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A dissertation entitled:

**Naturalism as a Literary Genre to Manifest the
Inhumanity of the Human Condition; Study
Case *John Steinbeck's "Of Mice and Men"***

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Dedication

This modest work is dedicated to:

My dear parents for their support and patience

To my wife

To my brothers and my sisters

To my best friends

To all my family

Acknowledgments

- *First of all, I present my heartfelt recognition to God, The Almighty, for giving me the possibility to further my studies, to undertake and complete my master dissertation.*
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Abstract

This dissertation studies American literary Naturalism. We look for showing the ways in which John Steinbeck's novella "Of Mice and Men" is representative of the most salient features of Naturalism. In fact we seek also to show the extent that this literary genre can reach to depict the inhumanity of human condition especially during crises. The present work is divided into four chapters. Firstly we review the history background and the characteristics of Naturalism, through its styles and themes. Then an over view of American society during the thirties, the great depression and its social and cultural effects, unemployment, immigration, loneliness. Before the end, we try to shed light on how John Steinbeck portrays the inhumanity of the human behaviour through the major themes of his naturalistic novella "Of Mice and Men" after talking about Steinbeck's language, style, the use of literary devices in "Of Mice and Men". And we finish by an appendix containing a short biography of the writer, some historical context of the novella and a plot summary of the novella.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

General Introduction

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American literature had witnessed various and different period and movements throughout its history. Each one of those trends has its own principles, directions, ideology and writers. One of these movements is Naturalism. Which is a literary movement of a pessimistic tone which came in the late nineteenth century; it studies human life in a completely different way from the other trends (High, 1986).

This dissertation sheds light on this important literary movement in the history of American literature. It appeared as new direction in the last part of the nineteenth century and during the thirties. Naturalism received huge following from many writers, because they were persuaded that it expresses the concerns of their era. Among naturalists we find Frank Norris (1870-1902), Hamlin Garland (1860-1940), Stephen Crane (1871-1900), John Steinbeck (1902-1968) and Edward Estlin Cummings (1894-1962).

This study aims at studying the principles of Naturalism and the inhumanity of human condition through an examination of Steinbeck's novella "*Of Mice and Men*" (1937). We intend to point out the most important naturalistic themes presented in this novella and introduce how those themes reflect the inhumanity of the human behaviour. First: by giving a general review of the literary Naturalism. Second: reviewing American society during the thirties, the great depression, lonely immigrants and the social and cultural effects of the Great Depression. Third: we examine Steinbeck's "*Of Mice and Men*" literary devices. Fourth: highlighting the human condition through its themes, then discussing the inhumanity of these themes in the novella.

Our study is mainly based on our interest in how Naturalism tracks the effects of the environment on people who were helpless to change their situation, lonely people seeking for company and friendship. John Steinbeck provides an excellent example of how

General Introduction

environment affects people's lives, opinions and destinies as he stated in "*Of Mice and Men*", in which he showed us how even life and death are determined by fate.

We have chosen John Steinbeck and his novella "*Of Mice and Men*" because we believe that it is a very interesting story which describes the suffering of the American people during the Great Depression of the thirties. It is a small novella which is rich of amazing meaning and emotions

To achieve our objectives, we investigate Naturalism and the inhumanity of the human condition in "*Of Mice and Men*" to find answers to the following question:

To which extent Naturalism reveals the inhumanity of the human behaviour through John Steinbeck's "Of Mice and Men"?

To begin our study it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 1: As long as John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* is a Naturalistic novel depicting the miserable life of two simple immigrant workers, it undoubtedly manifests the inhumanity of the human condition;

Hypothesis 2: Despite of the fact that John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* is a Naturalistic novel, it didn't shed enough the light on the inhumanity of the human condition;

CHAPTER ONE

Naturalism as a literary movement

Introduction:

The human being society witnessed a lot of changes during the period from the mid of the eighteenth century to the beginnings of twentieth century. These changes have led to the emergence of new intellectual trends which affect literature all over the world. So it declares the end of the romanticism domination by the coming up of many new literary doctrines like realism, naturalism and modernism ... etc. The objective of the present chapter is to discuss one of them which is Naturalism, by shedding lights on its history, influences, characteristics and themes.

1. What is Naturalism?

The term naturalism was coined by the French writer Emile Zola to describe the literary movement that attempts to apply the scientific principles of objectivity and detachment to its study of human beings. This perspective known as Naturalism is considered as the consistent outgrowth of literary Realism (Cunliffe, 1986).

The naturalist novelists used realism to associate the human being to society. They exposed social problems and were affected by Darwinian thought and the related philosophical doctrine of determinism, which views individuals as the helpless pawns of economic and social forces beyond their control.

Naturalism is basically a literary expression of determinism, associated with bleak, realistic depictions of lower-class life; determinism denies religion as a motivating force in the world and, as an alternative, looks to the universe as a machine. The enlightenment thinkers of the Eighteenth-century had also imagined the world as a machine, but as a perfect one, invented by God and tending toward progress and human betterment. While Naturalists

saw society as a blind machine, godless and out of control. For instance, Stephen Crane (1894, 1899), a naturalistic novelist, son of a clergyman, put the loss of God most succinctly:

A man said to the universe:

"Sir, I exist!"

"However," replied the universe,

"The fact has not created in me

A sense of obligation." (High, P B. 1986, 89)

2. The historical background of Naturalism

Naturalism is a literary movement that took place between the late 19th century and the middle 20th. Like Romanticism, Naturalism first appeared in Europe. The emergence of Naturalism does not mark a radical break with Realism, so this new style is considered as a legitimate development of the old one.

2.1. From Realism to Naturalism

Literary Realism came in the mid Eighteenth century as a result to reject the idealised presentations, imaginative settings, the supernatural, and the improbable plot twists of romanticism. Many realist writers were considered as naturalists too. Realists try to "write reality", portray the real life without "sugarcoating." They record *"the smaller details of everyday life, things that are likely to happen between lunch and supper"* (G. R. Thompson 2012 P,68). Realism portrays local colour, attempting to accurately portray the customs, speech, dress, and living conditions of their chosen locale.

Naturalism first appeared in Europe. It is generally traced to the works of Balzac in the 1840s and seen as a French literary movement associated with Gustave Flaubert, Edmond and Jules

Goncourt, Émile Zola, and Guy de Maupassant. By 1890 Naturalism was flourished in the USA as Americans became urbanized. It audaciously highlighted the seamy underside of society and such topics as divorce, sex, adultery, poverty, and crime. Naturalism is essentially realism with an additional facet: Determinism.

2.2. DARWINISM and Naturalism

Naturalism is an outgrowth of Realism. The two disciplines were significantly influence by Darwin's biological theories, Comte's application of scientific ideas to study society, and Taint's application of deterministic theories; that went to shape various points of view were they all concentrate on portraying social environment (Cuddon, 1977).

Charles Darwin (1809-1882) had a big influence on world literary culture in the late nineteenth century. He presented a theory about evolution and critical publications which are "*On the Origin of Species by means of Natural Selection*" (1859) in which his ideas were based on that all behaviour production are a matter of biological determine forces, that there is nothing transcendent in human life and "*The Descent of Man*" (1871). Darwinism ideas were manipulated in American author's appreciation, representation of civilization, human, nature, marriage, gender, race, the role of environment and heredity (Lamb & Thompson, 2005). Spencer the leading figure of what is known as social determinism coined the expression of "*the survival of the fittest*" which represents a social concept that parallels, to some extent, Darwin's biological concept of selection. Social Determinism advocated a new kind of determinism of natural ability in which any intervention on behalf of the poor or weak would weaken the race (Ahnebrik, 1961).

Darwin's theory of evolution, although never applied to human behaviour, was used to examine how one's situation was determined by biological aspects. Zola, in his essay "*The experimental novel*", related the scientific method to literary works. He said: "*the*

experimental novelist is therefore the one (...) who does not interpose his personal sentiments". Thus, novels had to be as objective as possible because naturalistic writers were supposed to offer a scientific view of reality, in which neither an illusion nor a moral judgment had to be included.

The greatest revolution started in 1859 with the publication of Charles Darwin's "*On The Origin of Species*". Sigmund Freud stated: *Darwin had dealt a great "biological blow to human narcissism"; compelling humankind to contemplate its place within the community of common descent"* (Lamb & Thompson, 2005:377).

Darwin believed that all behaviour productions are a matter of biological forces, that there is nothing transcendent in human life. The writing of Darwin and other evolutionists have widely been read by the new generation like Stephen Crane, Hamlin Garland and Frank Norris. So, Darwinian ideas had a significant impact on those writers. This era was characterized by the emergence of American Naturalists who were inspired by an advance of French Naturalism led by Emile Zola. (Kendir Fatma, master thesis, 2013 p7)

2.3. The American literature and Naturalism

In 1860, most Americans lived on farms or in small villages, but by 1919 half of the population was concentrated in about twelve cities. Problems of urbanization and industrialization appeared: poor and overcrowded housing, unsanitary conditions, low pay, difficult working conditions, and inadequate restraints on business. Labour unions grew, and strikes brought the plight of working people to national awareness. Farmers, too, saw themselves struggling against the "money interests" of the banks

The United States was transformed from a small, young, agricultural ex-colony to a huge, modern, industrial nation. It had become the world's wealthiest state, with a population

that had more than doubled, rising from 31 million in 1860 to 76 million in 1900 (Charles J, 1997 p,12).

