

Importance of dreams in the novel of 'mice and men'

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The novel 'Of Mice and Men', written by John Steinbeck is a truly fascinating novel based upon the theme of dreams. This novel was published in 1937, which was towards the end of 'The Great Depression' that hit the United States. The novel was set in Soledad, California, during the same time period as published. This was an era in which the economy collapsed; many Americans lost their jobs, therefore leading into a lot of poverty and despair. Although many people were depressed, this was also the era of dreams.

This is what Steinbeck's novel is all about, dreams during the great depression. Dreams were very important in the novel. They played a huge role in the character's lives, affected their behaviors, as well as their personalities. Steinbeck uses dreams as a tool to enrich the novel 'Of Mice and Men'; therefore he emphasizes their importance throughout the novel by making them the main theme.

Dreams have a rather important role in the novel 'Of Mice and Men'.

The whole novel is based around dreams, as well as decisions that were made according to these dreams. The author, John Steinbeck has emphasized this by the plot of the novel, the character's personalities, as well as their actions. The plot of the novel is based on two characters that were chasing their dreams. These characters are Lennie and George, who left a town called Weed because they got in trouble. They were searching for a job, in order to get better paid, which will help them achieve their dream, 'The American Dream'. The American dream is a dream shared by many of the characters in the novel, it is the desire to have a happy life, be part of a family, have a stable job, and maybe even own some land.

Page 47 of chapter 3 gives an insight why the characters Lennie and George left Weed. It turns out Lennie was accused of raping a woman, George said "Well, that girl rabbits in an' tells the law she been raped. The guys in Weed start a party out to lynch Lennie... An' that night we scrambled outta there." The characters left Weed because Lennie was in trouble. However, he didn't want to go to jail; he'd rather chase his dream, which he shares with his lifelong pal George. So instead they make the decision to leave Weed, and head to Soledad.

The characters' personalities are affected by their dreams, and so are their actions. Their dreams weaken them, which results in them doing things that they end up regretting just for the sake of attempting to make their dream come true. Although dreams can be a source of strength for the characters, they contribute a great deal in their weaknesses, which is what leads to their fatal actions. In chapter five, Lennie and Curley's wife were confessing their dreams to one another. Curley's wife stayed longer than she should have with Lennie, because he was a man and during that time period women were not permitted to interact with men, especially if the woman was married. However, she made that decision because she dreamed of having a friendship.

Lennie said, " Well, I ain't supposed to talk to you or nothing." " I get lonely," She said " 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?" (Chapter five, page 98). Clearly Curley's wife felt extremely lonely, empty, and sad. Even though she made a bad decision, she chose to stay longer and risk the

consequences in order to achieve one of her desires, even if it was for a little while. It was her weakness, and when she got a chance she grasped it without thinking. It was almost as though she lost her sanity.

Later through that chapter, Lennie physically hurt Curley's wife. She screamed, thus he made the decision to cover her mouth in attempt to stop her from screaming. He feared if George hears her screaming and finds out so he would get mad. Consequently, Lennie wouldn't be able to join George in owning some land, tending rabbits, and living their dreams. " She screamed then, and Lennie's other hand closed over her mouth and nose". Lennie said " Oh! Please don't do that!" George'll be mad... George gonna say I done a bad thing. He ain't gonna let me tend no rabbits... You gonna get me in trouble jus' like George says you will." " And she continued to struggle, and her eyes were wild with terror. He shook her then, and he was angry with her... he shook her; and her body flopped like a fish. And then she was still, for Lennie had broken her neck."(Chapter 5, page 103). Lennie killed Curley's wife, because he didn't want her to stand in the way of his dreams. Due to the fact that his dream blinded him, he couldn't differentiate between what's right or wrong. He chose his actions carelessly. Achieving his dream was his priority, so much so that he sacrificed a human being for nothing to stand in his way. Not only did dreams have a key role in the novel, dreams also played an important role in the characters' lives.

Dreams were a crucial part of the characters' lives. The characters were not living the life they craved, and it is safe to say that a few of them were depressed. However, their dreams were a source of motivation to them. In

chapter one, on page 15, George said “ Guys like us, that work on ranches, are the loneliest guys in the world. They got no family. They don't belong no place. . . With us it ain't like that. We got a future. We got somebody to talk to that gives a damn about us. We don't have to sit in no bar room blowin' in our jack jus' because we got no place else to go. If them other guys gets in jail they can rot for all anybody gives a damn. But not us.” It can be noted through this quote, the fact that George truly believes in his dream, and how it will keep him motivated. Not only does it make him not want to give up on his dreams, it also makes him strive and work harder to achieve his goals.

