

SELLADOOR

PRODUCTIONS

OF MICE AND MEN

BY

JOHN STEINBECK



EDUCATION PACK

WHO

GEORGE

A small man with ambition and intelligence. He shares a dream with Lennie to own a piece of land on which they can build a life.



LENNIE

Big and strong although has a childlike innocence that causes him to be misunderstood and leads him and George into trouble.



CURLEY'S WIFE

Young and pretty, she wears attractive clothes. She is lonely and the only woman on the ranch. She is often found flirting with the other ranch hands.



CURLEY

The boss's son who has recently married. He is a hot-headed boxer and always looks for reasons to fight.

RANCH HANDS

there are a number of other ranch hands, including Slim, Crooks and Candy.



WHAT

CONFLICT

There are a number of conflicts within *Of Mice and Men*. The main conflict is that George and Lennie exist in an extremely hostile world that makes their struggle for survival intense. They are also conflicted in a society where they do not fit and are not easily accepted. This struggle is made even more complicated for George because of Lennie's childlike outlook on the world. Even their friendship, which is based on a deep-rooted brotherly connection, is perceived as unusual.

PLOT

George and Lennie have been forced to leave a small town called Weed because of a misunderstanding involving Lennie and a local girl. The two friends often talk about their dream of owning their own land. The next day, they start their new jobs as farmhands in Soledad and are shown around the ranch by Candy, an old farmhand who lost his right hand in a working accident. George mentions their dream and Candy, who has some savings, eagerly offers to join them.

Curley, who is the boss's son, provokes Lennie into a fight, which results in Lennie crushing Curley's hand. Lennie is given a puppy by Slim, who is the natural leader at the ranch. Lennie doesn't realise his own strength and kills the puppy accidentally by petting him too much.

Curley's wife, a young, bored and lonely woman, who has only recently married Curley, wanders to the bunkhouses and finds Lennie, where she starts talking openly about her feelings. Alone with Lennie, she invites him to touch her hair. He does it so strongly that she panics and screams. In attempting to quieten her, Lennie accidentally kills her. Lennie runs away to hide, in the way that George has always told him to do.

Candy finds Curley's wife dead and tells George. Curley finds out and wants revenge. Lennie hides by the river dreaming of the land he will farm with George. George finds Lennie, and talks to him reassuringly about the little place they will have together someday. Fearing what will happen to Lennie at Curley's hands, George makes an unspeakable choice.



WHEN

Of Mice and Men is set in the 1930s. But what was going on at that time in the USA? On October the 29th 1929 millions of dollars were wiped out on the stock market in an event called the Wall Street Crash. Many of the USA's large banks and corporations went bankrupt. This led to the Great Depression. People lost their life savings, their homes and their jobs. Over 13 million people became unemployed. Over the next 11 years, between 1 and 2 million people travelled all over the country desperately looking for work. However, all they found were signs displayed saying 'No Men Wanted'.



Throughout the 1930s there were a series of severe droughts in states such as Oklahoma, Kansas and Texas. Some areas had droughts that lasted up to 8 years! During the droughts, high winds blew huge clouds of dust that blackened the sky. These were known as 'black blizzards' and occurred throughout America's Midwest area, which then became known as the Dust Bowl. The Dust Bowl forced millions of farmers to flee and abandon their land.

