

Of mice and men: an analysis essay

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Did you know, Steinbeck's novel *Of Mice and Men* was banned in some school districts? It was banned because of a controversial scene at the end of the movie in which George kills his only friend, Lennie. Steinbeck leads the reader to believe that George shoots and kills Lennie not out of hatred or vengeance, but out of compassion and mercy. This is because George knows that Lennie will die a physically and emotionally painful death if George does not intervene. In the movie adaptation of *Of Mice and Men*, Sinise, the director, uses cinematic techniques to enhance Steinbeck's vision that George acted with mercy meant to reduce suffering for Lennie.

First, Sinise uses a long shot to show that George is alone because he lost his only friend which he cares very dearly about. The shot shows Lennie lying on the ground with George kneeling behind him. Both are motionless. The viewer sees them on a river bank from afar. The only things around them are the aforementioned river located in between the camera and them, and many trees. The lack of other creatures shows just how lonely George is because he no longer has his only friend who he tried his best to end his suffering.

Second, Sinise uses specific lighting to show that George's action was an act of mercy. In the scene, bright, full light is shown from above and behind George and Lennie. This effect creates a shadow on George's and Lennie's face. The use of lighting to create shadows portrays that George is split in how he feels. The shadow shows that he is in darkness about his decision while the light shows that he did what he thought was best.

Another way we could look at this is that it is very similar to paintings of angels committing acts of mercy in that the lighting and actions taken are similar. The use of light and shadow helps shed light on the shadow that is George's juxtaposition about his decision. Finally, Sinise uses non-diegetic music to show that George feels sad about killing Lennie. The music has a slow heavy rhythmic pulse with a higher piano melody on top. This gives a melancholy feel to the scene.

The heavy tone represents George's grief for Lennie while the lighter tone represents George's feelings that he did the right thing to help his friend by preventing what would surely be a brutal and crude death for Lennie. The juxtaposition between these two melodies helps the audience understand George's conflict. Although it may seem that George was insensitive, he did what he thought was best. The ways in which this scene could be interpreted is likely why it was banned. Immediately before George kills Lennie, George tells Lennie that he is not mad nor was he ever mad at him.

He then gets Lennie to imagine their dream of a good life. While Lennie is imaging their good life together, George shoots him. Lennie dies painlessly and his last thoughts are knowing that George forgives him and they had reached their goal. In the end, George did his best to help Lennie but nonetheless still feels very sad and conflicted about his actions.