

JOHN STEINBECK'S

Of Mice and Men

Adapted by Bryon Cahill • Art by Robert Carter



CHARACTERS (main parts in boldface)

Narrators 1, 2, and 3

Curley, the boss's son

George } migrant farmworkers

Curley's wife

Lennie }
Candy, ranch handyman

Slim, main driver of the mule team

Carlson, a ranch hand

SCENE 1

Narrator 1: It is sometime in the 1930s. Somewhere south of Soledad, Calif., in the Salinas River valley, two men walk wearily along a wooded path toward the river.

Narrator 2: Both are dressed in work clothes and carry blanket rolls on their shoulders. The first man is small and quick, with restless eyes. Behind him is a huge man with large, pale eyes and wide, sloping shoulders. He walks heavily, dragging his feet.

Narrator 3: They come into a clearing, where the river forms a deep green pool. The big man throws himself down and drinks long gulps of water.

George: Lennie! For God's sakes don't drink so much. You gonna be sick like you was last night.

Narr 1: Lennie dips his head under the water, hat and all, and then sits up, smiling happily.

Lennie: Tha's good. You drink some, George. You take a good big drink.

George: I ain't sure it's good water. Looks kinda scummy.

Narr 2: Lennie wiggles his big fingers in the water. Rings widen across the pool to the other side.

Lennie: Look, George. Look what I done.

Narr 3: George takes a scoop of water and splashes his face. He stares **morosely** at the water.

Lennie: George?

George: Yeah, what ya want?

vocab
MOROSELY: miserably

Lennie: Where we goin', George?

George: So you forgot that already, did you? I gotta tell you again, do I?

Lennie: I forgot. I tried not to forget. Honest to God I did.

George: OK, OK. I'll tell ya again. I ain't got nothing to do. Might as well spend all my time tellin' you things and then you forget 'em.

Lennie: I tried and tried, but it didn't do no good. I remember about the rabbits, George.

George: Forget the rabbits. That's all you ever can remember is them rabbits.

Narr 1: George notices that Lennie is playing with something.

George: What did you take outta your pocket? Come on, give it here.

Lennie: It's only a mouse, George.

George: A mouse? A live mouse?

Lennie: No. Just a dead one. I didn't kill it, though, George. Honest! I found it dead.

George: Give it here!

Lennie: Aw, let me have it, George.

George: Give it here!

Narr 2: Lennie slowly obeys. George takes the dead mouse and hurls it to the other side of the pool.

George: What you want with a dead mouse, anyways?

Lennie: I could pet it with my thumb while we walked along.

Photos are from the 1992 movie *Of Mice and Men*, starring John Malkovich as Lennie and Gary Sinise as George.

George: Well, you ain't petting no mice while you walk with me. You remember where we're goin' now?

Lennie: No.

George: OK. Now, you listen good this time. You got to remember so we don't get in no trouble. We're goin' to look for work on a ranch like the one we come from up north in Weed. We're gonna go in and see the boss, but you ain't gonna say a word. You just stand there and don't say nothing. If he sees you work before he hears you talk, we're set. You got that?

Lennie: Sure, George. I got it.

George: OK. Now when we go to see the boss, what are you gonna do?

'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.'

Lennie: I ... I ain't gonna say nothin'.

George: Good boy. That's swell. You say that over and over again to make sure you won't forget.

Lennie: I ain't gonna say nothin'. I ain't gonna say nothin'.

George: OK. And you ain't gonna do no bad things like you done in Weed, neither.

Lennie: Like I done in Weed?

George: Oh, so ya forgot that too, did ya? Well, I ain't gonna remind you for fear you might do it again.

Lennie: They run us out of Weed.

George: Run us out, nothin.' We

run. They was lookin' for us, but they didn't catch us.

Lennie: I didn't forget that.

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. I could live so easy and maybe have a girl.

Lennie: We gonna work on a ranch, George.

