

Summary – of mice and men



Steinbeck, John. *Of Mice and Men*. New York: Penguin Books, 1965, 107 pages This is a novel that takes place during the latter stages of prohibition and the depression era. It centers on the pursuit of the American dream. There were many who dreamed of possessing it, but only two men dared to embark on the journey. The two farm workers seemed to be on a lifelong mission to possess the goal of many others, during that era. As, the men navigate through the affairs of life, the pursuit of the American dream takes many twists and turns. It is a lifelong struggle for the characters; as they fall short the prize.

The men experience, one pit fall, after another. However, nothing could have prepared them for what destiny seems to have planned for them. The novel centers on, two men and their purpose of life. George was a small man who cursed a lot, although he was somewhat witty. He seemed to have a sixth sense, about the people he encountered. His life was dedicated to the pursuit of the American dream " he wanted a plot of land to call his own," and the care of his lifelong friend. Lennie is mentally challenged and simple of speech. He possesses a large frame and has the strength of many men.

Lennie was not aware of his strength, due to his disability. He also wanted a piece of the American dream. " He wanted a plot of land to call his own," so he could raise rabbits. There were many supporting characters, which help shape the novel and bring a sense of mystery and intrigue. Many of these characters shared the common theme of the novel, which is the pursuit of the American dream. The dream was within the reach of many, but seemed far away. These characters had a goal, but they did not have a plan to accomplish that goal. The boss was mean and his son was even meaner.

The boss' son name was Curley; he had a chip on his shoulder. He did not like Lennie, because he was a big man. Curley was married and his wife had the eye for the ranch workers. She is flirtatious, and her flirting would cause her untimely demise. The supporting characters were: Candy, Slim, Curley, Curley's wife, Crooks, and Carlson. George and Lennie have been lifelong friends. George promised Lennie's, Aunt Clara that he would take care of him. Lennie was the victim of many tricks, as they were growing up. George realized that Lennie was very gullible and decided not to play tricks on him anymore, because Lennie could hurt himself.

The two men are working on a job in Weed. Lennie gets into trouble with a woman. She accuses him of trying to rape her. A lynch mob is formed, George and Lennie flee. The two men wind up in an area south of Soledad, seeking their next place of employment. George and Lennie get off the bus and walk the remainder of the way. It is almost night fall, so they decide to camp out in the brush. Fate would have the two men visit this area, once again. George likes the secluded area and asks Lennie to return there, if he ever got into trouble. George knew that Lennie always manages to get himself into trouble.

They arrive at the ranch with aspirations of making enough money to get a plot of land to call their own. The two men would work, rest and resume work at their discretion, because they would own the land. The dream of owning land is what fueled the men work day after day. Lennie was left at the ranch alone, and manages get into trouble. George and the other men decided to engage in some activities. Lennie was in the barn sadden over a mistake he just committed. He accidentally kills his pet puppy and he knew that George

would be mad. Curley's flirtatious wife walks into the barn and attempts to seduce Lennie.

He rejects her, but her charm is too much for Lennie to handle. He succumbs to her coy behavior. She decides to shut-down her charm. Lennie was overcome with emotion and couldn't control himself. Curley's wife starts to scream. Lennie wants to silence her, so he doesn't get into trouble with George. He accidentally kills the woman and partly buries her in the hay. He flees to a predestined location and waits for George's arrival. George is faced with a decision that will shatter his world and ultimately cause him to give up on his lifelong dream. Candy shows George the dead body, and now he has a decision to make.

Will he flee the ranch, go meet Lennie and runaway together, like they did in Weed or tell the men, that it was Lennie who killed Curley's wife and allow him to be lynched. George has to protect himself, because everyone would think that he was apart of the murder and he would be jailed or lynched too. George thinks that the men will track down Lennie, lynch him and not give him a fair trial. George could not imagine this happening to his lifelong friend. He had to do something to protect the integrity of his friend. He decided that he will kill Lennie himself, and protect him from the lynch mob.

The scene in the novel goes full circle. It began, in Soledad and ends in Soledad. George and the lynch mob search a wooded area for Lennie. George knows where Lennie is hiding. He goes ahead of the men to meet Lennie, because he has another plan in mind. George finds Lennie sitting on the riverbank and kills him before the lynch mob arrives. I do not read

novels, because I am not a fast reader; I have decided that if I am going to take the time to read something, it is going to be a self-help book. This is the first novel that I have read in years; my guess would be twenty-five years.

The book held my interest, it was full of intrigue. I was shocked at my desire to read more and more of the novel. I found myself at times not wanting to put the book down. I like the author's ability to draw the reader into the book as he describes the settings and characters with great detail. I felt, as if I was actually living during the era described in the book. As I read the novel, I began to develop emotions for the characters. I wanted desperately for them to achieve their goals or dreams. The outcome or conclusion of the novel saddened me.

I enjoy happy ending and this book's ending was far from happy. I began to meditate, on whether I should read the novel, again. I couldn't help, but to think that maybe I didn't read the entire book (I could have skipped over pages, without knowing it). If I read the novel again, maybe the ending would change and just, maybe, the men would possess their dreams. I pondered and said to myself-hey, this is America; we always have a happy ending. I read the book again, and was even more distraught by the outcome. I gained new revelation, the second time I read the novel. I realized that the men's lives were even more devastating, than I had thought at first. George and Lennie wanted a plot, so they could "live off the fatta the lan." Was this too much to ask? I began to wonder, and make comparisons in my own life.

George killed the dream; Candy wanted to hang onto the dream of owning land even though he knew Lennie wouldn't be around to possess it with him and George. He inquired of George, about moving forward. George stated, "I

think I knowed from the very first. I think I knowed we'd never do her. " I think that George, never really believed he would accomplish his dream.

He gave up without a fight. He could have pressed on despite the obstacles that stood in his way. He and Candy could have obtained the dream, together. People, during the depression era, gave up on their dreams too soon. They were within reach, but for many reasons; they fail to accomplish them. The characters, in the book, all had dreams or aspirations of living a better quality of life. We can draw this conclusion, because they were employed and didn't live as tramps or hoboes. Although, being employed, many of them wanted to achieve greater success, but misery fell on them, and crushed their hope.

Being a drifter or loner is a tough life. The farm workers didn't have many chances at success. The slumping economy seemed to be an enemy of their success. The unemployment rate was high and droughts were crippling. All these things caused them to lose focus. The times haven't changed much, since the depression era. The people of today are still giving up their dreams for the same reasons. The economy, agricultural problems, alcoholism, divorce, lack of motivation and failure to implement a blueprint for accomplishing their dreams, are some of the major obstacles in the path of success.

The jails and streets are filled with people who have big dreams. They let the affairs of life or external circumstances dictate the path they travel in life. I admire the author's ability to create a timeless novel. This book will continue to create controversy and inspiration, as long as, there are hard times, and

people with dreams. The characters in the novel didn't have to fail at life, all they needed was encouraging. Life is not a ten round fight. It isn't over, until you say it's over. Life is going to knock you down; if it knocks you down even times, get up seven times. Everyone experiences hardship or something that could make them lose the fight. The characters, in the novel, and many characters of today, don't realize-the fight is fixed and they're favored to win. If I said it was going to be easy, that would be a lie. Ladies and gentlemen, in this corner, is failure and you're in the other corner. Failure is a worthy opponent, but he is no match for you. The American dream is within reach of the people, today; just like it was within the reach of the people who lived during the early 1900's.