

# Discuss the significance of names in of mice and men

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



As seen in the book *Of Mice and Men*, author John Steinbeck uses a range of different names for his character, but as it seems, it is not just a coincidence that they are named this way. Steinbeck uses these specific names to match personality of a character and to show the significance of these characters to the society. Many characters names begin with a C for example Candy, Crooks, Curley, to create a direct reference to 'Cain' a nomad from the bible; who was cursed by God that he would never be able to settle down because of his wrongdoings for power, this signifies that the characters and Cain have a similarity; they are not able to settle down but are forced to keep moving from one area to another.

Curley's Wife, is perhaps the most major female character that is essential to the story, but has no name in the book. The most obvious assumption as to why Steinbeck has decided to do this is because he is using a historical reference to the American community, where woman were considered to be a man's possession.

"When they had them previews I coulda went to them, an' spoke in the radio, an' it wouldn'ta cost me a cent because I was in the pitchers". In the book, Curley's Wife has a dream/desire to have her name known as an icon, however, the results were that she had married a 'nobody' which makes her an even smaller existence to the society and the world. We can come to a conclusion that Curley's wife is unnamed because Steinbeck reflects her complete lack of individual identity.

Lennie Small, one of the two most major and necessary characters in the storyline, has a very ironic name. 'Lennie' is short for 'Leonard' or

abbreviated to 'Leo' has a definition of lion, has symbolizes courage, rulership and strength, which is a complete opposite of Lennie's character. 'Small' is also an addition to the irony, where Steinbeck uses this to emphasize his huge physical appearances. "I don't want no trouble, don't let him sock me George". As seen in the book, Lennie is a 'coward', as he has a huge body and strength, yet doesn't know how to defend himself in certain situations and cannot stand-up for himself.

Slim is perhaps the most unique characters throughout the whole book. The reason as to why Steinbeck has decided to name this character in this way is to reflect on the American society (similar to Curley's wife's reasoning) as to where people were depressing and rarely had a reason to laugh or be 'positive' meaning that his physical appearance as being a tall skinny man refers to this. Slim however, is often thought as a hero, and thinks deeply about his actions toward other people as seen in chapter 6 where Slim out of all men goes over to check on Curley's Wife's lifeless body. "Then Slim went quietly over to her, and he felt her wrist. One lean finger touched her cheek, and then his hand went under her slightly twisted neck and his fingers explored her neck." In other words, Slim's naming is decided on to reflect and perhaps to criticize the American society at the time.

Carlson, is the complete opposite of Slim, with 'Carl' meaning 'man' or 'manly' and 'son' meaning son, creating a definition of man's son. Carlson as seen in the earlier parts of the story is seen to show no respect or value to Candy's dog because of its putrid odor, not considering that the pet could be Candy's only companion, showing that his character is arrogant and selfish.

Carlson's name is also decided to reflect on the American society, where his physical appearance also represents the average man. " Carlson stepped back to let Slim precede him, and then the two of them went out the door". Nonetheless, Carlson shows in chapter 2 that he pays respect to the more superior than him, in this case to Slim, as he precedes back to let Slim past by. In conclusion, the names of characters in ' Of Mice and Men' are not just coincidences. In fact, the names John Steinbeck have chosen are to symbolize and signify certain images and personalities and sometimes to criticize the American society, therefore, names in ' Of Mice and Men' are also a great significance to the story.