

## CHAPTER 1: Between the Past and the Future

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### KEY PASSAGE | Chapter 1, Paragraphs 112-119

In this passage, George tells Lennie about what makes the two of them different from other men who work on ranches. Unlike other men, they have something to “look ahead to,” and they have each other. With some help from Lennie, George describes how they look out for each other and the “little house and a couple acres” that they plan to live in someday, complete with rabbits for Lennie to raise.

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**Discussion Prompt:** For Lennie, the main appeal of George’s vision of their future seems to be the rabbits. Based on evidence from the text, why do you think the dream of a “little house and a couple of acres” appeals so much to Lennie? To George? Compare the attractions of the dream to each man, and discuss their common elements and differences.

### VOCABULARY

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**wearily****wear•i•ly** *adverb*

In a way that indicates physical or mental fatigue

*When my alarm clock went off, I got out of bed and walked wearily to the closet.*

**horizontal****hor•i•zon•tal** *adjective*

Parallel with the horizon; lying flat rather than upright

*The sun rose through long horizontal bands of morning clouds.*

**scowl****scowl** *verb*

To frown or make an angry face

*The orchestra conductor scowled when the tuba player failed to come in on time.*

**quiver****quiv•er** *verb*

To shake or tremble

*The new zoo guards quivered in fear when they heard the lion roar.*

**mimicking**

**mim·ick·ing** *verb*

Imitating, especially in a mocking way

*The boy who was mimicking the teacher didn't realize she was standing right behind him.*

**CLOSE READ**

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**1:** According to George, what makes George and Lennie different from other ranch laborers? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

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**2:** In the first chapter, the narrator describes George and Lennie as opposites. Besides their physical differences, what are some other ways in which they appear to be opposites? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

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**3:** What seems to be the “bad thing” that Lennie did in Weed that caused them to have to run away?

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**4:** What does George instruct Lennie to do if he gets into any trouble? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

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**5:** George spends much of the first chapter irritated with Lennie; he complains about how much easier his life would be without Lennie. Which of George's statements from their conversation in this chapter suggest that George cares for Lennie despite his irritation and complaints?

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## CHAPTER 2: An Introduction to the Ranch

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### KEY PASSAGE | Chapter 2, Paragraph 178

This passage occurs near the end of George’s first conversation with Slim, the jerkline skinner—or head mule driver. Slim is asking questions about George and Lennie, and unlike the boss, his questions seem driven by curiosity rather than suspicion. In this paragraph, he muses on why most men seem to be so solitary, wondering if they remain isolated out of fear of others.

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**Discussion Prompt:** In Chapter 2, Slim considers the possibility that “ever’body in the whole damn world is scared of each other.” What type of fear does he seem to be referring to, and what seems to cause it? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

### VOCABULARY

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**skeptically****skep•ti•cal•ly** *adverb*

In a doubtful or suspicious manner

*When I told the guidance counselor I planned to win the lottery, she looked at me skeptically.***reassured****re•as•sured** *verb*

Had one’s doubts or fears lessened or erased

*As he dived, he felt reassured by the encouragement of the other swimmers.***calculating****cal•cu•lat•ing** *adjective*

With self-interest or shrewdness

*The movie’s villain was cold and calculating.***pugnacious****pug•na•cious** *adjective*

Ready or willing to fight or argue

*It surprised me that the boxer wasn’t at all pugnacious outside of the ring.***plaintively****plain•tive•ly** *adverb*

With an attitude of sadness, begging, or desperation

*Jazz vocalist Billie Holiday sang so plaintively that her voice could move listeners to tears.*

**CLOSE READ**

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**1:** Many of the characters in this chapter seem to be “scared of each other,” as Slim puts it. Provide three examples of characters who are suspicious of other characters, and support your answer with evidence from the text.

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**2:** In Chapter 2, George tells the boss that Lennie was kicked in the head by a horse and that he and Lennie are cousins. Is this information true? Why does George volunteer the information? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

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**3:** Describe Curley’s personality, and support your answer with evidence from Chapter 2.

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**4:** Despite the frequent tension and suspicion between characters in this chapter, there are occasional indications that not everyone at the ranch is “mean,” to use Lennie’s description. Point out two examples of kindness in this chapter.