George: All right. You've got that. But we're gonna sleep here tonight.

Narr 3: Lennie looks up and sees that the sun is going down.

Lennie: I wish we'd get the rabbits pretty soon, George.

George: Forget the rabbits. You can't even be trusted with mice.

Lennie: I remember a lady used to give me the mice.

George: Lady, huh? You don't even remember your own Aunt Clara. She stopped givin' them to you. You always killed 'em.

Lennie: They was so little. I'd pet 'em, and pretty soon they bit my fingers and I pinched their heads a little and then they was dead—because they was so little.

George: You keep me in hot water all the time. You get in trouble. You do bad things and I got to get you out. Like back in Weed. How was that girl supposed to know you just wanted to feel her dress? She jerks back and you hold on like it

was a mouse. She yells and we got to hide in a ditch all day with guys lookin' for us. We got to sneak out in the dark and get outta the country. All the time somethin' like that. All the time.

Narr 1: Lennie is quiet.

George: When I think of the swell time I could have without you, I go nuts. I never get no peace.

Lennie: George, you want I should go away and leave you in peace? I could go off in the hills and find a cave.

George: No. Look, I was just foolin', Lennie. 'Cause I want you to stay with me. The trouble with mice is that you always kill 'em. Tell you what I'll do, Lennie. First chance I get I'll give you a pup. Maybe you wouldn't kill it. That'd be better than mice. And you could pet it harder.

Lennie: Tell me again about the rabbits, George.

George: You get a kick out of that, don't you? Well, all right.

Narr 2: George's voice becomes deeper. He repeats his words rhythmically, as he has many times before.

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. They come to a ranch and work up a stake and then they go into town and blow their stake, and the first thing you know they're pounding their tail on some other ranch. They ain't got nothing to look forward to.

Lennie: That's it. That's it. Now tell how it is with us.

George: With us it ain't like that.

We got a future. We got somebody to talk to that cares about us. If them other guys gets in jail they can rot for all anybody cares. But not us.

Lennie: *But not us! And why? Because ... Because I got you to look after me, and you got me to look after you, and that's why! Go on now, George!*

George: You got it by heart. You can do it yourself.

Lennie: No, you. Tell about how it's gonna be.

George: Someday we're gonna have enough to have a little house and a couple of acres and a cow and some pigs and—

Lennie: *And live off the fat of the land! And have rabbits. Go on, George! Tell about what we're gonna have in the garden and about the rabbits in the cages and about the rain in the winter and the stove, and how thick the cream is on the milk like you can hardly cut it. Tell about that, George. Tell how I get to tend the rabbits.*

George: Well, we'll have a big vegetable patch and a rabbit hutch and chickens. And when it rains in the winter, we'll just say the heck with goin' to work, and we'll build up a fire in the stove and set around it and listen to the rain comin' down on the roof—Nuts! I ain't got time for no more.

Narr 3: The sun has gone down, and George lays out his sleeping blanket. Lennie does the same.

George: Look, Lennie. I want you to look around here. You can remember this place, can't you?

Lennie: Sure, I can remember.

George: Well, look, Lennie. If you just happen to get in trouble like you always done before, I want you to come right here and hide in the brush till I come for you. Can you remember that?

Lennie: Sure I can, George. Hide in the brush till you come.

George: But you ain't gonna get in no trouble, because if you do, I won't let you have the rabbits.

Lennie: I won't get in no trouble, George.

Narr 1: George lies down on his blanket. Lennie does the same.

Lennie: Let's have different color rabbits, George.

George: Sure we will. Red and blue and green rabbits, Lennie. Millions of 'em. Shut up now.

SCENE 2

Narr 2: The next morning, George and Lennie arrive at the bunkhouse on the ranch. George tells the boss that Lennie is not very bright but is a hard worker. The boss tells them they can start work after lunch, and then he leaves.

Narr 3: George sets up his bed. Lennie does the same.

