

Y9 Knowledge Organiser: *Of Mice and Men*

Assessment Week: One essay question. There will be an extract provided, but you will be expected to also refer to quotes from throughout the novel. The question will be about one of the outsiders – either Lennie, Curley’s Wife, Crooks or Candy. You will be expected to write an introduction, roughly 4 central paragraphs of analysis (including quotes from the extract and elsewhere) and a conclusion. You will have 1 hour to plan and write.

Plot overview: The novel is set in California, America, during the 1930s. At this time, many Americans migrated to the West in search of jobs due to high unemployment following The Great Depression. This time was particularly difficult for many, but one thing kept them going – The American Dream.

George and Lennie are two friends who work as ranch hands. At the start of the novel, the men move to another ranch in Soledad to try and build up a stake so that they can fulfil their dream of buying their own land. Lennie, a child-like character with a learning difficulty, is excited about the idea of ‘tending the rabbits’, but never understands how much damage his strength can cause.

Key Characters:	Key Themes:	History:	Writer’s Methods:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • George • Lennie • Candy • Crooks • Curley • Curley’s wife • Slim 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hopes and Dreams (and the fragility of dreams) • Friendship • Loneliness and Isolation • Prejudice • Violence • Women • Man and the Natural World 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Great Depression • The American West and migrant workers • The American Dream • Prejudice (racism, ageism and sexism) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foreshadowing • Animal Imagery • Juxtaposition • Cyclical structure

Key Quotes

“...and live off the fatta the lan’.” <i>Repeated throughout by G+L, their American Dream, reflects migrant worker’s desires to provide for themselves</i>	“Because ... because I got you to look after me, and you got me to look after you, and that’s why” <i>Lennie repeating G’s words, friendship and reliance</i>
“Behind [George] walked his opposite... he walked heavily, dragging his feet a little the way a bear drags his paws.” <i>Simile – uncontrollable strength and animal power of Lennie, foreshadows CW death</i>	“Lennie, who had been watching, imitated George exactly.” <i>Imagery - Lennie’s inability to think for himself and reliance upon George</i>
“An’ you ain’t gonna do no bad things like you done in Weed, neither?” <i>Lennie’s cyclical behaviour of violence, foreshadows the ending</i>	“A light of understanding broke on Lennie’s face.” <i>Metaphor – Lennie unexpectedly remembers his behaviour in Weed, imagery of hope juxtaposes the dark truth of his actions, highlights his inability to understand the consequences of his behaviour</i>
“Come on, George. Tell me. Please, George. Like you done before.” <i>Lennie’s childish nature and reliance upon George</i>	“Curley’s like a lot of little guys. He hates big guys.” <i>CW telling G+L about Curley, foreshadows Curley’s attack on Lennie</i>
“Married two weeks and got the eye?” <i>George pre-judging CW before he meets her, assuming her desire for friendship is flirtation</i>	“Well, I think Curley’s married... a tart.” <i>Candy – ranch workers pre-judge CW, insult her behind her back and take enjoyment from discussing her</i>
“for the rectangle of sunshine in the doorway was cut off.” <i>Imagery of CW foreshadows the ending and is symbolic of her taking the blame for many lost lives, hopes and dreams in the novel</i>	“She had full, rouged lips and wide-spaced eyes, heavily made up.” <i>Imagery portrays CW like a doll for the eyes of men; heavy make up could reflect her desire to conform, or to conceal her real self</i>
“...and though she did not seem to be looking at Lennie she bridled a little.” <i>CW’s awareness of men’s gaze and her use of her body for attention – her only tool to prevent her complete isolation</i>	“Jailbait.” “Bitch.” “Rattrap.” “Poison.” <i>Taboo and offensive language used by men to demean CW, reflect how women were judged and blamed for their interactions with men and sexuality</i>
“They fell into a silence. They looked at one another, amazed. This thing they had never really believed in was coming true.” <i>G+L and Candy, as the dream looks like it could come true – a rare moment of hope</i>	“I shouldn’t of let no stranger shoot...” <i>Candy’s concerning his dog, regretting the ease at which he was defeated by Carlson, also foreshadows George’s choice to shoot Lennie</i>
“...flopping like a fish on a line” <i>Simile – both Curley and his wife described in this way during Lennie’s attacks</i>	“I di’n’t mean no harm.” <i>Repeated by Lennie throughout the text, reflects his lack of self-control and inability to regulate his actions</i>
“a tattered dictionary and a mauled copy of the California civil code for 1905.” <i>Imagery reflects Crooks’ education and desire to defend himself and know his rights as a black man</i>	“This here’s my room. Nobody got any right in here but me.” <i>Crooks to Lennie, fearful of others initially and protecting his territory</i>
“A guy goes nuts if he ain’t got nobody... a guy gets too lonely an’ he gets sick.” <i>Crooks suggests isolation leads to illness “nuts...sick”, a reference to many of the men’s actions on the ranch</i>	“Crooks’ face lighted with pleasure in his torture.” <i>Imagery – cruelty of men to each other, Crooks enjoys exerting rare power over a weaker man (Lennie)</i>
“It was difficult for Crooks to conceal his pleasure with anger.” <i>Imagery – Crooks enjoys rare attention from others, reflects his usual isolation</i>	“I could get you strung up on a tree so easy it ain’t funny.” <i>CW threatens Crooks, referencing lynching in an order to demonstrate power over him</i>
“How’d you like not to talk to nobody?” – <i>CW’s question directed at men left on ranch, highlights her isolation and how this makes her vulnerable before her death</i>	“And the meanness and the plannings and the discontent and the ache for attention...” <i>List – highlights what CW struggled with in life and how beneath her cruelty she was simply lonely</i>
“She was very pretty and simple, and her face was sweet and young.” <i>Imagery – only in death is CW released, reveals how young she was</i>	“A silent head and beak lanced down and plucked it out by the head, and the beak swallowed the little snake while its tail waved frantically.” <i>Symbolism – snake could be Lennie/Curley’s wife/all migrant workers. Reminiscent of the opening description - cyclical structure – men trapped in migration cycle/life continues for George</i>
“‘Tend rabbits,’ it said scornfully. ‘You crazy bastard. You ain’t fit to lick the boots of no rabbit...’” <i>Lennie’s mental rabbit echoing George’s words, he’s internalised his treatment by the others</i>	“Ever’body gonna be nice to you. Ain’t gonna be no more trouble.” <i>Soothing and reassuring final words to Lennie before his death, foreshadowing George’s choice to shoot him</i>