As industrialization grew by 1890, so did alienation. Naturalism appeared in the characteristic American novels of the period Stephen Crane's *Maggie: "A Girl of the Streets"*, Jack London's *"Martin Eden"*, and later Theodore Dreiser's *"An American Tragedy"* which depict the damage of economic forces and alienation on the weak or vulnerable individual. Survivors, like Twain's *"Huck Finn"*, Humphrey Vanderveiden in London's *"The Sea-Wolf"*, and Dreiser's *"opportunistic Sister Carrie"*, endure through inner strength involving kindness, flexibility, and, above all, individuality. While the French initiated and began to develop Naturalism, Americans are credited with bringing it to fruition.

By 1920 the world witnessed the cultural wave of Modernism, which gradually emerged in Europe and the United States. It expressed a sense of modern life through art as a sharp break from the past, as well as from Western civilization's classical traditions. Modern life seemed radically different from traditional life more scientific, faster, more technological, and more mechanized. Modernism embraced these changes.

The economy collapse of 1929 in the United States of America destroys the image of the happy, wealthy country of "the roaring twenties". "The great depression" affected most of the population of the United States. Workers lost their jobs, and factories shut down; businesses and banks failed; farmers, unable to harvest, transport, or sell their crops, could not pay their debts and lost their farms. It is the failure of the "American dream". During this period Social realism and Naturalism re-emerged through the novelists of that era like John Steinbeck.

During the Great Depression, naturalism returned with a more overt political agenda in the form of the proletarian novel. The proletarian novelist, according to Michael

Gold, is 'a wild youth of about twenty-two, the son of working-class parents, who himself works in the lumber camps, coal mines, and steel mills' (Qtd. in Castro 16). Although Gold's famous definition leaves out female workers, women's novels are well represented in the ranks of proletarian novels, in which Agnes Smedley's "*Daughter of Earth*" (1929), Josephine Herbst's "*Rope of Gold*" (1939), and Catherine Brody's "*Nobody Starves*" (1932) take their place beside Robert Cantwell's "*The Land of Plenty*" (1934), Jack Conroy's "*The Disinherited*" (1933), and Michael Gold's "*Jews without Money*" (1930). Proletarian novels represented the power and abuses of capitalism from a working class perspective and proposed solutions through collective action such as an expression of class solidarity, an education into collective ideology, or a strike. In contrast to the earlier naturalists' emphasis on biological determinism, the naturalists of the 1930s relied more heavily on representing psychological and economic determinism, with Freudian theories of sexuality and repression and Marxist analyses of class and capital replacing earlier theories of hereditary traits. Economic determinism informs the naturalism of John Steinbeck's "*The Grapes of Wrath*", John Dos Passos's "*USA*", and James T. Farrell's "*Studs Lonigan*" (1932–35), with Dos Passos's trilogy a multi-character panorama and Farrell's a detailed chronicle of the title character's life and early death. In the 1940s, African American writers such as Richard Wright (*Native Son*) and Ann Petry (*The Street*) employed naturalism to register disillusionment with, and a protest against, the injustices visited upon Black Americans by a racist U.S. society.

3. Themes and characteristics of Naturalism:

Naturalism is a very intense literary style that an author can use. With naturalism, the author tries to convey the acquired knowledge through the senses and experiences that they have undergone.

3.1. Characteristics of Naturalism

Emile Zola is seen as the major and most influential author in the genre, and which may be seen as an outgrowth from realism; a natural continuation in a time when science had made big discoveries. (Ahnebrink 1961 p.21) The watchwords for the time had become observation, experience, and facts; thus the time may be characterized as an analytic time. The influences of Darwin and Marx, meant to the naturalists that nothing occult or transcendental existed, and everything happened as a matter of course.

Naturalism applies scientific principles of objectivity and detachment to study human beings so that the characters in the story may additionally appear like the subjects of scientific case studies. Both Darwinism's thinking of natural selection and Freud's concepts of psychology influenced the movement, so these concepts may be used to give an explanation for the development and the actions of a character.

Zola and his disciples rejected the concept of free will. (Ibid 184) Humans were often portrayed as weak and indolent, lacking free will, and driven by their instincts. Man was often closely related to animals, an idea derived from popular interpretations of Darwin's evolution theory. The universe was seen as controlled by mechanistic laws, and thus religion and social governments were untrustworthy (Ibid 24-25).

The Naturalist believes that the truth is found in nature. Everything follows predefined principles, patterns and rules. So life is as deterministic or even mechanistic for the reason that heredity and environment control human actions instead as free will.

The usual outcome of a life was tragic hopelessness where malice and wickedness faced the people. The novels ended often in sorrow, or annihilation. (Ibid p.28) Although the genre was meant to be an objective one where neither moralizing nor satire were to be

included, the genre was nevertheless critical of society. Zola believed that society had full responsibility for all misfortune that happened to the French people.

Naturalism often represents man in conflict with nature, society, or with himself. The main characters of naturalism are, in general, lower socioeconomic classes and often have no strong moral compass. However, the moral failings of individuals or of society as a whole are considered without passion.

The tone of naturalistic works is often detached, without emotion scientific and non-judgmental. The author presents himself as an objective observer, similar to a scientist who takes notes on what he sees. When it comes to diction, ugly and mean words can be chosen instead of lyrical or elegant. In the descriptive passages too much detail may appear, but the arrangement will be informal or even chaotic to show that society and nature are dominated by random forces.

Naturalistic works are character-driven more than plot-driven. The focus is on human nature, a predictable phenomenon. Skinnerian principles of learning through and Darwinian hierarchy of survival of the fittest are the underlying Themes involved in the formation of the human character. Artificial or optimistic plot structures of action are avoided, and the action is more like a "slice of life" than a bow in which characters can change, grow and develop

One of the main features of literary naturalism is *the belief that man behaves according to the laws of nature*. Instinct and inherited qualities would then guide his actions more than free will. A second belief that is connected with this is the notion that man is at the mercy of his environment. With this idea, the man reacts to what is happening around him rather than driving it. Once again, the free will is not determinative of what is going on in his life.

The novels were often very descriptive in detail. It did not matter if the subject was nice or brutal; everything had to be portrayed as it was. (Ibid p.24) Description of settings and other descriptive texts that did not force the story forward constituted a growing part of the novels. The main characters were mostly lower class people living in the slums of the cities, often described without any kind of mercy. At the same time as he wanted to be objective in his literature, he also wanted to aim some criticism against those in power. He was eager to depict those class-distinctions he saw, corruption, moral rottenness. (Ibid p.26) In this sense, at the same time as he is the leading figure of the naturalistic movement, he does not stick to its ideal perfectly himself. There is some kind of ambiguity over the whole genre, as though authors should be very objective in their work and not judge, yet most of them were influenced by the social ideas Marx had stated in the Communist Manifesto.

As the movement's goal was to portray society as closely to reality as it could, new subjects, earlier avoided, like social misery, prostitution, and controversial issues for the day were now possible subjects. The literature was characterized by detailed description of the environment. This demanded a lot of research by the authors.

3.2. Styles of Naturalists

Naturalists of the 1980's wrote about the immigrants who lived in slums, they wrote about the illicit sexual affairs of young girls who had moved from farms to cities, they wrote about the individuals who neither understood themselves nor those around them (Applegate,2002).

According to the style of naturalists; Naturalist authors use Symbolism to subtle a wealth of meaning in a few words or images, they use images to give an effective impressions. They were impressionistic in their writing (High, 1986).

Naturalists always use pessimistic tone in their stories and novels to describe the depression of their characters which are in state of suffering. Their style was unromantic filled with harsh words and meanings like violence, corruption, racism, poverty, etc (Lamb& Thompson, 2005).

4. Themes of Naturalism

Among themes in Naturalism, the literary critic Walcutt could recognize four themes: *Determinism, survival, violence and taboo*. The theme of determinism has already been explained. The theme of survival arises from the application of determinism to biological competition, which points out men can, due to their origin in animals, behave like them, su. The theme of violence is related to survival, because as everybody tries to survive, they have to damage each other in order to outlive. Finally, the last theme is taboo, which includes sex, disease, bodily functions, obscenity and depravity.

In addition, Themes like the *"brute within" each individual*, composed of strong and often warring emotions: passions, such as lust, greed, or the desire for dominance or pleasure; and the fight for survival in an amoral, indifferent universe. The conflict in naturalistic novels is often "man against nature" or "man against himself" as characters struggle to retain a "veneer of civilization" despite external pressures that threaten to release the "brute within."

Therefore, *Human beings are part of nature and subject to its laws*; no spiritual force or soul separates them from other animals. Nature is as indifferent force acting on their lives. The romantic vision of Wordsworth, that "nature never did betray the heart that loved her", here becomes Stephen Crane's view in "The Open Boat": "This tower was a giant, standing with its back to the plight of the ants. It represented in a degree, to the correspondent, the serenity of nature amid the struggles of the individual, nature in the wind, and nature in the

vision of men. She did not seem cruel to him then, nor beneficent, nor treacherous, nor wise. But she was indifferent, flatly indifferent."

