

# ***Of Mice and Men***

By John Steinbeck



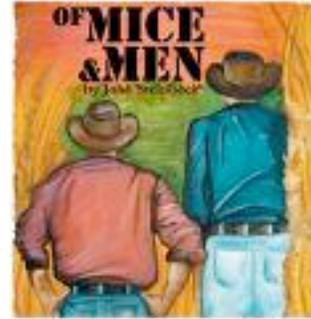
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## ***Of Mice and Men* Reading and Writing Schedule**

<b>Day Number</b>	<b>Reading</b>	<b>Writing</b>
One	1-10	1-5
Two	11-16	6
Three	17-25	7-8
Four	26-35	9
Five	36-37	10
Six	38-48	11-12
Seven	49-57	13-14
Eight	58-65	15-16
Nine	66-73	17-18
Ten	74-83	19
Eleven	84-91	20-21
Twelve	92-98	22-23
Thirteen	99-107	24-25
Fourteen	Catch Up	26-27
Fifteen	Catch Up	Prewrite
Sixteen	Catch Up	Rough Draft
Nineteen	Catch Up	Second Draft
Twenty-one	Catch Up	Final Draft

## **Of Mice and Men Summary**

Of Mice and Men is a novel set on a ranch in the Salinas Valley in California during the Great Depression of the 1930s. It was the first work to bring John Steinbeck national recognition as a writer. The title suggests that the best-laid plans of mice and men often go awry, a reference to Robert Burns's poem "To a Mouse." Of Mice and Men was selected for the Book of the Month Club before it was officially published, an honor that encouraged 117,000 copies of the novel to be sold before its official publication on February 25, 1937. Critical response to the novel was generally positive.



There were, however, critics who were offended by the rough earthiness of the characters and their lives. By April 1937, the book was on best-seller lists across the country, and it continued to remain a top seller throughout that year. Steinbeck said that he was not expecting huge sales, and he was surprised by the substantial checks he received from his agents. In fact, Steinbeck became a celebrity with the publication of his novel, a status that he feared would negatively affect his work. Steinbeck conceived Of Mice and Men as a potential play. Each chapter is arranged as a scene, and each scene is confined to a single space: a secluded grove, a bunkhouse, and a barn.

With the success of the novel, Steinbeck worked on a stage version with playwright George Kaufman, who directed the play. Of Mice and Men opened on Broadway in New York City on November 23, 1937, with Wallace Ford as George and Broderick Crawford as Lennie. The reviews were overwhelmingly positive, and the play ran for 207 performances, winning the prestigious New York Drama Critics' Circle Award. The action of the novel occurs over the course of three days. Steinbeck created the novel's two main characters, George Milton and Lennie Small, to portray victims of forces beyond their control. George and Lennie are two migrant agricultural workers on a California ranch who share a dream of owning their own farm someday. They take jobs at a ranch where their hopes are at first raised but then destroyed by a tragic accident. Steinbeck depicts George and Lennie as two innocents whose dream conflicts with the realities of a world dominated by materialism and greed. Their extraordinary friendship distinguishes them from other hopeless and lonely migrant farm workers. The novel portrays a class of ranch workers in California whose plight had been previously ignored in the early decades of the twentieth century. In fact, George and Lennie are like mice in the maze of modern life. The great friendship they share does not prove sufficient to allow them to realize their dream. As a young man, Steinbeck learned about migrant laborers, usually unmarried men recruited to work during harvest seasons, from his own experience as a worker on company-owned ranches. With Of Mice and Men, Steinbeck became a master craftsman, ready to write his masterpiece The Grapes of Wrath the following year.

## **John Steinbeck**



John Ernst Steinbeck was born in Salinas, California, on February 27, 1902 of German and Irish ancestry. His father, John Steinbeck, Sr., served as the County Treasurer while his mother, Olive (Hamilton) Steinbeck, a former school teacher, fostered Steinbeck's love of reading and the written word. During summers he worked as a hired hand on nearby ranches, nourishing his impression of the California countryside and its people.

After graduating from Salinas High School in 1919, Steinbeck attended Stanford University. Originally an English major, he pursued a program of independent study and his attendance was sporadic. During this time he worked periodically at various jobs and left Stanford permanently in 1925 to pursue his writing career in New York. However, he was unsuccessful in getting any of his writing published and finally returned to California.