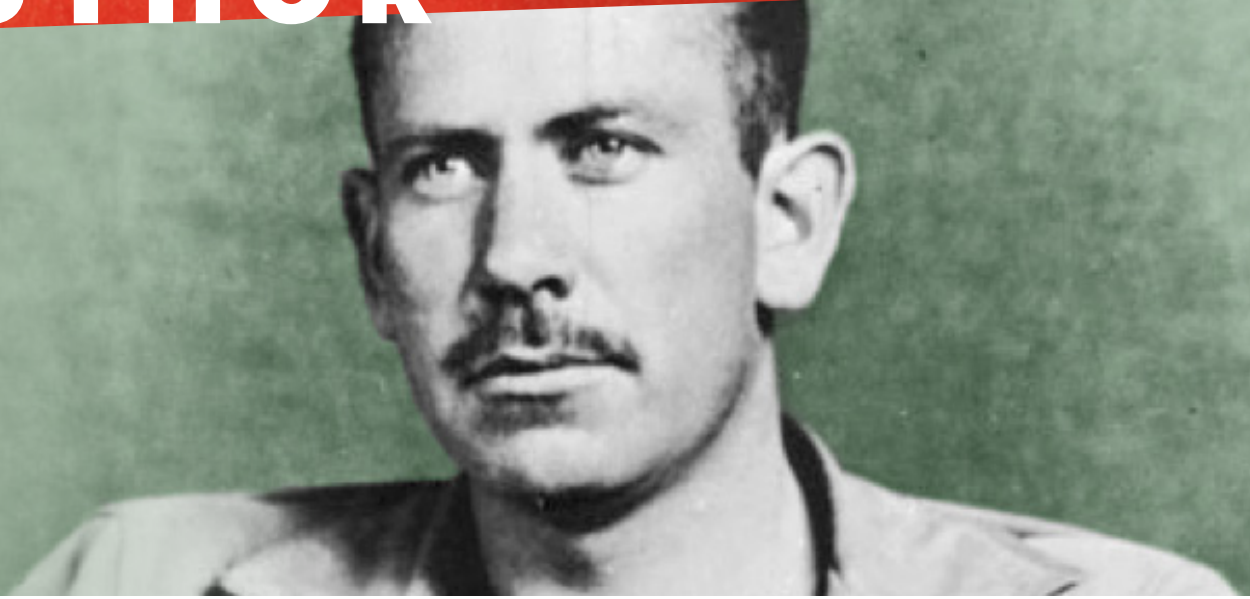
Many farmers moved to 'Golden California', thinking that there would be fertile farmland going spare. Many Californians turned the 'Okies' away but these migrants had nowhere to go. They created camps of cardboard and metal shacks and looked for work as migrant farmhands. If a farmer did get a job as a ranch hand, it was a very lucky position to be in! They would be provided with accommodation in a bunkhouse, food, and a very small monthly wage.





This picture, from 1932, shows men queuing up at a breadline awaiting a free loaf

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Of Mice and Men was written by the American author, John Steinbeck. Steinbeck grew up in a small, rural town called Salinas in California, the setting of *Of Mice and Men*. In his youth, Steinbeck spent his summers working on nearby ranches and later with migrant workers on sugar beet farms. This time spent on ranches showed Steinbeck how harsh life could be for a migrant worker. These experiences were key in helping him write *Of Mice and Men*.



Steinbeck began to write a series of "California novels" and Dust Bowl fiction, which he set among the common people of the Great Depression. These works included *In Dubious Battle*, *Of Mice and Men* and *The Grapes of Wrath*. In an interview about *Of Mice and Men* Steinbeck said:

I was a bindlestiff myself for quite a spell. I worked in the same country that the story is laid in. Lennie was a real person. He's in an insane asylum in California right now. I worked alongside him for many weeks. He didn't kill a girl. He killed a ranch foreman. Got sore because the boss had fired his pal and stuck a pitchfork right through his stomach. I hate to tell you how many times I saw him do it. We couldn't stop him until it was too late.

Of Mice and Men was Steinbeck's first attempt at writing in the form of novel-play. It is structured in three acts. Each act has two chapters in it. He wanted to write a novel that could be played from its lines, or a play that could be read like a novel.

In 1962, Steinbeck won the Nobel Prize for literature for his "realistic and imaginative writing, combining as it does sympathetic humor and keen social perception."

