

Of mice and men



a) in this passage, what methods does Steinbeck use to present Curley's wife and the attitudes of others to her? Refer closely to the passage in your answer.

b) how does Steinbeck present attitudes to women in the society in which the novel is set?

In this passage of mice and men, Steinbeck present Curley's wife as a dreamer, who is an outsider, insecure and labelled by others. He does this by the use of metaphors and stereotyping.

In the beginning of the passage Curley's wife is introduced into the novel for the first time. Almost immediately she has portrayed women during the 1930s, as she is presented as an outsider. As women in the 1930s were living in a mans world and they did not have much respect. She is the only girl on the ranch so therefore she is going to feel isolated and alone. She also represents loneliness which is a theme in of mice and men. " A girl was standing there looking in".

The noun " girl" suggest that she is immature, innocent, it also tells us that she has not fully developed into a mature woman. The meaning for the word " girl" is for unmarried females, however we know that she is married, so therefore we can tell that her marriage may not be real and they may not care for one another. The noun " girl" can be quite offensive if used to describe a young women. The noun " standing" can be used to describe respect and status in a community. So therefore Curley's wife has little standing in the community. Which reflects women in the 1930s, as they didn't have much respect and authority.

The words "looking in" may suggest that Curley's wife is looking inside the bunk house longing for company. We learn that Curley's wife is an outsider, who is not accepted into the ranch life. Who is considered to be immature and not fully developed into womanhood. She does not have much respect and authority as she is the only female living on the ranch. She does not have much importance as the men. She longs to have companions and tries to find that in the ranch workers however they do not wish to be her company. She is lonely and needs some company. The effect on the reader is that we sympathise with her as she is an outsider and she is lonely and all she wants is friendship.

Steinbeck uses metaphors to present Curley's wife's role models and aspirations. In the 1930s people aspired to be in the films and they believed that the only people not struggling from the depression were film stars. "Her hair hung in little rolled clusters, like sausages." The preposition "like" is used to describe something or someone which has the same characteristics, similarities and qualities to something else. The film star in the 1930s had their hair in "rolled clusters, like sausages" so therefore we learn that Curley's wife has been influenced by them. When people mimic or try to copy one another's style, they do this for a number of reasons, such as they look up to them and they want to be like them. In this case, Curley's wife has adopted the hairstyles of the movie stars, as she aspires to be like them.

This brings in the theme, American dream, as Curley's wife dreams to be of a movie star. This quotation may suggest that she is not content in her life so therefore she wants to find happiness in the acting life. This may also suggest that the ranch life does not satisfy her and is not appealing to her.

The effect on the reader may be annoyance, as in the 1930s everybody was struggling, however Curley's wife is not, she has a house and money. So therefore they may question her about her aspiration as she is well off, so instead of dreaming of another life she should fulfil the life she has right now.

Steinbeck uses stereotyping to present the attitudes towards Curley's wife. In the 1930s women had very little respect so therefore they were subjected to many labels and name calling. " Jesus, what a tramp". The noun " tramp" is a stereotype who may be used to label people who dress a certain way and act in a certain way. George has already stereotyped her and judge her without getting to know, this may show that he doesn't want to get to know as he feels that there is no need.

It may also show that he has already taken a disliking to her based on her looks. He has shown no respect to her as he has already judged her, and not given her the benefit of the doubt. George's opinion may be a representation of the all the ranch workers opinion, so therefore maybe Steinbeck chose to voice other people's opinions through him. George is one of the main characters in the novel, so for him calling Curley's wife a " tramp" it is going to influence the readers opinion and think that of Curley's wife also.

In conclusion, Steinbeck uses metaphors and stereotypes to empathise her dreams and the attitudes towards her as well as, the attitudes of women in the 1930s as they had little respect and authority.