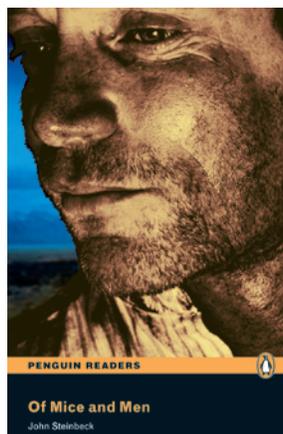




Of Mice and Men

John Steinbeck



About the author

American novelist, story-writer, playwright, and essayist, John Steinbeck was born in Salinas, California in 1902. His first novel, *Cup of Gold*, was published in 1929. He first received real popular acclaim for his novel *Tortilla Flat* in 1935. *Of Mice and Men* (1937) and his Pulitzer Prize-winning book *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) concerned the plight of America's dispossessed rural population, during the Great Depression. *The Red Pony* (1937) is another of his finest works. His last major novel *The Winter of Our Discontent* was published in 1961. *Of Mice and Men* was made into a movie in 1939 and 1992. Other Steinbeck novels that have been made into movies include *Tortilla Flat*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *The Red Pony*, *The Moon is Down*, *Cannery Row* and *East of Eden*. Steinbeck was married three times, had two sons by his second wife, and died in New York City in 1968.

Summary

George Milton and Lennie Small, two friends on their way to work on a farm, are very different men. Lennie is tall and strong but is simple-minded, whereas George is small but intelligent. They both share a dream that one day they will have their own farm. They find work on a farm but things start to go wrong from the start. The boss's son, Curley, is an aggressive little man who takes an instant dislike to Lennie. He hits Lennie in the face whereupon Lennie crushes his hand in a vice-like grip. Curley's wife is a pretty but lonely and flirtatious woman. One day she mistakenly encourages Lennie to touch her hair. Lennie panics when she starts to scream and accidentally kills her. He then hides in the woods to wait for his friend George, who always helps him in times of trouble. George arrives,

and as the two men discuss their farm dream one more time, George shoots Lennie in the head.

Chapters 1–2: It is late afternoon and Lennie and George, two farmhands, arrive at a riverbank, en route to a new job. The men are very physically different. Lennie is tall and wide and walks slowly behind his friend George, who is small and thin. Lennie produces a dead mouse from his pocket and George throws it away. A little later, Lennie has another dead mouse and George throws this one away too. We understand that they have worked on other farms before, but Lennie has gotten them into trouble in many places and they have had to run away. Lennie is always getting into trouble and George tries to help him. George is tired of Lennie but he cannot leave him alone because he knows Lennie needs him. Both men eat and sleep before going to the farm to start work. Before going to sleep, they both talk about their dream of having a farm of their own and “living off the fat of the land.”

Chapters 3–5: When they arrive at the farm, the next morning, they go to the bunkhouse and meet the boss, who asks them some questions. George answers all the questions. Later, both farmhands meet Curley, the boss's son, who is small and hates big strong men like Lennie. George realizes this could cause problems, and tells Lennie to go to the woods if he is ever in trouble. Later, Lennie and George meet Curley's wife, a pretty woman who wants to talk to the men. George is not interested in her, but innocently Lennie finds her attractive. George has a bad feeling about this. Lennie tells George he is not happy there and that he wants to leave. Another ranch hand, Slim, enters with news that his dog has had puppies. He gives one to Lennie. Slim asks George why he and Lennie are always together. George explains to him that Lennie cannot be by himself because he is not smart and that they are friends. George also tells Slim how Lennie got into trouble in Weed when he touched the dress of a woman he liked. Both of them had to run away after that.