STEINBECK QUOTES -

// *Try to understand men, if you understand each other you will be kind to each other. Knowing a man well never leads to hate and nearly always leads to love"*

// *We are lonesome animals. We spend all our life trying to be less lonesome"*

EDUCATION RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS

Three lessons have been designed for further exploration of the themes, characters and setting of Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*. Each lesson has a different focus; acting (a post-show activity), playwriting and theatrical design (which can be done at any time).

The lessons were crafted in line with the national assessment objectives as outlined by each exam board.

Teachers should feel free to adapt and modify these lessons according to the needs of their students.

ACTING LESSON

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. To be able to cite evidence from the production and/or script to infer how the characters feel.
2. To be able to use persuasive language to influence decision making.
3. To be able to improvise and use persuasive arguments that targets a character's inner conflict.

Assessment Objectives:

(applicable for AQA, Edexcel, OCR and WJEC)

Drama - AO1, AO2, AO4

English Literature - AO1

English SQA - H23H 75 Outcome 2; H23T 75 Outcome 2

STARTER ACTIVITY - SIT AND STAND

- Students stand if they agree with the statement or stay seated if they disagree with the statement
- There are no right or wrong answers!
- For each statement, ask one person standing and one person sitting to explain their choices.
- Challenge the persons explaining to try to persuade someone to change their original response. Can they make them sit or stand?

STATEMENTS

1. I'm the type of person who always stands up for my friends
2. When I make a promise, I always follow through.
3. At times, I have felt picked on and misunderstood.
4. If I've let someone down, I feel really guilty.
5. I can count on other people to help me when I need it.
6. At times I have felt like an outsider.
7. I have been loyal to someone that has got me into a lot of trouble.
8. I get angry when I see vulnerable people being picked on.
9. My oldest friends are the most important to me.

MAIN ACTIVITY 1 - ANGEL/DEVIL BRAINSTORM

This activity explores a character's moral dilemma, using the image of an angel on one shoulder and a devil on the other. We will explore George's moral dilemma from the play:

“Should I stay with Lennie and care for him or should I go off on my own without him?”

1. Brainstorm with the class reasons for staying with Lennie
2. Brainstorm with the class reasons for leaving Lennie.
3. Collate these arguments onto the board/large sheets of paper for students to reference later.
4. Encourage students to reference the show/quotes from the play
5. E.g. For the Angel: You should stay with Lennie because he is your friend and he would be helpless without you. You would feel so guilty if you left him. For the Devil: Life would be easier for you if you didn't have to worry about Lennie. He holds you back.

MAIN ACTIVITY 2 - ANGEL/DEVIL IMPROVISATION

1. Choose 3 students: one to play the Angel, one to play the Devil, one to play George.
2. The Angel and Devil stand about 8 feet apart with George in the middle. George begins the scene by stating the moral dilemma question; “Should I stay with Lennie and care for him or should I go off on my own without him?”
3. Then the Angel has about approximately 30 seconds to persuade George to move to his side. Encourage the students to quote arguments from the class brainstorm.
4. When the student playing George hears an argument that is persuasive to him, he must take a step towards the Angel.
5. Then the Devil has about approximately 30 seconds to persuade George to move to his side. Encourage the students to quote arguments from the class brainstorm.
6. When the student playing George hears an argument that is persuasive to him, he must take a step towards the Angel.
7. The Angel and Devil each have 3 chances to persuade George.
8. Teacher Note: The actors may elaborate on arguments or repeat statements with different delivery.
9. After the final turn, George will see which actor, the Angel or the Devil, that he is standing closest to and state, “ I choose to (stay with Lennie or leave Lennie) because (re-states the persuasive arguments). E.g. I choose to leave Lennie because I can make a better life on my own. I won't have to keep protecting him.
10. Repeat the activity with three new actors and see if the outcome changes.

PLENARY - ANGEL/DEVIL EVALUATION

1. Discuss as a class which arguments were most persuasive. Perhaps circle/highlight the arguments on the board/paper.
2. Ask each student in the class to write their own version of George's final statement:
 - a. What would they do if they were George?
 - b. What arguments were most persuasive
 - c. Why were these statements so persuasive?
3. Students will share with their writing with the class.

