

# Of mice and men – the american dream

Literature, Russian Literature



The term American dream may not be used too often any more, but especially in the 1930's it was a very motivating term for the working class. Whether their dream was to own their own company, support their family or even just own a piece of land to call their own, the thought of having a dream that they could fulfil if only they worked hard enough was keeping them moving forward. George and Lennie's dream was the latter, they longed to own a piece of land, to have animals, and live so no one would have control over them.

But throughout the course of the novel, some of their choices adjust the final outcome of their dream. By the end of *Of Mice and Men* Lennie and George's dream has been altered in many ways. Although Lennie was killed in the end of the novel, a version of his dream still came true. The basis of Lennie's dream was that he would be safe from harm and people running after him and that he would be stopped from hurting anyone accidentally.

By killing Lennie, George gave him what it was he wanted, even if he didn't realize it at the time. " Ever'body gonna be nice to you.

Ain't gonna be no more trouble. Nobody gonna hurt nobody or steal from 'em" (Steinbeck 106). Without Lennie living, he would no longer be wanted by the people from Weed for accused rape. He would also be spared from Curley and his revengeful killing, because of the accidental killing of Curley's wife. George knew what he had to do but he didn't want Lennie to feel any pain in the process. " Shoot him right in the back of the head...he wouldn't feel nothing" (Steinbeck 45). The way Carlson shot Candy's old dog was the

same way that George shot Lennie. Right in the back of the head he said softly" (Steinbeck 107).

The method he used to end Lennie's life was much more merciful and humane than Curley's plan. George also wanted Lennie to be at peace, thinking about their dream, their ranch, before he died. Killing Lennie was George's only option. If Curley had gotten to him he would have had a painful death and even in the possibility of Lennie's escape, he would eventually be tracked down and killed or sent to an asylum because of his mental disabilities.

Because of George's death and the circumstances they put themselves in, Lennie did not get to see the day that they owned a ranch, but he did ultimately get his dream. We never find out for sure if George fulfills his dream and gets a ranch, but even though Lennie died, he still has an opportunity to achieve this dream. Lennie is now not driving George out of his jobs and on the run. " You can't keep a job and you lose me ever' job I get. Jus' keep me shovin' all over the country all the time" (Steinbeck 11).

Since George could keep a job without Lennie, he would be able to get the full stake of pay each month for his ranch and raise the money quicker. He also still has the support of Candy. " S'pose I went in with you guys. Tha's three hundred fifty bucks I'd put in. I ain't much good, but I could cook and tend the chickens" (Steinbeck 59). Not only could George keep a job but he could also have a much more leisurely life. " I could get along so easy and so nice if I didn't have you on my tail. I could live so easy and maybe have a girl" (Steinbeck 7).

Without having to care for Lennie, George would be able to relax and live a more normal life as a worker. Because of Lennie's death George may even be able to get the ranch faster and by doing so still achieve a version of the American dream. The American dream is a motivation for many characters in *Of Mice and Men* but through a series of events, not all their dreams remain the same by the end of the novel. George and Lennie's dream was their ambition, their reason to keep persevering. They always had it as their ideal, their goal to strive for.

If they could just own a ranch they would be happy. But throughout the novel, Lennie is killed and his dream is fulfilled by not having life at all. George's dream is now altered because Lennie would not be a part of it. Even Crooks had a dream, to go in on the ranch with George, Lennie and Candy, but because of his race, he had to realize that his dream could not be that lofty and his dream was forgotten. All during the novel, the message that is portrayed is that the American dream that is fulfilled is not the same as the dream they originally began with.

Throughout the duration of *Of Mice and Men*, many versions of the American dream demonstrated motivational objectives for the characters. Lennie longed for peace and safety. George wished to have a leisurely life and Crooks hoped for a world where he was not discriminated against. Throughout the novel, these dreams were changed and sometimes even forgotten. Because of this, Steinbeck gives the impression that the American dream can never truly be fulfilled to the dreamer's original standards.