Of Mice and Men: Ch. 2 Study Guide

Vocabulary Warm-Up: Match the word in bold with the correct meaning.

1. When the children first arrived at the camp, they complained about how uncomfortable their bunks were, but they eventually decided sleeping in their bunks was better than sleeping on the floor. (p. 17)
   a. sleeping bags  b. beds  c. pillows

2. Great inventors have often been laughed at, but some of their ideas have not been as crazy as people thought. For example, people scoffed at the idea of airplanes until the Wright brothers proved it was possible. (p. 17)
   a. were excited  b. got upset  c. made fun

3. My uncle told me about a good investment, but it turned out to be a bum steer. In the end I lost all the money I invested. (p. 21)
   a. bad advice  b. joke  c. lie

4. When Toby came in 20 minutes late for an important business meeting, his boss didn't say anything but just scowled at him across the room. (p. 22)
   a. wrote a note  b. gave an angry look  c. nodded

5. Edith has used a cane and walked a bit lamely ever since she had hip surgery last year. (p. 24)
   a. too quickly  b. slowly and with difficulty  c. more easily

6. Jo's co-workers think she is nosy because she asks many questions about their personal lives. (p. 24)
   a. wasting time when she should be working for others  b. caring and concerned  c. too interested in other people's affairs

7. The longer the children were supposed to sit still at their desks, the more they squirmed uncomfortably. (p. 25)
   a. twisted or moved around  b. laughed  c. stiffened their backs

8. My father is very handy around the house. He can fix almost anything. (p. 26)
   a. good with his hands  b. active  c. quick

9. The students were nervous about their test because their teacher had told them ominously that it was very difficult and some students might fail. (p. 27)
   a. in a warning manner  b. in a helpful manner  c. in an upset manner

10. Randy knew his new boss didn't like him and was afraid that she might have him canned. (p. 27)
    a. fired  b. promoted  c. given more work

11. Elaine was a very kind woman. She never made derogatory comments about anyone. (p. 27)
    a. respectful  b. disrespectful  c. funny

12. Jeff was apprehensive because he was afraid he hadn't done very well on the midterm exam. (p. 32)
    a. relieved  b. worried  c. angry
Specialized Vocabulary
Here are definitions for some other words, expressions, and idioms in Chapter 2.

**swamper** (p. 18) - someone who does miscellaneous jobs often involving cleaning

**ticking** (p. 17) / **tick** (p.19) - a mattress cover and its filling, a tick is often filled with straw

**lice** (pl.) / **louse** (sing.) (p. 18) - a bug that lives on the body and in the hair of people and animals

**stable buck** (p. 19) - a stable is a building where horses are kept; a stable buck is someone who works in a stable

**nigger** (p. 20) - a black person; this is an extremely impolite and offensive word

**old lady** (p. 22) - wife or mother

**old man** (p. 25) - husband or father

**ring** (p. 26) - boxing ring; the place where boxing matches are held

**lightweight** (p. 26) - in amateur boxing, a boxer weighing between 126 and 132 pounds

**solitaire** (p. 28) - a card game that is played by one person

**purtty** (p. 28) - pretty, this is an example of Steinbeck spelling a word the way it is pronounced by a character

**jerkline skinner** (p. 28) - someone who drives draft animals, such as mules, used for pulling heavy loads

**tart** (p. 28) - a woman with low moral standards

**pan gold** (p. 33) - a method of finding gold by sifting it out from other rocks in a river or stream

**two bits** (p. 33) - twenty-five cents

**bitch** (p. 35) - a female dog

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Focus on Reading: Before You Read

Looking Ahead. In Chapter 1, you learned that George and Lennie are going to work on a ranch. What will life be like for them at the ranch? Check all the answers that you think are probably true. You can check more than one answer.

**Where do you think George and Lennie will live?**

- [ ] They will share a bedroom.
- [ ] They will sleep in the barn.
- [ ] They will share a very small house.
- [ ] They will live in the boss’ house.
- [ ] They will share a large room with other workers at the ranch.

**How and where will George and Lennie get their food?**

- [ ] They will have to cook their own food.
- [ ] They will buy their meals at a restaurant.
- [ ] They will eat with the other ranch workers.
- [ ] They will eat with the boss.
- [ ] The ranch’s cook will make their meals.
At the ranch George and Lennie are going to, what do the ranch workers do in their free time?

- They read magazines.
- They play cards.
- They play horseshoes.
- They watch movies.
- They sit around a campfire and sing.
- They go into Soledad.

Other ideas or predictions?

While You Read

Part 1

- **START** on page 17.
- **STOP** on page 28 after you read: *He stepped out the door into the brilliant sunshine.*

**Questions:**
1. Who is Candy and what is he like?
2. Who is Curley and what is he like?

Part 2

- **START** on page 28 with the sentence: *George laid down his cards thoughtfully, turned his piles of three.*
- **STOP** on page 37 at the end of the chapter.