Another theme of naturalism "*Determinism / Social Determinism*" in other words "Man as a product of his heredity and his environment" the forces of heredity and environment are the only factors to shape the individuals lives and determine their Fate. And the behaviour is determined more by instinct than by reason

Also *the lack of free will* is a major theme of Naturalism. Naturalistic texts often describe the futile attempts of human beings to exercise free will, often ironically presented, in this universe that reveals free will as an illusion.

Heavily influenced by the scientific theories of the time, particularly Darwin's, Naturalists in one hand call for *the respect and importance of science, biology, sociology, Darwinism in writing* .On the other hand they call for the necessity of *the rejection of supernatural explanations for situations or events*.

The philosophical term *Fatalism* is also a theme of naturalism literature and it means: the belief that people cannot change the way events will happen and that events, especially bad ones, cannot be avoided (Cambridge dictionary)

Chance, Fate and Destiny ¹ are major theme of naturalism they mean that man is guided by uncontrollable forces that make him do things without knowing why to do, nature as a dominant image contributing heavily to character

Conclusion

1) http://www.longwood.edu/staff/lynchrl/English%20336/american_naturalism.htm

On the whole, Naturalism regards humans as beings fated to obey their natural instinct and environment, depicting a reality in which they cannot be criticized, because they are “human beasts”. Then, due to the lack of free will, it would make no sense to judge human behaviour, for humankind does not made decisions by itself.

CHAPTER TWO

**The American Society during the
thirties**

*"Once I built a railroad, I made it run.
I made it race against time.
Once I built a railroad, now it's done.
Brother, can you spare a dime?"*

Edgar Yipsel "Yip" Harburg

Introduction

In the late 1920s, the United States boasted to have the largest economy in the world. With the destruction of the First World War, the Europeans fought, while the Americans prospered. As a successor to the presidency, Herbert Hoover predicted that the United States would soon see the day when poverty was eliminated. Then, in a moment of apparent triumph, everything collapsed. The 1929 stock market crisis triggered a series of events that plunged the United States into the deepest and longest-running economic crisis in its history.

1. The great depression

The Great Depression is the economic crisis that occurred in 1929 through the 1930s and early 1940s and is the biggest and most famous economic crisis of the 20th century. This crisis began in America and historians say it began with the collapse of the US stock market on October 29, 1929 Called the Black Tuesday. The impact of the crisis has been devastating to almost all poor and rich countries. World trade has fallen by half, and average personal income, tax revenues, prices and profits have fallen too.

The most affected by the crisis are the cities, especially the heavy industries. Construction in almost all countries has stopped, and farmers have been affected by falling crop prices by about 60% of their value. The areas that depend on the basic industries such as agriculture, mining and logging were the hardest hit due to the lack of demand for raw materials, the lack of alternative employment opportunities, the factories being stopped from production, the entire families were homeless and they slept in cardboard huts, Dirt and garbage.

2. Results of the Great Depression

By October 29, 1929 the US stock market crashed, but few Americans thought that a decade of depression was underway. When the Americans saw how the banks were closed and the savings disappeared, they reduce their spent on goods and services. Companies began to dismiss workers to compensate for other losses. Many manufacturers have overproduced and created large stocks.

The unemployment rate reached 25% across the whole country; many workers had to choose between wage cuts and being informed that they are no longer needed in their jobs. Most people who accepted wage cuts their income were reduced by a third. SOUP Kitchens and Charitable Lines, which were not known to the middle class, could not meet the growing demand for food. All this let despair has swept the nation

Thousands of people who desperately strive for respectful income have done odd jobs such as washing clothes or collecting and selling fruits on the street. University professors in New York are driving taxis to manage till the next month. Millions of house gardens were well prepared for the cultivation of vegetables.

The strife was uneven across the land. Oklahoma was particularly hard hit, as a drought brought dry winds, kicking up a "DUST BOWL" that forced thousands to migrate westward. African Americans endured unemployment rates of nearly twice the white communities, as African American workers were often the last hired and the first fired. Mexican Americans in California were offered free one-way trips back to Mexico to decrease job competition in the state. The Latino population of the American Southwest sharply decreased throughout the decade, as ethnic violence increased.

As the days and weeks of the GREAT DEPRESSION turned into months and years, Americans began to organize their discontent. Many in America wondered if the nation would survive. The demonstration that attracted the most national attention was the bonus army march of 1932. In 1924, Congress rewarded veterans of world war one with certificates redeemable in 1945 for \$1,000 each. By 1932, many of these former servicemen had lost their jobs and fortunes in the early days of the Depression. They asked Congress to redeem their bonus certificates early.

The Bonus Army organised a march into the capital in June 1932 and built a shantytown across the Potomac River. President Hoover refused to address them; they found an audience with a congressional delegation. When the Senate rejected their demands on June 17, they were considered as a threat to national security. Washington police began to clear the demonstrators out of the capital. Two men were killed as tear gas and bayonets assailed the bonus marchers. Fearing rising disorder, Hoover ordered an army regiment into the city, under the leadership of General Douglas MacArthur. The army rolled into Anacostia Flats forcing the Bonus Army to flee. MacArthur then ordered the shanty settlements burned.

Many Americans were annoyed. How could the army treat veterans of the Great War with such disrespect? Hoover maintained that agitators, anarchists politic which made communists leading the mob. But facts contradict his claims. Nine out of ten Bonus Marchers were indeed veterans, and 20% were disabled. Population was outraged, America sank deeper in Depression.

The election of 1932 brought a landslide for the Democrats, as Roosevelt earned 58% of the popular vote and 89% of the electoral vote, handing the Republicans through Hoover their second-worst defeat in their history. Bands across America struck up Roosevelt's theme

song — "*Happy Days Are Here Again*" — as millions of Americans looked with hope toward their new leader who promised "*a new deal for the American people*"

2.1. A New President

The election of Franklin D. Roosevelt to the presidency in 1932 reflected the new thinking of many Americans. Roosevelt offered a planned economy, an activist government, and federal assistance to the disadvantaged. Hoover wanted to keep government as much as possible out of the lives of private citizens. Yet the Depression exposed the degree to which wealthy and powerful private citizens used government to their benefit. At the local and state levels, lucrative provisioning contracts and generous bonds to businessmen continued to be paid, even as city councils and school boards canceled public relief programs and closed schools. When local governments defaulted on their debts to the rich in order to keep schools and welfare services open, wealthy citizens organized tax strikes and liquidated private charities. At the federal level congressional investigations in 1933 and 1934 revealed sensational securities fraud, profitable ties between business and government (especially in the airmail business), and the tax loopholes provided for the wealthy. The public was outraged, and Roosevelt took advantage of this anger to reverse the relationship of government to the powerful, placing government at the service of common people.

2.2. The New Deal

Roosevelt's New Deal intervened at an unprecedented level in the lives of average Americans. Direct emergency relief, although meager, kept many from starving; public works projects provided temporary jobs for millions; federal insurance protected the life savings of American workers; housing and farm loans protected millions from foreclosure; Social Security provided retirement and unemployment protection; Roosevelt's support for organized labor insured millions of workers of high wages and safer working conditions.

Such policies laid the foundation of the welfare state and were overwhelmingly supported by the public. But they did not cure the Depression, and the New Deal's critics saw them as a harbinger of federal despotism in the private lives of Americans. Many businessmen and politicians of Hoover's stripe were bitterly opposed to such programs. Other businessmen and politicians pointed out that the New Deal was fundamentally conservative and supported the New Deal as a reform necessary to prevent revolution. Most Americans had already adopted the communitarian, interdependent perspective of the New Deal. The Great Depression forced friends, family, and ultimately government to help one another. It made hash of the "rugged individualism" often rhetorically evoked by conservatives and reflected a deeper historical fact: the Great Depression disrupted the norms of American life; the New Deal redefined those norms.

3. Social and Cultural Effects of the Depression

No nation could emerge from the cauldron of national crisis without profound social and cultural changes. While many undesirable vices associated with hopelessness were on the rise, many family units were also strengthened through the crisis. Mass migrations reshaped the American social fabric. While many businesses perished during the Great Depression, others actually emerged stronger. And new forms of expression flourished in the culture of despair.

The rapid rise in the crime rate of that time was due to the Great Depression, as many unemployed workers resorted to petty theft to put food on the table. Suicide rates rose, as did reported cases of malnutrition. Prostitution was on the rise as desperate women looked for ways to pay the bills. Health care in general was not a priority for many Americans, as visiting the doctor was reserved for only the direst of circumstances. Alcoholism increased

with Americans seeking outlets for escape, compounded by the repeal of prohibition in 1933. Cigar smoking became too expensive, so many Americans switched to cheaper cigarettes.

Higher education remained out of reach for most Americans as the nation's universities saw their student bodies shrink during the first half of the decade. High school attendance increased among males, however. Because the prospects of a young male getting a job were so incredibly dim, many decided to stay in school longer. However, public spending on education declined sharply, causing many schools to open understaffed or close due to lack of funds.

3.1. The Family

Demographic trends also changed sharply. Marriages were delayed as many males waited until they could provide for a family before proposing to a prospective spouse. Divorce rates dropped steadily in the 1930s. Rates of abandonment increased as many husbands chose the "poor man's divorce" option — they just ran away from their marriages. Birth rates fell sharply, especially during the lowest points of the Depression. More and more Americans learned about birth control to avoid the added expenses of unexpected children. H.

