

# Explore the ways steinbeck presents one or more minor characters in 'of mice and ...

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Explore the ways Steinbeck presents one or more minor characters in 'Of Mice and Men'. In this essay I will be giving you an insight on how Steinbeck presents one minor character in the novel, *Of Mice and Men*. John Steinbeck wrote the novel in 1937; the novel is set on a ranch in the Salinas Valleys in California during the Great Depression due to the Wall Street Crash in America. America's stock market crashed and many people ended up unemployed, which led to them leaving their families to look for jobs around America, including some of the characters in the novel. My essay is focused on Curley's wife and I will be discussing the ways Steinbeck presents her appearance, personality, dreams and the ranch worker's views of her.

Steinbeck presents Curley's wife as a flirtatious woman and attention seeking towards other men. This is shown on (page 53): "She wore a cotton house dress and red mules, on the insteps of which were little bouquets of red ostrich feathers, rouged lips, wide spaced eyes, with red fingernails". This quote foreshadows and signifies that Curley's wife will have sexual feelings towards other men throughout the story because of the ways she appears and acts. Steinbeck also presents her wearing the colour red throughout the story. The colour red is a colour synchronised with danger; this shows that people should keep away from her because she may be dangerous. The colour red can also be synchronised with love and romance; this means that she could be flirtatious towards other men and she also can show love towards them. This is why she dresses this way; it also suggests to the reader that Curley's wife acts seductively towards other men because she dresses up in a seductive way so she can catch the attention of other men on the ranch such as George and Lennie. She dresses that way because she is a

tramp and they like to seduce other men towards them despite having a husband called Curley. This also shows that she is not really loved by Curley because she needs other men to catch her attention and body. She also could be found innocent "wide spaced eyes" this is something which she cannot help. The workers on the ranch view Curley's wife in a negative way. Evidence to support this is "I seen em' poison before, but I never seen no piece of jailbait worse than her" Said George (to Lennie). This quote suggests that Curley's Wife is unsafe to be around because she is "jailbait" meaning she is a young woman considered in sexual terms. This shows that Curley's wife could land Lennie in jail due to her being presented in that way. Due to Lennie calling her "jailbait" this means that the reader is supposed to see Curley's wife in a negative way. This would also make the reader predict that Curley's wife would be dangerous, trouble and bad as the story progresses. George also says "worse than her" this is suggesting that she is the worst jailbait he has seen. The reader also learns that they have encountered a problem like this before "I seen em' poison before" this shows that they have come across another woman like this before. We see this in the introduction in Weed, Lennie "pets" a girl's pretty dress and frightens her away which makes George and Lennie run out of town due to people chasing them. This quote may be prejudicing the reader because before the reader has actually learnt much about the character they are already presenting her in a negative way. This is because women were not seen as important in the 1930s and they had no rights therefore women were not well-respected so men could just talk about women in that manner. Steinbeck presents Curley's wife in a provocative way so she can be noticed.

This suggests that she uses provocative body language, 'she put her hands behind her back and leaned against the door frame so that her body was thrown forward'. This is her flimsy excuse to be with the men on the ranch. She both talks and acts playfully and flirtatiously in front of the ranch workers. She behaves in this manner because her sexuality is her only weapon to gain attention. Therefore this makes her body as an object because by using her body she can be noticed. Loneliness is a major theme in the novel. This suggests that she does this because she is lonely; she is the loneliest character in the story. She is also the only woman character so she needs company by anyone. Her husband, Curley does not really love her and she does not love him. Several times throughout the story she does this she says she's looking for Curley but really that is just an excuse to be with other men. Steinbeck makes great use of isolation; it is shown throughout the story. Curley's Wife is a character who is isolated. This shows that she is isolated because she can't really go anywhere nor do much on a ranch so she needs people to keep her busy so her time can pass by. The main theme of the novel is 'The American Dream'. Like many characters in the book, Curley's wife also has a dream. She dreams of being a film star. Steinbeck makes very good use of dreams throughout the novel. Steinbeck uses context 'The American Dream' to present Curley's wife's dream. This can be shown in chapter five on (page 125) "Could 'a been in the movies an' had nice clothes- all them nice clothes like they wear. An' I could 'a sat in big hotels and had pitchers took of me. This quote shows that 'The American Dream' is important context here. 'The American Dream' states that anyone can achieve anything they dream of in America. However, for Curley's wife,

like lots of ordinary Americans, this does not turn out to be reality. She also repeats "I coulda" this suggests that it could have been but now is no longer a possibility. Instead being in Hollywood she is stuck with her unloving husband Curley who does not really care for her. This may be the reason she is always attention seeking around the ranch so she can get noticed because her dream was to be noticed and "had pitchers" took of her. Steinbeck presents her in regret who has failed in life. In addition she talks about how she wants people to take pictures of her so she can be famous. She also says this before Lennie kills her this suggests Steinbeck's view of the pointlessness of dreams.