Narr 1: George peers out the front door. An old man is standing there with a broom in his hand. George snags the broom from him.

George: What you doin' listenin', anyway?

Candy: I wasn't listenin'. I was just standin' in the shade scratchin' my dog.

Narr 2: Candy comes into the



Lennie and George meet Candy.

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bunkhouse. At his heels is a sheepdog with a gray **muzzle** and pale, blind old eyes. The dog struggles lamely to the side of the room and lies down, licking his grizzled, moth-eaten coat.

George: Well, sit down for a minute then. That's a hell of an old dog.

Candy: I had him ever since he was a pup. God, he was a good sheepdog when he was younger. How'd you like the boss?

George: He seemed all right.

Candy: He's a nice fella. You gotta take him right.

Narr 3: A thin young man enters the bunkhouse.

Curley: You seen my old man?

Candy: He was just here a minute ago, Curley. He went over to the cook's house, I think.

Narr 1: Curley notices Lennie looking at him.

Curley: You the new guys?

George: We just come in.

Curley: Let the big guy talk.

George: Suppose he don't want to talk?

Curley: By God, he's gotta talk when he's spoke to. What the heck are you getting into it for?

George: We travel together.

Curley: Oh, so it's that way.

George: Yeah, it's that way.

Narr 2: Curley takes a long look at Lennie.

Curley: Well, next time you answer when you're spoken to.

Narr 3: Curley turns toward the door and walks out.

George: What's his problem? Lennie didn't do nothing to him.

Candy: That's the boss's son. He was a boxer for a while. Curley's pretty handy.

George: Well, let him be handy. He don't have to take after

Lennie like that. What's he got against Lennie?

Candy: Curley hates big guys. He's always pickin' scraps with 'em. Kind of like he's mad at 'em because he ain't a big guy. Seems to me like he's been worse lately, though. He got married a couple of weeks ago. She's purty, but she got the eye.

George: Married only two weeks and she already got the eye?

Candy: Know what I think? I think Curley's married ... a **tart**.

George: He ain't the first.

Narr 1: Candy leaves the bunkhouse. Curley's wife enters. She has full red lips, and her eyes are heavily made up. Her fingernails are red. Her hair hangs in little rolled clusters, like sausages.

Curley's wife: I'm looking for Curley.

Narr 2: She leans against the doorframe so her body juts forward.

Curley's wife: You're the new fellas that just come, ain't ya?

Narr 3: Curley's wife lingers awhile, trying to flirt, but George will have none of it. After she leaves, George yells at Lennie for staring at her. He reminds Lennie about the plan to hide in the brush by the pool if he gets in trouble.

Narr 1: Slim, the mule-team driver, enters the bunkhouse and introduces himself. He's tall, with long black hair, carefully combed. He's carrying a Stetson hat.

Slim: You guys travel together?

vocab

MUZZLE: snout; a dog's face

TART: a flirtatious, immoral woman

George: Sure. We kinda look after each other. We've known each other for a long time.

Slim: Ain't many guys that travel together. Don't know why. Maybe everybody in the whole world is scared of each other.

George: It's a lot nicer to go around with a guy you know.

Narr 2: Carlson, a big-bellied man, comes into the bunkhouse and introduces himself.

Carlson: How's your dog doin', Slim?

Slim: She had nine pups last night! I drowned four of 'em right off. She couldn't feed that many.

Carlson: Five pups left, huh? Well, I been thinkin', Slim. That dog of Candy's is so old he can't barely walk. Stinks somethin' awful. Why don't you get Candy to shoot his old dog and give him one of the pups to raise?

Narr 3: The lunch bell rings, and the conversation is left for another time as the men file out of the bunkhouse.

Narr 1: George looks at Lennie's excited face.

George: Yeah, I heard him, Lennie. I'll ask him.

Lennie: A brown-and-white one!

George: Come on, let's get lunch.

SCENE 3

Narr 2: That night, after work, Lennie goes out to the barn and plays with his new pup. Slim has given Lennie a brown-and-white one, just as he wanted.

