TO UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT OF JOHN STEINBECK’S BOOK, YOU NEED TO KNOW A BIT ABOUT STEINBECK HIMSELF, AND A LITTLE ABOUT ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN 1930’S AMERICA.

JOHN STEINBECK

John Steinbeck was born in Salinas, California in 1902. Although his family was wealthy, he was interested in the lives of the farm labourers and spent time working with them. He used his experiences as material for his writing.

He wrote a number of novels about poor people who worked on the land and dreamed of a better life, including The Grapes of Wrath, which is the heart-rending story of a family’s struggle to escape the dust bowl of the West to reach California. Steinbeck was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1962, six years before his death in 1968.

THE DEPRESSION

On October 29 1929, millions of dollars were wiped out in an event that became known as the Wall Street Crash. It led to the Depression in America which crippled the country from 1930 - 1936. People lost their life savings when firms and banks went bust, and 12 - 15 million men and women - one third of America’s population - were unemployed.

There was then no dole to fall back on, so food was short and the unemployed in cities couldn’t pay their rent. Some ended up in settlements called ‘Hoovervilles’ (after the US president of the time, Herbert C Hoover), in shanties made from old packing cases and corrugated iron.
Migrant farmers

Added to the man-made financial problems were natural ones. A series of droughts in southern mid-western states like Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas led to failed harvests and dried-up land. Farmers were forced to move off their land: they couldn’t repay the bank-loans which had helped buy the farms and had to sell what they owned to pay their debts.

Many economic migrants headed west to ‘Golden’ California, thinking there would be land going spare, but the Californians turned many back, fearing they would be over-run. The refuges had nowhere to go back to, so they set up home in huge camps in the California valleys - living in shacks of cardboard and old metal - and sought work as casual farmhands.

Ranch hands

Against this background, ranch hands like George and Lennie were lucky to have work. Ranch hands were grateful for at least a bunk-house to live in and to have food provided, even though the pay was low.
THE PLOT

The story begins when George and Lennie prepare to arrive at a ranch to work and ends in tragedy just four days later. The story is told in the third person, so we are provided with a clear, unbiased view of all the characters.

Chapter 1

George and Lennie camp in the brush by a pool, the night before starting new jobs as ranch hands. George finds Lennie stroking a dead mouse in his pocket. He complains that caring for Lennie prevents him from living a freer life. We find out that Lennie’s innocent petting of a girl’s dress led to them losing their last jobs in Weed.

However, when they talk about their dream of getting a piece of land together, we know they really depend on each other.

Chapter 2

When they arrive at the ranch in the morning, George and Lennie are shown around by old Candy. They meet their boss and, later, his son, Curley - George is suspicious of Curley’s manner and warns Lennie to stay away from him. They see Curley’s pretty and apparently flirtatious wife and meet some of their fellow workers, Slim and Carlson.

Chapter 3

Later that evening, George tells Slim about why he and Lennie travel together and more about what happened in Weed. The men talk about Candy’s ancient dog, which is tired and ill. Carlson shoots it, as an act of kindness. George tells Candy about their dream of getting a piece of land and Candy eagerly offers to join them - he has capital, so they could make it happen almost immediately.

Curley provokes Lennie into a fight, which ends up with Lennie severely injuring Curley’s hand.

Chapter 4

The following night, most men on the ranch go into town. Crooks is alone in his room when Lennie joins him. They talk about land - Crooks is sceptical, not believing that George and Lennie are going to do what so many other men he’s known have failed to do, and get land of their own. Yet when Candy happens to come in as well, Crooks is convinced and asks to be in on it too. Curley’s wife arrives. She threatens Crooks and an argument develops. Crooks realises he can never really be part of George, Lennie and Candy’s plan.
Chapter 5

Next afternoon, Lennie accidentally kills the puppy that Slim had given him by petting it too much. He’s sad. Curley’s wife finds him and starts talking very openly about her feelings. She invites Lennie to stroke her soft hair, but he does it so strongly she panics and he ends up killing her too. He runs away to hide, as George had told him.

Candy finds the body and tells George. They tell the other men - Curley wants revenge.

