

# Of mice and men – loneliness



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In terms of emotional stability, there is only one thing in life that is really needed and that is friends. Without friends, people would suffer from loneliness and solitude. Loneliness leads to low self-esteem and deprivation. In the novel, *Of Mice and Men*, by John Steinbeck, the characters, Crooks, Candy, and Curlys wife all exhibit some form of loneliness. They are driven towards the curiosity of George and Lennies friendship because they do not have that support in their life. Through his novel, *Of Mice and Men*, Steinbeck demonstrates that often times, a victim of isolation will have a never-ending search to fulfill a friendship.

“ A guy goes nuts if he aint got nobody. Dont matter no difference who the guy is, longs he with you. I tell ya a guy gets too lonely an he gets sick”  
(Steinbeck, 13)

Crooks is a black man that experiences isolation because the society in which he resides is racist. As a result, the previous quote was his means of finding a personal connection to Lennie. Like Lennie, Crooks has a relationship with loneliness. He knows that when people get lonely, they tend to get sick. Studies show that people who suffer from loneliness have higher incidence of health problems. This can be determined based on his emotional behavior. “ A 1998 study showed that 50 percent of patients with heart disease who reported feeling very isolated were not married and had no one in whole they could communicate with, died within five years.” (ub-counseling. buffalo. edu) At the rate Crooks is headed, he will probably die in a short period of time. Gerontology stated “ seniors, who attend church at least weekly, live longer than those who dont.” By attending church, the attendees maintain a relationship with god and have the ability to relieve

themselves of loneliness. They can deal with their severe problem of loneliness through attending church or other social events and in turn, live longer. Crooks is rejected from every group of people and cannot socially interact with others.

“ Loneliness can result from rejection” (Couns. uiuc. edu/loneline. htm)

Although discrimination is still present during the time period of the book (early 20th century), Crooks still attempts to make friends. Others treat Crooks unjust because he is different from others given that he is black. He does not know how to treat others because of the way others treat him; with disrespect. Furthermore, he does not know how to vent his frustration and as a result, lashes out at others because they are cruel to him. Crooks is not allowed to participate in daily events with white people. He is treated unfairly and therefore acts the same way toward the white people (the ones who offended him.)

“ Cause Im black. They play cards in there, but I cant play because Im Black. They say I stink. Well I tell you, you all stink to me!” (Steinbeck, 75)

Nobody likes to be forced to live in a barn, let alone to work only with the horses. Crooks spent most of his nights reading and he keeps away from others because of the way he is treated and this eventually leads to his very own emotional downfall. He is treated as an outcast and is forced to find friendship the only way he can, through the books that he reads. The Counseling Center of the University of Buffalo said that: “ When you are alone, use the time to enjoy yourself. For example, listen to music or watch a favorite television show. Do not spend the time eating endlessly or worrying

about your problems.” (Karlene Robinson, [www.ub-counseling.buffalo.edu](http://www.ub-counseling.buffalo.edu))

Obviously Crooks is aware of his problem and tries to cope with it through books and magazines.

Crooks is fascinated by the strength of the friendship of Lennie and George, especially how close they are. Crooks said, “ Well, spouse, jus spouse he dont come back. Whatll you do then?” (Steinbeck, 79) Crooks asks these questions because he does not have any friends. He was curious about the friendship of Lennie and George. He wants the people to feel the way that he did when he was lonely, having nobody with them. He is striving to achieve sympathy and understanding from others. Crooks would work for nothing if it meant communicating with others. Crooks offers his services to clear out his problems of loneliness.

“ If youguys would want a hand to work for nothing just his keep, why Id come an lend a hand. I aint so cipped I cant work like a son-of-a-bitch if I want to.” (Steinbeck, 84) This quote supports that he is attracted to the friendship of Lennie and George. It also proves that all Crooks wants to do was talk to people, and he will do anything for it, even work like a “ son-of-a-bitch.”

Candy, an old, physically disabled swamper, has worked on the ranch practically his whole life. When Candy was on the ranch, he got into an accident that cost him a physical handicap. Farm machinery took away his hand, leaving him money and loneliness. The Counseling Center of the University of Buffalo said that loneliness means to also feel: “ excluded from a group or a result of a tragedy”. As a result of Candys age and disability he

has a feeling of uselessness. Since Candy feels that he is old, he places himself in a state of mind that handicaps him more than his missing hand ever will. He looks down on himself as an old worthless man wasting away his last few years. He is often afraid of losing his work, not to mention his whole life.

