

Great economic depression and of mice and men

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



In 1929, the US entered a period of Great economic Depression from it only emerged with the onset of the Second War in 1939. During this period, there was long-term unemployment, so workers needed to go to California where there was still some short-term, poorly paid contract ranch works available. They were not educated therefore they had got no right and could be sacked at any time. They travelled from ranch to ranch to get jobs. This lifestyle forced ranch workers to keep moving and got no chance of making friend and keeping contact with their families.

There was also a lot of competition, which put workers under pressure about whether they were good enough.

They live isolated lives and are alienated from each other because are rivals. They are struggling to survive in a hostile world. All of these factors make all the characters lonely in 'Of Mice and Men'. Between them, there are some characters who are very lonely because they are disadvantaged, Crooks, he's black; Candy, because he is old; Curley, because he has more security than others; and his wife, as she is the only woman on the ranch.

They are the victims of the strange society. In this essay I will be investigating the reasons why these characters are lonely in more depth by looking at each character more carefully.

Crooks is probably the loneliest character in the book because he is very different from other ranch workers. He is old, disabled and the only black man in the book who lives in a racism society. As a result of this, he is isolated in his own room in the barn and is not allowed to go into or stay in the bunkhouse with the other ranch workers. Therefore he has no one to talk

to. Though other workers knew that he reads a lot and has more knowledge and thinks deeper, they don't listen to his opinions.

' If I say something, why it's just a nigger saying it.' P102

Instead they take advantage of his disability this is shown when they beat him up at Christmas. The racism society gives Crooks no chance of making friend. Crooks tries to get his own back for the way the white men treat him by keeping a distance between him and the other men. But obviously he resent the fact that he isn't want in the bunkhouse. This makes it even harder to make friends. This is revealed by his words when Lennie comes to his room.

' I ain't wanted in the bunkhouse, and you ain't wanted in my room.'

But gradually he is defeated by Lennie's innocent smile and lets his guard down. This is because in his heart he knows that coping with loneliness is no good by reading books, he needed a friend to be near him and talk to him.

' Suppose you didn't have nobody ... A guy needs somebody -to be near him... a guy goes nuts if he ain't got nobody ... I tell you a guy gets too lonely and he gets sick.'

' A guy sets alone out here at night, maybe readin' books or thinking or stuffs like that...If some guy was with me, he could tell me I was sleep. An' then it would be all right. But I just don't know.'

This quote from the same page of the book also shows you Crooks' feelings of loneliness. When Lennie and Candy started to talk about the dream Crooks pointed out that this dream was shared by thousand of ranch workers

but none of them ever succeed in reality but just for a moment he suspends his disbelief long enough to wish to share the dream, though he was immediately reminded his position by Curley's wife words and shut by George's anger as he doesn't think that any white people would treat him decently. From the facts above, we could see the reasons of why Crooks are lonely.

Candy is an old and disabled character in the book. He is quite similar to Crooks and is very lonely because he is different too. He lost his hand in an accident and was only kept on by the boss out of guilt. He has no relatives, no friends and his only comfort is his old dog, which keeps him company and reminds him of the days when he was young and whole. Candy is not interested in the things the other guys talk about. For instance:

' I ain't interest in nothing you was saying. A guy on a ranch don't never listen nor he don't ast no questions.'

But when his only comfort has gone- was shot by Carlson, he is totally alone and eagerly clutches at the idea of buying a farm with George and Lennie. This is shown below when George started to talk about the dream:

' Old candy turned slowly over. His eyes were wide open. He watched George carefully.'

The reason for this change is, Candy himself is very similar to his dog, they both old and disabled, from the shooting of his old dog, Candy knows that when he can't work any more he will be turned away from the ranch. He will have

‘ I got hurt four years ago. They’ll can me purty soon, jus’ as soon as I can’t swamp out no bunk-houses they’ll put me on the county... When they can me here I wish’t somebody’d shoot me. But they won’t do nothing like that.’

At this situation, Candy needs something to look forward to, so when he heard about the dream between George and Lennie he found that this is the thing he needed. But of course this all comes to nothing.

As the inevitability of the fall of the dream, Candy would certainly be disappointed. The dream ends in a miserable way.

‘ You and me can get that little place, can’t we, George? You an’ me can get that little place, can’t we, George... Can’t we?’

Before George answered, candy dropped his head and looked down at the hay, he know.

Then- it’s all off?

... And I’ll have fifty buck more.’

Candy’s words show that he realises that the end of Lennie means the end of the dream, without Lennie George hasn’t got the heart to go on. There are so many ‘ can’t we ‘ in his speech telling us he wants George to tell him he is wrong. But the reaction of George confirms this completely.