Chapter 6

Lennie hides in the brush by the pool. He dreams of his Aunt Clara and the rabbits he will tend when he and George get their land. George finds Lennie and talks reassuringly to him about the little place they will have together - then shoots him with Carlson’s gun. When the other men find George, they assume he shot Lennie in self-defence. Only Slim understands what George did and why.

CHARACTERS

Not many people had real friends in the American West in the 1930s - it was a case of every man for himself. That is one of the reasons why the story of George and Lennie’s unusual friendship is so poignant. They have each other. No one else in the novel is so lucky.

George Milton

- He is a small man, but has brains and a quick wit.
- He has been a good friend to Lennie, ever since he promised Lennie’s Aunt Clara that he would care for him. He looks after all Lennie’s affairs, such as carrying his work card, and tries to steer him out of potential trouble.
• He needs Lennie as a friend, not only because Lennie’s strength helps to get them both jobs, but so as not to be lonely. His threats to leave Lennie are not really serious. He is genuinely proud of Lennie.

• He shares a dream with Lennie to own a piece of land and is prepared to work hard to build up the money needed to buy it.

• "...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 bar room blowin’ in our jack ’jus because we got no place else to go. If them other guys gets in jail they can rot for all anybody gives a damn. But not us."

• He is honest with people he trusts. For example, he tells Slim that he used to play tricks on Lennie when they were young, but now feels guilty about it as Lennie nearly drowned.

Lennie Small

• He is a big man, in contrast to his name.

• He has limited intelligence, so he relies on George to look after him. He copies George in everything George does and trusts George completely.

• "Behind him (George) walked his opposite, a huge man, shapeless of face, with large, pale eyes, with wide, sloping shoulders; and he walked heavily, dragging his feet a little, the way a bear drags his paws. His arms did not swing at his sides, but hung loosely."

• He shares a dream with George to own a piece of land. Lennie’s special job would be to tend the rabbits

• He likes to pet soft things, like puppies and dead mice. We know this got him into trouble in Weed when he tried to feel a girl’s soft red dress: she thought he was going to attack her.

• He can be forgetful - George continually has to remind him about important things.

• He is very gentle and kind, and would never harm anyone or anything deliberately.

• He is extremely strong: he can work as well as two men at bucking barley.
• He is often described as a child or an animal - he drinks from the pool like a horse and his huge hands are described as paws.

Slim

• Slim is the jerkline skinner (lead mule-team driver) at the ranch. He is excellent at his job.
• He is the natural leader at the ranch. Everyone respects his views and looks up to him.
• He has a quiet dignity: he doesn’t need to assert himself to have authority.
• "there was a gravity in his manner and a quiet so profound that all talked stopped when he spoke. His authority was so great that his word was taken on any subject, be it politics or love."
• He understands the relationship between George and Lennie. He helps George at the end and reassures George that he did the right thing.

Curley
Curley is the boss's son, so he doesn’t need to work like the ordinary ranch hands, and he has time to kill.

He's little - so he hates big guys.

He is a prize-fighter and looks for opportunities for a fight.

"He glanced coldly at George and then at Lennie. His arms gradually bent at the elbows and his hands closed into fists. He stiffened and went into a slight crouch. His glance was at once calculating and pugnacious."

He is newly-married and is very possessive of his wife - but he still visits brothels.

There is a rumour that he wears a glove filled with Vaseline to keep his hand soft for his wife.

Curley's wife

She is newly married to Curley.

We never know her name - she is merely Curley’s 'property' with no individual identity.

She is young, pretty, wears attractive clothes and curls her hair.

She seems flirtatious and is always hanging around the bunk-house.

She is lonely - there are no other women to talk to and Curley is not really interested in her.

"What kinda harm am I doin' to you? Seems like they ain't none of them cares how I gotta live. I tell you I ain't used to livin' like this. I coulda made somethin' of myself."

She doesn’t like Curley - she tells Lennie that she only married him when she didn’t receive a letter she’d been promised to get into Hollywood.

She is naive.
Crooks is the black stable hand or buck.

He is the only permanent employee at the ranch, since he injured his back in an accident. His back gives him constant pain.

He is the only black man around and is made to be isolated by his colour - he can’t go into the bunk-house or socialise with the men.

He is always called the 'nigger' by the men, which shows how racism is taken for granted. The men don’t mean to insult Crooks every time they call him this, but they never think to use his name.

