

Of Mice and Men Essay Questions

1. How do being different, and the prevailing attitudes of intolerance, lead to tragedy in this story? Discuss examples of these issues with any and all characters in the novel that are different, and as a result, play tragic roles. Take care to show the relationship between the ways in which each character is different from normal, and how each character is oppressed by the intolerance or disregard of others.
2. How does Curley's wife suffer from oppression because she is a woman? You may wish to include areas an analysis such as the importance of marriage, stereotyping, women's roles and power in society, and the common idea of women's "evil sexuality" when discussing Curley's wife. You should also consider why Steinbeck did not give her a name, but chose only to refer to her as "Curley's wife." Be sure to discuss the position of men related to women.
3. Discuss how the killing of Candy's dog, and his associated feelings, relate to the death of Lennie, and George's associated feelings. Be sure to include relevant quotes from characters, including Carlson. You must also discuss the issue of mercy vs. lost usefulness. For which of these two reasons did Lennie and the dog die?
4. Agree or disagree with the statement that Curley's wife's death was neither her fault nor Lennie's.
5. How does the idea of lost hope or hopelessness, futility, pervade this story? Give examples of characters that have no hope, or have lost it, and show why this idea is so universal in this book. Consider explaining why the little farm is a vision of utopia, and why it is impossible to reach. Why do the characters know they won't get it? You may wish to discuss the symbolism of the farm representing Heaven. Consider the economic conditions of the time.
6. Of Mice and Men has an allegorical quality, with each character possessing a specific trait that represents something in society. Identify these traits in the main characters; explain their relevance to the book, and the book's comment on society. Research "allegory" if you are not familiar with its meaning.
7. Explain the value of relationships in this story, and how this contrasts to the problem of loneliness. Be sure to include insight about the value of this idea in society.