack of a name effectively symbolises women’s lack of identity. Similarly, as the only woman in the novella, Steinbeck is commenting on the limited voice of women at the time.

The impression of Lennie as innocent is further inferred by the animal imagery that Steinbeck frequently utilises through the novella. ‘walked heavily, dragging his feet a little, the way a bear drags his paws’. This comparison shows that Lennie has an affinity with nature in a way the other characters don’t. The combination of the adverb ‘heavily’ and verb ‘drags’ reinforce the idea that Lennie is slow. As readers, our sympathy for Lennie increases as Steinbeck emphasises his nature as innocent and free of prejudice just like the animals he loves.

A prevalent theme in Steinbeck’s novella is the concept of The American Dream. George and Lennie epitomise this with their dream about living off ‘the fatta the land.’ This dream secures the bond between them as shown early in the novella when George says: ‘We got a future. We got somebody to talk to that gives a damn about us.’ The repetition of the pronouns of ‘we’ and ‘us’ convey the deep friendship between the two men. Later in the novella, Steinbeck uses Crooks to voice his own cynicism about the reality of the American Dream. After hearing about the dream, Crooks tells George and Lennie that ‘Nobody never gets to heaven, and nobody gets no land. It’s just in their head.’ Here, repetition is used again with the word ‘nobody’ but this time to highlight the futility of the dream that George and Lennie share and to build sympathy for their inevitable failure.

**Steinbeck’s Inspiration**

Translation from ‘To a Mouse’ By Robert Burns:

“But little **Mouse**, you are not alone,
In proving foresight may be vain:
The **best laid schemes of mice and men**
Go often askew,
And leave us nothing but grief and pain,
For promised joy!”

**Year 8 – Of Mice and Men – Knowledge Organiser**

**Characters**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **George –** a clever migrant worker and Lennie’s best friend | Frustrated but determined; a dreamer. Looks after Lennie out of love. |
| **Lennie** - a childlike migrant worker and Lennie’s best friend | Kind and vulnerable. Relies on George. Innocent of the world and gullible. Physically powerful but unaware of his own strength. |
| **Candy –** an old labourer | Unloved, an outcast, aging. Devoted to his old and useless dog. Wants to join George and Lennie’s dream.  |
| **Curley –** the manager of the ranch | Insecure, unmerciful, jealous. Disrespects everyone including his new wife. |
| **Curley’s wife** | A seductive temptress, objectified, lonely, nameless. Lennie kills her by accident when he doesn’t understand her advances. |
| **Crooks –** a stable hand | Cynical, proud, isolated. Likes Lennie and George but doesn’t really believe in their dream. |
| **Slim –** a mule driver | Compassionate, wise, well-respected. Befriends George and Lennie and comforts George at the end. |
| **Carlson –** A ranch hand | Heartless, insensitive . Persuades Candy to kill his dog. |

**Context**

-John Steinbeck was born in **Salinas, California** in 1902. He was interested in the lives of the farm labourers.

- In1929, millions of dollars were wiped out in the Wall Street Crash. Americans lost their life savings and a third of America's population became unemployed. **This became known as The Great Depression.**

- **Droughts** in states like Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas led to failed harvests and dried-up land. Farmers were **forced to move** off their land.

- **Racism/sexism** were common, especially in Southern states due to the bad economy, & history of **slavery**.

- Many people still believed in **The American Dream** which was the idea that opportunity is available to any American, allowing people to achieve any goals.



**Key**

Evidence

Terminology

Zooming in analysis

Themes

CHRIS RICE

Effects

Context