
Of Mice And Men: Main Themes And Ideas

A number of unique themes and ideas are seen in the novella *Of Mice and Men*, written by John Steinbeck. Steinbeck has focused on the lives lived by many individuals during The Great Depression, in the USA. Each theme explored in his novel holds a unique and diverse technique of usage. This essay will analyze how John Steinbeck has explored friendship, dreams, and tragedy in his novel *Of Mice and Men*. Quotes from the novel will be used to support the arguments.

Friendship acts as one of the leading ideas in *Of Mice and Men*, as it is explored in two different ways, through how the workers do not know how to be friends with each other, and through the bond George and Lennie share. The men who roam around the ranch convey the impression that they are dejected and companionless. Each man who works on the ranch is simply there to make somewhat of a living for himself, and himself only. The men rarely demonstrate warmth towards one another, which shows that none of the men know how to befriend each other. However, George and Lennie hold a strong bond towards each other. Although George may be disrespectful towards Lennie and play cruel jokes on him, Lennie will always forgive George as he has nobody else to care for him. In a different way, George also relies on Lennie, as he knows Lennie is a true friend and will always come back to him. Lennie relies on the advice George provides him, as he is a simple man and does not know any better. Friendship grows evident when the two men are on their journey to the ranch, and they stop at a filthy pond for a drink. Lennie begins to drink too much, and George warns him "Lennie, Lennie for god sake don't drink so much Lennie, you gonna be sick like you was last night." This shows that George genuinely cares for the health and safety of his friend.

Dreaming is a theme that is explored regularly throughout the novel. The employees at the ranch have yet to fulfill their lives completely. The majority of the men are empty inside, with nothing to work towards except their dreams. This novel was set in the 1930s, during this time the USA was experiencing a depression, from the fall of the stock market. Most families were poor and struggled during this time. The men in this story were quite poor and could not make enough money to purchase what they desired for themselves. Therefore, George and Lennie have nothing to keep them sane except their dream. The boys invent their own dream of one day owning a ranch and being in control of their own lives. The idea 'dreams' is demonstrated when George and Lennie spend the night next to the pond, and Lennie asks George to tell him about their dream, and George says "we'll have a big vegetable patch and a rabbit hutch and chickens. And when it rains in the winter we'll say the hell with goin' to work." This shows the important role 'dreams' play in this novel.

The tragedy is an idea that is demonstrated in the novel frequently. Lennie often causes harm to other people and animals, as he is unable to recognize the physical strength he holds. As Lennie also possesses a mental disability, he does not understand that he is inflicting harm onto other beings. The tragedy is seen in the novel when Curley's wife tells Lennie to stroke her hair, as he likes to touch items that are soft. When Lennie strokes her hair too forcefully, she tells him to stop, Lennie panics and accidentally breaks her neck. "And then she was still, for Lennie had broken her neck." The tragedy also occurs in the novel through Crooks, an African American man, who is a victim of constant racial discrimination. During the 1930s, African

American people were considered to be the lowest class and were treated disrespectfully. The tragedy is demonstrated through racism when Curley's wife verbally attacks Crooks in his room. "Listen nigger, you know how much trouble I can do to you if you open your trap?" This displays how John Steinbeck has incorporated tragedy into the story.

In conclusion, John Steinbeck has used a number of ideas in the novella *Of Mice and Men*. Most characters dreamt of making a greater life for themselves, and through their friendships, attempt to conquer their dream. However, the tragedies that occur set them back. Through Steinbeck's use of friendship, dreams, and tragedy, we see the unique way in which the characters have adapted to life through their hardships.