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loneliness is



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han Rainman in giving us understandings of loneliness and friendship. Steinbeck's novel "Of Mice and Men" cannot accurately be compared in effectiveness of its themes with the movie Rainman. The importance of each theme differs in both- in Steinbeck's novel, loneliness is the most dominant theme, and in Rainman the major theme is friendship.

Levinson and Steinbeck both do a brilliant job at showing the major themes in both materials to the greatest of their potential, and the minor themes are somewhat overpowered because of this. One extremely clever way that Steinbeck has more effectively conveyed the theme of loneliness to the reader is by never letting the characters develop or change in "Of Mice and Men". Very early in the novel we are introduced to George and Lennie as they are about to start new jobs on the ranch. The reader is made aware directly that Lennie has a mental disability, and really has no attachment to anyone or anything except George. Throughout the novel, this fact never changes. Lennie's disability never alters, and he only cares for George. George is also never developed in the story.

He feels greatly burdened by the responsibility of caring for Lennie. On page 7, he says, "I could get along so easy and nice if I didn't have you on my tail." George almost wishes that he could lead a normal life; not the one he's living now. This mindset of wishing for more than he has continues throughout the novel. As well as wishing to not have to look after Lennie, he and Lennie share a common wish- to one day own their own land. Although George is a lot less enthusiastic (and a lot more realistic) about achieving this, he still longs for it. It's still something he hopes can be accomplished in his lifetime.

Through the main characters thinking and acting the same for the course of the story, it doesn't give the reader any window of opportunity to bond or become closer to them- therefore escalating the overall feeling of loneliness much more effectively than Rainman does. The character development in Rainman is much more obvious. One of the main characters, Charlie, is extremely materialistic and self absorbed when we are first introduced to him. Throughout the course of the story we view major changes in his attitude and ways of thinking. An example of such an instance would be in the beginning of the story.

We are shown Charlie's ignorant, narrow minded way of thinking towards Ray's disability, and as the story continues, Charlie's thoughts towards Ray, and how he perceives his mental condition drastically change. By the end of the movie, we see to the full extent of how Charlie's way of thinking and life in general have been changed and affected by Ray. Because of the actions of Charlie throughout the movie, and the way his character has developed, the writer does not accurately portray the theme of loneliness.

This is because the viewer is shown and made aware of the growing love and friendship that develops between Ray and Charlie. The main characters, however, are not the only characters who have limited change and growth in Steinbeck's novel. Crooks, the black man, is a prime example.

He has to live in the harness room, away from the other men. Because racism was socially acceptable in the book's time frame, he was isolated and degraded. This was a constant in the novel. He was referred to as Nigger'

constantly, and was even verbally assaulted by Curley's Wife- a character who was also slandered and labelled, but because of her gender.

" Well, you keep your place then, Nigger. I could get you strung up on a tree so easy it ain't even funny." pg 85. None of the characters change their opinion on Crooks in the novel- he's always the crippled old Nigger. " Of Mice and Men" has limited development in the character's thoughts towards other characters, which more effectively fuels the sense of detachment and loneliness. This heightens the feeling of loneliness much more than Rainman does, because in Levinson's movie the minor characters also grow and show some development as the plot continues. The minor character Susanna, from Rainman, shows major changes in her mindset towards Ray by the end of the movie. Looking back in the film to when she is initially introduced to Ray, she extended her kindness towards him only as a means of keeping the peace between the two brothers, rather than through a genuine wish to make him feel welcome.

As the story evolves, Susanna's friendship towards Ray becomes something of her own free will rather than a forced gesture. This shows a strong development in Susanna's mindset towards Ray, and because of this it does not effectively convey the theme of loneliness as powerfully as Steinbeck has in his novel. Another way Steinbeck effectively conveys the feeling of loneliness throughout his novel is by having only slight changes in the setting of the story. The very beginning and the very end take place in the brush- the place George told Lennie to go if he did anything wrong. However, the rest of the book is set at the ranch, where Lennie and George work picking barley. This limited setting change gives Steinbeck a solid

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foundation, from which he can build upon to effectively portray loneliness to the reader through other means- such as the characters. This works excellently, because in *Rainman*, the backdrop is constantly changing, and this presents the viewer with a broad range of changing scenery. By having restricted setting change in *Of Mice and Men*, it lets the reader focus fully on the more important things, and therefore the themes are presented more efficiently.

An additional theme that both these pieces share is the theme of friendship. *Of Mice and Men*, however, is nowhere near as effective in presenting this theme as *Rainman* is. Levinson lets us watch as Charlie and Ray go from not knowing each other, to forming a deep bond with one another.

This development in their characters reels us further into the story, and the journey. Through the growth and change we can clearly see in Charlie and Ray, the theme of friendship is much more successfully displayed in *Rainman*. Because of Steinbeck's intention to expand on the theme of loneliness, the friendship that George and Lennie have is left in the background. Rather than concentrating on the strong bond between the two, he instead chooses to pounce on the flaws which other characters possess. This, in turn, makes the reader somewhat forget about the special friendship of George and Lennie.

Because both of these characters were never developed, the reader doesn't feel a part of their relationship. This pushes George and Lennie's friendship even further out of the reader's mind- making it very hard for them to

identify with it. This greatly differs from the presentation of this theme in Rainman.

The journey- both physically and emotionally- portray the theme of friendship much more effectively, through its gradual change. The physical journey, that is, the trip from Ray's institute to Charlie's car company, invites the viewer to see the bond that slowly develops throughout the film between Charlie and Ray. If this part of the plot never came to be, it would be extremely hard for the viewer to identify with their growing friendship.

Because of the car trip, the viewer feels like they are right there with Charlie and Ray- through the good times and the bad- and feels extremely close to them. We bond with the characters and truly embrace the friendship they eventually possess. This varies from *Of Mice and Men*, because George and Lennie's friendship was a constant, and like many other things in the novel, never changed.

This factor isolated the reader away, which in effect amplified the sense of loneliness, rather than friendship. The emotional journey of Charlie and Ray also effectively showed the viewer the theme of friendship. Through meeting Ray, Charlie transformed himself spiritually into everything Ray needed- a loving, caring companion. Ray also changed slightly- which is amazing for an autistic person who bases their lives around routine and familiarity.

By developing the characters' personalities and thoughts on one another, the viewer is taken on the journey of change too. In *Of Mice and Men*, the reader is looking down on the happenings at the ranch, rather than being in the

heart of the action. These differences overall portray the theme of friendship a lot more effectively in Rainman than in Of Mice and Men.

In conclusion, the differing importance of loneliness and friendship in both pieces make it extremely difficult to say exactly how effective "Of Mice and Men" is in conveying these themes to the reader, in comparison with Rainman. Initially, superficial comparisons are made about each conveying an equal amount of significance for both of the themes. However, after exploring what the major and minor themes were in the novel and film, and how both Steinbeck and Levinson efficiently portrayed only their major theme, it is easy to see that these two cannot be effectively compared to one another because of these differences.