Narr 3: Candy comes into the bunkhouse with his old dog

struggling along behind him.

Candy: Hello, Slim, George. Either you guys got a slug of whiskey? I gotta gut ache. Them old turnips give it to me.

Narr 1: Candy climbs into his bunk. Carlson enters, turns on a light, and sniffs the air.

Carlson: God awmighty, that dog stinks. Get him outta here, Candy! I don't know nothing that stinks as bad as an old dog.

Candy: (*petting the dog*) I been around him so much I never notice how he stinks.

Carlson: Well, I can't stand him in here. Got no teeth. All stiff with rheumatism. He ain't no good, to you or to himself. Why don't you shoot him, Candy?

Candy: No. No, I couldn't do that. I had him too long.

Carlson: Tell you what. I'll shoot him for you. Then it won't be you that does it.

Candy: But I had him since he was a pup.

Slim: You can have a pup from the new litter. Carl's right, Candy. That dog ain't no good to himself. I wish somebody'd shoot me if I get old and a cripple.

Candy: Maybe it'd hurt him.

Carlson: The way I'd shoot him, he wouldn't feel nothing. I'd put the gun right here. (*Carlson points with his big toe to the back of the dog's head.*) He wouldn't even quiver.

Narr 2: Carlson pulls a Luger pistol from his bag. Candy looks

vocab

QUIVER: to tremble or shake



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'Tell about that place, George. ... Go on—tell again.'

around the room helplessly and finally agrees. He turns onto his back and stares at the ceiling.

Carlson: (*to the dog*) Come on, boy.

Narr 3: The old dog gets stiffly to his feet and follows.

Slim: Carlson. Take a shovel.

SCENE 4

Narr 1: When Lennie finally comes back from the barn, he lies down in his bunk.

Lennie: Tell about that place, George.

George: I just told you last night!

Lennie: Go on—tell again.

George: Well, it's 10 acres. Got a little windmill. Got a little shack, a kitchen, an orchard, apples, peaches. There's a pigpen—

Lennie: (*interrupting*) And rabbits! We could live off the fat of the land!

George: And it'd be our own.

Candy: You know where there's a place like that?

George: What's that to you?

Candy: They'll can me pretty soon. I'm too old to be workin'. You seen what they did to my dog tonight. They say he wasn't no good to himself nor nobody else. When they can me, I wish somebody'd shoot me. But they won't do nothin' like that. I won't have no place to go, and I can't get no more jobs. Well, I got 350 bucks I'd put in, if you got a place. I ain't much good, but I could cook and tend the chickens and hoe the garden.

George: Lennie and I only got 10 bucks between us. But if we work for a month and don't spend nothin', we'll have a hundred bucks. That'd make four fifty. I bet that'd be enough.

Narr 2: George has a far-off look on his face, as if his dream could possibly come true.

George: We'll fix up that old place and we'll go live there. And if ever a carnival or a circus come to town ... why, we'd just go to her. Wouldn't have to ask nobody or nothin'. Just milk the cow and sling some grain to the chickens and go to her.

Lennie: And put some grass down for the rabbits. I wouldn't never forget to feed 'em. When we gonna go, George?

George: Right smack in one month, Lennie.

Lennie: I'm gonna take my pup.

George: Don't say nothin' to nobody, Lennie. Just us three and nobody else.

Lennie: I won't say nothin' to nobody, George.

Candy: I ought to of shot that dog myself, George. I shouldn't ought to of let no stranger shoot my dog.

Narr 3: The bunkhouse door opens, and Slim comes in. Curley and Carlson follow.

Curley: I didn't mean nothin', Slim. I was just askin'.

Slim: Well, you been askin' too often. I'm getting sick of it. If you can't look after your own wife, what you expect me to do about it?

Curley: I just thought you might have seen her, that's all.