Chapters 6–8: Candy, an old man, overhears George and Lennie talking about their dream of buying a farm and he asks if he can join them. George calculates they could buy a farm of their own for six hundred dollars. Candy tells them he is getting old and cannot use one of his hands because he had an accident. He says he will give them all of his money if he can live with them and work for them doing odd jobs. They start to dream of a farm of their own. George, Lennie and Candy are very happy



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about their plan. Curley enters asking where his wife is and looking for a fight. Curley insults Lennie and hits him hard. Lennie does not defend himself at first until George tells him to fight back. Lennie grabs Curley's hand and crushes it so badly Curley has to see a doctor. While George is in town with the other farmhands, Lennie wants to see his puppy. He meets Crooks, the only black man in the ranch, who is made to live away from the bunkhouse. Lennie tells Crooks about the dreams he and his friends have but Crooks is very pessimistic about their chances.

Chapters 9–11: Candy comes to Crooks' room to talk with Lennie about their dream farm. Crooks continues to have a negative attitude. Suddenly Curley's wife enters. Crooks and Candy argue with her, because they don't want trouble with the boss's son. When the men come back from town, she quickly leaves. Next afternoon, the trouble George predicted starts coming true. Lennie goes to see his puppy, but accidentally kills it by petting it too hard. Shortly after, Curley's wife enters and invites Lennie to touch her hair. She screams, and in a panic he kills her. Lennie runs away, back to the river in the woods, where George told him to go if he ever gets in trouble. That way, George would know where to find him. Curley wants Lennie dead. George finds Lennie by the riverbank and they discuss their dream for the last time. Then George shoots Lennie in the back of the head before the other men arrive, possibly to spare Lennie the fate that awaits him at the hands of the other men.

Background and themes

Strength and weakness: Lennie is a physically strong man but he is emotionally and intellectually weak. He does not even realize how strong he is and always forgets the most important things and remembers the least important things. George is the opposite. Curley, because he is a small man, always challenges big men to fights, in an attempt to appear a stronger man.

Loneliness: Many of the characters in this story suffer from loneliness for different reasons. Crooks because he is black and has to live away from the other men, Candy because he is old and not a useful worker anymore, Curley's wife because the men ignore her as she represents danger and Curley because none of the men like him.

Friendship: Lennie trusts George and George is a good friend to him. George looks after Lennie and gets him away from the trouble he causes through being a simple-

minded giant. At the end, George wants to take Lennie's life instead of leaving him to the mercy of the rest of the men, and possibly because Lennie has become too much of a liability and might kill again.

Shattered dreams: Lennie's and George's dream of becoming independent is another strong theme in this story. The poor ranch hands, like so many poor Americans, dream of one day having a better life, a better future. These men want to share their dreams with each other. A dream needs to be shared. And so just before George kills his friend, they share their dream together – one last time. Curley's wife also had dreams of being in the movies but her dream was shattered when she married Curley. Curley probably dreams of being bigger man, but knowing this to be impossible, attacks bigger men to prove himself.

Discussion activities

Before reading

- Predict:** Ask students to read the first part of the introduction. Make sure they understand that there was trouble in a town called Weed. Then ask them to think about what happened. Suggest the following possibilities: *Lennie killed someone. Lennie hurt someone. Lennie took money from a bank. Lennie took money from someone. Lennie got into trouble with a girl. Lennie started a fire.*
- Find and discuss:** Write the following words on the board: *a big man, a small man, a mouse, a pretty girl, a puppy, a fight, an old man.* Ask students to find these things in the pictures in the book. Then get them to make a list of five other things they can see in the pictures. Get feedback from the whole class and then have a class discussion: *What is going to happen in the story?*

Chapters 1– 2

While reading

- Pair work:** (page 3, after "I tried but I forgot.") Lennie is always forgetting things. Put the students in pairs and ask them to think of something important that they have forgotten in their lives. Suggest the following: *Forget someone's birthday/to do something/ where you put something.* Expand the discussion to things that the students have lost. *Money, mobile phone, computer.*
- Group work:** (page 6, after "I want ketchup.") Ask the students to say what their favorite types of food are. Write their comments on the board. Then put the students in small groups and ask them to talk about the various foods and whether people in their country eat them and whether they like them or not.



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After reading

- 5 **Write and ask:** Write “Where are the men going to work?” on the board and elicit the answer (On a farm). Ask students to write another question about something in Chapters 1 and 2. Check their work as they do this. Now have students stand up and mingle, asking and answering each other's questions.

