

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.

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.

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.

Isolation and loneliness in *Of Mice And Men*

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.”

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.