

"of mice and men's" literary merit essay sample

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The quote noted by Oscar Wilde, “ The books that the world calls immoral are the books that show the world its own shame”, demonstrates his belief on censors, who hold the power of removing classical literature from the high school curriculum. One such novel, Steinbeck’s Of Mice and Men, is a rather controversial novel and have been frequently criticized. A tragic story about the brutality of loneliness and the significance of dreams, the novel fills the reader’s heart with overwhelming emotions. Although attempts have been made to restrict this piece of literature because of its violent plot and harsh language, one who understands it recognizes that these characteristics are only used to fit the time period, which is during the Great Depression.

Undeniably, Of Mice and Men, written by John Steinbeck, presents literary merit and should remain in the high school curriculum.

Admittedly, the novel shows the mistreatment of minorities; however, the characters that Steinbeck has created exhibit the value of friendship.

Particularly, the main characters, George Milton and Lennie Small, demonstrate great care for each other. For instance, when George and the other workers have gone off to play horseshoe, Lennie visits Crooks in the barn. Crooks, a bitter but lonely African-American, talks to Lennie about his life and feelings. As he observes Lennie’s loyalty to George, Crooks develops feelings of jealousy and starts to “ suppose” many different possibilities about how George is never going to come back. Since Lennie is simple-minded, he becomes defensive and gets angry at Crooks and says, “ ‘ What you supposing’ for? Ain’t nobody goin’ to talk no hurt to no George.’” Then

Lennie becomes so aggressive that Crooks has to back down and try to calm him by telling him that George is alright. Even then, Lennie is still worried about George until he gets distracted by Crooks' new story.

The care Lennie shows for George is not one-sided; George also displays a great deal of concern for him. In this case, George bravely gathers up his courage and shoots his best friend Lennie at the end of the novel. After killing Curley's wife on accident, Lennie hides in the bushes and waits for George to rescue him. George then arrives, and calms Lennie down to assures him with their within-the-grasp goal, which is about their dream land with the rabbits. While Lennie is savoring the dream, George, with great difficulty, shoots him on the back of the head, and thus saving Lennie from the torture that is promised to come. Clearly, the care that George and Lennie show each other helps the readers visualize true friendship.

One cannot call another a " friend" if that person doesn't show care and concern for others. Aside from this, readers can also realize the many different forms of care. Lennie worries about George's safety even though he is not sure whether George is hurt or not. Likewise, George overcomes the fear of killing his best friend and thus relieving Lennie from the future tribulation that awaits him. Truthfully, the kind of friendship displays by the two friends is not something a person sees everyday; one can't help but to envy the two best friends. In short, the true meaning of friendship is shown repeatedly by the characters in the novel.

Without a doubt, Of Mice and Men illustrates the negativism of the world; yet, the characters create a microcosm of many situations and different

people. To be specific, the characters encounter numerous different problems that ordinary individuals in the real world come across. When Candy's dog is killed, for example, he grieves over the death of his ex-best friend. His dog is shot because Carlson, an insensitive worker on the ranch who complains about the odor of Candy's dog, pressures Candy into giving him the permission to end the dog's life. Candy is reluctant since the dog has been his companion during most of his lonely life. But after Slim, the leader of the group, agrees with Carlson, Candy finally gives in to him. After Carlson shoots the dog, Candy falls into a depression as he mourns for his precious companion and friend. Another example that shows the different kinds of problems is the fact that Curley's wife tries to get attention from the men on the ranch.

Curley's wife, a pretty but lonely woman married to the short-tempered Curley, cannot stand being all alone with no one to talk to. Therefore, she is always flirting with the men on the ranch by going over and asking where Curley is, even though she doesn't care. The workers all think she's very attractive, but one can tell that most of them think she will cause trouble based on Candy's statement to George, " Purty... but... she's got the eye... Curley's married a tart." George, who is a rather cunning character, also agrees with Candy. Naturally, one must have experienced the events mentioned above, in one way or another. People make sacrifices for something they really love or believe in and have to go through the process of getting over it. Also, attention-loving individuals, like Curley's wife, appear frequently in one's life. If one is in a difficult situation, that kind of people tend to make matters worse, regardless the enormity of the problem.

Indeed, the microcosm created by Steinbeck's colorful characters contributes to the realism of the novel.

Unquestionably, *Of Mice and Men* by Steinbeck presents literary merit and should be read by high school students. Even today, colorful characters like Lennie, George, and other ranch workers exist among people. In summary, the characters' genuine friendship, like the unbroken bond between George and Lennie is one of the most important themes to the story. Also, the character-developed microcosm is a method used by Steinbeck to create the different problems people face. By all means, this priceless work of literature is contributed by both of the factors and should certainly remain in the high school curriculum.