Moreover, having dreams, and goals, brought the characters happiness. This is because their dreams give them an image of a better life, and what it would be like. In chapter one, George and Lennie were feeling down and they were upset over the limited amount of food they had, but then they cheer themselves up by reminding themselves of the bright future that would lay ahead for them. George said “ Someday- we're gonna get the jack together and we're gonna have a little house and a couple of acres an' a cow and some pigs, and -” “ An' live off the fatta the lan'” Lennie shouted. “ we'll have a vegetable patch and a rabbit hutch and chickens. And when it rains in winter, we'll just say the hell with goin' to work” said George (chapter one, page 16). George and Lennie spoke with enthusiasm; this indicates how much happiness their dreams bring them. Obviously, dreams had a major impact on the characters' lives; therefore they were a major aspect of the novel. Not only do dreams impact the characters' lives, but they also affect several characters in the novel.

Dreams had a role in molding the characters. They had an effect on the characters personalities, behavior, dialogue, as well as their decisions. As stated before, characters made their dreams their priority; this automatically changed the way they thought. Therefore, their behavior changed. The characters only said what would benefit them, and eventually tried to refrain from saying anything that could cause trouble, so that impacted their dialogue. Their dreams also affected their decisions because they either didn't want to cause trouble so they decided not to do some things, while other characters were blinded by their dreams so they made reckless decisions while trying to achieve their dreams. George's personality was affected by his dreams.

One can see this by his behavior and his dialogue. For example, in chapter 2 (page 28) when Curly lashes at George because he was answering all of the questions that were asked to Lennie, Curly rudely says " By Christ, he's gotta talk when he's spoke to. What the hell are you getting' into it for?" George didn't lash back at him, instead he replied coldly; this symbolizes George's patience towards people, even the rudest people just for the sake of his dream. If he stirred up a fight with Curly just to gain back his dignity he would have gotten fired from his job, but instead he spoke coldly because he couldn't risk losing his dream or doing anything that could possibly threatens it.

Another character whose personality has been affected by his dreams was Crooks. However, unlike the others, Crooks' personality is greatly affected. Crooks' dream has a different effect on him. It brings him misery, because he

once had everything and now he lost it all. Although, he has accepted that fact that his dream is unattainable, he may still have a little bit of hope. However he has accepted his fate better than the rest of the characters who seem to be unable to accept the reality that their dreams would most likely not come true. As a result, he is bitter and he has isolated himself from everyone. It has drastically affected his personality and his attitude towards life.

He knows he won't have his 'Happily ever after'; therefore he doesn't look forward to what the future would bring. "I ain't a southern Negro... I was born right here in California. My old man had a chicken ranch, 'bout ten acres. The white kids come to play at our place, an' sometimes I went to play with them, and some of them was pretty nice. My ol' man didn't like that. I never knew till long later... but now I know" (Chapter 4, page 79). Although this quote starts off as a happy story, it doesn't have a happy ending. In fact, it's heartbreaking. Nevertheless from this quote, it can be understood that Crooks had a taste of 'The American Dream', but then he lost it. In addition, the color of his skin puts him down even though he was literate, and educated. Crooks wanted to belong somewhere, he wanted to have friends, he wanted for life to be as simple as it was when he was younger, but he knows that the odds aren't in his favor. That's why he isn't the nicest person, and he has isolated himself from everyone else. In chapter four when Lennie came to see Crooks, at first he shut Lennie out, because of the rules he had to oblige and because he knows what it feels like to have friends and lose them.

As one of his dreams was to have a friend, he compromised and he let Lennie accompany him while the others were gone. " Lennie smiled helplessly in an attempt to make friends. Crooks said sharply " You got no right to come in my room. This here's my room. Nobody got any right in here but me... I ain't wanted in the bunkhouse, and you ain't wanted in my room" " Why ain't you wanted" Lennie asked. "" Cause I'm black. They play cards in there, but I can't play because I'm black. They say I stink. Well, I tell you, you all stink to me... well, what do you want?" " Nothing- I just seen you light. I thought I could jus' come in an' set." Crooks stared at Lennie... Crooks scowled, but Lennie's disarming smile defeated him. " Come on in and set a while" Crooks said " Long as you won't get out and leave me alone, you might as well set down." (Chapter 4, pages 77-78).

Finally, the novel ' Of Mice and Men' is a truly spectacular novel by John Steinbeck. The theme of dreams was very important during the course of the novel. All the main events in the novel were caused in relation to someone's dream, and the sacrifices they had to make in order to achieve it. Additionally, dreams were equally important because they played a big role in the characters' lives. The characters in the novel use dreams to motivate them through their tough lives, and through the great depression. The characters were also greatly affected by their dreams. For some of the characters, their dream was their weakness and they would literally kill to achieve it. For others it was a source of happiness, while for many of the characters their dream was both their weakness and their source of happiness. All of these three points are what made the theme of dreams such an important part of the novel. The theme of dreams is what makes the

novel ' Of Mice and Men' so fascinating. Dreams controlled all of the main events, as they were significant in the lives of the characters, their behavior, their ups and downs, as well as their fates.