“ I got hurt four years ago. Theyll can me purty soon. Jus as soon as I cant swamp out no bunk houses theyll put me on the county.” (Steinbeck, 66)

Candy is so down that he puts himself into a state of solitude. He is often allowed to go out with the other guys, but he always refuses due to his negative aspect towards himself. Candy thinks that nobody wants to be friends with him because of his disability. Eventually, he tries to find a friendship by attempting to join the dream of George and Lennie, to own and run their own little ranch. This is one of Candys desperate attempts to find a place in society and meaning in life. Candy offered his services to become a part of George and Lennies friendship and dream.

“ Ill wash dishes an little chick stuff like that. But Ill be on your own place, an Ill be let to work on our own place.” (Steinbeck, 66)

Candy was attempting to overcome his loneliness and regain a positive outlook by seeking out situations that enable him to get involved with other ranchers. It is quite possible that he was sad and lonely because he was in search of the right person to be friends with. After Candy lost his dog, he felt much more lonely than he was before. The dog was something that Candy had owned and confided with within his years. He felt worthless because now he didnt own a single important thing. Candy and his dog had the same

relationship that George and Lennie had shared for so many years. While Lennie had George and the ranchers had each other, Candy did not have anybody and this put him in a condition of sorrow and depression. Every character in the book is different and no protagonists act alike.

Nobody in the book shared the same interests and/or dreams as Candy did. This is why he tried so hard to gain the attention and friendship of Lennie and George. He offers everything that he had to support the friendship including money, but money will never buy genuine friendship. " Maybe if I give you money, youll let me how in the garden even after I aint no good at it." (Steinbeck, 66) All of these characters are alike because, not only were they affected by loneliness, they were always in search for ways to solve these dilemmas. Another character who possesses the same inner conflict of loneliness is Curleys wife.

Curleys wife is a tease to everybody on the ranch. She will dress and act sort of like a " whore". She makes use of her stunning body to gain the attention of the ranchers to sooth her loneliness. These acts give her a sense of relief and made her feel wanted so she can share her personal concerns and experiences. Because of her reputation for being a flirt, none of the farmhands wants to talk to her, but no matter how hard she tries, she can never fit in.

Curleys, insecure feelings towards his wife, forces her into flirting with the other ranchers. Curleys wife also dressed rather " slutty" and fairly bare. One sign of loneliness is when " You become overly critical of your physical

appearance.” (www. ub-counseling. buffalo. edu) Many people do not want to talk to her because of her reputation for being a flirt and bothering others.

“ Maybe you better go along to you own house now. We dont want no trouble.” (Steinbeck, 85)

Curleys wife notices how simple-minded Lennie is and takes advantage of that situation. She knows that he would be the only one where she could discuss her problems that she deals with everyday. Loneliness is caused when “ you feel theres no one in your life with whom you can share your feelings and experiences.” (Www. cound. uiuc. edu/loneline. htm) One problem that Curleys wife was unaware of, was Lennies curiosity and interest in soft objects. When Curleys wife was done explaining her problems to somebody that could care less about them, she asked him to stroke her hair. But when she began to yell at Lennie, he just pulled her hair tighter. This leads to the death of Curlys wife and now she will not have to worry about being lonely ever again. This could be thought of as a misfortune, but as a positive aspect as well because it ended her suffering. Curlys wifes case of loneliness was the most severe throughout the novel. She struggled in her society to find somebody that she could consult with. She tried and would do anything imaginable to dispatch her one psychological disorder, loneliness.

Loneliness is an inevitable fact of life that not even the strongest can avoid. Throughout the story, Of Mice and Men, the reader discovers the many sources of solitude, primarily being discrimination and prejudice. Crooks, Candy and Curleys wife all suffer the previous injustices resulting in loneliness and isolation. They learn to cope with their loneliness through

their interest in Lennie and Georges friendship. In some ways they are even envious of the bond. Often times, a victim of isolation will have a never-ending strive to fulfill a friendship.