PLAYWRITING LESSON

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. To be able to make conclusions about relationships from an image and/or text
2. To be able to explain these conclusions by citing evidence from an image and/or text
3. To be able to create an original dialogue from photographs that highlight the historical context.

Assessment Objectives:

(applicable for AQA, Edexcel, OCR and WJEC)

Drama - AO1, AO2

English Literature - AO1, AO2, AO3, AO4

English SQA - H23H 75 Outcome 1; H23T 75 Outcome 1 and 2

STARTER ACTIVITY - PHOTO AND SCENE ANALYSIS

Look at the photo and answer the following questions:

1. What does the photo tell us about the characters pictured?
2. What do you think is the relationship between the characters pictured?
3. Then read the short scene between George and Lennie from *Of Mice and Men*:
4. Answer the following questions making sure that you cite evidence from the text.
 - a. What are the characters' emotions?
 - b. What are their worries concerns?
 - c. What does the dialogue tell us about their relationship?
 - d. How does the dialogue connect to the photo?

MAIN ACTIVITY 1 - PHOTO INTERPRETATION

1. Students look at the photos of people from the Great Depression (these can be on the smart board, printed and pinned around the classroom or simply given as handouts).
2. Answer the same questions as before.
 - a. What does the photo tell us about the characters pictured?
 - b. What do you think is the relationship between the characters pictured?
3. Then students will answer the following questions for the photo, inferring the information from the photo, their knowledge of the time period and their creative imagination.
 - a. What are the characters' emotions?

- b. What are their worries and concerns?
- c. Describe the relationship between the characters pictured.

MAIN ACTIVITY 2 - DIALOGUE WRITING

1. Now students in pairs will write a short 4-8 line dialogue that is inspired by their particular photo.
2. Students will use the photo, their knowledge of the time period and the answers to the questions to create dialogue that communicates their characters' relationship, emotions, worries and concerns.

PLENARY

1. Students will show their photo and share their scenes with the class. The class will answer the same questions about their classmates' work.
 - a. What are the characters' emotions?
 - b. What are their worries and concerns?
 - c. What does the dialogue tell us about the characters' relationship?
 - d. How does the dialogue connect to the photo?

PHOTO AND SCENE ANALYSIS - OF MICE AND MEN



GEORGE - Guys like us that work on ranches is the loneliest guys in the world. They ain't got no family. They don't belong no place. They come to a ranch and work up a stake and then they go into town and blow their stake. And then the first thing you know they're poundin' their tail on some other ranch. They ain't got nothin' to look ahead to.

LENNIE - That's it, that's it! Now tell how it is with us.

GEORGE - 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 barroom blowin' our jack, just because we got no place to go. If them other guys gets in jail, they can rot for all anybody gives a damn.

LENNIE - But not us! And why? Because...because I got you to look after me...and you got me to look after you...and that's why!

GLOSSARY OF TERMS:

Stake - The amount of money a migrant worker is paid for a month's work

Poundin' their tail - Working hard at manual labour

Blowin' our jack - Spending all our money



PHOTO INTERPRETATION - OF MICE AND MEN



PHOTO INTERPRETATION - OF MICE AND MEN

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PHOTO INTERPRETATION - OF MICE AND MEN



PHOTO INTERPRETATION - OF MICE AND MEN



PHOTO INTERPRETATION - OF MICE AND MEN



PHOTO INTERPRETATION - OF MICE AND MEN

THEATRICAL DESIGN LESSON

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. To be able to cite evidence from the text that identifies language/imagery that the writer uses to establish a scene.
2. To be able to develop a set design that matches the play as a set designer would.
3. To be able to develop a soundscape that matches the play as a sound designer would.