His first novel, *Cup of Gold* was published in 1929, but attracted little attention. His two subsequent novels, *The Pastures of Heaven* and *To a God Unknown*, were also poorly received by the literary world.

Steinbeck married his first wife, Carol Henning in 1930. They lived in Pacific Grove where much of the material for *Tortilla Flat* and *Cannery Row* was gathered. *Tortilla Flat* (1935) marked the turning point in Steinbeck's literary career. It received the California Commonwealth Club's Gold Medal for best novel by a California author. Steinbeck continued writing, relying upon extensive research and his personal observation of the human condition for his stories. *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) won the Pulitzer Prize.

During World War II, Steinbeck was a war correspondent for the *New York Herald Tribune*. Some of his dispatches were later collected and made into *Once There Was a War*.

John Steinbeck was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1962 "...for his realistic as well as imaginative writings, distinguished by a sympathetic humor and a keen social perception."

Throughout his life John Steinbeck remained a private person who shunned publicity. He died December 20, 1968, in New York City and is survived by his third wife, Elaine (Scott) Steinbeck and one son, Thomas. His ashes were placed in the Garden of Memories Cemetery in Salinas.

## **Theme Poster**

Create a poster on your *theme* word. It must be featured prominently on your poster. EACH poster must include the following:

1. the theme word
2. a dictionary definition of the word
3. a quotation (from a movie, book, song, poem, etc.) which features the word, include the source of your quotation
4. a symbol (including illustration) of the word and an explanation of its relevance
5. a one-sentence explanation of how the word has an effect on people's lives.

Each member must come with a rough draft for the poster on the bottom of this paper. Someone must volunteer to bring markers, and I will supply the poster board. Each person is responsible for thinking up one suggestion for each above requirement. You will have time to share this week.

## **Map Work for *Of Mice and Men***

Draw FREE HAND the state of California. Then, locate the following places on a map or do an internet search to assist you in placing them on your hand drawn map.

1. the Salinas River
2. the Salinas Valley
3. Salinas
4. Fresno
5. San Francisco
6. Soledad
7. Monterey
8. Monterey Bay
9. San Jose
10. the Gabilan Mountains
11. Sacramento
12. the American River near Sacramento
13. the Sacramento River
14. Weed
15. Auburn
16. the Santa Lucia Mountains



C. Questions: What questions did you have while you were reading? List them below. Supply answers when you find them.

1.
2.
3.

D. Predictions: Describe what you believe is going to happen next

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E. What connections did you make to the "real world"?

1.
2.
3.

## **Of Lennie and George: Who are they?**

You've read about them, now draw them! What is your perception of George and Lennie? Draw a picture where you not only describe the two, but also include three objects that could be symbolic for their characters. For example; you could draw George holding a caged bird which could be symbolic for his desire to be set free from having to take care of Lennie.

## **Of Mice and Men: Character Functions**

Fill in the columns with one or more characters, and list the ways in which the character functions in the story. Then list instances from the story that illustrate each function.

Name of character	Function	Examples from the story



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## **Of Mice and Men: Characters & Complications Chart**

In chapter two, Steinbeck introduces most of the other characters in the novel and foreshadows the problems or complications that will occur. Give a brief description of each of the characters listed below and then tell what about the character might create problems or complications as the story unfolds. Note page numbers of the descriptions.

Character	Description	What about this character may cause problems?
Lennie		
George		
Candy		
Curley		
Curley's wife		
Slim		
Carlson		

## **Of Mice and Men: Live on Stage!**

Your task as a team is to create a brief skit where you incorporate the characters in *Of Mice and Men* in one of the following, modern occurrences:

1. A musical version of the story to this point
2. A sports team going through chemistry issues
3. A mailman trying to deliver a heavy box to a pizza parlor
4. A Super Mario Brothers convention
5. A game of Dungeons and Dragons
6. A first date
7. A meeting at a singles club
8. A drag race
9. A high school English classroom
10. A middle school fight

Your group will be graded based on how creative you are, how well you work together as a team, and how cohesive your story is.



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## **To Whom It May Concern....**

Imagine how difficult it must have been to be George, having to look out for not only himself, but for Lennie as well. In the 30's, people like Lennie had to rely on their family, but in today's society, we have all kinds of social programs that can help people with disabilities adapt to life. For this assignment, imagine that you are George, and write a letter to a government agency asking for assistance with Lennie. Be sure to explain exactly what Lennie's issues are, and use specific examples to illustrate how those issues affect your life. Lastly, come up with a specific plan for Lennie that you would like the government to help you with (do you want Lennie admitted to a hospital, do you want hospice care, etc.).