The Great Depression hit families who had felt insulated from economic crises. Families who based their security on savings accounts and home ownership were suddenly penniless and unable to pay off their mortgages. Some nine million families lost their savings in the Depression, and by 1934 two-fifths of all homeowners in twenty cities had defaulted on their loans. The Depression created two kinds of poor Americans, The traditional poor, whose poverty began before the Depression, included tenant farmers, the elderly, single-parent families, and the disabled. The "new" poor included thousands of formerly middle-and working-class families suddenly impoverished by the loss of jobs, homes, and savings. Unemployment or low-paying part-time work caused financial uncertainty and lower

standards of living for many families. The self-esteem of men eroded as they were unable to fulfill their roles as breadwinners for the families. Needy relatives stretched thin the resources of extended families. Marriage and birth rates declined, as many couples decided to wait until they could afford marriage and children. Single people in their late teens and early twenties, as well as young married couples, were forced to live with parents, creating tight quarters, frustration, and tension. Rates of divorce declined, in part because divorce became too expensive, but husbands deserted their wives in record numbers. Undernourished children contracted nutritional-deficiency diseases such as rickets and pellagra. The destructive impact of the Depression on families is undeniable, but it also brought families closer together, forcing family members to rely on each other. As writer Louis Adamic observed, "On the one hand, thousands of families were broken up, some permanently, some temporarily, or were seriously disorganized. On the other hand, thousands of families became more closely integrated than they had been before the Depression."

3.2. Migration and ethnicity

Mass migrations continued throughout the 1930s. Rural New England and upstate New York lost many citizens seeking opportunity elsewhere. The Great Plains lost population to states such as California and Arizona. The Dust Bowl sent thousands of migrant farmers "OKIES" and "ARKIES" looking to make a better life. Many of the migrants were adolescents seeking opportunity away from a family that had younger mouths to feed. Over 600,000 people were caught hitching rides on trains during the Great Depression. Many times offenders went unpunished.

3.2.1. The Plight of the "New Immigrants."

Already economically disadvantaged, immigrants were especially vulnerable to the economic hardships of the Depression. In the 1920s members of the "new immigrant"

groups—such as the Poles, Italians, and Jews who came to the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—still depended on local ethnic institutions such as charities, loan associations, and banks for survival. During the Depression these agencies lack sufficient resources to meet the increased demands of the needy in their communities, and they folded quickly in the nationwide banking crisis of the early 1930s. Many ethnic Americans lost not only their savings but also the sense of trust and stability within their communities.

3.2.2. Blacks

Blacks also lost traditional means of support in the 1930s. Already poorly paid and badly treated, thousands of southern tenant farmers and sharecroppers were forced off the land as banks foreclosed on the owners of a third of all cotton fields. Always the first to be fired, blacks were especially discriminated against during the Depression. In one Chicago manufacturing plant African American employment went from a high in the 1920s of 18 percent to 10 percent by 1940. Unemployed white workers were willing to take unpleasant jobs they might previously have disdained, and employers were far more likely to hire even inexperienced whites rather than experienced blacks. As a black meatpacking-house worker complained, "They were hiring young, white boys, sixteen and eighteen years old, raw kids, didn't know a thing," instead of black workers who knew how to do the job. Thus, unemployment rates for blacks in the Depression were far higher than the national average. Roughly 25 percent of the national workforce was unemployed in 1932, but the national unemployment averages for blacks stood at 48 percent, and in Pittsburgh 70 percent of blacks were unemployed.

3.2.3. Mexican Americans

When the Depression hit, most Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans were already living at or below the poverty line, and during the 1930s their underemployment and unemployment increased. At a time when noncitizens were frequently blamed for taking jobs away from American citizens and burdening relief services, Mexican Americans often lost their jobs because federal and local officials mistook them for foreigners. Mexican immigrants were seen as a public burden: their children required special language instruction in public schools, or increased education costs in districts that chose to establish separate "Mexican schools." Mexicans and Mexican Americans were also seen as a public-health problem; they were more likely to contract infectious diseases because they lived in overcrowded housing, and they were alleged to practice poor hygiene. Finally, they were thought to have difficulty assimilating into American society because they were clannish and clung tenaciously to their own culture. As a result of these arguments, the U.S. Department of Labor initiated a program of forced deportation and voluntary repatriation. Between 1929 and 1934 some four hundred thousand Mexican immigrants and U.S. citizens born to Mexican parents were deported or repatriated to Mexico.

3.3. Woman as Homemaker

In 1933 Eleanor Roosevelt called on American women to pull the country through the crisis of the Great Depression. In her book *It's Up to the Women* she wrote, "The women know that life must go on and that the needs of life must be met and it is their courage and determination which, time and again, have pulled us through worse crises than the present one." The collective contributions of women were critical during the 1930s. With Americans turning inward and relying on their families for survival, woman's role at the center of the family gained in significance. Overall, the Depression served to reinforce traditional gender

roles. During the Depression the vast majority of American women were neither rich nor poor but somewhere in between. Most women were married, and their husbands remained employed, but they probably took pay cuts to keep their jobs. If a middle-class man lost his job, his family typically had enough resources to make do without turning to relief or losing their property. While life was not easy for these women, it was not all bleak either. The ingenious survival strategies of middle-class married women helped their families to make do. They saved money by buying day-old bread, relining coats with old blankets, cutting adult clothing down to children's sizes, and saving anything that might be useful someday (such as string and broken crockery) or could be sold as scrap (such as old rags). As Eleanor Roosevelt commented, women were responsible for "endless little economies" as a hedge against "some catastrophe such as accident or illness which may completely swamp the family budget." Even the middle class lived in fear of poverty, with no social safety net to protect against unforeseen disaster.

3.4. Gender Roles

Men's lives were more disrupted by the Depression than women's. As men tried desperately to remain breadwinners for their families, their self-esteem suffered when they lost their jobs. Discouraged after daily searches for hard-to-find jobs, they frequently had time on their hands. Sociologists Robert and Helen Lynd described the difference in gender roles in a 1937 study: *"The men, cut adrift from their usual routine, lost much of their sense of time and dawdled helplessly and dully about the streets; while in the homes, the women's world remained largely intact and the round of cooking, house-cleaning, and mending became if anything more absorbing."*

3.5. Resentment

While some unemployed men willingly pitched in with housework, many men found being asked to do "women's chores" a deeper insult to their already fragile masculinity. Male anger and resentment was typical, especially when it was the women who had a job. As the Lynds put it: "Time hung on his hands. In the morning before she left for work his wife told him to make the beds. The children, seeing him in this new role, sometimes laughed at him. I came upon a man who, making the beds one day, was so enraged by his son's laughter that he had nearly killed the child." In general these role reversals were not desired by either men or women, and most couples tried to maintain traditional, patriarchal gender roles through the dislocations of the Depression. Yet simple survival required change. The collapse of the traditional male sphere of business increased the importance of the traditional female sphere of the home. Despite often fierce resistance, the Depression radically altered traditional ideas of male privilege, economic conservatism, and social conformity.

Popular culture saw new trends as well. Despite the costs of an evening out, two out of every five Americans saw at least one movie per week.

Classic films like "Frankenstein, It Happened One Night", and "*Gone With The Wind*" debuted during the Great Depression. Radio flourished as those who owned a radio set before the crash could listen for free. President Roosevelt made wide use of radio technology with his periodic "*fireside chats*" to keep the public informed. Dorothea Lange depicted the sadness of Depression farm life with her stirring photographs. And an apt musical form — the blues — gained popularity during the decade.

The 1930s has been dubbed the "Red Decade" the decade of the people, when culture embraced the common folk. It was a decade when communists and intellectuals kept happy company. As critic Malcolm Cowley commented, membership in the Communist Party held

intellectual status in the 1930s: "*There was an enormous prestige at that time for people who belonged to the party. They were listened to as if they had received advice straight from God.*" Participation and belonging, both intellectually and politically, were central to the culture of the 1930s. Nowhere was there a greater sense of intellectual belonging than in the rich intellectual circle of New York City. In leftist journals such as the *Nation* j *Partisan Review*, *New Masses*, and *The New Republic*, and in Greenwich Village coffeehouses, New York intellectuals debated a broad range of topics from wages to Stalin to psychoanalysis, art, aesthetics, and religion.

Escape, such intellectual engagement coexisted with a contrasting experience in the culture of the 1930s: escape fantasies, which helped people lift, at least temporarily, the burden of the Depression. Hollywood provided images of escape for the masses, via films about high society, ease, and luxury, featuring glamorous film stars. The escape fantasy also manifested itself in an increase in popular participation in sports and games, specifically gambling. Bingo nights, chain-letter schemes, and the Irish sweepstakes attracted tremendous interest, and the board game Monopoly was an enormous success. Each enabled players to "*make it*" in ways that current economic conditions forbade. Escape fantasies of the 1930s involved taking chances, competing, and, above all, winning.

4. The clouds of the war

War had finally come.

Two days after Britain and France declared war on Nazi Germany, President Roosevelt issued a proclamation of neutrality and ordered the suspension of munitions sales to all belligerents. But Roosevelt stopped short of asking that Americans remain emotionally neutral in the European conflict. FDR knew that the only chance Britain and France would

have to defeat the German Reich was to have ample supplies of weaponry. He immediately began to press Congress to repeal the ARMS EMBARGO.

