

Of mice and men commentary

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



"Of Mice and Men" is a novel written by the 1962 Nobel Prize winner, John Steinbeck. It is an emotional tale of the extraordinary friendship between George and Lennie, who are traveling workers in the harsh depression years of the 1930s. George is a caring person whose love to Lennie is just like a father-son relationship, where Lennie, a mentally challenged man whose strength lies in body rather than brain, appears to be very dependent on George. "Of Mice and Men" teaches a universal theme about the nature of human beings that a person whose power exists over another turns corrupt. Steinbeck exploits the theme of power and control in his novel through the extensive use of sexism, racial discrimination, and the power of the strong over the weak. Sexism is the belief that one sex is superior over the other. In "Of Mice and Men", Steinbeck undoubtedly shows that the power is centered on the majority sex, which is the males, against the minority, the females, where in this novel is "Curley's wife". By simply keeping the character nameless and using the expression "Curley's wife" to identify her is a clear example of referring to her as an object without any respect rather than a person. "Curley's wife" shows how women during the early 1900s were inferior under the men. She is merely the spouse of Curley as far as all the men in the ranch are concerned. "They are only forced to relate to her through Curley; if they fear him or want no trouble, the men will stay away from her. George, for example, has set goals in his mind that he is committed to, thus he will stay away from her in order not to get into any trouble. On the other hand, if they do not fear anyone, they can enjoy their time with the intention of forming a physical relationship with her.

Lennie, whose childish mind cannot comprehend why he should stay away from Curley's wife, falls into the trap and gets severe consequences for doing so. " She is simply a person living in the ranch with the purpose of only to obey Curley with no voice to complain to. All the men including Curley may go to the " cathouse" and enjoy their time; Curley's wife on the other hand, may not dare to do the same, along with Crooks. During the 1900s, racial discrimination was widely used throughout America, a land that is filled with various ethnic groups. Steinbeck portrays the cruel racist manner that is used throughout on the stable buck, Crooks.

He lives a separate, isolated life under everyone in the ranch, and is incapable to protest, merely because he is black. He is terribly labeled with the epithet of a " nigger" from everyone else. Steinbeck portrays him as an unfortunate man for being born black with no power at all and may not do anything about it. He is not allowed to enter any white man's room, and to slightly raise his own degraded dignity, does the same, not allowing any white man to his room; although he only says so, it is not necessarily true as we later on see that George and Candy enter.

Crooks is a person where all the sorrows and miseries of another can be thrown on him because he is powerless to object. As soon as Curley's wife feels insulted from him and Candy, she threatens him verbally, using her superior social status as a white woman, " Well you keep your place then, Nigger. I could get you strung out in a tree so easy it ain't even funny". Although most people in the ranch appear to want friendship, they all live with hidden fear of each other.

The years of the great depression left everyone trying to look stronger and better than the other, or otherwise the strong will get rid of them; the killing of Candy's dog is a great symbol for that which makes it clear. Candy's dog is ought to get shot and killed, even though it has spent its lifetime with Candy, because it is now old and useless. The stronger, in this case man (Carlson), mercilessly shoots Candy's dog, who knew nothing of his grief fate. Candy then sees his reflection upon the killing of his dog, that he will soon get too old and therefore useless, which will then have him left alone.

This pushes him into desperately asking George to permit him to join with him and Lennie for the pursuit of their own dream ranch, "Tha's three hundred an' fifty bucks I'd put in, I ain't much good, but I could cook and tend the chickens and hoe the garden some". On the contrary, Curley is a man who takes advantage of his authority and power to oppress and mock others to make himself seem stronger and even more powerful. He uses his power and gender to boss around with workers of his ranch and his wife, respectively. However, when he chose to do so towards Lennie, Lennie reacts angrily and smashes his hand.

Through the intense use of sexism, racial discrimination, and the power of the strong over the weak, Steinbeck successfully exploits the theme of power and control. Whether it is mentally, physically, or moneywise, power seems to be moving from one person to another depending on the situation. Perhaps it really is the roots of evil; that occurs as a result of someone realizing his power over others, and then uses it for his own personal desires, while taking advantage of others. In other words, as the Arabic proverb

professes, a person's power and freedom is corrupt when it limits the power and freedom of another.