All this has made him proud and aloof.

He is lonely

"S'pose you didn’t have nobody. S'pose you couldn’t go into the bunk house and play rummy 'cause you were black...A guy needs somebody-to be near him....I tell ya a guy gets too lonely an' he gets sick."

The only time he mixes with the ranch hands socially is when they pitch horseshoes - and then he beats everyone!

He has his own room near the stables and has a few possessions. He has books, which show he is intelligent and an old copy of the California Civil Code, which suggests he is concerned about his rights.

He has seen many men come and go, all dreaming of buying a piece of land, but is now cynical, as no one has ever achieved it.
Candy

- Candy is the oldest ranch hand. He lost his right hand in an accident at work.
- He is the 'swamper' - the man who cleans the bunkhouse. He knows he will be thrown out and put 'on the county' when he is too old to work.
- Because of this, he accepts what goes on and doesn’t challenge anything: he can’t afford to lose his job.
- He has a very old dog, which he has had from a pup. It is his only friend and companion.
- "The old man came slowly into the room. He had his broom in his hand. And at his heels there walked a drag-footed sheep dog, gray of muzzle, and with pale, blind old eyes."
- Carlson insists on shooting the dog because he claims it is too old and ill to be of any use. Candy is devastated.
- He is lonely and isolated, but makes friends with George and Lennie and offers his compensation money to help them all to buy a ranch together and achieve their dream.
- When he finds Curley’s wife dead, he is furious, as he knows instantly that Lennie was involved and that they have lost their chance of achieving their dream.

THEMES

A theme is an idea that runs through a text. A text may have one theme or many. Understanding the themes makes the text more than 'just' a text - it becomes something more significant, because we’re encouraged to think more deeply about the text, to work out what lies beneath its surface.
Of Mice and Men

The title of the book comes from a poem by the 18th century Scottish poet Robbie Burns. It is about a mouse which carefully builds a winter nest in a wheat field, only for it to be destroyed by a ploughman. It is written in Scots dialect.

The best laid schemes o’ mice an’ menGang aft a-gley,An’ lea’e us nought but grief an’ pain,For promised joy!

(The best laid schemes of mice and menOften go wrongAnd leave us nothing but grief and pain,Instead of promised joy!)

The mouse had dreamed of a safe, warm winter and is now faced with the harsh reality of cold, loneliness and possible death. There is a parallel here with George and Lennie’s joyful fantasy of a farm of their own, and its all-too-predictable destruction at the end of the story. Perhaps the is also meant to suggest to us how unpredictable our lives are, and how vulnerable to tragedy.

Loneliness and Dreams

The two main themes in 'Of Mice and Men' - foreshadowed by the reference to Burns’ mouse - are loneliness and dreams. They interlock: people who are lonely have most need of dreams to help them through.

Study the table below, showing both the loneliness and the dreams of each of the main characters. You could use a table like this as the basis for an exam answer about themes in Of Mice and Men.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Loneliness</th>
<th>Dream</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>George</td>
<td>George is not lonely during the novel, as he has Lennie. He will be lonely afterwards, without his best friend.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lennie</td>
<td>Lennie is the only character who is innocent enough not to fear loneliness, but he is angry when Crooks suggests George won’t come back to him.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Curley’s wife</td>
<td>She is married to a man she doesn’t love and who doesn’t love her. There are no other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Loneliness</strong></td>
<td><strong>Dream</strong></td>
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<td>women on the ranch and she has nothing to do. She tries to befriend the men by hanging round the bunkhouse.</td>
<td>Hollywood, but when she didn’t receive a letter from him, she married Curley.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Candy**

When Candy’s ancient, ill dog was shot, Candy has nothing left. He delayed killing the dog, even though he knew deep down that it was the best thing, as he dreaded losing his long-time companion.

Candy joins George and Lennie’s plan of owning a piece of land. His savings make the dream actually possible to achieve.

**Crooks**

Crooks lives in enforced solitude, away from the other men. He is bitter about being a back-busted nigger. He is thrilled when Lennie and Candy come into his room and are his companions for a night.

Crooks dreams of being seen as equal to everyone else. He knows his civil rights. He remembers fondly his childhood, when he played with white children who came to his family’s chicken ranch, and longs for a similar relationship with white people again.