The request was simple. Allow trade of MUNITIONS with belligerent nations on a "cash and carry" basis. There would be no danger to American shipping if the Allies had to carry the supplies on their own ships. Isolationists were concerned, but support for the President's initiative was strong enough. The NEUTRALITY ACT OF 1939 ended the arms embargo and permitted the sales of munitions on a "cash and carry" basis.

5. The United States of America in the Second World War

For the second time in the 20th century, the United States became involved in a furious world conflict after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

The social and economic consequences were profound. The great migration of African Americans from the rural South to the industrial North was accelerated. New opportunities opened for women. Americans finally enjoyed a standard of living higher than the pre-Depression years. But the war effort also had a darker side. Civil liberties were compromised, particularly for the 110,000 Japanese Americans who were forcibly uprooted from their West Coast homes to be sent to remote relocation camps. And Over 400,000 Americans perished in the four years of involvement, an American death rate second only to the Civil War.

Conclusion

"It is life," he said, "and life is not always beautiful. And yet, perhaps because I am strangely made, I find something beautiful there." Jack London - Martin Eden. At the point when Hoover was introduced as president in 1929, the American economy was likely to collapse. Unfit to give the best possible alleviation from harsh circumstances, his popularity diminished as more and more of Americans lost their employments. His moderate way to deal with government intervention had little effect. The economy shrank with each progressive year of his Presidency. As middle class Americans remained in a similar soup lines frequented in the past only by poorest people. During the next decade the whole social texture of the United States has been changed forever. But as industry expert John Rockefeller said *"There are a lot of pessimists these days, but in my 99 years of life, crises have come and gone but prosperity must come after them"*.

CHAPTER THREE

**The inhumanity of the human
condition in “Of Mice and Men”**

Chapter III The inhumanity of the human condition in “Of Mice and Men”

*"Youth dies. Life hurts. Love warms. Understanding heals.
The wounds and balms of the human condition are so
commonplace that men eventually experience them without
noticing."*

1970, "Alive and Well," Time, 18 May

Introduction

Literature is a form of language written by a human mind living in a specific society within a specific historical background read by a specific group of people within alternative views. Literary analysis depends greatly on literary (critical) cultural theory since it calls for being objective when analyzing it. Also, using the appropriate theory or theories in this analysis process, “ *a man with one theory is lost. He needs several of them or lots! He should stuff them in his pocket like news papers*” (Wallek & Warren) ¹

Of Mice and Men is a tragedy, a tale of men journeying through a world of pitfalls and brutal, inhumane experiences. Their dreams seem all but doomed, their ways are full of obstacles, happiness appears to be an impossibility, and human handicaps affect their hopes. The novel begins by forest scene promising that life is good with the sunshine on the pond and the gentle breeze in the willow trees. But soon after, that nature scene is replaced by a human world full of loneliness, cruelty, jealousy, rootlessness, hunger for owning land, and shattered dreams.

1. The setting of “Of Mice and Men”

The story took place in Salinas’ valley in California which is located near to the Pacific Coast. “Of Mice and Men” was written in time of the Great Depression. It takes three days starting on Thursday evening and ending on Sunday evening.

The story starts when George and Lennie arrive to ranch near the city of Solidad, which is situated in Monterey country in California. George and Lennie worked also in Weed in the north of Solidad. In order to find a new job, they moved to Murray and Ready’s in San

1) Course of literary theory by teacher S boukhelifa, university of Saida

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Francisco. In the first chapter, George tells Lennie “You remember about us goin’ into Murray and Ready’s, and they give us work cards and bus tickets?”²

2. The Characters of “Of Mice and Men”

Most characters in this novella are migrant farmers in salinas valley, they work on fields and they head to other places where they can find new job. They are seen as social victims of the great depression.

The main protagonists of this book **Lennie Small** and **George Milton**, they always travel together. They are friends, and their friendship is really extraordinary. George always tries to protect Lennie, and he tries to remind him about important things since Lennie is forgetful. **Lennie** is a flat character who does not change throughout the story. He is a kind man who does not want to hurt others. George is the opposite of his friend, an intelligent man. He is a dynamic character. He thinks that his life would be better without Lennie, but in fact he knows that it would be lonely without him. He changes throughout the story. He used to take care of Lennie at first to kill him at the end.

In addition, there is **Candy and his dog**. Candy is an aging ranch worker who lost his hand in an accident. His only friend is the dog. All workers want to get rid of that dog because he is smelly and old. So **Carlson**, another worker, decided to shoot the dog and end his misery instead of Candy. Carlson is insensitive man.

Moreover, there is **Crooks**, the nigger. He is the only black man in the ranch. He has his own bunk in the harness since he is not able to enter in the bunk house because of his colour.

Furthermore, **Slim** is the prince of the ranch. He understands what behind others’ thoughts. His actions are majestic. He is respected and admired by others.

² Steinbeck, Of Mice and Man, 7.

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Curley is the boss's son. He is recently married, and he is a jealous man of anyone who talks to his wife.

However, the female in the ranch was **Curley's wife**. She tries to talk to others because she feels lonely. Accidentally, she was killed by Lennie.

3. The themes of “Of Mice and Men”

• Dreams, Hopes, and Plans

In essence, *Of Mice and Men*, dreams, hopes, and plans are the very essential issues of what makes life worth living because humans give meaning to their lives by creating dreams. In this novella, dreams, hopes, and plans are not about realistic ambitions, but about finding a way to survive the Depression.

• Friendship

In this story, friendship is not discussed deeply. The writers do not talk about how characters feel about each other or why they should stay loyal. Their desire is to come together in the way that allows them to be like brothers and stand by each other.

• Isolation

Isolation is an abstract concept than reality. The book *Of Mice and Men* flourishes the idea that everyone is isolated and lonely. Each character tries to talk about his loneliness and communicate with others to give meaning to his life. But the thoughts of moving for seeking a new job and having new friends is enough to make a man feel isolated.

• Innocence

Innocence has many different situations in *Of Mice and Men*. Firstly when Lennie is described as having a childlike innocence. His attitude towards things are treated with a simple and soft view. In addition, innocence functions as the opposite of guilt. Innocence is an

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excuse for bad behavior; thus, why Steinbeck insists that characters should be treated without judgment.

• Freedom and Confinement

In this novella, freedom is not so much a major point as it's a constant and silent contrast to confinement. Confinement, such isolation which is a state of mind. At that, story men work outside and are free to leave when they want. Despite of that they feel there is something stops the feeling of freedom, thus; most characters seem more focused on achieving their freedom, and get rid of their confinements.

• Weakness

Steinbeck explores different types of weakness throughout the novel. He uses several characters to highlight different forms of weakness such Lennie who is mentally weak, George can't fight for his dream, and Crooks suffers from social weakness due to racism.

• Man and the Natural World

The ranch is a reflection of the natural world in the story. For instance grove, animals, pool and ranch too. In addition, the natural world is represented as part of the duality of relationships between human and animals , but this relationship does not mean always safety such Lannie who loves animals but kill them, Candy loves his dog, but can't stand up for it.

• Visions of America

Of Mice and Men describes the life of rural America during the Depression. The story is full of dreamers and strugglers, who all have a different idea of what life should be:

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Hollywood, a quiet ranch, the pages of a pulp magazine. All these visions could be fulfilled or melt away to impossibilities.

4. Symbols in “*Of Mice and Men*”

•Animal Imagery

Steinbeck uses animal images in his story. Such :

❖ Candy’s dog

Candy’s dog is a symbol of what happens to migrant workers when they live alone and cannot do the work of the farm. The dog’s killing is mentioned as a way out of trouble.

❖ The rabbits

The rabbits that Lennie imagine are symbol of the comfort, because he wants to be in a home place.

Also he love it because of their soft fur , so it a symbol of innocence in the harsh world.

❖ Lennie’s puppy

The puppy is a symbol of fate of the weak in the face of the strong, as Lennie's puppy depend on him, Lennie is dependent on George.

❖ Mice

Mice are a symbol of wrong hope; they are like men who are also victims of cruel fate and destiny. Through the novel Lennie loves soft, warm, and happy things, but at the end he is a victim of his own vulnerability, like mice.

•Characters

❖ Curley and Curley’s wife

Curley’s wife is symbolic of Eve – the female character who, in the Biblical story, brings sin and death to the world. She also symbolise everywhere women who are repressed by male-centered societies.

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Curley is symbolic of "small" people who may feel inferior and overcompensate by inflating or flaunting their power and status.

They represent evil both oppress and abuse the migrants in different ways.

• George and Lennie's farm

The two friends “George and Lennie” hope to have their own farm, this is a symbol of the American dream, such mirage, and the farm leads to ranchers. Also, the George’s description of the farm that has a verities of plants and animals is symbol of paradise

5. Language and style of “*Of Mice and Men*”

In "*Of Mice and Men*" Steinbeck was concerned with presenting a true picture of the topical issues of the thirties using a special style and structured language full of imagery, irony and humour about the social and economic reality created by American Depression. By giving interest to the lives of the poor people; he shows ordinary, everyday details, and makes characters speak and behave as they might do in real life.