## **Of Mice and Men: Dreams Chart**

*Of Mice and Men* is a book about dreams. Identify what each person wants as his/her dream, and comment on why it is important for each one.

Character	His/her dream?	Why it is important?
Lennie		
George		
Curley		
Curley's wife		
Candy		
Crooks		



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## **Home on the Range**

Lennie and George plan to buy a farmhouse with Candy after saving enough money. Each of the characters has a specific idea as to what this house will contain, as well as what it will symbolize to them. Your task is to draw the house and the farm, paying particularly close attention to the details provided in the text. Additionally, make sure to include elements of weather that symbolize exactly how this farmhouse will make each character feel.

## **Of Mice and Men: Symbolism**

Steinbeck includes a number of symbols (something concrete representing something abstract) in the novel. For each one listed below, write what you think it symbolizes in the right hand column.

Object/place	What is symbolizes
the river	
the cave by the river	
the mountains	
the thicket of trees	
the dead mouse in Lennie's pocket	
the farm that George and Lennie want	
the rabbits on their dream farm	
Candy's dog	
the dead puppy	
the giant rabbit at the end	
the heron at the end	
the water snake at the end	



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## **Of Mice and Men: Use of Foreshadowing**

Steinbeck includes certain events in order to foreshadow Lennie's inevitable death at the end of the novel. For example, on page 15 George tells Lennie to hide in the brush by the river in case he gets in trouble; this foreshadows Lennie's return to the river after he accidentally kills Curley's wife. There are other instances, though, where Steinbeck foreshadows later events. Look back through the story and/or your notes and list those instances in the chart below. On the right discuss how the example foreshadows something that happens later.

EXAMPLE (don't forget to include page number)	HOW IT FORESHADOWS A LATER EVENT
George tells Lennie to hide in the brush by the river in case he gets in trouble (15); this foreshadows Lennie's return to the river after he accidentally kills Curley's wife.	When Lennie hides in the brush in the last chapter, we know that he will not live much longer because he is in too much trouble for George to fix.

## **Of Mice and Men: Function of Violence in the Novel**

Steinbeck includes a number of instances of violence in *Of Mice and Men* –when Lennie scares the woman in Weed, and others listed below. Authors have a purpose in mind whenever they use such events and descriptions. Fill in the chart below, and then write a paragraph analyzing the function of one of the violent scenes in the novel.

Scene	Details	Point in the story	Function of the scene
Lennie grabs the girl's dress in Weed.			
Lennie accidentally kills the mouse and then the puppy.			
Carlson shoots Candy's dog.			
Lennie crushes Curly's hand.			
George kills Lennie.			

## **Final Essay for *Of Mice and Men***

Choose **two** of the following to prewrite for a well-developed five-paragraph essay on that topic. Then, choose your best prewrite to create that essay. Make sure to include a number of lines from the text to support your assertions.

1. The belief in the American Dream—the belief that anyone can achieve a better life through hard work—has always been an important part of the American character. In *Of Mice and Men*, does Steinbeck seem to be supporting the belief in the American Dream or rejecting it?
2. An allegory is a work where the characters are symbols or ideas—for example, one person might symbolize honesty, another courage, and another anger. An allegorical novel has a group of such characters interconnected to suggest a moral lesson. Given this definition, consider how *Of Mice and Men* is an allegory. What ideas do the characters represent, and what is lesson is Steinbeck trying to teach?
3. Both Crooks and Curley’s wife suffer from acute loneliness. What is the nature of their isolation? In your essay, you will probably want to address the following: What factors have led up to their isolation? What are the consequences of their situation?
4. The theme of friendship is a strong one in *Of Mice and Men*. What is Steinbeck saying about friendship? In answering this question, analyze one or more friendships in the book—George & Lennie, Candy & George, George & Slim, or another of your choice—and discuss what each person gives to and gains from friendship.
5. Emily Dickinson writes:

‘Hope’ is a thing with feathers—  
That perches in the soul—  
And sings the tune without the words—  
And never stops—at all—  
-No. 254 (1861)

What is the function of hope in the novel, and how does Dickinson’s poem shed light on the use of hope in the novel?

6. John Steinbeck wrote that he believed George was a hero for killing his friend in order to save him. Discuss why you agree or disagree with this statement?