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**Isolation and Loneliness**

**GEORGE AND LENNIE**

- Different from the other ranch hands, “we got somebody to talk to that gives a damn about us” because they have each other.
- George enjoys the dream of the two friends owning land together as much as Lennie “An’ if a fren’ come along….we’d say ”Why don’t you spen’ the night?”
- George tells Slim, “I seen the guys that go around the ranches alone. That ain’t no good”, revealing that he benefits by avoiding their loneliness. He says that he and Lennie “got kinda used to each other” and “it’s nicer to go around with a guy you know.”
- George tells Slim how he once used Lennie for fun but he learned his lesson after an incident in the river and “I ain’t done nothing like that no more.” He protects and defends Lennie, for example not allowing Slim to call him “cuckoo”, proudly telling the Boss that “he can put up more grain alone than most pairs can” and not allowing Curley to beat him up.
- Lennie, despite being slow and easily confused, is sure of this friendship, answering Crooks’s threat that George might abandon him, “George wouldn’t do nothing like that.”
Lennie is also protective of George “Ain’t nobody goin’ to talk no hurt to George.”
When he kills Lennie, George makes sure that he dies happy, Lennie’s last words being, "Le’s get that place now" as George pulls the trigger behind his head.

**CURLEY’S WIFE**
In the first meeting, Steinbeck stresses how incongruous her clothes and appearance are, with her “full, rouged lips”, “heavily made up” eyes, “red fingernails” and “red mules on the insteps of which were little bouquets of red ostrich feathers.” She is immediately isolated, partly by being the only female here and also by being the sort of woman who would not easily fit in on a hard-working ranch. Steinbeck makes her seem more friendless and remote by never giving her a name.
This is the first of several visits to the bunkhouse, always claiming that she is looking for Curley but clearly she is looking for company.
The men know that, as Curley’s wife, she is too dangerous to befriend and so they are never chatty, and just want her to leave. George has to teach this to Lennie, telling him to “leave her be.”
On Saturday night, she wanders in to the barn where there is a gathering of those excluded from going into town. Though she knows Curley has gone to the cat-house, she asks if he is here; clearly, she is lonely.
She announces her isolation to these men, “Think I don’t like to talk to somebody ever’ once in a while? Think I like to stick in that house alla time?”
She lashes out viciously because they do not want her to talk to them, calling them “a bunch of bindle stiffs” and claiming that she is only here because “They ain’t nobody else.”
In the barn with Lennie she pleads, “I never get to talk to nobody. I get awful lonely.” She is, perhaps, more friendless than anyone else.
As she realises that she can talk to Lennie, she confides that she only married Curley to get away from home. The dream world that she lives in, the belief that she could have been a film star only isolates her further; her real world is lonely and miserable whilst her dream is unattainable.

**CANDY**
His dog is his company and his equivalent of a friend, “I had ‘im since he was a pup.”
The other men, all loners and migrant workers, cannot understand the idea of friendship and simply want the dog shot because it is no longer useful and is a nuisance in the bunkhouse.
They do not recognise, nor sympathise with, Candy’s affection for the dog as he pleads with them to let the subject drop, “I’m so used to him” and “he was the best damn sheepdog I ever seen.”
He offers his money to George and Lennie to buy the property because “I ain’t got no relatives nor nothing.”

He knows that his future is more loneliness and then death, “They’ll can me purty soon… I won’t have no place to go to.”

When Crooks sneers at the idea of owning their own place, his answer shows the comfort he gains from his new friends and the end to loneliness, “we gonna do it… Me and Lennie and George.”

The importance of friendship and the self-esteem it now gives to him is also shown in the way that he answers back to Curley’s wife when she insults him and Crooks and Lennie, “We got fren’s, that’s what we got.” (Page 111)

Seeing the collapse of his dream, he takes out his anger on Curley’s wife’s corpse, “You wasn’t no good…. I could of hoed the garden and washed dishes for them guys” but now there is only his lonely old aged existence on the ranch.

**CROOKS**

He is segregated in the barn, demonstrating racial discrimination of the 1930s.

Candy tells a story from Christmas when “they let the nigger come in that night.”

