

# The ways in which Steinbeck presents conflict in George's relationship with Lennie...

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'Of Mice and Men' is written by John Steinbeck, published in 1937. The novel is set in the 1930s during the Great Depression in California. The two protagonist characters, George and Lennie are farm workers who have a dream of one day owning their own ranch. They find work in a ranch near Soledad which means loneliness in Spanish, after escaping from Weed because of George's incident. They are met by different characters on the farm that all have a dream. In this story, the characters are lonely because although they are all together they all feel very much on their own.

George and Lennie do not see themselves as lonely as the other characters because they have each other and a dream to go away one day together. In the novel there are two main characters, Lennie and George who are friends. 'They had walked in single file down the path and even in the open one stayed behind the other. Both were dressed in denim trousers and in denim coats with brass buttons. Both wore black, shapeless hats and both carried tight blanket rolls slung over their shoulders. From the first sight of Lennie and George, a dynamic in their relationship is established. Though the men are outwardly of the same class (wearing identical clothes and carrying identical gear), one still walks behind the other. George is, of course, the leader, but it seems he doesn't value himself as necessarily superior to Lennie; they're both in it together. Lennie is a simple chap who has the mind of a child; George feels a need to look after Lennie and so takes on the role of a protective parent.

While this thing is going on George often gets frustrated with him because he has to look after him all the time and he doesn't have time for himself. On this George says: 'Whatever we ain't got, that's what you want. God a ' <https://assignbuster.com/the-ways-in-which-steinbeck-presents-conflict-in-georges-relationship-with-lennie-assignment/>

mighty, if I was alone I could live so easy. I could go get a job and work, and no trouble. No mess at all, and when the end of the month I could take my fifty bucks and go into town and get whatever I want. ' Steinbeck goes to great length to create very different personas for the two men even making the two different physically.

In the later part of the text George says ' If I was your relative I'd shoot myself. ' This shows that George doesn't really care for Lennie and he just wants an easy life as a migrant worker. At this time, The Great Depression, workers had to keep a job to keep them alive, so it was important to get the destination. Lennie at this time is being frustratingly slow therefore George is getting angry. The word ' relative' in this context means that George doesn't want the responsibility of Lennie because he can live a lot easier without the burden.

However as they only had each other George was reluctant to leave Lennie and travel alone, even though there were frequent conflicts between them. The context of the novel fits well with the scene when George is shouting at Lennie, after losing another job. Lennie has just been fired because he was accused of sexually assaulting women, when actually he didn't. George knows this and stuck up for Lennie, resulting in Lennie being fired too. ' I got you! You can't keep a job and you lose me every job I get'.

Here George loses his temper with Lennie, because once again they have been fired from their jobs, it causes conflict between the two. ' I got you! ' is a cruel and unnecessary thing to say, here George is insulting that his whole problem in life and the main reason for this upset is of the fact that he is

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having to put up with Lennie, it shows how much conflict and hurt was caused. This was caused in the 1930s, because the lack of money and food, all added up pressure, and resulted in mean outbursts like this.

George seems to be of two minds when it comes to Lennie. He complains constantly that if he did not have Lennie he would be done with a huge responsibility. He could go to town, drink when he wanted, have a girlfriend, shoot pool, and in general have a life. Tired of constantly reminding Lennie things he should remember, George gets quickly angry when Lennie forgets to get the firewood, for example and instead goes after the dead mouse. On the other hand George's anger is quickly under control and he blames himself for scolding Lennie.

Steinbeck makes it clear that, despite his complaining and frustration, George looks out for Lennie and genuinely cares for him. The fact that George has repeated his instructions many times, the fact that he scolds Lennie for doing things (like petting the dead mouse or drinking the untested water) that could hurt him, and most importantly, the fact that George retells the story of their shared dream indicate the close relationship the two men have. In fact, George acts as a parent towards Lennie.

He treats Lennie as one would treat a child, he laughs a great deal at Lennie's words, and because he knows how much Lennie likes soft things, he promises to try to get Lennie a puppy and let him take care for the rabbits when they finally get their own ranch. LENNIE ' I was only foolin', George. I don't want no ketchup. I wouldn't eat no ketchup if it were right here beside

me. ‘ GEORGE ‘ If it was here, you could have some’ LENNIE ‘ But I wouldn’t eat none, George. I’d leave it all for you.

You could cover you beans with it and I wouldn’t touch none of it. ‘ After George’s mean outburst about how much better off he’d be without Lennie, Lennie is the one who makes the first move to apologize for being a jerk. Even after this awful fight, the men’s friendship has a simple and remarkable erectness. George grudgingly knows he’s wrong and in fact he really loves his friend, and even though Lennie can’t express it in a terribly complex way, he loves George back.