

Crooks as the biggest victim

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



Crooks as the biggest victim on the ranch - discuss Monday 24th October 2011 In the novel 'Of Mice and Men' Steinbeck presents Crooks, the black stable-buck as the biggest victim on the ranch because of his race. Crooks is also the most damaged person, emotionally and physically. He has a crooked back and has begun to mimic the cruel and violent behaviour of the other men on the ranch. The impact of his loneliness also makes him push people away, leaving him even more lonely and segregated.

The other men exclude Crooks because he is black.

He is not allowed to go into the bunkhouse with all the white men because they are racist and follow the racist behaviour of segregation. It is clear that Steinbeck is criticising wider society through his description of Crooks. Crooks has his own room - 'had his bunk in the harness room' he lives alone and is no more important than the animals symbolised by the nearness to the animals.

He is alone all the time and gets lonely but never admits it because he is too proud. Steinbeck shows the irony of Candy saying - 'must be nice to have a room all to your self'.

When Lennie comes in to his room, Crooks has right to ask him to leave but instead acts as though he didn't want Lennie to stay. He says - 'come on in and set a while...long as you wont get out and leave me alone.' The ellipsis' show his hesitation after he admitted he wants the company he realizes and changed it around to say he wants to be alone. This is so Crooks can maintain his pride and his dignity. He is so lonely that he admits to Lennie - 'just a guy talking to another guy doesn't matter if he understands.' This

tells us Crooks is happy talking to Lennie even though Lennie does not understand most of the things Crooks is saying.

It is the company and the talking to another human that matters to him. Steinbeck also adds that Crooks 'reads a lot'. Steinbeck implies that even though Crooks is treated badly he could be the most educated worker on the ranch has a better understanding of things than most of the other men and is wiser because he is older and has seen more things. Also he has a 'Californian Civil Code' book, because he has this book and reads it often he knows a lot about the laws of discrimination in different areas. He is interested in his rights as a black man unfortunately, despite his knowledge Crooks is unable to change anything.

Slim is the only man who treats Crooks sympathetically. He respects Crooks more and talks to him some times. Slim is 'kind' and 'is a good listener' but Slim and Crooks are the opposite- Slim is respected and has power whereas Crooks is disrespected and beaten by the men because of the colour of his skin. Slim is a 'tall man' who is 'capable of killing a fly on the wheelers butt without touching the mule' but Crooks was just a 'stable buck, nigger with a 'crooked back'. Through this contrast, Steinbeck provokes pathos about Crooks' life.

Ironically, even Slim is effected by the hardship on the ranch casually drowns four pups. Steinbeck depicts Crooks as the most physically damaged person on the ranch. One of the reasons for this is that the white men beat Crooks, just because he was black. The boss uses Crooks to let his anger out - 'the boss gives him hell when he's mad.' Even though the boss hired Crooks to do a job he beats him when he is angry, this shows Crooks is of a low status

on the ranch and that he matters the least. The men are also very cruel to Crooks when they say ' Jesus we had fun. They are referring to a time when they beat Crooks. This is very cruel he had no way of defending himself by fighting back because he has a crooked back and is much weaker he also has no one on his side.

What is more brutal is that they did it just for pleasure this suggests that the ranch is corrupting everyone. Steinbeck warns us of the consequences of brutality in the wider world. Furthermore the cruelty Crooks faces made him cruel to Lennie when he says - ' I don't blame the guy you travel with for keeping you outta sight. ' and ' what if he don't come back. Crooks wants to frighten Lennie and is clearly jealous of the companionship he has with George. When ' Crooks face lightened with pleasure in his torture' it shows that Crooks has learnt from the other men how to be cruel. This is also another way he has been damaged emotionally by the ranch because most of the men become cruel and it is a violent world where only the fittest will survive. Crooks wishes that he could have what George and Lennie have so he gets dragged in to the dream against his better judgment - ' Never a god dammed one of em gets it just like heaven. Here is Crooks talks about men trying to get land for themselves. He does not believe in God because his life has been so bad that there cannot be a God but he still equates land with heaven. Crooks is lonely and has a room to himself on the ranch and in it there were ' hung broken harness strips in process of being mended, strips of new leather. ' Ironically 'Being a stable buck he was more permanent than other men' His permanency does not give him status he is all alone and

unlike the bunk house where games are played in the evenings his room is filled with work objects so he would not get much time to relax or rest.

Also in his room is ' a range of medicine bottles for himself and the horses. ' This is another example of him being no more important than the animals and also part of the discrimination against him. Steinbeck depicts Crooks as a victim by the description of his physical appearance. - ' His body was bent over to the left by his Crooked spine' His lean face was lined with deep wrinkles, and he had thin, pain-tightened lips which were paler than his face. ' His body is bent over because a horse has kicked him on the ranch so the ranch damages him physically.

His lined face shows the evidence of the brutality of the ranch, he is older and weaker because of the hard work he has done and his thin, pain-tightened lips show the pain he is in. yet he still has to work everyday and he tries to soothe the pain by repeatedly applying liniment to his back. This reminds us of his pain - ' he poured his liniment into his pink palmed hand. ' Although Crooks is damaged by the ranch and has no status, he is a very proud, dignified man who wants people to respect the few rights he has, ' you got no right to come in here' he said to Lennie because his room was the only thing people has respect.

He has read about black rights, he is interested in what rights he could have in other places. Although Crooks had the right to ban Candy and Lennie from his room the desire for company overrode this. He was happy to have the company of the two men, ' well, why'n't you kick ' em out? ' ' I di'nt care much'. Steinbeck makes us sympathise with Crooks as he is presented as the biggest victim on the ranch because he is damaged mentally, physically

and emotionally. Steinbeck also makes us sympathise with Crooks because he is lonely and how he is lonely from the isolation from the other men.