Excluded from the companionship that exists in the bunkhouse - no cards or chat. When he comes to speak to Slim about a mule’s foot, he does not enter - “the stable buck put in his head.”

At the beginning of Section 4, we see where and how he lives, his possessions including books as he reads instead of having company.

“Crooks was a proud, aloof man” because he has no choice but to endure this prejudice and isolation. Consequently, he bitterly guards his enforced privacy, saying to Lennie, “This here’s my room… I ain’t wanted in the bunkhouse, and you ain’t wanted in my room.”

He is regretting the way that he taunted Lennie, “A guy needs somebody - to be near him” and “a guy gets too lonely “ and “A guy sets alone out here at night.”

**THE RANCH AND THE ITINERANT WORKERS**

The ranch is isolated as suggested by Lennie and George’s long walk to reach there and by the town’s name Soledad, the Spanish for “loneliness.”

This remoteness is further emphasised by the fact that the Steinbeck’s location never changes; the reader hears of, but never sees, the men going “into town” and of Curley’s going to a doctor when his hand is smashed.

The Boss is suspicious of George because he is unaccustomed to the idea of friendship among the men- Page 43, “I never seen one guy take so much trouble for another guy.”

The workers are all nomadic and solitary, like the man used George’s bed before him, “he just quit, the way a guy will….just wanted to move.”
When telling the details of the dream to Lennie, George describes ranch workers as "the loneliest guys in the world" with "no family" and "nothing to look ahead to."

Slim talks to George of the rarity of guys travelling together and being friends. "I don't know why. Maybe ever'body in the whole damn world is scared of each other."

The men on the ranch are all passing through except Candy and Crooks who are forced to stay because of their disabilities. No-one seems to have a family and they all go to town to pay for the temporary company of women.

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**TEST YOURSELF – HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW THE TEXT?**

* OF MICE AND MEN* - CHAPTER 1

Use quotes to back up your answers

1. What are your first impressions of George and Lennie?
2. Find three examples which suggest Lennie has the mind of a child?
3. How does the writer convey the impression that George can get easily annoyed with Lennie?
4. Why did George and Lennie leave their last place of employment?
5. How can we tell that George feels responsible for Lennie?
6. Why does George instruct Lennie to familiarise himself with the clearing they are staying in?
7. What are George and Lennie's hopes for the future and how do these reflect the American dream?
8. How can we see evidence of the theme of loyalty and friendship in the opening of the novel?

* OF MICE AND MEN* - CHAPTER 2

Use quotes to back up your answers

1. Find evidence to suggest that Lennie relies heavily on George.
2. Why is George in such a bad mood at the opening of the chapter?
3. How can you see evidence of racial prejudice in Chapter 2? (p40 &41)
4. Why is the boss short tempered with George and Lennie?
5. Why is the boss suspicious of George and what does this tell us about the context of the time?
6. Why is George angry with Lennie after the conversation with the boss?
7. What is your first impression of Curley?
8. Why does George take an instant dislike to Curley?
9. How is Curley's wife introduced by the Old Swamper and why might this worry George?
10. What are your first impressions of Carlson and Slim and why is George interested in them?

'O F MICE & MEN'- CHAPTER 3
Use quotes to back up your answers

1. How can we tell that George is proud of Lennie in the opening pages of the chapter?
2. How does George describe his early relationship with Lennie and why do you think he decided to look after Lennie?
3. Why does George decide to confide in Slim about the reasons they had to leave Weed?
4. How does Lennie’s words and actions convince Slim that he has the mental age of a child?
5. Why does Carlson persist in arguing with Candy about his dog and why does candy look to Slim for his view?
6. Why does George call Curley’s wife jail bait? What could he mean by this?
7. Why do you think Candy is interested in hearing the dream of Lennie and George?
8. Why does Curley pick on Lennie and why does George instruct Lennie to lash back at him after allowing Curley to hit him?
9. Why is it better for Curley to pretend he got his hand caught in the machine rather than tell the truth?
10. How is the theme of loneliness addressed in this chapter?