**Questions:**
1. What is Curley’s wife like?
2. Who is Slim and what is he like?
After You Read
Understanding Main Ideas

A. Write a Title. Write a title for Chapter 2.

B. Look at the Big Picture. Circle the best answer or answers for each of the questions below.

1. Why does George lie to the boss about Lennie?
   a. George thinks the boss is too nosy.
   b. George doesn’t want the boss to know that Lennie isn’t a good worker.
   c. George doesn’t want the boss to know why they had to leave their last job in Weed.
   d. George thinks the boss won’t believe him if he says that he and Lennie are just friends.
   e. Other: ____________________________

2. Why doesn’t George like Curley?
   a. George is afraid Curley will try to beat him up.
   b. George is afraid Curley will try to beat up Lennie.
   c. George is jealous of Curley.
   d. George thinks Curley is a bully.
   e. Other: ____________________________

3. Why does George tell Lennie to stay away from Curley’s wife?
   a. George is jealous of Lennie.
   b. George thinks Lennie might get in trouble again like he did in Weed.
   c. George is attracted to Curley’s wife.
   d. All of the above.
   e. Other: ____________________________

4. Which of the following is not true about Slim?
   a. Slim is respected by the others at the ranch.
   b. Slim is very good at his work.
   c. Slim is friendly to George and Lennie.
   d. All of the above.
   e. Other: ____________________________

5. Why does Carlson want to give one of Slim’s puppies to Candy?
   a. Carlson wants Candy to get rid of his old dog.
   b. Carlson knows that Candy doesn’t like his old dog.
   c. Carlson thinks a puppy would be a good companion for Candy’s old dog.
   d. All of the above.
   e. Other: ____________________________
Reading Beyond the Lines

B. **Real Life.** What if the characters in this book were real people in your life? Based on what you’ve learned about the characters in the book so far, decide which of the characters below you would like to have with you in the following situations and which you wouldn’t. Then write one or two of your own situations and ask your classmates who they would and wouldn’t like to have with them. Discuss your answers with your classmates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candy Carlson Crooks Curley Curley’s wife</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>George Lennie Slim the boss</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>1st Choice</th>
<th>2nd Choice</th>
<th>Definitely Not!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If you wanted to go camping, who would you like to take with you?</td>
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<td>If one of the characters was going to date your brother or sister, who would you like it to be?</td>
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<td>If you wanted to hear the all the latest gossip, who would you ask?</td>
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<td>If you were moving and had a lot of heavy boxes, who would you ask to help you?</td>
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<td>If you had to go to a dangerous part of town at night, who would you ask to go with you?</td>
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<td>If you had a personal problem, who would you want to talk to about it?</td>
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<tr>
<td>If you needed someone to give you a job reference, who would you ask?</td>
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<tr>
<td>If you wanted to plan a party, who would you ask to help you?</td>
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**gossip** - news or information about people’s actions and private lives

**Longer Answers**

1. At the beginning of Chapter 2, Steinbeck describes in detail the bunkhouse where George and Lennie will live. How does the bunkhouse contrast with the place George and Lennie slept the night before? How does it contrast with the place of their own that George and Lennie hope to get someday?

2. Think about George’s relationship with Lennie and George’s reaction to Curley. What do these two things reveal about George’s values in life?

3. Why does George have such a strong reaction to Curley’s wife? Do you think his reaction is justified? What does this reveal about George’s attitude toward women?

4. On page 35, Slim says, “Ain’t many guys travel around together. I don’t know why. Maybe ever’body in the whole damn world is scared of each other.” What is the significance of this statement? Do you agree with it?
Mental Retardation

You don’t have to read very far in *Of Mice and Men* before you realize that there is something different about Lennie. We learn early on that Lennie has the mental abilities, judgment, and memory of a child. The type of cognitive disability that affects Lennie is sometimes called *mental retardation*. People with mental retardation have been limited since childhood in their cognitive abilities and in their abilities to carry out routine and necessary life skills.

For Discussion and Reflection

- How does Steinbeck show that Lennie is a person with a cognitive disability? What is Steinbeck’s attitude toward Lennie?
- How are people with cognitive disabilities treated in your country? Do they live with their families, do they live on their own, or do they live in institutions? Are they integrated into society or are they kept separate?

Learn More

Cognitive Disabilities in Lennie’s Day. In *Understanding Of Mice and Men, The Red Pony, and The Pearl*, Claudia Durst Johnson summarizes the situation of people with cognitive disabilities such as mental retardation around the time that the events in *Of Mice and Men* were taking place. Read the following excerpt.

The other major class of individuals in Steinbeck’s novels who are unable to subsist on their own, much less achieve the American Dream, is represented by Lennie, the mentally retarded companion of George. At the time Steinbeck wrote his novel, mentally deficient individuals were legally defined as “persons in whose case there exists from birth or from an early age mental defectiveness not amounting to imbecility, yet so pronounced that they require care, supervision, and control for their own protection or for the protection of others.”1 At the time the novel is set, the public, influenced by late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century studies of retardation, saw people like Lennie as “useless, incompetent, potentially dangerous and totally parasitic”; even those with mild retardation were seen as incapable of living in ordinary society and in need of institutionalization.2 Until the middle of the nineteenth century in America, mentally disabled children who needed the support of an institution were only accepted by a few state schools for the blind and the deaf. Under the leadership of Samuel Gridley Howe, the public began to pay attention to the plight of retarded children in the late nineteenth century, and gradually began to establish small schools to meet their special needs. These were eventually replaced by large institutions. Between 1900 and 1920, the idea that all feebleminded people were a burden was replaced by the idea that all of them were dangerous. Despite the need for someone to protect and help people like Lennie, up until the 1920s little was done for mentally retarded adults. When a mentally retarded person reached the age of sixteen, he was excluded from programs and institutions established for those who were then called “the feebleminded.” Consequently, in the early decades of the century, retarded men frequently became homeless and were preyed upon by unscrupulous street people. By the 1930s, many mentally deficient citizens, rather than joining society to work after being trained in special schools, remained in such schools throughout their adult lives. Many more retarded adults began staying in institutions during the economic depression of the 1930s because it was almost impossible to get them even the most menial jobs. The availability of facilities for adults produced a measure of protection for those who needed it, but it also turned the little schools into big institutions.

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