

Of mice and men, analysing weak characters

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



The novel is called 'Of mice & men' because things can go wrong between a small mouse to an important human being. Things can go wrong despite how hard you try.

There are two characters in this novel that I think are portrayed as being weak. One of the characters that I feel comes across as weak in the novel is Crooks. The reason being is because of how he is treated by the other characters in this novel. For example, most of the characters except for Slim refer to Crooks as a 'Nigger'.

Even though 'Nigger' is a racist term, it was used normally in those days.

But this shows the little respect the rest of the characters had for Crooks; they could have decided to refer to him using his real name, just like Slim.

The fact that they continuously call him that shows the weakness in Crook, if he had the amount of free will and power the rest had, he would have spoke up and tell them to stop calling him a 'Nigger'.

Steinbeck may have set it out like this to show that not everyone was racist and disrespectful to whom the majority of the people thought was inferior. Slim could have been a character just like Steinbeck, he's showing that he is not racist and is empathetic to Crook's feelings, and is aware that despite his skin colour, he is just as superior. However, noticing this, Slim could be portrayed as weak because he didn't speak up to defend Crooks when it came to the name calling, if he did, he probably would have been casted as a 'Sell out' by the other characters.

There is another incident in the novel that shows how inferior and weak Crooks is portrayed. After Curley's wife enters the room to talk to him,

Lennie and Candy, Crook's ends up getting frustrated with Curley's wife and starts telling her off. However, by now the readers would have thought that Crook's is finally standing up for himself and defending himself, but this all changes in the space of a few minutes. For example, Curley's wife retaliates and says ' Listen, Nigger, you know what I can do to you if you open your trap?' ' Well, keep your place Nigger. I could get you strung up on a tree so easily it ain't even funny'.

' Strung up on a tree' meant to be lynched; this shows that she had the power to get Crooks lynched, even for the pettiest things. So even though Crooks was speaking the truth, him speaking up could get him into trouble, he can't win, him staying quiet and saying the things the other characters wants to hear makes him look weak, but even when he does speak up against problems, he is still portrayed as weak. After Curley's wife mentions this, the narration says ' Crooks seemed to grow smaller' the use of the letters ' Er' shows that he was already ' small' but by Curley's wife mentioning Lynching, it made him ' smaller', weaker than he already is.

One more factor that shows Crooks is weak, is by the structure of the chapter, the chapter starts and ends the same. On page 99, it says ' Crooks sat on his bunk [...] he held a bottle of liniment and with the other hand, rubbed his spine'. The chapter also ends the same way. This shows that the way Crooks is living is never ending, it's a cyclical feature, and there is no hope for him. Also, because Steinbeck kept on referring to his spine, shows that even though Crooks does have hopes and dreams, him being black and being injured is what's stopping him from living the ' American dream'. The injury to Crooks back occurred after being kicked in the spine by a horse.

The reason for this is because of where Crooks is forced to sleep. Crooks sleeps in a barn. This is usually a place where horses rest. On page 98, it lets the readers know the Crooks bunk was made from a long box filled with straw. 'Crooks' bunk was a long box filled with straw'. This portrays him to be some sort of animal. He is portrayed as a horse. Again even though horses are strong physically, they are weak in the sense that they have no power, they are usually tied up. This is a good example of Crooks. Again, he may be the most intelligent out of the characters and in some ways, mentally strong. But he is still weak in other ways.

Another character that Steinbeck portrays as being weak is Curley's wife. The apostrophe in 'Curley's' is possessive, this shows that Curley's wife belongs to Curley and that he is her owner. She is referred to as 'Curley's wife' throughout the novel and is not named. It also shows how unimportant she is and how little the characters think of her. Another way she is portrayed as weak is by her attitude towards the men in the novel. Curley doesn't pay her much attention, so she feels insecure and lonely. This makes her want the attention of the other men and makes her feel superior and important, even though she isn't. The characters talk about her in a negative way behind her back. For example, after Curley's wife is introduced George says 'Jesus, what a tramp'. The use of the word 'Jesus' makes George's reaction to Curley's wife seem dramatic, this shows that Curley's wife is a huge problem if she causes such dramatic responses. Also he refers to her as a tramp.

'Tramp' can mean many things, but one definition of a tramp for a female is a prostitute or a person regarded as promiscuous. This is George's first

impressions Of Curley's Wife, and this is how she comes across whilst trying to flirt. This shows how weak she is to George especially. She may be trying to flirt and act sexy in order for the men to lust after her but her trying has no effect on George, he thinks of her as the opposite. George also calls her a 'bitch' and a 'Rat trap' whilst talking to Lennie. A 'bitch' is the name given for a female dog, this links to the apostrophe in 'Curley's wife' Dogs are popular pets and have owners. She is like Curley's pet.

Curley's wife thinks of Crooks, Lennie and Candy as the 'Weak ones' by her saying this, it makes her look weak as well, she feels she has to refer to them as something deemed inferior in order to make her feel superior. However, even though she refers to them as this, she still hangs around them, this shows that she hasn't got much choice and that that is the only form of company she has and appreciates, despite coming across as nasty. This shows her weak side.

In section 5, Curley's wife goes in the barn to comfort Lennie and flirt with him, this could have led into something more. If she didn't end up dying she probably would have ended up sleeping with Lennie. This again, shows her weakness; she is not strong enough to just leave Curley if she is not happy, she married Curley for the wrong reasons, leading to her being unhappy. Instead she goes behind his back looking for 'Love', 'comfort' and a sense of 'importance'. This leads to her being accidentally killed by Lennie.

Before this happens whilst she confides in Lennie she admits, 'He says he was gonna put me in the movies' referring to one of the actors she met. This didn't end up happening so she ended up marrying Curley. She then goes on and says 'So I married Curley. [...] I don't like Curley, he ain't a nice fella'.

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This shows that she had no choice but to marry him and that she is finding it hard to escape from him.

The death of Curley's wife is like Karma. She threatened to get Crooks lynched if he carried on disrespecting her but then ended up dying as a result of her neck of being broken, this is what lynching is. Also, she married Curley for the wrong reasons and used him and she was also the women who stopped the characters from living their dreams, this may have been out of spite from her not getting to live hers. However, again, she ended up dying, and the characters still didn't get to live their dream. This is how Karma works, ' what goes around comes around'. This could be linked to the ' Cyclical feature' in the novel, the problems are never ending and there is just no hope.

To conclude, both Crooks and Curley's wife are very much alike and they're just as weak as each other. Both characters are referred to as harsh names other than their real names. They both had dreams of being successful but it never happened. Crooks is a black man, and Curley's wife is a white women. So even though Crooks had dreams and was capable of getting far the only problem that would have been stopping him is the fact that he is black and racism was in full effect in those days. Also, he was the smartest among the other characters, this links back to the title ' Of mice and men' that things can go wrong despite how hard you try. So despite his intelligence and how hard he learns, he still can't get to where he wants to go in life. Nevertheless, even though Curley's wife is white, she is a woman.

Women didn't have that much say or rights when men were involved. So her dreams and goals were not reached. For example she say's ' I never got that
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letter, I always thought my ol' lady stole it' She is adamant that her mum stole the letter an actor ' wrote' to her, so that's why she never became an actress. Except, going back to how powerful men were in those days, White American men especially, he may have not even written a letter, probably forgetting about her and just complimenting her because it was the heat of the moment type. This shows that Curley's wife is not mentally strong enough to come to terms and face reality of what actually might have happened, again that's her way of feeling important, because deep down she is a weak individual.