"*Of Mice and Men*" is written in the third person in a play format consists of dialogue which is mainly short exchanges, using non-standard grammar and slang (‘would of’, ‘brang’ ...) in this dialogue in order to show the backgrounds of men and to convey an authentic sense of the speaking voice.

Steinbeck adopts condensed narration with minimal action descriptions, this makes the writer invisible. The characters are usually only briefly described physically, and demonstrate their inner thoughts by their speech and actions. He uses dramatic lighting and foreshadowing to connect his plot which makes some readers feel that the novel is a work of art as it is so balanced and thoughtful in structure. Other readers feel that the structure makes the book predictable.

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He uses figurative language to compare between Lennie and animals in the form of metaphors. This style of language helps to illustrate the innocence and personalities of characters.

6. The Struggle in “Of Mice and Men”

There are two main types of literary conflicts in Steinbeck’s “*Of Mice and Men*”. The first one is an internal conflict (Person versus himself). The second one is an external conflict (Person versus Person, society or even fate)

The conflict (Man versus himself) appears when George feels responsible of Lennie, although the latter gets in trouble all the time, because he promises his aunt to take care of him. It appears also in chapter three when Curley Beats Lennie badly. Lennie was standing unaware of what to do in the wait for a cue from George to fight. Another major internal conflict depicted at the end of the novella before and after the killing of Lennie by George; Only Slim seems to understand George’s conflict at that moment.

The struggle (Person versus person) is clearly shown in the scene of the fight between Curley and Lennie. This struggle is also exemplified in many other scenes throughout the novella (Lennie against George, Crooks against Curley’s wife, Lennie against Curley’s wife).

Candy and Crooks are characters who struggle against society, Candy suffers from the bad attitudes of the other men in the ranch because of his age and handicap which made him unable to work as hard as before. Meanwhile Crooks suffers from segregation which made him lonely because the society of that time looks down on his race and colour.

The external conflict (Person versus fate) is revealed in the title of the book which came from Robert Burn’s poem “*To a Mouse*”. The poem is about the intervention of fate on

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the plans of mice and men to make them unrealised. The plan of George, Lennie and Candy is shattered by fate when Lennie killed Curley’s wife.

7. Naturalistic Nature of “*Of Mice and Men*”

Steinbeck in "*Of Mice and Men*" dramatised the social chaos in the American society during the Great Depression and Dust Bowl era. He criticised economic system of that time which divided society. Steinbeck introduced social themes around concepts of evolutionary biology and the survival of the fittest. He saw that poor people were often suffering cruelly in their environment and that the causes for their misery were frequently beyond their control. Steinbeck saw and wrote the lives of innocent victims. His writing implies that these unfortunates could have been well in the materialistic American society. Throughout a career which spanned four decades, Steinbeck wrote about ordinary people, who struggle against inhumane tendencies and attempt, to create lives of meaning and worth. At the center of Steinbeck's thematic vision is dialectic between contrasting ways of life: between innocence and experience

In order to study and sort out the inhuman human condition in John Steinbeck's novella "*Of Mice and Men*" , giving a definition to the "human condition" is a necessity, then following a historical and sociological approaches of analysing using theories like historical, Marxist and feminism theories

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8. The Human condition

8.1. Definition of Human condition

"Human condition is: the characteristics, key events, and situations which compose the essentials of human existence, such as birth, growth, emotionality, aspiration, conflict, and mortality".³

"... the discussion of the human condition is any thematic concern about human nature, human society or how we live our lives. In other words, it's about the fundamental issues of human existence. One of literature's central concerns is to comment on these issues; ..." ⁴

Robert G. Bednarik defines human condition in the preface of his book "*The Human Condition*" as:

The term 'human condition' generally refers to what it means to be human and why we are the way we are. It is often expressed as the human predicament: our capacity for both good and evil, our "dark side," or "the troubled state and nature" of the human being. It can also refer to our limitation, such as our inability to go where only our imagination can take us, The concept was popularized by André Malraux's 1933 novel about the failed communist uprising of 1927 in Shanghai La condition humaine ...

The big theme of the novella is that a man can plan his whole life out and the things he wants to do, but at the end his hopes and dreams never come true. The title of this book, *Of Mice and Men* was taking from the poem called: *To a Mouse*. The poem talks about a mouse who's plans and dreams die away. The same with Lennie, George, and Candy, their dreams die away; they couldn't get their land no more. Through reading this novella in hand, three major themes of human condition are to be discussed as following:

3) "human condition". Dictionary.com's 21st Century Lexicon. Dictionary.com, LLC. 26 Oct. 2017.

4) Colin Welch's Education Resources. <http://learn.lexiconic.net/humancondition.htm> . 26 Oct. 2017.

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8.2. Friendship in “Of Mice and Men”:

Steinbeck once stated in one of his letters in 1933, “*The fascinating thing to me is the way the group has a soul, a drive, an intent, an end, a method, a reaction and a set of tropism which in no way resembles the same things possessed by the men who make up the group*”. (Steinbeck & Wallsten 1975:76). Steinbeck makes it clear that people need the friendship and love of other people to survive. Among all the sad and lonely people in the book, George and Lennie are lucky. Despite having to run away from towns (because Lennie keeps getting in trouble) and George forced into the role as a surrogate parent, the two men have each other. This friendship is rare in this book at cost of loneliness as it is best exemplified in the case of the black man “Crooks”.

George says in the first chapter (Steinbeck 1965 p.07) : “*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 an' work up a stake and they go into town and blow their stake, and the first thing you know they're poundin' their tail on some other ranch. They ain't got nothing to look ahead to... With us it ain't like that. We got somebody to talk to that gives a damn about us. We don't have to sit no bar room blowin' in our jack jus' because we got no place else to go. If them guys other guys gets in jail they can rot for all anybody gives a damn. But not us.*”. Lennie continues. “*But not us! An' why? Because . . . because I got you to look after me, and you got me to look after you, and that's why.*”. This passage depicts the miserable life of migrant people during the great depression by dint of the greed and irresponsibility of the capitalistic environment at that time. This miserable life revolves around the feeling of loneliness, rootless, unforgiving, and without guarantee. The migrant workers are always looking for a job from ranch to ranch. This is what makes them just seen as workers and nothing more. George and Lennie are different as they have each other. They are also

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different to those who “belong no place” as George and Lennie have a goal. They will one day have their own place.

“Go on now, George!”

“You got it by heart. You can do it yourself.”

“No, you. I forget some a’ the things. Tell about how it’s gonna be.”

“O.K. 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—” (Ibid P. 07)

Although Lennie is still a friend for George, he is different to him in many ways; a friend who can be characterized as more than just a casual friend. They provide strong emotional support to each other and their relation is therefore better characterised as a close friendship. (Baron & Byrne 1993 p309). Lennie and George are almost opposites both physically and mentally. In one hand Lennie, the person with a great body, is a kind soul with a big heart with a childlike innocence; he is indifferent to the pain of the Depression. It is obvious that he is mentally unstable and really unaware of the world outside him. On the other hand George, the small man, is intelligent quick to speak and think, but unlike Lennie, he is aware of the darker side of life and the Depression which leaves him a very serious person and also very a realistic thinker. The two almost use each other for an emotional and physical support .Lennie relies on George to look after him and keep him from getting into trouble whereas George relies on Lennie as a distraction from the real world. George answered “Slim” question: *“You guys travel around together?”* . *“Sure,” ... “We kinda look after each other.”* (Steinbeck 1965 p17)

The persona of Crooks can be seen as a social critique of racism, but that the most important role he plays in the novel is as a contrast to George and Lennie. It seems entirely plausible to say that through viewing the loneliness of Crooks, it becomes easy to notice what both George and Lennie have. It is a universal truth that very few people can stand loneliness,

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thus we all need people around us; without a friend we are no one in society and in contact with others we become someone. As Crooks said: “... . *A guy needs somebody—to be near him.*” He whined, “*A guy goes nuts if he ain’t got nobody. Don’t make no difference who the guy is, long’s he’s with you. I tell ya,*” he cried, “*I tell ya a guy gets too lonely an’ he gets sick.*” (Ibid p35)

8.3. Innocence in “Of Mice and Men”:

Innocence can be differently described in many various cases in 'Of Mice and Men'. The mental disability that Lennie has is the first exemplar of childlike innocence. He has a child’s attitude towards the world and others, which is simplistic and often warm view. Innocence also described as the opposite of guilt. This can be shown through the sympathetic portrait of Lennie in spite of his constant failings and murdering tendencies. Innocence is something like an excuse for bad behaviour. It seems to fit in with Steinbeck’s insistence that characters be treated without judgment.

According saying of George “Lennie wants to touch everything he likes” (Ibid, p.41). In fact, on seeing a red dress, Lennie goes to touch it and confuses the woman wearing it, who believes he was planning on raping her.

After he finds the body of Curley's wife, George notes that though Lennie does many bad things, he never acts out of meanness, he said “*Lennie never done it in meanness,*”... “*All the time he done bad things, but he never done one of ‘em mean.*”(Ibid, p 46). It is only out of an inability for Lennie to understand the world or control himself. Many of the characters in the novel act out of self-interested malice. Lennie never does.