Carlson: Why don't you just tell your wife to stay at home where she belongs?

Curley: You keep outta this unless you wanna step outside.

Narr 1: Curley looks at Lennie, who is still smiling, thinking about the rabbits.

Curley: What are you laughin' at?

Lennie: Huh?

Curley: Nobody laughs at me!

Narr 2: Curley smashes Lennie in the face. Lennie cries out in terror. His hands remain at his sides. He is too frightened to defend himself.

Lennie: George! Make him stop!

George: Get him, Lennie! Don't let him do that to you!

Narr 3: Curley's fist swings out again, and Lennie grabs it this time and holds on tight.

vocab

WRITHES: twists in pain

Curley **writhes** to the ground, his fist in the grip of Lennie's massive hand.

George: OK, now let him go, Lennie! Let go!

Narr 1: George runs to Lennie.

George: Let go, Lennie!

Narr 2: Bleeding and crying, Lennie lets go of Curley's hand. Curley drops to the ground.

Lennie: I didn't wanna ... I didn't wanna hurt him, George.

Slim: It ain't your fault, Lennie. This punk had it comin'.

George: Slim, will Curley's old man can us now? We need the money.

Narr 3: Slim kneels in front of Curley, whose hand is **mangled**.

Slim: Listen here, Curley. I think you got your hand caught in a machine. If you don't tell nobody what happened, we ain't going to. But you just try to get these guys canned and we'll tell everybody who beat you in a fight. Then you'll get the laugh.

Curley: I won't tell.

Narr 1: Slim helps Curley up, and Carlson takes him to see a doctor.

Narr 2: Slim is in awe of Lennie.

Slim: Man, I'd sure hate to have you mad at me!

George: Lennie was just scared. He didn't know what to do.

Lennie: I didn't wanna, George.

George: It ain't your fault. You done just what I told you. Maybe you'd better go wash your face, though.

MANGLED: crushed, disfigured

Narr 3: Lennie smiles with his bruised mouth.

Lennie: George?

George: Yeah, what you want?

Lennie: We can still have the rabbits, right?

George: Sure, Lennie. You ain't done nothin' wrong.

Lennie: I didn't mean no harm.

George: I know, Lennie. Now go and wash your face.

SCENE 5

Narr 1: It is Sunday afternoon. All the men are playing horseshoes outside. Lennie is in the barn, staring down at a dead puppy. He puts out his huge hand and strokes the puppy.

Lennie: Why'd you got to get killed? You ain't so little as mice. I didn't bounce you hard. If George finds out you got killed, maybe he ain't gonna let me tend no rabbits.

Narr 2: Lennie carries the dead puppy to a quiet corner of the barn and covers him with hay.

Lennie: This ain't no bad thing like I got to go hide in the brush. I'll tell George I found the pup dead.

Narr 3: Lennie uncovers the dead puppy and strokes him again.

Lennie: But he'll know. George always knows. Now he won't let me tend the rabbits.

Narr 1: Curley's wife enters the barn and sees Lennie playing with the dead puppy.

Curley's wife: What you got there, sonny boy?

Lennie: George says I ain't supposed to talk to you.

Curley's wife: George giving you orders about everything?

Lennie: He says I can't tend the rabbits if I talk to you.

Curley's wife: He's just scared Curley will get mad. Well, Curley's got his arm in a sling. And if Curley gets tough, you can just break his other hand.

Lennie: No, sir. I ain't gonna talk to you or nothin'.

Curley's wife: Listen, all the guys are out playing horseshoes. They're gonna be there for a long while. Why can't I talk to you? I never get to talk to nobody. I get awful lonely.

Lennie: Well, I ain't supposed to talk to you or nothin'.

Curley's wife: I can't talk to nobody but Curley, else he gets mad. How'd you like not to talk to anybody?

Lennie: I ain't supposed to. George's scared I'll get in trouble.

Narr 2: Curley's wife looks at what Lennie is hiding.

