

The exclusion from society in the novella "Of Mice and Men" by John Steinbeck

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Throughout the novella *Of Mice and Men*, John Steinbeck utilizes the characters and their exclusion from society to establish the dynamics of power on the ranch. To begin with, Candy is pitied throughout the novel due to his old age and futile arm, evidently displaying that he is becoming increasingly useless. Consequently, he is treated in a similar manner. When Carlson shoots his dog, Candy miserably states, " You seen what they done to my dog tonight? They says he wasn't no good to himself nor nobody else... I wisht somebody'd shoot me... I won't have no place to go, an' I can't get no more jobs" (Steinbeck 22). Old Candy is proven to be powerless due to his physical incapacabilities.

The foreshadowing moment during the tragic shot that kills Candy's dog, acts as a sudden moment of realization. He understands the limited time he has left until he is relieved of his responsibilities, simply because of his unusable hand, making him virtually useless for the ranch and its profits. He has spent his whole life living under the shadows and working for other individuals, displaying his lack of power. On the other hand, Crooks experiences alienation due to his ethnicity and his constant mistrust towards others, as he cannot look past the prejudice he has constantly experienced. Crooks explains his childhood when he states, "...The white kids come to play at our place... My ' ol man didn't like that.... There wasn't another colored family for miles around. And now there ain't a colored man on this ranch..." (Steinbeck 37). In addition to gaining the title of being the lowest status on the ranch, Crooks finds himself trapped on the accounts of society's racism due to the colour of his skin. As a result of uncontrollable factors such as race, Crooks is forced to live separately from other men.

He becomes impotent, due to the lack of further opportunities for coloured individuals in America in the 1930's, leaving him with the only option available to stay on this ranch as a powerless man who is disregarded from the ranch and society. Likewise, Lennie's intellectual impediment segregates him from the stereotypical cliques of a 'strong and smart, white rancher'. His genuinity and innocence is what distinctly separates Lennie in comparison to the others. This is clearly portrayed when Slim carefully observes Lennie and his behaviour, "Jesus," he said. "He's jes' like a kid, ain't he...There ain't no more harm in him than a kid neither, except he's so strong" (Steinbeck 44). Lennie's dependence on George is apparent, which ultimately causes the other ranch workers to degrade his social ranking. His childlike purity also contributes to this factor. Thus proving that to Lennie's innocence and curious nature proves no importance to upholding a sense of power in his lifestyle. This also leads to the other characters displaying superiority over his disadvantage. To conclude, the lack of power is evidently employed by John Steinbeck, through the characters by using exclusion from society throughout *Of Mice and Men*.