The sadness is expressed in the bitter words he uttered to the body of Curley’s wife, whom he blames for spoiling the dream or more accurately, his hope of a future.

‘ You god damn tramp... You done it, didn’t you? I s’pose you’re glad... you lousy tart.’

Curley is the character who is described as a 'wretch' by John Steinbeck. It may be argued that he must be not lonely because he is the boss's son and had been married for two weeks, has a family and a lot of things that other ranch workers wanted to have. But actually he is very lonely. As he has more security (he was never worried about being fired), other ranch workers don't mix with him so he has no one to talk to. The 'macho' male society makes him feel that if a guy doesn't appear to be tough and strong, others will put something on him and laugh at him. It is even worse for him that he chooses the wrong way to earn respect-by fighting and be aggressive. But other workers know that he is a coward and despise him for the tension atmosphere he creates.

'What does he got on his shoulder?' George

'You god damn punk, ... you tries to throw a scare into Slim, an' you couldn't make it stick. Slim threw a scare into you. You're yella as a frog belly. I don't care if you're the best welter in the country. You come for me, an' I'll kick your God damn head off.'

He has no friends, to overcome his loneliness, he married a pretty young woman but has blindly chosen the wrong person whom totally inappropriate for the kind of life he leads. He forbids his wife to talk to other ranch workers, as he is scared that she may have an affair with one of the other men which makes her hate him and others more despise to him. Consequently, his feelings are all channelled into aggressive behaviour in order to deal with his loneliness but this leads to his feeling lonelier because the others don't want to be with him.

Curley's wife is another character who is lonely. She is newly married, lives in a strange place, and does not seem to fit in on the ranch as being the only woman. She and Curley do not love each other; both of them try to overcome their own loneliness by the marriage. But unfortunately, both have chose the wrong person. She hates Curley because of his aggressive:

' I don't like Curley, he ain't a nice fella.'

One point that needs to be mentioned here is that she is the only character who is never given a name in the book and is only referred to as ' Curley's wife'. It appears that John Steinbeck passes a message from this that she is not seen as a person at all by other characters, but an object which Curley thinks he owns.

' You gotta husban'. You got no call foolin' around with other guys, causing trouble.'

' Why'n't you tell her to stay the hell home where she belongs?'

Her situation is just like Crooks'; no one is sensitive about her feelings. This makes her feel angry with the men especially at Curley.

' Whatta they think I am, anyways.'

' Seems like they ain't none of them care how I gotta live.'

Further more, she has been forbidden by Curley to talk to anyone but him, as he doesn't trust her.

' I get lonely, you can talk to people, but I can't talk to nobody but Curley. Else he gets mad. How'd you like not to talk to anybody?'

To counter this, she keeps approaching the ranch hands with the excuse that she is looking for Curley or something she lost.

‘ Think I don’t like to talk to somebody ever’ once in a while? Think I like to sit in that house alla time?’

The only result is, the men regard her as a slut. But in her eyes, that is the way she is supposed to be.

‘ Candy:’... I think Curley’s married... a tart.’

‘ Whit:’ Well, ain’t she a looloo?’

Curley’s aggressive behaviour leads others to avoid her and this further isolated her and she approaches the ranch hands more frequently therefore Curley becomes even more jealous and aggressive. This leads to her feeling lonelier. Finally her loneliness leads to her death as she makes a serious error of trying to overcome it by playing the tease with Lennie as she is pleased that Lennie beat Curley and impressed by his size and strength, but she didn’t realise the extent and danger of Lennie’s mental disability.

George and Lennie are also caught in the trap of loneliness; this is because they are different as they have a strong friendship. They travelled together and trust each other and share a dream of owning a farm whereas other ranch workers travelled alone and had no strong relationships with others and have nothing to look forward to. George’s loneliness could be reflected by the words that he uses a lot of swearing and the fact that he needs the dream to keep him going. Just as candy has his dog for company, George has Lennie (who is often described in animal-like terms). Both companions died and George and candy are left completely alone. Lennie totally relies on

George and couldn't survive without George, but on the other hand, George somehow needs Lennie to overcome his own loneliness. It is revealed by Crooks' words with great understanding he tells us of the importance of Lennie.

' I don't blame the guy you travel with for keeping you outa sight.'

' It's just the talking. It just being with another guy. That's all.'

Maybe it is just talking but this is an enough reason of keeping Lennie as company for George.

In conclusion it is clear that all of the characters in ' Of Mice and Men' are lonely. Their loneliness is the evitable result of the society, which is made by the Great Depression. Crooks, for instance is suffered deeply from the racism society. No one is trying to make friends with him before the visit of Lennie except Slim. Candy, Curley and his wife are the victims of the macho male society. They all have dreams but none of them realise them and get nothing at the end.