

Of mice and men:
celebration of life or
depressing?



**ASSIGN
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ENGLISH LITERARY ESSAY OF MICE AND MEN Brianevan C. Handoyo 11 IB English A2 Mrs Maureen Due Date; 03/09/08 Life is an array of emotions and experiences. At times it blesses us with experiences that instill feelings of happiness and joy, in which we are able to celebrate life and all it could offer us. Other times life hits us in the face, letting us endure hardships, sadness, depression and loss. Most may argue that *Of Mice and Men* is either intended to celebrate the joys of life or meant to be a depressing book.

Yet what most fail to see is that *Of Mice and Men* portrays both aspects of human life through the mutual friendship of two uncommonly men, George and Lennie, the dream they both share, and the sudden calamity that befall them. Relationships are an important essence of life. Humans need relationships because we are dependent on each other to survive. Babies need their mothers to feed and nurse them, and friends need each other to support, comfort, sympathize, and understand them. The friendship between George and Lennie outlined the core of *Of Mice and Men*, and although it's sometimes idealized and exaggerated throughout the novel, there is no question of its sincerity.

Lennie thinks of George as his only friend, his guardian, someone who he can trust and depend on, someone who had accepted him for who he is despite his childlike tendencies. Every time he did something wrong, his only thoughts would be of George's disapproval. " I done a real bad thing. I shouldn't have did that.

George'll be mad. An'... he said.... An' hide in the brush till he come. He's gonna be mad.

" (pg. 2) On the other hand, George thinks of Lennie as a constant source of frustration, and as he frequently mention in the novel, " God, you're a lot of trouble. I could get along so easy and nice if I didn't have you on my tail," (pg. 7) someone who he would be better living without. Yet, he had taken responsibility of Lennie's welfare and is clearly devoted to him.

George never took care of Lennie out of pity, he did it because he needs the companionship. You see, George needed Lennie more than Lennie needed George. Lennie's innocence and childlike behaviors softened the heart of the hardened, cynical George. Dreams have the power to give hope and comfort for people to continue living even in the harshest of conditions. A man lost in a jungle or dessert would struggle to survive rather than accept his fate due to his dream of being reunited with his loved ones.

The setting Of Mice and Men took place during the Great Depression in the US, where high unemployment, poverty, low profits, deflation and lost opportunities for economic growth and personal advancement struck the population. Many were forced to live a hand to mouth existence, and lost hope in becoming more than what they are. Of Mice and Men emphasizes the loneliness and powerlessness of men during the Great Depression through two characters, Candy and Crooks. Candy, a one- handed ranch handyman, fear that his age is making him useless and worries about his future on the ranch. Candy is the portrayal of a broken man, hopeless and scared. Yet, after he listened to George's and Lennie's dream of having their own farm, he eagerly wanted to be a part of that dream " Maybe if I give you guys my money, you'll let me hoe the garden even after I ain't no good at it.

And I'll wash dishes and little chickens and stuff like that. But I'll be on our own place, an' I'll be let to work on my own place. " (pg. 60).

His eagerness shows the power of the Eden-like vision of owning a private land in the Great Depression, which was rare to find among any ranch workers. Death has always been a source a grief, sadness and depression. When a person dies, they leave broken bonds, and unfulfilled dreams. Of Mice and Men turned into a more depressing note when Lennie accidentally killed Curley's wife.

To save Lennie from a life behind bars or a terrifying death in the hands of Curley, George shot Lennie hoping that he had given him a peaceful death. Lennie's death ended the possibility of the dream in becoming reality because it was Lennie's unquestioned belief in that dream that made the hardened, cynical George imagined the possibilities in that dream as well. George and Candy's belief for a brighter future depended solely on Lennie, and that belief was taken by Lennie to his grave. Another depressing aspect in Of Mice and Men the feeling of profound loneliness felt by many of the characters which they confessed as the story develops. George sets the tone of these confessions with the quote, " Guys like us, that work on ranches, are the loneliest guys in the world. They got no family.

They don't belong no place. " (pg. 6). Candy, Crooks and Curley's wife all confessed of their deep loneliness. For Candy, he was lonely because he felt to be the only one of the other ranch workers that is getting more useless everyday and feels uncertain of his future in the ranch. For Crooks, it was being segregated from the rest of the workers that made him lonely.

And for Curley's wife, it was the inability to talk to anyone else other than her husband. For George, the hope of such companionship dies with Lennie, and true to his original estimation, he will go through life alone. In conclusion, the relationship between George and Lennie and the dream the dream they shared portrayed the celebration of life in *Of Mice and Men*, while the loneliness of the characters and Lennie's death express the more depressing side of the novel. *Of Mice and Men* revealed the reality of human life, which is volatile and unpredictable. One day life may lift you up and gives hope just to take it away the next day.

The wise Forrest Gump quoted " Life was like a box of chocolates...you never know what you're gonna get. "