Chapters 3–5

While reading

- 6 **Discuss:** (page 14, after “She’s a dangerous woman and she’s Curley’s wife.”) Put the students in small groups and ask them to talk about all the movies and books they know which feature a dangerous or evil women. Ask them to think about the following questions: *Why is the woman dangerous? Is she beautiful or ugly? Is she young or old? Does the film have a happy or sad ending?*

After reading

- 7 **Write and guess:** Put students in pairs and ask them to choose a short paragraph from Chapters 3–5. Tell them to write it again, making five changes to words in the text. Students then read out their paragraphs to the other students, who have to identify the changes.
- 8 **Discuss:** Tell the students to discuss the following in small groups after reading Chapter 5: *Do you think Lennie is a good man? Is he dangerous? What problems did he have in the past? What problems can he have at the farm? Why does he like animals a lot? Would you like to meet Lennie? Would you be afraid of him?*

Chapters 6–8

Before reading

- 9 **Predict and write:** Ask the students to write about the farm George and Lennie want to buy. Tell them to think of the following: *How much will it cost? What animals and fruit and vegetables will they have on the farm? How many hours a day will they work on the farm? What will they eat on the farm?* Students check if their predictions were right at the end of Chapter 6.

While reading

- 10 **Discuss:** (page 22, after “A farm is no place for a girl.”) The students in small groups discuss whether they would prefer to live on a farm in the country or in a big town or city. Ask them to consider the following: *Which is more exciting/boring/expensive/cheap? Which is harder or easier to live in?*
- 11 **Role play:** (page 23, after “I don’t like your questions.”) Ask the students to imagine they are Slim and Curley outside the bunkhouse: Student A is Slim and Student B is Curley. Think about what the two men say before they come into the bunkhouse. Then the students act out a role play.

After reading

- 12 **Pair work:** Remind the students that the men have some money to buy their dream farm. Put them in pairs and tell them they have one million dollars to spend on their dream. What would they spend it on? The students have to agree on one idea. Then the students read out their idea to the rest of the class.

Chapters 9–11

Before reading

- 13 **Guess:** Tell the students that Curley’s wife is going to play a dangerous game. Ask them to guess what she is going to do. Write their suggestions on the board and add some of your own.

While reading

- 14 **Role play:** (page 34, after “Curley’s wife came into the room very quietly.”) Put the students in pairs and ask them to act out a conversation between Curley’s wife and Lennie. Remind them that Lennie shouldn’t talk to her and that she likes men a lot.

After reading

- 15 **Pair work:** Write the following words on the board: *crazy, machine, movies, pretty things, woods, gun.* Ask the students, in pairs, to talk about how these words were used in Chapters 9–11.
- 16 **Game:** Write the following characters on the board: *Lennie, George, Curley, Curley’s wife, Slim, Candy, Crooks, Whit.* Divide the class into small groups and give them 10 minutes to write of as many sentences about these characters as they can. The students write some true sentences and some false ones. Now play the game in which team A has to read out a sentence to team B. Team B has to decide if it is true or false. If team B says a true sentence is false, or a false sentence is true, team A get a point. No repetition is allowed. The group with the most points at the end wins.
- 17 **Discuss:** Put the students in small groups. Remind them that Lennie and George are friends but they are very different people, physically and mentally. Ask them to talk about their best friend. *Is your friend as tall/short/thin as you? Is your friend as intelligent as you? Does your friend like the same food as you? Does your friend like the same movies/sports/people as you?*

Vocabulary activities

For the Word List and vocabulary activities, go to www.penguinreaders.com.



