

The character of curley's wife in john steinbeck's classic novel essay sample

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The character of Curley's wife in John Steinbeck's classic novel *Of Mice and Men* seems insignificant and one-dimensional. Curley's wife is considered nameless and flirtatious. Curley's wife has yet to establish an identity for herself. The "context" of her life has left her deprived of many of the established means necessary for the development of an identity. It is undiluted that Steinbeck omits both a name and a definite identity in his creation of Curley's wife in order to accurately portray her.

Like most women, Curley's wife's self-image is largely defined through her relationships with other people. Throughout the novel she struggles with the process of identity development. The reason why she struggles is because she doesn't have many of the key types of relationships women come to know themselves through, namely friendships and working relationships. The few relationships she does maintain, such as her marriage to Curley, are unhealthy and damaging to the frail sense of identity she possesses.

She left her mother to be with Curley in hopes of discovering a "wholeness" and sense of identity. She saw her identity or role in life as that of an actress, wearing fashionable clothes and staying in grand hotels. When that dream dissolved, she tried to replace her lost self-image through Curley.

Curley's wife is a static character. She never changes throughout the whole novel. She was considered a tart or hussy. She exhibits a strong desire throughout the novel to work or have an occupation. "Think I like to stick in that house all the time?" She uses the habits and skills of an actress as a means of relating to the men on the ranch. She performs in front of the

ranchers as an actress would perform for her audience through her actions as well as her appearance.

Curley's wife's actions throughout the novel similarly possess a performance-life quality about them. With the practiced ease of an actress, Curley's wife instinctively calls attention to herself by her posture and gestures. Curley's wife's loneliness causes her to talk to Lennie. They have got a lot in common, not physically, but they are both lonely and excluded from the others. Lennie accidentally hurts her by tugging her hair, and she screams. Since Lennie doesn't want to get into trouble with George, and doesn't know better.

Therefore, Curley's wife cannot say who and what truly makes her the woman she is. She was very lonely and she related better with Curley. She will be remembered as a tart. One can only conclude that it is not Steinbeck's " portrait of Curley's wife" that is " incomplete," but rather the woman herself.