'O F MICE AND MEN'- CHAPTER 4
Use quotes to back up your answers

1. Why is Crooks very defensive about his own space?
2. Why does Crooks feel the need to explain his ancestry and what does this reveal about the context of the time?
3. When does Crooks change his defensive attitude and why?
4. Why does Crooks taunt Lennie about George leaving him?
5. Why does Crooks suddenly stop taunting Lennie?
6. Why does Crooks think that Lennie’s dream is just a pipe dream?
7. Why are the men so dismissive of Curley’s wife?
8. How does Curley’s wife assert her authority over Crooks and why is he worried?
9. Why does Lennie start to wish George was present?
10. Why does Crooks change his mind about wanting to be part of Candy’s plan?

'MICE AND MEN' – CHAPTER 5-
Find quotes to back up your views

1. How would you describe the setting of the scene at the beginning of this chapter and why might these be important when we consider what happens later on?
2. What has happened to Lennie’s puppy and how does Lennie finally admit to this?
3. How does the fate of Lennie’s puppy pave the way for future events in the chapter?
4. How does Lennie react to the arrival of his visitor and why?
5. What does Curley’s wife complain about to Lennie?
6. What background story does Curley’s wife tell Lennie and what do you imagine really happened in this story?
7. Why do you think Curley’s wife married Curley and what does this tell us about the social conditions of the time?
8. What does Lennie tell Curley’s wife he likes to do and how does she respond?
9. How does it all go wrong for Lennie?
10. Where does Lennie run away to?
11. After George finds out what has happened, what does he decide and why?
12. What does George decide about his future now and why?
13. Who does Candy blame and why? Is this fair?
14. How does Curley respond to the news of the death of his wife? What does he want to do Lennie? Do you think he loved his wife?
15. What must George do? How does Slim contribute to the decision?
16. How do all the other ranch hands respond and what does this tell us about human nature?
17. How does Slim try to convince Curley to stay back at the ranch and why?
18. Where is Carlson’s Luger?
1. The chapter starts with a description of a heron eating a water snake, how could this image be foreboding?

2. What visions does Lennie hallucinate and what do these visions mean?

3. What two things does Lennie ask George to talk about and why are these things comforting for Lennie?

4. How does George distract Lennie whilst he prepares to kill him?

5. Why is George not angry with Lennie and why does he choose to explain this now?

6. What story does Carlson suggest that George goes along with?

7. Do you think Slim approved of George's actions and why?

8. What does Carlson's final comment suggest about him?

9. What do Slim and George decide to do and what bond do they have?

10. How do you think George feels at the end of the novel?

11. The title of the novel is taken from Robert Burns's poem, 'To a Mouse', which is often quoted as: "The best-laid plans of mice and men/often go awry,". Awry, means to go wrong, or off the predicted course. Why is this a fitting title for the novel?

**WHO SAID WHAT? MATCH THE QUOTES TO CHARACTERS**

1. 'All right. But don't try to put nothing over, 'cause you can't get away with nothing. I seen wise guys before.'

2. 'You know how the hands are, they just come in and get their bunk and work a month, and then they quit and go out alone. Never seem to give a damn about nobody. It jus' seems kinda funny a cuckoo like him and a smart little guy like you travellin' together.'

3. 'If you got idears, you ought to come in town with us guys to-morra night.'

4. 'You're yella as a frog belly. I don't care if you're the best welter in the country. You come for me, an' I'll kick your goddamn head off.'

5. 'I remember when I was a little kid on my old man's chicken ranch. Had two brothers. They was always near me, always there. Used to sleep right in the same room, right in the same bed - all three. Had a strawberry patch. Had an alfalfa patch. Used to turn the chickens out in the alfalfa on a sunny morning. My brothers'd sit out on a fence rail an' watch 'em - white chickens they was.'
6. ‘God damn you ... Why do you got to get killed? You ain't so little as mice.’

7. ‘You god-damn tramp ... You done it, di'n't you? I s'pose you're glad. Ever'body knowed you'd mess things up. You wasn't no good. You ain't no good now, you lousy tart.’

8. ‘OK, Machine. I'll talk to you later. I like machines.’

9. ‘You crazy bastard. You ain't fit to lick the boots of no rabbit. You'd forget 'em and let 'em go hungry. That's what you'd do.’

10. ‘I tol' you, "Min' George because he's such a nice fella an' good to you." But you don't never take no care. You do bad things.’

11. ‘This ain't no good place. I wanna get outa here.’