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Chapters 1–2

While reading

- 1 **Finish the sentences with the right word.**
drink cards fat trouble farm dead
 - a The bigger man was very thirsty, so he started to from the green pool.
 - b “Why do you want a mouse?”
 - c “There was in Weed, Lennie.”
 - d “Where is the we are going to?”
 - e “I am going to give the boss the work
 - f “We’ll live off the of the land,” Lennie shouted happily.
- 2 **Find the right words in Chapters 1–2.**
 - a People use this to carry things in. (p. 1)
 - b A place where people have fruit, vegetables and animals. (p. 4)
 - c The most important person in a company. (p. 4)
 - d Something is this when it is not difficult to do. (p. 5)
 - e You feel this when you want something to eat. (p. 5)
 - f People use this to cook on and to get warm. (p. 5)
- 3 **Answer the questions.**
 - a What color were the men’s pants?
 - b What animals did Lennie always remember?
 - c Why didn’t George want to drink the water?
 - d How many cans of food did George have in his bag?
 - e What did Lennie like to do to mice?
 - f What did Lennie want to have with his food?
- 4 **Circle the extra word in the sentences.**
 - a George sat down near of the river.
 - b Lennie didn’t want wanted to give George the mouse.
 - c Lennie liked petting mice with by his fingers.
 - d George has have to stay with Lennie.
 - e The two men didn’t have some any ketchup.
 - f George wanted to living live alone.

Chapters 3–5

- 5 **Write the names next to the person who says or thinks this.**
George Slim The Boss Curley
Candy Lennie
 - a “I think I’m going to have trouble with these men.”
 - b “I am going to talk to the big man.”
 - c “His wife really likes men.”
 - d “Wait for me in the woods if there is a problem.”
 - e “I don’t like this farm.”
 - f “My dog had nine puppies last night.”
- 6 **Are these sentences right (✓) or wrong (X)?**
 - a There were ten beds in the bunkhouse.
 - b Curley was looking for his father.
 - c Curley was the boss’s brother.
 - d The pretty woman wore a short dress and red shoes.
 - e Lennie looked at the woman’s hair.
 - f Slim was very intelligent.
- 7 **Underline the wrong word and put the right one.**
 - a George didn’t take Lennie’s food.
 - b Lennie was the weakest man on the farm.
 - c Curley was a happy young man.
 - d Lennie saw a girl in a green dress in Weed.
 - e Lennie didn’t like the girl in Weed.
 - f Lennie was a man on the inside.
- 8 **Put a word on the left with a word on the right.**

new	weak
before	ugly
strong	fast
slow	old
short	after
pretty	tall



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Chapters 6–8

- 9 **Finish the sentences with the right name.**
Candy Lennie Curley Whit Slim Crooks
- a cleaned the bunkhouse and did small jobs.
 - b was the youngest worker on the farm.
 - c didn't want to hit someone.
 - d was outside with a sick horse.
 - e couldn't go into the bunkhouse.
 - f had to see a doctor because his hand was hurt.

10 **Put the underlined letters in the right place to make a word.**

- a Candy had an ncadiect on the farm and couldn't use his hand.
- b Curley hit Lennie in the hosmcat
- c George thought about a uftlaibeu farm.
- d George didn't think the farm was very pvsexenie
- e Whit thought that Curley's wife was rsgaeudon because she looked at other men.
- f Lennie liked to hear stories about masanil

11 **What's first? Number the sentences, 1–6.**

- a George and Whit played cards.
- b Lennie went into Crook's room.
- c Candy, Lennie and George talked about buying a farm.
- d Lennie broke all of Curley's fingers.
- e Curley went looking for a fight with Slim.
- f Curley hit Lennie in the face.

12 **Are these sentences right (✓) or wrong (X)?**

- a Candy couldn't use his left hand.
- b Candy could give George three hundred and fifty dollars.
- c Carlson didn't have a gun.
- d Whit thought that a farm was a good place for a girl.
- e Slim was with Curley's wife.
- f Carlson was afraid of Curley.

13 **Answer the questions.**

- a Why did George and Lennie always work on the same farms?
.....
- b What were George and Whit doing in the bunkhouse?
.....
- c Why did Whit think Curley's wife was dangerous?
.....
- d Where did Whit say was a nice place?
.....
- e Why did Whit want to go out of the bunkhouse?
.....
- f Who lived in a room next to the dog's house?
.....