Lennie is totally defenseless. He cannot avoid the dangers presented by Curley, Curley’s wife, or the world at large. His innocence raises him to a standard of pure goodness. Lennie's innocence creates confidence. Crooks talks freely to Lennie. His enthusiasm for the

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vision of their future farm proves easily spread as he convinces George, Candy, Crooks, and the reader that such a paradise might be possible. But he is a character whom Steinbeck sets up for disaster, a character whose innocence only seems to ensure his inevitable destruction.

8.4. Segregation “Of Mice and Men”:

8.4.1. The acts of racism in “Of Mice and Men”:

Racism and racial segregation were sadly a real and accepted part of the thirties' society. Steinbeck used the character of Crooks to manifest the suffering of the coloured people at that time. In "Of Mice and Men", Crooks the black man is treated disrespectfully, he lives in an isolated room alone as it is illustrated in the passages bellow:

"...You go on get outta my room. I ain't wanted in the bunk house, and you ain't wanted in my room."

"Why ain't you wanted?" Lennie asked.

"'Cause I'm black..." (Ibid, p33)

Crooks *"This is just a nigger talkin', an' a busted-back nigger. So it don't mean nothing, see?"*
(Ibid p34)

... Candy leaned against the wall beside the broken collar while he scratched his wrist stump. *"I been here a long time,"* he said. *"An' Crooks been here a long time. This's the first time I ever been in his room."*

Crooks said darkly, *"Guys don't come into a colored man's room very much."* (Ibid.36)

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8.4.2. Ageism in “Of Mice and Men”:

Steinbeck's characters are often powerless, due to intellectual, economic, and social circumstances. Lennie possesses the greatest physical strength of any character, which should therefore establish a sense of respect as he is employed as a ranch hand. However, his intellectual handicap undercuts this and results in his powerlessness.

Economic powerlessness is established as many of the ranch hands are victims of society during the Great Depression. The hopelessness is used by John Steinbeck to protest against the treatment of the disabled such as old persons during the Great Depression. Candy knows that he does not have a future. Crooks emphasizes this fact when he says that Candy will be "*You'll be a swamper here till they take you out in a box. Hell, I seen too many guys.*"(Ibid p.37). Candy swamper out houses, because he is not able to do something else. Although he hopes that their dream will work, he recognizes that it is unrealistic. It is unrealistic because of his disability. Steinbeck's protest against the treatment of the disabled is evident from the way he describes Candy's hopelessness. Crooks is clearly one of the most intelligent on the ranch but is oppressed by the hierarchy of America and the ranch. The repeated reference to Candy's hopelessness could be understood as a protest against ageism. He says more than once that if he "*Jus' as soon as I can't swamper out no bunkhouses they'll put me on the county.*"(Ibid p.29) He "*wisht somebody'd shoot" him, if he gets fired. 'I wisht somebody'd shoot me if I get old an' a cripple.*"(Ibid p.22) He will not have a place to Candy "subsided". He suggests to tell the boss about that dispute, but he knows that "nobody'd listen to" them. Steinbeck uses these situations to protest against ageism.

8.4.3. Sexism in “Of Mice and Men”:

During the great depression, in the United States of America, migrant workers would travel and leave their wives at home. Many women were abandoned in unhappy marriages,

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and divorce was too expensive. *Of Mice and Men* was set during the 1930s in America and is set on a ranch. The men of the ranch were chasing the American dream of success and living off the fat of the land, but the achievement of this dream was even harder.

Curley's wife, the main female character in *Of Mice and Men*, feels violated and lonely as she is being flirtatious towards them. Steinbeck's title immediately hints at the marginalisation of female characters in the novella, with an immediate emphasis on the role of 'men'. Curley's wife, the main character and only female on the ranch in novella introduced from the beginning until the end of the story as the wife of Curley with no name referring to her as a possession of Curley.

She is figured as a floozy throughout the novel. When we first see her, her body language is deliberately provocative when she leans against a pole in the barn. '*So her body was thrown forward.*' Knowing her beautiful womanly figure, and being the only woman on the farm, this suggestive posture reveals her need to be noticed and admired by the men. She talks very confidently and flirtatiously to George and Lennie even though they have just arrived and she doesn't know them. She pretends to be looking for her husband and when told that he is not there Steinbeck writes: "*If he ain't, I guess I better look some place else*" (Ibid, p15) she said playfully.' This suggests her boredom in marriage and that she just wants company and fun. She talks 'playfully' as a young teenager would and obviously cares more about throwing herself towards people and enjoying male company than she does spending time with her husband.

Also she is presented as an attention seeker when she appears into Crooks room to ask where Curley is located. She again uses a weak excuse to talk to the men. "Lennie watched her, fascinated but Candy and Crooks were scowling down away from her eyes." Firstly, the word "scowling" implies that they're (Crooks and Candy) unhappy at Curley's wife as she is

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causing trouble but they do not want any. This makes the reader feel that she is unapproachable as she is danger to the ranchers. This is linked to when she enters Crook’s room and says, “*they left all the weak ones here*” (Ibid, p37) suggesting that she considers herself higher in stature than Crooks, Candy and Lennie..

3. The inhumanity of the human condition in “Of Mice and Men”

3.1. Inhumanity in Friendship

The relationship between Lennie and George is complex and the reader is initially struck by the harsh manner in which George often speaks to Lennie. However, it is the strength of their friendship that binds the two men together and makes them mutually dependent. Lennie’s dependency is that of a child to its guardian, but George is equally as dependent on Lennie as he is the one person that can be trusted absolutely. Lennie cannot function normally due to his child-like mental state. Lennie’s disability has gotten him into trouble numerous times in the novel because his simple and innocent intentions were misunderstood.

George wanted to protect his simple-minded best friend Lennie from the rage of the townspeople and a potentially cruel death by shooting him, such as a lynching. George’s actions could be viewed as a compassionate action in preventing Lennie’s suffering. This might seem animal and barbaric, but upon a closer look we remember it was during a time of poverty, stressing the need for individual survival.

Slim's puppies were in the same position. His young dog just had puppies and he couldn’t care for them. They were struggling to stay alive and Slim knew he had to do something. He couldn’t sell them because nobody had any money to buy them. He then came to the decision to drown them in the river. This way the puppies wouldn’t be struggling and

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he wouldn't have to worry about caring for them. Once again, it was a harsh decision to make but at the end it was the best one.

3.2. Inhumanity in Innocence

In depression era only the strong survived. The way in which Carlson kills the dog with a gunshot to the back of the head—foreshadows Lennie's death and compares Lennie with Candy's dog: both of them are powerless, innocent, and doomed

Lennie doesn't mean to do bad things- they simply happen to him. He acts with his best intentions. He acts badly without intending to act at all. Indeed, Lennie's crime is a fundamental inability to understand the weakness of others. He literally loves things to death. His puppy is soft, so he pets it to death. Only George understands him fully, knows his childish mixture of innocence and dangerousness. Others, including Curley's wife, treat him as a sort of recorder for their own complaints and fantasies. They failed in understanding the danger that goes along with Lennie's obvious innocence. Lennie, like an animal, doesn't understand his actions as morally wrong. Steinbeck's story evokes a challenging issue of responsibility and justice. A death has occurred, but the reader is left with the question of whether Lennie committed murder. Lennie did not have an “evil act” in mind when he was stroking Curley's wife's hair. He was frightened and clumsy but not murderous when he kills her.

3.3. Inhumanity in Segregation

Racism

The American society treats black people unfairly, Crooks in "Of mice and Men" lives in inhuman condition, he is isolated in a special room away from white people, the other men on the ranch disrespect him only because of his race and colour. Although he is intellectual

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who reads book a lot, his room is well organised, but his society does not allow him to do more thing only because of his race and colour.

Ageism

Candy the cripple old man is a characterisation of the old people and the handicaps who suffer deeply during the great depression of the thirties. Steinbeck used this character to protest against the bad life condition of the elders, and the handicap at that time which was inhuman, their families abandoned them because of poverty and the government did not help them because of the crisis.

Candy was also disrespected because of his handicap and age, they killed his companion dog. His dream of owning a piece of land is vanishing. He feels lonely without a future. He despairs and reaches a dark point to wish being shouted at the back of his head as his old dog in order to put end to his miserable life. In his perspective this end is the only way to avoid a mysterious and scary future

Sexism

Curley's Wife is first introduced by Candy, the swamper, who describes her from his perspective to George and Lennie. The fact that she is introduced through rumours means that the reader already has biased opinions of her before she even enters the section. Candy mentions that she's, “*got the eye*” implying that she is flirtatious and evil in the hint with the fact that she flirts with other men immediately after she is stated that she is married to Curley. Already, the reader is introduced to the thought that Curley's wife is an immoral “tart” which is expanded upon her first experience, which follows shortly after.

The flirtatious, highly sexualized figure of Curley's wife puts her between domesticity and prostitution. This makes her extremely problematic in the novel, a source of anxiety and unrest. She leads to trouble, as George immediately observes she will. Steinbeck pins the role of trouble-maker on the unnamed woman. Curley's wife is regularly used as a scapegoat in the novel. She is blamed for the lustful feelings she inspires. Even after she has been tragically killed, Candy shouts misogynist insults at her corpse.

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Curley's wife's life, clearly, is miserable, yet we are not encouraged to see things from her perspective. Even when she expresses her miserable loneliness, these episodes are followed by instances of manipulation, of threatening. Her death is hardly touching, and her corpse is praised more in death than she was in life. The reader has every reason to question Steinbeck's motives in giving us such an unsympathetic view of this woman and, by association, women in general. to conclude, in *Of Mice and Men*, the only good woman is a dead woman.

