

# Of mice and men



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Victimizing the Tart What does a person think when they are labeled? No matter bad or good, the reaction is always significant. There is a plethora of interesting characters in the novel *Of Mice and Men*, by John Steinbeck, but some of them stand out more than others. One of these outstanding characters is Curlers Wife. Curlers Wife may not seem to be a character of any importance, given the fact that she does not receive an actual name, however she controls a copious amount of the plot. Some argue that Curlers Wife is a villain, and some argue that she is a victim.

Although Curlers Wife attracts attention to herself, she is a victim in the ranch due to the fact that she is in a loveless marriage, and her version of the American dream was crushed. Granted that Curlers Wife is mainly seen as a victim of multiple discriminations, one who was opposing the idea of the visualization of Curler's Wife could attach her to certain villainous characteristics. Curlers Wife is given no name in this novel besides the ones that the men on the ranch call her. Names like "Tart", "Rat Trap", and "Tramp", are the ones that the men define her as.

We can see early on in the story that Curlers Wife lives up to these nicknames when she enters the bunkhouse for the first time, "She had full, rouged lips and wide-spaced eyes, heavily made up" (Steinbeck 31). In this portion of the story, Curlers Wife is given an image, and it is the image of a woman who is seeking attention. She uses the attention she receives to manipulate the men who work on the ranch. This is not the only villainous quality Curlers Wife has; she is also very harsh towards some of the ranch workers, especially Crooks the black stable buck.

We see the racist attitude that Curler's Wife exerts upon Crooks when she claims, "unveil, you keep your place then, Nigger. I could get you strung up on a tree so easy it ain't even funny" (Steinbeck 81). Curler's Wife threatens to have Crooks lynched, all because he didn't want to be caught talking to her. If Crooks were caught talking to Curler's Wife, he would have lost his job. Granted that these traits that Curler's Wife attains paint the picture that she is a villain, she should be depicted as a victim. The visualization of Curler's wife can be accredited to the fact that she is in a loveless marriage.

However, Curler does not see the lack of love in their marriage, because he is always making sure she is not flirting with any of the men. The effect of the emotionless marriage between the two causes Curler's wife to be noticed by the other members of the ranch. We see that Candy is among the first of the men to recognize this. "Manville-She got the eye" (Steinbeck 28). Curler's Wife can't help but seek attention from the men on the ranch, because she does not get any from the man she is married to. Curler's Wife asserts that all Curler ever talks about is himself. "Sure I got a husband".

"You all seen him. Swell guy, ain't he? Spends all his time saying 'what he's gonna do to guys he don't like, and he don't like nobody. Think I'm gonna stay in that two-by-four house and listen how Curler's gonna lead with his left twice, and then bring in the 01' right cross? 'One two' he says. 'Jus' the 01' one-two an' he'll go down'" (Steinbeck 78). Curler's Wife expresses how she is treated at home with Curler in this section of the novel. She sits and listens to Curler ramble on about the way he would fight other men.

The lack of passion is the main cause for her loneliness, which drives her to try to interact with the men in the ranch. One of the main elements of this story is the process of achieving one's American dream. Leonie and George always wished to own their own ranch, and be their own bosses. Curlers Wife had her own American dream as well. She claims that she was offered a position as a movie actress " Another time I met a guy an' he was in pitchers. Went out to the Riverside Dance Palace with him. He says he was goanna put me in the movies. Says I was a natural.

Son's he got back to Hollywood he was goanna write to me about it" (Steinbeck 88). Curlers Wife blames her mother for hiding all the letters the movie pitcher was going to write her. This made her infuriated with her mother and she left her home and married Curler. The thought of becoming famous still goes through her mind everyday, and it kills her that she didn't take the opportunity. Given the few ill-famed characteristics that Curlers Wife has, she is still a victim in the novel *Of Mice and Men* due to her loveless marriage, her isolation on the ranch ND her crushed version of the American dream.

Curlers wife seeks out the attention of the other men because Curler does not provide her any. She spends time alone on the ranch, and has nobody to talk to. She also had her dreams crushed by her mother, and her idea of being famous still haunts her everyday. Some may argue that the flirtatious qualities of Curlers Wife make her a villain, however the qualities that define her as a victim outnumber those of a villain. Being labeled can influence the way one acts, and Curlers Wife is under the influence.