Chapters 9–11

14 **Find the right words in Chapters 9–11.**

- a It means the same as afraid. (p. 28)
.....
- b Something people use to make or do things. (p. 30)
- c To touch an animal with your hand. (p. 32)
.....
- d To really not like something or someone a lot. (p. 32)
- e To say something very loudly. (p. 35)
.....
- f People use this to kill other people and animals. (p. 37)

15 **Write the names next to the person who says or thinks this.**

- Lennie Slim Crooks Curley's wife Candy
- a "Only Slim and the boss come into my room."
 - b "Why don't the men talk to me?"
.....
 - c "Go away now or I will tell Curley."
.....
 - d "She has got really nice hair."
.....
 - e "I will never leave you because we're a family."
.....
 - f "Let's find George!"



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Chapters 1–2

1 Circle the right word or words.

- a Young *boys / girls / women* swam in the water.
- b The men had *blue / black / red* bags with them.
- c George thought the water looked *clean / dirty / cold*.
- d Lennie always remembered *mice / rabbits / chickens*.
- e Lennie took a *mouse / work card / watch* from his coat.
- f George threw the mouse into the *river / trees / fire*.
- g The people in Weed wanted to *hurt / thank / pay* the two men.
- h When Lennie came back from the trees he didn't have much *food / wood / water*.
- i Lennie wanted some *ketchup / vegetables / fruit* with his food.
- j There was enough food for *two / three / four* men.

Chapters 3–5

2 Put a sentence on the left with a sentence on the right.

a The men arrived at the farm and	1) he always wanted to fight.
b The boss didn't understand why	2) their mother couldn't feed them all.
c George didn't take Lennie's money	3) Slim gave him a puppy.
d Curley was dangerous because	4) took their bags to the bunkhouse.
e Curley's wife was a pretty woman who	5) he was very smart.
f Slim killed four puppies because	6) George was speaking for Lennie.
g Lennie was happy when	7) soft, pretty things.
h Lennie liked to touch	8) Lennie's second name.
i Slim spoke slowly but	9) because he was his friend.
j Carlson laughed when he heard	10) really liked men.

Chapters 6–8

3 Underline the wrong word and put the right one.

- a George wanted a big house with a nice bathroom.
.....

- b Candy had an accident and hurt his leg.
.....
- c Candy couldn't work very much but he could clean.
.....
- d Candy and Lennie could sell chickens on the new farm.
- e Curley was always looking for his brother.
.....
- f Whit thought that Slim was weaker than Curley.
.....
- g Slim was happy when he came back into the bunkhouse.
- h Curley called Lennie a big, stupid man.
.....
- i Curley cut Lennie's mouth.
- j Curley cried like a girl when Lennie hurt his hand.
.....

Chapters 9–11

4 Finish the sentences with the right word.

threw games dead clothes scared legs feel
mouth stupid noise

- a Lennie watched Curley's wife with an open
.....
- b Curley's wife called Candy a old man.
- c Lennie looked at the puppy.
- d Lennie the dead dog across the room.
- e Curley's wife liked to her hair.
- f The of the gun went up the mountains.
- g Curley's wife moved her hands to the tops of her
.....
- h The men played on Sunday afternoon.
- i Lennie's Aunt Clara gave him some soft
.....
- j Lennie was and he put his hand over the girl's mouth.

5 Are these sentences right (✓) or wrong (X)?

- a George and the men went to town.
- b Lennie killed the puppy.
- c Lennie threw the dead puppy out of the farm building.
- d Curley's wife liked to feel Lennie's hair.
- e The other men were looking for Lennie and George.



