

# How does steinbeck present curley's wife essay sample

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



Steinbeck uses a variety of techniques to portray Curley's Wife in different ways, including colour imagery, metaphors and similes; he also uses foreshadowing and prejudicing at the start of the novel to give an opinion of her before she is even introduced into the novel as a character. Steinbeck first presents Curley's Wife in a negative way, with the reader being introduced to her by Candy saying "well- she got the eye" which has several connotations, including her need for sexual attention from men.

This makes the reader immediately judge Curley's wife and stereotype her as a lonely woman wanting sexual attraction. Steinbeck presents her in this manner as a sign of potential foreshadowing as the reader knows Lennie has had previous trouble with girls so he wants to show that there may be an incident between Curley's Wife and Lennie later in the novel. She is also presented as a flirt, as she enters the bunkhouse for the first time in the novel, she "playfully" says "if he ain't, I guess I better look some place else".

This shows that she is playful and flirts with the other men on the ranch. It also shows that she is sexually driven, as she does not know how to communicate with men without flirting with them, or giving them "the eye" which means that it seems she is cheating with, or wants to cheat with, a particular person. When she first appears in the novel, she is described in a way that makes her seem very pretty, and she is shown to enjoy showing herself off. "she put her hands behind her back and leaned against the door frame so her body was thrown forward".

This shows that she is extremely flirtatious and loves getting men's attention, and that she is quite childlike, and treats it as a game, and is always vying for everybody's attention, as if her husband Curley is not enough, she must be the centre of attention at all times. There is also extensive use of colour imagery, as she is always presented as wearing red. " her fingernails were red she wore a cotton house dress and red mules, on the insteps of which were little bouquets of red ostrich feathers".

This implies that Curley's Wife is shown to be the sexual temptation and desire that each of the men are vulnerable to. Also, wearing red in the 1930s was inappropriate as it was seen as a seductive colour, and was a way to show that she was a dangerous person. There is a more sinister side to Curley's Wife, which may have developed from being married to Curley, as he is also a cynical and mean character. The men have gone into town on Saturday night, and Crooks, Candy and Lennie have been left behind.

She interrupts them discussing their shared dream, and immediately asks " any you boys seen Curley? and this developed into a kind of catchphrase for her, as she always asks where Curley is, and then begins flirting with the other men, as this is the only way she knows how to communicate with them. She does this because she feels lonely and wants somebody to talk to, and is angry that the men do not want to talk to her when she says " ain't I got a right to talk to nobody? ". This is evident here as she then says " think I don't know where they all went? Even Curley. I know where they all went. " This shows that she is never really looking for her husband, but is instead looking for attention from the men on the ranch.

When the men in Crooks' room do not play her game and refuse to talk to her and engage in a conversation, she begins to verbally abuse them, saying "you bindle bums think you're so damn good an' what am I doing? Standin' here talkin' to a bunch of bindle stiffs - a nigger an' a dum-dum and a lousy old sheep". This shows that she is easily frustrated when she doesn't get her own way, and she takes her frustration out by abusing these men in particular, as she believes they are "the weak ones" and that they were left behind at the ranch for a reason. She then viciously racially abuses Crooks, and threatens to have him killed.

She says to Crooks "listen nigger, you know what I could do to you if you open your trap? You know what I could do?" This is a normality in 1930s America, and therefore there is no reaction from the other men in the room, and therefore Curley's Wife assumes command of all the men in the room, especially Crooks. "Well you keep your place then, nigger. I could get you strung up on a tree so fast it ain't even funny". This verbal assault is a result of her feeling powerless and alone, and as racism was a socially acceptable thing at the time, she uses this to assert her limited power on Crooks to make her feel better about herself.

Curley's Wife is depicted as a lonely character later in the novel "I get lonely" as she is the only woman on the ranch, and she is also seemed to have been taken advantage of, as the other men have gone to visit a brothel on the Saturday night, and Curley, despite being married, has gone with them. This shows that women were not valued very highly in 1930s America, and were deemed almost as property to husbands or boyfriends. This is

emphasised by Curley's Wife not having a name, and that the only person to give her a compliment was Slim saying "hey good looking".

All the other men call her abusive things such as "rat trap" and "tart", and Curley himself shows her no respect. The only time Curley and Curley's Wife are seen together is in the barn after Curley's Wife has been killed by Lennie. Another way in which Curley's Wife is depicted as lonely is after her death, when she has been left in the barn. "She caught the dead scent of Curley's Wife, and the hair rose along her spine. She whimpered and cringed to the packing box and jumped in among the puppies".

All of the animals in the barn do their best to stay away from her, as the quote is describing Slim's dog, and how she is trying to get away from the body, and that even in death, she does not immediately get attention. "A pigeon flew in and flew out again". This quote shows that she is undesirable and lonely because even the pigeon refuses to be near her after she dies, and pigeons were widely considered to be vermin, much the same as rats are considered vermin.

Curley's Wife is shown as a compassionate person when she speaks to Lennie in the barn near the end of the novel, and comforts him when he accidentally kills his puppy. "don't you worry none, he was jus' a mutt, you can get another one easy" she also feels sorry for Lennie, and tries to comfort him as he believes that George will no longer allow him to tend to the rabbits. She understands what it is like to have a dream and for it not to be fulfilled as she has gone through similar feelings and events herself, and

the reader can relate George to Curley's Wife's mother, who threatened to, and eventually did destroy her dreams, as George does to Lennie repeatedly in the novel by saying "I won't let you tend no rabbits", and when George is forced to kill Lennie, he ends Lennie's dreams as well as his own.

Each character in *Of Mice and Men* has their own dreams and desires, and Curley's Wife is no different. She only speaks about her dreams in snippets at points in the novel, usually in times of anguish or anger, "a guy tol' me he could put me in pitchers", this quote is from the conversation between the men in Crooks' room and Curley's Wife. It shows her frustration at being stuck on the ranch and she later confides in Lennie about her dreams, and the story of her life, and how she believes her mother was responsible for hiding a letter from a Hollywood movie producer, who wanted to put her in movies.

She says that she married Curley to get away from her mother. She reveals that she is in an unhappy marriage with Curley, "I don't like Curley. He ain't a nice fella" and that she doesn't like the way that Curley is controlling her "I can't talk to nobody but Curley, else he gets mad". This majorly emphasises the fact that women were considered property, and were of lower status than men.

In the 1930s women did not have many rights and did not have many choices and no career prospects, and she must stay at home, and raise children and clean, and therefore Curley's Wife feels lonely and is always looking for an excuse to leave the house and attract the attention of the

other men as she wants somebody to talk to. In *Of Mice and Men*, Curley's Wife was victimised by Curley, verbally abused by the other men, especially George, and is never able to fulfil her dreams of becoming an actress in the movies.

This shows the meaning of the title of the novel which comes from a poem called "To a Mouse" by Robert Burns; "The best laid plans of mice and men often go askew." This means that plans will go wrong, and each person in the novel had plans but they all went wrong in the end. Curley's Wife's life is ended and with it all of George and Lennie's dreams and her own, and Candy blames her for it all and believes she is happy about it. All in all, Curley's Wife is mainly portrayed as a tart for the majority of the novel, but is also presented as a victim and as lonely at the end, and compassionate to Lennie, shortly before she dies.