Curley's wife: What you got covered up there?

Lennie: Just my pup. Just my little pup.

Narr 3: Lennie shows her.

Curley's wife: Why ... he's dead!

Lennie: He was so little. I was just playing with him. And he tried to bite me. And I was gonna smack him ... and ... and then I done it. And then he was dead.

Curley's wife: Well, don't worry about it. He was just a mutt. You can get another one. This whole country's full of mutts.

Lennie: George ain't gonna let me tend the rabbits now.

Curley's wife: Why not?

Lennie: Well, he said if I done any more bad things he ain't gonna let me tend the rabbits.

Curley's wife: Well, don't you worry about talkin' to me.

Narr 1: Curley's wife sits down next to Lennie.

Curley's wife: Ain't I got a right to talk to people? I could've been somethin', you know. I had offers. I could've been in movies. But I married Curley. And I tell ya', he ain't a nice fella.

Lennie: Maybe if I took this pup out and throwed him away, George wouldn't ever know. Then maybe I could tend the rabbits.

Curley's wife: Don't you ever think of nothin' but rabbits?

Narr 2: Lennie moves cautiously closer to her.

Lennie: I like to pet nice things. Once at a fair I seen some of them long-hair rabbits. And they was nice, you bet. Sometimes I've even pet mice.

Curley's wife: I think you're nuts.

Lennie: No, I ain't. George says I ain't. I like to pet nice things with my fingers, soft things.

Curley's Wife: I think you're nuts. But you're a kinda nice fella. Just like a big baby. But I can see what you mean. Sometimes when I'm doing my hair, I like to stroke it 'cause it's so soft.

Narr 3: She takes Lennie's hand and places it on her head. He begins to stroke her hair.

Lennie: Oh, that's nice!

Narr 1: Lennie strokes harder.

Curley's wife: OK, you can stop it now. You'll mess it up.

Narr 2: Lennie strokes harder.

Curley's wife: Ow! Let me go!

Narr 3: Lennie begins to panic. He holds on to her hair. She tries to pull away, but Lennie's grip is too strong. She screams.

Curley's wife: Let me go!

Narr 1: Lennie puts his hand over her mouth.

Lennie: Oh, please don't yell. George'll be mad.

Narr 2: Curley's wife struggles under Lennie's big hands, but it is no use. She is suffocating. Lennie picks her up and shakes her violently.

Lennie: I don't want you to yell! You're gonna get me in trouble just like George says you will.

Narr 3: Her eyes are wild with terror. Lennie shakes her and shakes her. Her body flops like a fish. And then she is still. Lennie has broken her neck.

Lennie: I don't want to hurt you, but George'll be mad if you yell.

Narr 1: Her body goes limp, and Lennie lets her drop. He becomes scared and whispers to himself.

Lennie: I done a bad thing. I done another bad thing. George said if I did somethin' bad ... to run and hide in the brush till he comes. That's what he said.

Narr 2: Lennie covers Curley's wife with hay. He runs out the back of the barn, away from the men's voices and the sound of horseshoes hitting metal and dirt.

SCENE 6

Narr 3: The horseshoe game ends, and Candy enters the barn. He finds Curley's wife's body in the hay and runs to get George.

Narr 1: George knows right away that Lennie killed her.

Candy: We oughtta let him get away. You don't know that Curley. He's gonna wanna **lynch** him.

George: Yeah, you're right, he will. And the other guys will.

Candy: You and me can still get

that little place, can't we, George?

George: I think I knew all along it would never work. He used to like to hear about it so much that I got to thinkin' maybe we would.

Candy: He's such a nice fella. I wouldn't think he could do this.

George: Lennie never done it in meanness. All the time he done bad things, but he never done one of 'em mean.

Narr 2: George straightens up and looks at Candy.