12. ‘But I'll be on our own place, an' I'll be let to work on our own place.’

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**SELF ASSESSMENT- ENGLISH LITERATURE EXAM ANSWERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Title:</th>
<th>Not confident/ Not attempted</th>
<th>Attempted and ok</th>
<th>Secure-can do this well</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Have I attempted to focus on the question throughout by using the language of the question at the start and finish of my paragraphs?</td>
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<td>2. Have I used quotes to back up my points?</td>
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<td>3. Have I analysed the language in the quotes I've used to show my understanding of the character/theme or sub plot?</td>
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<td>4. Have I shown an awareness of the sub text?</td>
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<td>5. Have I discussed how meaning is conveyed through language, structure or style?</td>
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<td>6. Have I discussed alternative interpretations of events, characters or scenes?</td>
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<td>7. Have I shown understanding of dramatic devices?</td>
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<td>8. Have I considered a variety of ways in which effects are achieved?</td>
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<td>9. Have I discussed the relationships between characters/situations or events?</td>
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<td>10. Can I comment on the social, historical and contextual features?</td>
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<td>11. Have I used paragraphs correctly?</td>
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<td>12. Have I used a range of vocabulary, sentence structures and punctuation?</td>
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**TARGET FOR EXAM**

1. 
2. 
3. 

**ADVICE FOR THE EXAMINATION**

- Highlight the key points of the question- this will help you stay focused on the question.
- Use the language of the question and refer to the question at the beginning and end of your paragraph.
- Plan your answer. You have an hour so you will have time to prepare a good plan.
- Use the Point, Quote, Comment or PEE paragraph structure.
- Remember to be specific. Do not start narrating the story, the examiner knows the story. Do not make generalising statements. You must be really specific. Say exactly how or why something happens.
- Use appropriate formal vocabulary.
- Remember to pay attention to the bullet points and make these the focus of your answer.
- Analyse the character’s use of language closely. How does this reflect the time period, story, and the social and historical context?
- Do not spend several paragraphs on one point. Make the point, then move on. Squeeze as many points in as possible.
- Remember if you choose a very narrow or prescriptive question which is asking you about a specific point, answer the specific point but then take
it wider and think about how this relates to other features of the text or incidents.

- Always relate points to other issues in the text. This shows you have a wide understanding of the text and you will get more marks.
- Think about how everything reflects the context of the time. Whatever point you are making, consider whether you can say anything about the context of the time. This will automatically get you more marks. Remember historical and social contexts.
- Back every point in with close analysis of the language. Do not just use a quote to back up your point but use it to examine the choice of language. What does it imply to you and what is the effect on the audience?
- Remember inverted commas around the titles of texts.
- Every point you make needs to be backed up by evidence.
- There is a difference between the style of writing used in coursework essays and the style of writing used in the exam. You need to improve the pace of your writing. Do not spend a long time justifying points. Make a point, back it up, analyse language, effect on audience, move on.
- It’s really important that you ensure you have read your text at least twice.
- Make sure you know key themes, quotes and characters
- Use a York Notes or Letts study guide
- Use the internet resources listed on the back to help you revise.
- Plan some of the questions below:

POSSIBLE EXAM QUESTIONS

1. Write about the strengths and weaknesses of some of the characters in the novel. Choose three of these characters: Lennie, Slim, Curley’s Wife, Crooks.

2. Write about animals that you think are important in ‘Of Mice and Men’

3. Several characters in the novel are trapped or feel as if they are caught in a trap. How does Steinbeck show the causes and effects of being trapped?

4. Write about three relationships, showing how Steinbeck explores the needs that keep relationships going, despite conflict and strain.

5. Write about the significance of Lennie in the novel

6. Which character in the novel do you most sympathise with and why?
7. How far do you think Steinbeck presents dreams as futile in 'Of Mice and Men'?

8. How does Steinbeck present loneliness and isolation in the novel?

9. How does Steinbeck prepare you for the idea that the death of Curley’s wife is inevitable?

10. How does Steinbeck show that Lennie is always getting into serious trouble?

**TOP TEN QUOTES**

Use the grids below to find top 10 quotes on characters and themes. Choose from:
- George, Lennie, Curley’s Wife, Curley and Slim, Candy and Crooks and Loneliness and Dreams

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