

# Curley's wives' desires of mice and men

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Curley's wife How does Steinbeck present Curley's wife's' desires in the book 'Of Mice and Men'? John Steinbeck's novella, 'Of Mice and Men' depicts the struggle of two wayward men during the Great Depression of the 1930's.

Although a variety of characters in the story are presented as the outcasts of society, Curley's wife is perhaps the character in which readers feel most sympathetic towards. Essentially, Curley's wife represents the image of all women in the society in which Steinbeck lived.

Society in the 1930's discriminated heavily against women; they were essentially objects, whose sole purpose in life was to serve their husbands, objects that were to be simply seen, and not heard. Steinbeck presents the female genders lack of identity and individuality in 1930's society by deliberately not naming Curley's wife. Her missing a name emphasizes her second-class citizenship. The woman has no name because she is just an object, the "property" of someone else.

Curley's wife is deemed unimportant, victimized as a direct result of her gender, the majority of male characters in the novel have names, even Crooks; the stable buck, who because of his race is probably viewed as being beneath Curley's wife in terms of society's classification. Curley's wife can only be seen in reference to her husband, who (supposedly) owns and controls her body, and by extension, her. Curley's wife desires attention above all other dreams. As the only female on the ranch, she has no one she could relate to and is presented by Steinbeck to be incredibly isolated and shrouded in feelings of loneliness.

She appears to present a facade on the ranch, burying her isolation with boldness and femininity ' She had full, rouged lips and wide spaced eyes,

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heavily made up. Her fingernails were red. Her hair hung in little rolled clusters, like sausages'. She continuously uses the excuse of looking for Curley as a means of extracting some sort of communication with others on the ranch ' I'm looking for Curley'. ' He was in here a minute ago, but he went'. ' Oh! '. She put her hands behind her back and leaned against the door frame so that her body was thrown forward'.

Steinbeck presents Curley's wife in a flirtatious manner in order to highlight her loneliness and isolation on the ranch. She often feels depressed and doesn't understand why the ranch workers are afraid to communicate with her ' What's the matter with me? Ain't I got a right to talk to nobody? '. As a result of her loneliness, she often uses her body and circumstance as the only woman on an all male ranch to extract conversation from individuals. Steinbeck presents her flirtatiousness by displaying Curley's wife's liking of the colour red ; red as a colour connotes emotions of passion, desire and love.

Curley's wife is a temptress who leads men into trouble. She represents sexuality and danger. This has led to some commentators who see ' Of Mice and Men' as being a biblical allegory to describe Curley's wife as an Eve figure. Curley's wife's isolation also leads her to desire power. Her position in society as a woman virtually denies her of any power, however she chooses to use her position as the wife of the boss' son to exert what little authority she can muster onto individuals who she believes are beneath her in society's classifications.

Curley's wife uses her miniscule quantity of authority to insult and manipulate those beneath her 'I could get you strung up in a tree so easy it

ain't even funny. ' Wants freedom, is suffocated ; pathetic fallacy, when she dies, weather is hot and stifling because that is how she feels on the ranch.. suffocated Alongside Curley's wife's desire for attention, I believe she also seeks freedom. As the only female living on the ranch, she has no one she can talk or relate to, she is Curley's wife but feels that she cannot relate to him.

Curley's wife admits herself that she has no one to talk to, it appears to the reader that Curley himself observes his wife as more an object to flaunt, rather than a partner who he supposedly loves. She may potentially be jealous of the women that work in the cathouses as they seem to gain more attention I believe she feels, as Curley's wife, she is obligated to present a show to the other men living on the ranch, as she is Curley's prized possession, and he seems to want to flaunt her ' Well, I tell ya what - Curley says he's keepin' that hand soft for his wife. '