Assessment Objectives:

(applicable for AQA, Edexcel, OCR and WJEC)

Drama - AO2, AO3

English Literature - AO1, AO2

English SQA - H23H 75 Outcome 1; H23T 75 Outcome 2

STARTER ACTIVITY - TEXT ANALYSIS

1. Read the first 3 paragraphs of Steinbeck's novel.
2. In pairs/small groups, students will circle/underline any words that relate to sights and sounds.
3. Create a master list on the board of things you can see in one column and things you can hear in a second column.
4. Ask the students to write down what mood they think Steinbeck is trying to evoke in the reader?

MAIN ACTIVITY 1 - SOUND/SET DESIGNING

In pairs or small groups, create either or both:

1. Set Design - Draw a backdrop for *Of Mice and Men*. Students can use the two images below, plus the photo of the Salinas river as inspiration. Students must incorporate at least 3 items from the master columns created in the Starter. Students need to be able to justify/consider:
 - a. Will your set design be realistic or symbolic?
 - b. What aspect of the set is most important?
 - c. What colour schemes might you use?
 - d. How can you as a set designer evoke the same mood in the audience that Steinbeck evokes in his readers?
2. Sound Design - Create a 30 second/1 minute soundscape. Students must incorporate at least 3 items from the master columns created in the Starter. Students:

- a. may play sound effects on their phone or
 - b. create the sound effects themselves by using what is available in the classroom or
 - c. Use computer suite and associated programmes
3. Students need to be able to justify/consider:
- a. Will your sound design be realistic or symbolic?
 - b. What other sounds might occur in this natural setting?
 - c. How can you as a set designer evoke the same mood in the audience that Steinbeck evokes in his readers

PLENARY

- Have a Set Design group present their backdrop to the class at the same time as the Sound Designers play their soundscape
- Teacher Note: Match groups that will compliment each other. E.g. if a realistic sound design has been created, make efforts to pair with a realistic set design.
- Class to answer the following questions:
 - What elements from the master lists did they incorporate into their designs?
 - Were the designers successful in evoking the mood?



SAMPLE PICTURE OF SET DESIGN FOR PROFESSIONAL PRODUCTION OF 'OF MICE AND MEN'.



**SAMPLE PICTURE OF SET DESIGN FOR PROFESSIONAL
PRODUCTION OF 'OF MICE AND MEN'.**



THE REAL SALINAS RIVER

FIRST THREE PARAGRAPHS FROM OF MICE AND MEN

WRITTEN BY JOHN STEINBECK

A few miles south of Soledad, the Salinas River drops in close to the hillside bank and runs deep and green. The water is warm too, for it has slipped twinkling over the yellow sands in the sunlight before reaching the narrow pool. On one side of the river the golden foothill slopes curve up to the strong and rocky Gabilan mountains, but on the valley side the water is lined with trees—willows fresh and green with every spring, carrying in their lower leaf junctures the debris of the winter's flooding; and sycamores with mottled, white, recumbent limbs and branches that arch over the pool. On the sandy bank under the trees the leaves lie deep and so crisp that a lizard makes a great skittering if he runs among them. Rabbits come out of the brush to sit on the sand in the evening, and the damp flats are covered with the night tracks of 'coons, and with the spread pads of dogs from the ranches, and with the split-wedge tracks of deer that come to drink in the dark.

There is a path through the willows and among the sycamores, a path beaten hard by boys coming down from the ranches to swim in the deep pool, and beaten hard by tramps who come wearily down from the highway in the evening to jungle-up near water. In front of the low horizontal limb of a giant sycamore there is an ash pile made by many fires; the limb is worn smooth by men who have sat on it.

Evening of a hot day started the little wind to moving among the leaves. The shade climbed up the hills toward the top. On the sand banks the rabbits sat as quietly as little gray, sculptured stones. And then from the direction of the state highway came the sound of footsteps on crisp, sycamore leaves. The rabbits hurried noiselessly for cover. A stilted heron labored up into the air and pounded down river. For a moment the place was lifeless, and then two men emerged from the path and came into the opening by the green pool.