

How does Steinbeck present loneliness and isolation in the novel?

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



How does Steinbeck present loneliness and isolation in the novel? Steinbeck presents the concepts of loneliness and isolation in the novel in various ways. He uses the characters, action and the setting as devices to demonstrate the loneliness in the novel. Steinbeck uses the setting of the book to show the theme of isolation and loneliness in the book. An example of Steinbeck using the setting to demonstrate the loneliness in the book is Steinbeck's description of Soledad is key to the portrayal of the ranch as being basically in the middle of nowhere. The significance of the ranch being in the middle of nowhere is that the theme of loneliness and isolation runs throughout the novel and the fact that the ranch is isolated to just adds to the theme. Lennie and George both share a dream to live on a ranch, again isolated from society, the dream is that Lennie and George would buy a country house and then live off of the land not relying on anyone. The fact that even the dreams of the main two characters are living away from society. The use of the characters is key to the presentation of isolation and loneliness in the book. The three main characters Steinbeck uses for the purpose of presenting the theme of loneliness are Curley's wife, Crooks (the black stable buck) and Candy. Curley's wife is the only woman on the ranch and she is often seen in the book wondering around the ranch mischievously looking for the men seeking their attention, from this we can infer that in the 1930's women were still being treated as possessions and that women would have been very lonely at the time. another thing that indicates to us that women weren't treated as equal to men at the time is that Curleys wife is simply referred to Curleys wife. Because of the fact that Curley's wife is the only woman on the ranch it causes her to be isolated in that she has no other

women to be with in a society of working class men. Another character that is used to infer the isolation and loneliness in the book is Crooks. He is black. Crooks sleeps alone in the stables away from all the other men, this suggests that he is lonely as he doesn't socialise with any of the other men. Crooks is constantly being berated by the men of the ranch calling him a 'nigger'. The presentation of Crooks in the book emphasises that Black people in the 1930's were isolated from general society. Crooks is at the very bottom of the hierarchy, this is demonstrated when Curley's wife who is also below the other men in the hierarchy tells Crooks she could get him hung demonstrating how insignificant Crooks is thought of as. Lastly Candy is an old man who has lost one of his arms so he is restricted to working as a swamper meaning he gets little pay and little respect from the other men. Candy is treated as a second-class citizen by the other men simply because he is disabled. He is lonely and isolated from all the other men because whilst all the men are working in the fields he is back at the ranch doing the dirty jobs. Steinbeck emphasises that Candy is disposable like his dog when Carlton shoots his dog because he is 'no good' this indicates to the reader that Candy may be becoming 'no good' as well. The fact that Candy is lonely is reinforced by Candy offering Lennie and George, relative strangers his entire life's savings \$300 too allows to share their dream and live on a ranch alone; Candy is a lonely man who longs company. The last way Steinbeck portrays the theme of loneliness and isolation in the novel is through the characters' actions. Throughout the novel George plays solitaire. The game, as the name suggests is only a single player game. George frequently sets up a solitaire hand when there are other men around, most notably when he

is talking to Candy on pg. 66 and he begins to play solitaire instead of a game that would include Candy. This is symbolic of the loneliness in the book. Another example of an image of loneliness that is projected by actions of a character is Lennie's tendency to stroke things; this suggests that there is an absence of love in Lennie's life and so he turns to stroking animals to get affection. Overall Steinbeck presents the concepts of isolation and loneliness in the book by the story being based in a remote town, Soledad, and there being many characters in the book who were prejudiced upon in the 1930's, causing them to be lonely and isolated from society.