

Of Mice and Men

Chapter 1 Study Guide

Vocabulary Warm Up

Match the word in bold with the correct definition below.

- _____ 1. Carl looked **morosely** at the stack of papers on his desk. It made him depressed to think about how many hours of work he still had to do that night. (p. 4)
- _____ 2. The rabbit ran across the field and then hid in the **brush** at the edge of the field. (p. 6)
- _____ 3. When Jake was in college, he earned money by working on a **ranch** in Colorado every summer. (p. 6)
- _____ 4. The two little girls always **giggled** at each other's jokes even though they weren't always funny. (p. 7)
- _____ 5. Sue **contemplated** going to China for her vacation, but eventually decided to go to Peru instead. (p. 8)
- _____ 6. My two-year-old daughter loves **mimicking** everything we do: when we wash the dishes, she wants to too; when we fold laundry, she tries to fold laundry too. (p. 11)
- _____ 7. Jessica gets an **anguished** look on her face whenever she describes how her dog was hit by a car. (p. 11)
- _____ 8. When the teacher asked Phil why he had failed the test, Phil **ashamedly** admitted that he had gone to a party the night before instead of studying. (p. 11)
- _____ 9. My parents just bought half of an **acre** of land to build a house on. (p. 14)
- _____ 10. Dan would like to raise rabbits, but first he needs to build a **hutch** to keep them in. (p. 14)

Definitions

- a. a unit of measurement used for land and equaling approximately 4,047 square meters
- b. a small box or cage for keeping animals; one or more sides is usually made of wire
- c. a large farm in the western part of North America where sheep, cattle, or horses are raised
- d. an area of small trees and bushes
- e. copy someone's actions
- f. full of pain, especially mental pain
- g. in a manner showing a feeling of guilt or failure
- h. in a manner showing no hope or cheerfulness
- i. laugh in a silly way
- j. think about in a serious way

Specialized Vocabulary

Here are definitions for some other words, expressions, and idioms in Chapter 1. Some of these vocabulary items are old or specialized expressions which are not frequently used today.

jungle-up (p. 2) - Expression used by hobos and tramps during the Great Depression which means to camp out for the evening

bindle (p. 3) - A small bundle of items rolled up inside a blanket and carried over the shoulder or on the back

work cards (p. 5) - During the Great Depression a job assignment from an employment agency would be written on a work card for the worker to give to the employer.

thrashin' machines (p. 8) - Threshing machines. Farm machines used to harvest grain, such as wheat or barley

bucking grain bags (p. 8) - To throw large bags of grain onto a truck or wagon

cat house (p. 11) - House of prostitution; whore house

in hot water (p. 11) – An idiom that means in trouble

blowin' in one's jack (p. 14) - Losing, spending, or gambling away all one's money

live off the fat of the land (p. 14) - An idiom that means to live well, to live from the abundance of the land

These questions are based on Chapter 1 of *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck. Write your answers here.

1. Who are the main characters and what are they like?
2. Where are they going and why?
3. What does George do that upsets Lennie?
4. What does Lennie do that upsets George?
5. What dreams do George and Lennie have for the future?

A. Write a Title. John Steinbeck did not give titles to any of the chapters in *Of Mice and Men*. Write a title for Chapter 1 that will capture the interest of readers while also giving them some idea about the content of the chapter.

B. Look at the Big Picture. Read the following quotations from Chapter 1. What important ideas about the story do they express? Without looking back at your book, explain the main ideas behind the quotations.

1. *George*: God, you're a lot of trouble. I could get along so easy and so nice if I didn't have you on my tail.

2. *George*: Guys like us, that work on ranches, are the loneliest guys in the world. They got no family. They don't belong no place. [. . .] With us it ain't like that. We got a future. We got somebody to talk to that gives a damn about us.

3. *George*: Someday--we're gonna get the jack together and we're gonna have a little house and a couple of acres an' a cow and some pigs and --
Lennie: An' live off the fatta the lan'.

Imagery. In Chapter 1, we meet George and Lennie, the two main characters of the book. You will notice that when Steinbeck is describing Lennie, he often chooses descriptions or actions that will make the reader think either of a child or an animal. Try to find the animal or child ***imagery*** that Steinbeck uses in Chapter 1 to talk about Lennie.

CHILD IMAGES		ANIMAL IMAGES	
<u>Pg.</u> <u>#</u>	<u>Description or Action</u>	<u>Pg.</u> <u>#</u>	<u>Description or Action</u>
		2	dragging his feet like a bear

Quotations and Proverbs. With a group, discuss the meaning of the following quotations and proverbs. Then, in the column with the heading GEORGE, check the statement(s) you think George would agree with based on what you've learned so far about his personality and situation in life. Then in the YOU column, check the statement(s) you agree with.

<u>GEORGE</u>	<u>YOU</u>	
_____	_____	A man is known by the company he keeps. (<i>Coverdale</i>)
_____	_____	A trouble shared is a trouble halved. (<i>Dorothy Sayers</i>)
_____	_____	God helps them that help themselves. (<i>Aeschylus</i>)
_____	_____	Enough is as good as a feast. (<i>Barbour</i>)
_____	_____	Hope for the best, but prepare for the worst. (<i>English proverb</i>)
_____	_____	Hope is the poor man's bread. (<i>Thales</i>)
_____	_____	Learning is better than house and land. (<i>Goldsmith</i>)
_____	_____	Happiness grows at our own firesides, and is not to be picked in strangers' gardens. (<i>Douglas Jerrold</i>)
_____	_____	I would rather sit on a pumpkin and have it all to myself than to be crowded on a velvet cushion. (<i>Thoreau</i>)
_____	_____	Every man for himself. (<i>Chaucer</i>)

Longer Answers. Write answers in complete paragraphs, typed or neatly written, on your own paper (NOT this page).

1. Steinbeck often makes the reader think of an animal or of a child when describing Lennie. Why does he do this, and what does this tell us about Lennie?
2. Why does George decide to wait until the next day to go to the ranch?
3. Why do George and Lennie travel together? What is their relationship to each other?
4. In the middle of this chapter, George talks about how easy his life would be without Lennie. Then at the end of the chapter, George and Lennie talk about how much better their lives are because they have each other. Explain whether one or both of these statements reflects George's actual feelings.
5. It is obvious that George and Lennie frequently talk about their dream for the future. Why do they talk about it so often? Is their dream realistic?
6. What is your reaction to the book so far?