Conclusion

The novel “*Of Mice and Men*” is a great naturalistic story about two ordinary friends and their struggle to realize their dream of having a farm through their friendship. The two friends are completely different; one of them is a retarded man who called Lennie, and the second who called George.

John Steinbeck was a novelist of people. His writings are about ordinary people, simple man and woman who do battle against dehumanising social forces or who struggle against their own inhumane tendencies and attempt, sometimes successfully, sometimes not, in order to create lives of clear meaning and worth. The American physician and essayist Lewis Thomas said “*Our behaviour toward each other is the strangest, most unpredictable, and most unaccountable of all the phenomena which we are obliged to live. In all of nature, there is nothing so threatening to humanity as humanity itself.*”. Through this novella, Steinbeck succeeded in depicting the suffer of a slice of the American society during the great depression.

GENERAL

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General conclusion

General conclusion

Naturalism is a literary genre emerged in the United States of America in the late 1800's and the early 1900's and during the thirties as a result of the development in the scientific field especially after the spread of the Darwin's ideas, it is considered also as a reaction to realism movement; as the latter try to depict real life by recording all the details of everyday life. Realists see that humans have some degree of free will that they can exercise to change their situations, whereas Naturalists view individuals as being at the mercy of biological and socio-economic forces. This forces act upon their life to the point that makes them "human beasts".

Naturalism attempts to apply the scientific principles of objectivity and detachment to its study of human beings. It deals generally with ordinary people and raw and unpleasant experiences which reduce characters to "degrading" behaviour as they struggle to survive. It considers them as higher-order animals, their actions are totally related to the forces of heredity and the environment.()

The last stanza of the poem of the Scottish poet Robert Burns is probably the most relevant to Steinbeck's novella "*Of Mice and Men*":

Still thou art blest, compar'd wi' me! The present only toucheth thee:

But, och! I backward cast my e'e [eye] On prospects drear! [dreary]

An' forward, tho' I canna [cannot] see

I guess an' fear!

In this stanza, the speaker realizes the poor little animal is only touched by the present, as she can't think about the past or the future. It's the thinking man, who can look backwards and forwards, that suffers the most from the terrible things he has done. This last verse is a nice

General conclusion

way to think of Lennie and George's respective fate. Whatever happens to Lennie is done, but George is left to spend the rest of his future thinking of his past deeds.

The major themes described in "*Of Mice and Men*" like friendship, segregation and innocence are defined as human conditions the human being is a social creature; who is bound to live within a group, hence develop different kinds of relations. Thus it is a vital need for him to love and be loved even to hate or be hated, which lead him to act upon his relations innocently or violently.

Through the use of the themes mentioned above, John Steinbeck successfully portrayed inhumanity within the human condition. He describes Lennie, the mentally retarded, as an innocent person who gained readers sympathy easily regardless to the abominations he committed. George sacrificed his friendship with Lennie by killing him in order to protect him. Steinbeck illustrated the inhuman acts towards Curley's wife by not giving her a name and how the workers referred to her focusing her provocative attitude. Candy the handicap old man is suffering to the extent that he wishes to have the same fate as his old dog. The racist act on Crooks is due to the colour of his skin; he lives alone in a special room, almost all the characters of the novella treat him in a bad way, they do not talk to him and disrespect him. Steinbeck succeeds in depicting all that cruelty through something which is essential to man in order to live.

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Appendix

1. Bibliography of John Steinbeck

John Ernst Steinbeck is one of the greatest novelists of the twentieth century. He is an American writer and a winner of Nobel Prize for literature in 1962. He was born on February 27, 1902, in Salinas, California. His love of literature was inherited from his mother who was a schoolteacher in Salinas. John Steinbeck left university without a degree, and he went to New York for working. Then, he came back to California. After that, Steinbeck published his first novel, *Cup of Gold*, in 1929, and later on he married his wife, Carol Henning.

In 1937, Steinbeck published *Of Mice and Men*, which was a book of the month club selection and earned him the honor of being named one of the ten outstanding young men of the year.

After few years, he published one of his most powerful, ambitious and popular books, *The Grapes of Wrath*, which was the bestselling book at that time. Thus, It awarded him the Pulitzer prize in 1940. John Steinbeck passed away on December 20, 1968 due to heart disease.

2. Historical context of “Of Mice and Men”

Steinbeck's birthplace is where “*Of Mice and Men*” is set. He works at ranches in summer like “Lennie and George”. He saw for himself how the workers' life is so hard, how lonely they were, and no one of them was married. *Of Mice and Men* was written during the era The Great Depression. The latter was a nightmare to American people. Most of them lost their jobs. There was no financial assistance or unemployment benefits. Old-people and disabled one work as much as possible they can, or they were depend on their families and donations, thus, why most of them didn't married .

Appendix

People became selfish, and suspicious of each other due to the job's competitions at that time. They were hopeless, comfortable and best life was a dream, only few of them believed it was possible to achieve.

The title “*Of Mice and Men*” was taken from a line in the Robert Burns poem “*To a Mouse*”. This poem is about an unhappy field mouse, which builds a winter nest, but it loses it because of ploughing, so the mouse cannot survive the winter.

But, Mousie, thou art no thy lane [alone]

In proving foresight may be vain:

The best-laid schemes o' mice an' men

Gang aft agley, [often go awry]

An' lea'e us nought [leave us nothing] but grief an' pain,

In this poem, the mouse's dream was to have a safe and warm place, but it had to struggle with cold. This mouse's fate is like George and Lennie one. They also dreamt about their own farm, but this dream is broken when Lennie is killed at the end.

3. Plot and Summary of “Of Mice and Men”

In chapter one, George and Lennie moved from one place to another in order to find a new job. Lennie is not like everyone else. He is mentally handicapped. George is looking after him. Lennie loves soft things, he loves to find a little mouse and put it in his pocket so he can pet it, then kill it with love.

They have a dream, and George uses this dream to guide his friend along the straight line. George tells Lennie that if he faces some problems, he will be in that place, by the river, to save him.

Appendix

In the second chapter, both friends are at the new ranch and they are taken to the bunk house where they find Candy, who cleans the bunk house. He has an old, smelly dog. Then, Lennie and George meet the boss who is angry because they are late. Candy advises them not to look at Curley's wife. George warns Lennie to watch out for Curley and his wife. After a while, Curley's wife comes into the bunkhouse to look for Curley. She flirts with George and Lennie. Slim, the ranch's prince, tells her that her husband is going home. Carlson suggests that the candy's dog must be killed off.

The next chapter begins with George thanking Slim for giving Lennie a pup. Lennie enters the bunk house hiding the pup he is carrying. Lennie denies he has it and finally tells George that he did not mean to cause any harm. Slim understands that Lennie is just like a kid, a strong man with childish mind.

After that, Slim tells Candy he can have the pup if he agrees that it is time to shoot the old dog. Curley comes looking for his wife and thinks she is with Slim. Lennie tells George that Curley's wife was not in the barn with Slim. The chapter ends with Lennie feeling bad about the fight against Curley, who attacked

At the beginning of chapter three, there is Crooks, the black man, who lives in a room in the stable, not in the bunk house with the other men. Lennie does not understand why white workers do not enter Crooks' room. At first Crooks tries to kick him out, but then decides that talking to him is better than having no one to talk to. Lennie tells Crooks about the ranch they are going to buy with Candy. Candy comes to Crook's door looking for Lennie. Crooks tells him to come in but he hesitates then he enters. All of a sudden Curley's wife, again, is looking for her husband. They tell her to leave, but she stays at the door flirting with them, telling them how hard her life is. Lennie keeps watching her.

Appendix

Chapter five is the climax of the tragedy and begins with Lennie in the barn on Sunday afternoon. As Curley's wife enters, Lennie quickly hides the puppy under the hay. She is dressed in a bright dress. Lennie avoids talking to her, and then he gives up. Curley's wife starts talking about how life is hard with her husband. He was listening without understanding. She starts to encourage him flirting her hair. He begins to stroke her head, harder and harder, and she cries out in fear, so he puts his hand over her mouth so George won't hear her screaming. He covers her dead body. Candy comes to look for Lennie; he finds Curley's wife, then he calls George. He decides to tell the others, but he realizes that they might hurt him, so George asks Candy to give him a couple of minutes to go back to the bunk house and then to tell the men just like he just found her.. Candy brings the men to the barn. Curley knows that Lennie who did that.. George figures out where Lennie is, He misleads the men. Meanwhile, Carlson discovers that his gun is not there. The men go to the south, Curley with his shotgun and Carlson with Crooks' gun. George follows behind.

The final chapter opens where the book began, next to "the deep green pool of the Salinas River. Lennie is kneeling by the edge of the pool drinking water, knowing George will come to where he has told him to hide. George comes quietly out of the brush. They talk of the bad thing Lennie has done. Lennie asks him to talk about how they have each other. George keeps talking. He reaches for Carlson's gun, and as he hears the men's' voices , he keeps talking and shoots Lennie in the back of the head. The men arrive and Curley tells George how he must of wrestled the gun from Lennie and shot him in the back of the head. And, the story is tragically resolved.