

# Steinbecks present and development of the character curly

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



How does Steinbeck present and develop the character of Curly's wife in 'Of Mice and Men'? 1) In the beginning of "Of Mice and Men" we readers are made to perceive Curly's wife as a vain, trouble making bully who provokes people and intends on bringing their anger out, especially Lennie and is incapable of seeing the world from any perspective other than her own. We then realise by the end of the novel that she is only a sweet, innocent woman who just wanted to be cherished and wasn't able to reach her dreams. 2) Steinbeck introduces Curly's wife for the first time as a "girl" and not a woman. This implies that she only appears to the people on the ranch as a young naïve person. You could also interpret her being called a girl into not being respected by anyone. This could be seen as quiet odd as although she is the boss's son's wife she still hasn't gained any respect from the men on the ranch. We are made extremely aware that she isn't respected on the ranch when the men refer to her as "jailbait", "tramp", "tart", "bitch" and at one point is even referred to as a "loo loo", lulu also being the name of the dog on the ranch which could again reinforce the idea that they see her as unimportant and invaluable. 3) As we look into her being called a girl, it emphasises the fact that she is also vulnerable but she attempts to mask this by presenting herself in a seductive and flirtatious manner, i. e. being "heavily made up" & wearing the colour red quite often as Steinbeck describes her as wearing "red mules" and "full rouged lips". Some readers could choose to perceive this as again being seductive whereas others may see this as red being associated with danger, with the idea developing throughout the novella. 4) Now although Steinbeck refers to her as heavily made up and vulnerable, the readers' ideas may begin to

change as we notice references in the book which make her appear unattractive both physically and mentally. Steinbeck refers to her hair as "hung in little rolled clusters, like sausages" which doesn't sound very appealing. He also mentions how "her voice had a nasal, brittle quality" which again gives us the impression that she had an annoying voice which could make her appear less attractive which will give the readers second thoughts on her appearance and how they visualize her, and whether she is actually attractive or whether she desires to be attractive in order to seduce and cause danger to the men on the ranch. 5) As we begin to go through the novella we notice a hierarchy which follows Curly's wife. As mentioned before we would think that being the boss's son's wife, she would automatically have respect from everyone on the ranch however, we are made aware of the low status she has and the disrespect she suffers. Instead she appears to be a sex object to the men, whether or not this is due to the fact of how she presents herself. It appears even her own husband; Curly doesn't have any respect for her. This could be due to the fact that instead of being a traditional stay at home wife she is out on the ranch and dressed incongruous as well as flirting with the men on the ranch as shown when quoted that "she smiled archly and twisted her body". However, we also see how although Slim is of lower status, it seems the men manage to ignore this as they show massive respect for him, which Steinbeck presents when he refers to him as "God-like". 6) As we look at the low status that Curly's wife encounters we realise that not once is she ever referred to by her name, but only as Curly's wife. This implies she has no value, and is only seen as Curly's possession which reinforces the idea that she is of the same value of

the dog, as she is referred to as a "loo-loo" which is also the name given to the dog. 7) Now, when we look at the themes presented in "Of Mice and Men" we notice one is loneliness. We get an idea at the beginning of the book when we see that the place they are located in is "Soledad" which has the meaning of solitude and loneliness. By Curly's wife being the only woman on the ranch, readers may get the idea that she is lonely as is separated from the other men on the ranch. Even when Curly's wife is at home with Curly she still feels loneliness as we are made aware that she didn't actually love Curly and still doesn't. She is in fact only with him because she wanted to get away from her "ol lady". Throughout the novella Curly and his wife don't seem to interact and Curly's wife isn't afraid to express the emotional distance between her and her husband, as she shared with the men on the ranch "he aint a nice guy". 8) As Curly's wife begins to develop out sympathy begins to lie with her. We begin to see the negative light that shines on her as her actions begin to cause disruption. As a person who faces prejudices, loneliness and segregation we would think that she would have sympathy for any other person who faces the same problems and in order to make herself feel bigger, she has to search for out those who appear less important. She cruelly cuts down Candy for his old age and meekness, Lennie for being "a dum dum," and most harshly, she threatens Crooks with a hanging if he's in contact with the men crushing his dreams of having a ranch full of chickens, berry patches and alfalfa. 9) Crook isn't the only man in the book who has a dream, as we see the theme of dreams follows everyone throughout the novella. Many of their dreams relation to the American dream, which is to own a little bit on land, their own crops and

animals. George's dream has been shown when quoted " we'll have a big vegetable patch and a rabbit hutch and chickens. And when it rains in the winder, we'll just say the hell with goin' to work, and we'll build up a fire in the stove and sit around it an' listen to the rain comin' down on the roof..." Lennie's dream is also shown when quoted " We could live offa the fatta the lan". 10) Although we weren't made away of Curly's wife's dream during the novel, as we reach the end of it the readers are made aware that her dream was to be in the pitches and start in shows and make it in Hollywood. She realised that this was her dream when she men someone (a male) claiming to be from Hollywood who told her that she would go far and was a natural. Sadly, we see how her dream was crushed when she blamed her " old lady" for stealing the letter she believes her wrote. 11) By us readers being made aware of her dreams, we begin to understand why her appearance is the way it is with her " red ostrich feathered mules", her " heavily made-up" self and " roughed lips". All she wanted was " all them nice clothes" and the glamorous Hollywood lifestyle which is why she dresses incongress to the ranch. 12) In the end, when Curly's wife is lying dead she is then describe by Steinbeck as " pretty and simple...sweet and young". This suggests that the reason of her appearance is relating to her loneliness and how she just wanted to be loved. This has an effect on us readers, as we go from seeing her as a seductive malicious person to a lonely, in search of love girl who didn't mean any harm. Our sympathy then begins to go out to her, and the way she is treated by men in the novel goes from being due the fact that she is a trouble maker to just begin a victim of society. 13) This brings me to my conclusion that Curly's wife is presented as a women who is a flirt and is in

need on attention, but can also appear to be malicious, horrible and a danger to others. We see her character develop noticeably and her dreams are shared as her death takes place which makes us aware of how lonely, naïve and attractive she is. How she is not a girl, but a women who is in need of love and compassion and was only a victim to the segregation and prejudices which took place throughout the novel.