George: Now listen. We gotta tell the guys. There ain't no way around that. Maybe they won't hurt him. I ain't gonna let 'em hurt Lennie. I'm gonna go in the bunkhouse so they don't think I was in on it. Then in a minute you tell the guys about her. Then I'll come along and make like I never seen her. Will you do that? So the guys won't think I was in on it?

Candy: Sure, George. I'll do that.

Narr 3: George goes to the bunkhouse. Candy tells the other men what happened. George comes back and joins the crowd. All the workers are there, standing over the body.

Curley: I know who done it! I'm gettin' my shotgun. I'll shoot him myself. I'll shoot him in the guts.

Narr 1: All the men follow Curley to the bunkhouse, except Slim and George.

Slim: I guess Lennie done it, all right. Everyone else was playin' horseshoes. Where do you think



Lennie can't help but touch Curley's wife.

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vocab

LYNCH: to put to death by mob action, without legal sanction

he went?

George: We come from the north, so he would have went south.

Narr 2: Carlson runs out of the bunkhouse.

Carlson: He stole my gun! It ain't in my bag!

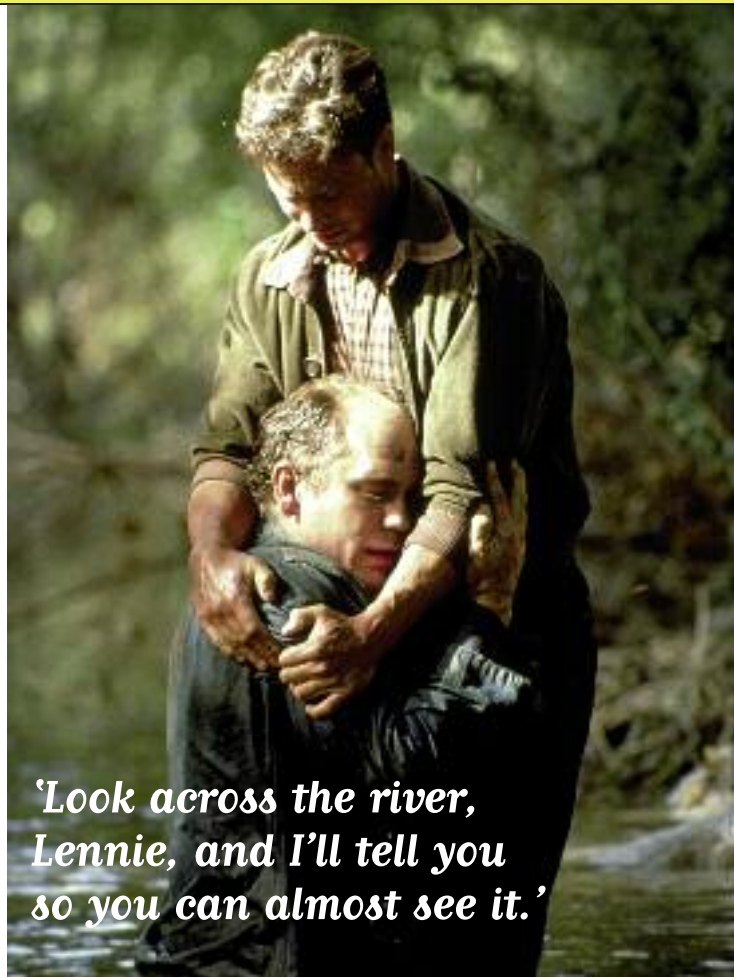
Narr 3: Curley and the rest of the men come out of the bunkhouse. All the men are carrying guns. Curley has his shotgun.

Curley: George, you're coming with us.

George: I'll come. Listen, Curley, don't shoot him. He's nuts. He didn't know what he was doin'.

Curley: He's got Carlson's gun. Of course we'll shoot him!

Narr 1: Curley takes off in search of Lennie. All the men follow him except Candy, who stays with Curley's wife. George follows the search party. His feet drag heavily.



'Look across the river, Lennie, and I'll tell you so you can almost see it.'