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**5:** What is Lennie excited about at the end of Chapter 2? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

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## CHAPTER 3: Tensions in the Bunkhouse

### KEY PASSAGE | Chapter 3, Paragraphs 58-65

In this passage, Carlson tries to convince Candy that it would be best to put down his dog. He offers to do this mercy killing himself, and he explains how he would do it and why. Candy quietly resists Carlson's suggestions, but then Carlson asks Slim for his opinion. When Slim gives his approval to Carlson's idea, Candy looks on "helplessly," since "Slim's opinions were law."

### YOUR STUDYSYNC® TV

**Discussion Prompt:** Are Carlson's actions in Chapter 3 justified? Is his treatment of Candy as well as Candy's dog ethical? Why or why not? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

### VOCABULARY

**defensively****de•fen•sive•ly** *adverb*

In a manner that seems self-protective; reacting as if one is being criticized or attacked

*He reacted defensively, turning away when I offered some suggestions about his parenting style.*

**uneasily****un•eas•i•ly** *adverb*

In an awkward, worried, or uncomfortable manner

*The boy looked at his mother uneasily when she said they should walk home in the dark.*

**subside****sub•side** *verb*

To return to a normal level or become less intense

*When they returned home safely, his fears subsided.*

**reverently****rev•er•ent•ly** *adverb*

In a manner showing great respect or wonder

*When the famous painter walked by, the art students all looked reverently in her direction.*

**whimpering****whim•per•ing** *adjective*

Crying quietly

*I heard the dog whimpering, so I let him back inside.*

## CLOSE READ

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**1:** Near the beginning of Chapter 3, George and Slim agree on the negative consequences for men who “go around on the ranches alone.” What are those consequences, and how might this explain why George travels around with Lennie? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

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**2:** When Candy finally gives in and allows Carlson to take his dog, he says, “Awright—take ’im,” and the sentence that follows says, “He did not look down at the dog at all.” Why doesn’t he look at his dog before Carlson takes him?

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**3:** What causes George to change his mind and allow Candy to get involved in their dream of owning a house? Is it simply the fact that Candy has money? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

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**4:** When Slim tells Curley that he’s been asking him “too often” and that he’s “sick of it,” what is he referring to? What is Curley asking him, and why does it make Slim mad?

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**5:** At the end of Chapter 3, how does Slim convince Curley not to tell anyone about Lennie hurting his hand? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

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## CHAPTER 4: In Crooks's Room

### KEY PASSAGE | Chapter 4, Paragraph 55

In this passage, part of a long conversation between Lennie and Crooks, Crooks tries to get Lennie to understand the particular loneliness that defines Crooks's life, and the way that being black in a racist environment creates that loneliness. He asks Lennie to imagine not being able to go into the bunkhouse and play cards with the other men because he's black, and he ends this part of the conversation by noting that "a guy gets too lonely an' he gets sick."

### YOUR STUDYSYNC® TV

**Discussion Prompt:** How is Crooks's loneliness and solitude different from the loneliness and solitude experienced by many of the other men on the ranch? How is it the same? Support your answers with evidence from the text.

### VOCABULARY

**accumulate****ac·cu·mu·late** *verb*

To acquire or amass an increasing amount of something

*The artist accumulated great wealth by selling her paintings.*

**aloof****a·loof** *adjective*

Distant; unfriendly; separating oneself from others

*He acted aloof in class, but after I asked him what it was like growing up in Norway, we became good friends.*

**brutally****bru·tal·ly** *adverb*

With great cruelty or force

*The soldiers brutally forced the people out of their homes.*

**contemptuously****con·temp·tu·ous·ly** *adverb*

With deep disapproval, dislike, or hatred

*When I spilled grape juice on the hostess's carpet for the second time, she looked at me contemptuously.*

**crestfallen****crest·fal·len** *adjective*

Deeply disappointed or saddened

*He was crestfallen when he didn't make the team, but he resolved to work even harder next year.*



## CLOSE READ

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**1:** What are some ways in which Crooks's life on the ranch is affected by racism, and how does this treatment affect him emotionally? Support your answer with evidence from Chapter 4.

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**2:** Why does Crooks ask Lennie to suppose a situation in which George does not return and Lennie is left alone? Why does he abruptly withdraw the suggestion?

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**3:** Name two ways in which Curley's wife and Crooks are revealed to be similar in Chapter 4. Support your answer with evidence from the text.