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Book key

- 1–2 Open answers
- 3 a trouble b feed c soft d chased
- 4 a mouse, puppy, rabbit b bastard c ketchup
d bunkhouse e scared
- 5 a X b X c X d X e ✓ f X g ✓ h ✓
i ✓ j ✓
- 6 a Lennie. He can't find his work card. But George has it.
b Lennie. They want to get jobs. But Lennie understands that he is different. When he speaks, people know that. He is a good worker, but they don't want a crazy man on their farm.
c George. The people of Weed were angry with them and chased them out of town.
d Lennie. He petted the mouse in his coat and now it is dead.
e George. The story is about their plan for a farm and some animals.
- 7 Open answers
- 8 a the boss b Lennie c the boss's son (Curley)
d Curley's wife e Slim f Carlson
- 9 a puppy b aunt c touched d day
- 10–12 Open answers
- 13 a George b Candy c Whit d Lennie
e Slim f George g Crooks
- 14 a They have \$10. They will make \$90 from one month's work. Candy will give them \$350.
b He thinks that Slim is with his wife.
c Because Curley hits Lennie. Then George tells Lennie, "Hit him!"
d Because he is black.
e Because his puppy is in the next room.
- 15 a and b
- 16 Open answers
- 17 Crooks, Lennie, Candy, Curley's wife
- 18 a 2 b 5 c 1 d 3 e 6 f 8 g 10 h 9
i 7 j 4
- 19 a Candy. She wants to be with other men.
b Lennie. Curley cut his nose.
c Lennie. She is playing with his feelings.
d Lennie. She is saying that she is not always happy with her husband.
e Lennie. She had plans, but now she has to stay on the farm with her husband.

f Lennie. She thinks that in many ways he is not really a man. He has the words and feelings of a small child.

20–29 Open answers

Discussion activities key

- 1 Open answers
- 2 river, bags, hats, a fire, cards, a black man.
- 3 Open answers
- 4 Suggestions: Pizza, hamburgers, hot dogs, chips, milkshakes, curry, kebabs, Chinese food, lasagne, spaghetti.
- 5 Open answers
- 6 Suggested films: *Fatal Attraction*, *Basic Instinct*, *Misery*, *101 Dalmatians*, *Kill Bill*.
- 7–11 Open answers
- 12 Suggestions: Travel around the world, buy a big house in the city/country, buy a tropical island.
- 13 Suggestions: She is going to take some money from the men, she is going to kill one of them, she is going to kiss one of them.
- 14 Open answers
- 15 Crooks thought Lennie was crazy. Curley's wife liked machines. Lennie liked petting pretty things. George found Lennie in the woods. George killed Lennie with a gun.
- 16–17 Open answer

Activity worksheets key

- 1 a drink
b dead
c trouble
d farm
e cards
f fat
- 2 a bag
b farm
c boss
d easy
e hungry
f fire
- 3 a blue
b rabbits
c Because it looked dirty.
d four
e To pet them.
f Ketchup



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- 4 a of
b wanted
c by
d have
e some
f living
- 5 a The Boss
b Curley
c Candy
d Goerge
e Lennie
f Slim
- 6 a ✗ b ✓ c ✗ d ✓ e ✗ f ✓
- 7 a food > money
b weakest > strongest
c happy > angry
d green > red
e like > hurt
f man > boy
- 8 new–old
before–after
strong–weak
slow–fast
short–tall
pretty–ugly
- 9 a Candy
b Whit
c Lennie
d Slim
e Crooks
f Curley
- 10 a accident
b stomach
c beautiful
d expensive
e dangerous
f animals
- 11 a 2 b 6 c 1 d 5 e 3 f 4
- 12 a ✗ b ✓ c ✗ d ✗ e ✗ f ✗
- 13 a Because Lennie couldn't live alone.
b Playing cards.
c Because she looked at every man on the farm.
d Susy's bar.
e Because he wanted to see a fight.
f Crooks.

- 14 a scared
b a machine
c to pet
d hate
e to shout
f a gun
- 15 a Crooks
b Curley's wife
c Candy
d Lennie
e George
f Slim

Progress test key

- 1 a boys
b black
c dirty
d rabbits
e mouse
f trees
g hurt
h wood
i ketchup
j four
- 2 a 4 b 6 c 9 d 1 e 10 f 2 g 3 h 7
i 5 j 8
- 3 a bathroom > kitchen
b leg > hand
c clean > cook
d chickens > eggs
e brother > wife
f weaker > stronger
g happy > angry
h man > animal
i mouth > nose
j girl > baby
- 4 a mouth
b stupid
c dead
d threw
e feel
f noise
g legs
h games
i clothes
j scared
- 5 a ✓ b ✓ c ✗ d ✗ e ✓