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SCENE 7

Narr 2: Lennie makes his way down to the brush near the pool. He waits there for George.

Narr 3: Lennie begins to think that George is going to leave him, and he gets scared.

Lennie: He ain't gonna leave me! He ain't! Oh, George! George!

Narr 1: George comes quietly out of the brush.

George: What you yellin' about?

Lennie: You ain't gonna leave me, are ya, George?

Narr 2: George sits beside Lennie.

George: No, I ain't.

Lennie: I knowed it! You ain't that kind!

Narr 3: George is silent.

Lennie: George? I done another bad thing.

George: It don't make no difference.

Narr 1: The sound of men shouting to one another can be heard in the distance.

Lennie: I can go away, George. I'll go right off in the hills and find a cave if you don't want me.

George: No. I want you to stay with me right here.

Lennie: Tell me about the other

guys and us. Tell me like you done before.

George: Guys like us got no family. There ain't nobody that gives a hoot about 'em.

Lennie: *But not us!* Tell about us now.

Narr 2: George is quiet for a moment.

George: But not us. Because I got you and ...

Lennie: And I got you. We got each other.

George: Take off your hat, Lennie. The air feels fine.

Narr 3: Lennie takes off his hat, just as George says. The sound

of the men is getting closer.

Lennie: Tell how it's gonna be.

George: Look across the river, Lennie, and I'll tell you so you can almost see it.

Narr 1: Lennie looks out across the pool and up the darkening slopes. George reaches into his pocket for Carlson's gun.

George: We gonna get a little place.

Narr 2: George raises the gun to the back of Lennie's head.

Lennie: Go on, George. How's it gonna be?

George: We'll have a cow ... and we'll have maybe a pig an' chickens ... and a little alfalfa—

Lennie: For the rabbits! And I get to tend the rabbits!

George: And you get to tend the rabbits. Yes.

Narr 3: Lennie turns his head.

George: No, Lennie. Look down there across the river, like you can almost see the place.

Lennie: Go on, George. When we gonna do it?

George: Gonna do it soon.

Lennie: I thought you was mad at me, George!

Narr 1: George's hand falls.

George: No, Lennie. I ain't mad. I never been mad. That's a thing I want you to know.

Lennie: Let's do it now. Let's get that place now.

Narr 2: The men's voices are close now. George raises the gun to the back of Lennie's head.

George: Sure, right now.

Narr 3: George pulls the trigger.

The crash of the shot rolls up the hills and down again. Lennie falls forward and lies in the dirt. He does not quiver.

Narr 1: George throws away Carlson's gun. The men burst out of the brush.

Curley: You got him, by God! Right in the back of the head!

Narr 2: Carlson goes to George.

Carlson: How'd you do it?

George: I just done it.

Carlson: Did he have my gun?

George: Yeah. He had your gun.

Carlson: And you took it away from him and you killed him.

Narr 3: George looks down at his hand that held the gun.

Slim: Come on, George. Me and you will go get a drink.

George: Yeah, a drink.

Slim: You had to, George. I swear you had to. Come on with me.

Narr 1: Slim leads George to the trail. Curley and Carlson watch them as they go.

Carlson: Now what do ya suppose is eatin' them two guys? ■

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



JOHN

STEINBECK (1902–1968) used his writing as an opportunity to raise awareness about social problems, particularly among rural laborers. That theme, present in *Of Mice and Men*, is also the foundation for his book *The Grapes of Wrath*, among many others. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature in 1962 “for his realistic and imaginative

HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

WRITE ABOUT IT

- 1 Would you call the relationship between George and Lennie a friendship? Why or why not?
- 2 George often complains that he would be better off without Lennie. Why doesn't George leave Lennie?
- 3 Foreshadowing is a device that writers use to hint at the outcome of a story. Which scene in this play foreshadows its tragic ending?
- 4 Does George make the right decision at the end of the story? Why or why not? Tell us what you think. Write to us at read@weeklyreader.com.