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**4:** What is Curley's wife suggesting when she tells Crooks that she could have him "strung up on a tree so easy it ain't even funny"? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

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**5:** What does Crooks mean when he says, "You guys comin' in an' settin' made me forget"? What did he forget? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

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## CHAPTER 5: Unintended Deaths

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### KEY PASSAGE | Chapter 5, Paragraphs 32–34

In this passage, Curley’s wife shares her frustrations with Lennie. She asks him why she shouldn’t be allowed to talk to him or other people, and he replies that George tells him she’ll get him into trouble. She scoffs at this notion and then tells him that she “ain’t used to livin’ like this,” before telling a story about how she could have been an actress once, but her mom didn’t let her.

### YOUR STUDYSYNC® TV

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**Discussion Prompt:** Throughout *Of Mice and Men*, the other characters often sharply criticize Curley’s wife. After reading Chapter 5, do you think the characters’ criticisms are fair and warranted? Why or why not? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

### VOCABULARY

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**sullenly****sul•len•ly** *adverb*

In a gloomy, sluggish, or resentful way

*After failing the driving test, he left sullenly, without speaking to anyone.***contorted****con•tort•ed** *adjective*

Twisted, distorted, or bent out of normal shape

*The gymnast contorted her body as she jumped.***writhed****writhed** *verb*

Twisted or squirmed, especially in situations of pain or discomfort

*The worm writhed around the fishhook until it was able to escape.***discontent****dis•con•tent** *noun*

Unhappiness with one’s circumstances

*After the meeting, he showed his discontent by slamming the door.***viciously****vi•cious•ly** *adverb*

In a malicious way, intending to cause pain

*The comedian viciously hurled the tomato back at the heckler who had thrown it.*

## CLOSE READ

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**1:** How does Lennie’s problem with his puppy at the beginning of Chapter 5 foreshadow the events at the end of the chapter?

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**2:** Unlike Lennie and George, who dream of the future, Curley’s wife clings to a dream from her past. What is that dream, and how does Curley’s wife show her naivete when she shares it with Lennie? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

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**3:** After Lennie kills Curley’s wife, Candy asks George if they’ll still be able to get the house they’ve dreamed of, but before George answers, the narrator writes that “Candy dropped his head and looked down at the hay. He knew.” What did he know?

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**4:** Why does George tell the men that Lennie “would of went south”? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

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**5:** How does Candy feel toward Curley’s wife after she is killed? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

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## CHAPTER 6: A Final, Intentional Death

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### KEY PASSAGE | Chapter 6, Paragraph 23

In this passage, Lennie is arguing with an imaginary rabbit, defending himself and George. In the previous paragraph, the imaginary rabbit had told Lennie that George will “beat hell outa you with a stick” because of what Lennie had done. Here, Lennie says that George would never do something like that, that George is nice and “won’t do nothing like that.”

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**Discussion Prompt:** In his argument with the imaginary rabbit, Lennie says that George has never hurt him and that he’s “nice” and “ain’t gonna be mean.” Does George’s final treatment of Lennie in this chapter prove Lennie wrong? When George shoots Lennie, can we interpret this act in any way other than “mean”? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

### VOCABULARY

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**belligerently****bel•lig•er•ent•ly** *adverb*

In a combative manner; angrily, ready to fight  
*The batter shouted belligerently at the pitcher after being hit by a curveball.*

**dutifully****du•ti•ful•ly** *adverb*

With a sense of obedience or duty  
*The students dutifully turned in their homework on time.*

**reprimand****rep•ri•mand** *verb*

To express severe or formal disapproval of something  
*When employees are late for the third time, the company will reprimand them.*

**monotonous****mo•not•o•nous** *adjective*

Without variety or change of tone; droning  
*In a monotonous voice the conductor announced all the stops the train made between New York and Boston.*

**emphasis****em•pha•sis** *noun*

Special stress given when speaking, in order to attach importance to certain words  
*“And finally,” said the proctor with emphasis, “keep your eyes on your own tests!”*

CLOSE READ

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**1:** Why does the sound of a bird “skittering over the dry leaves” cause Lennie to jerk his head up and look around, and why does he drop his head again when he sees the bird? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

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**2:** How does Lennie’s trust in George help provide George with a clear opportunity to take Lennie’s life? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

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**3:** When George tells Lennie, “Gonna do it soon . . . Ever’body gonna be nice to you. Ain’t gonna be no more trouble. Nobody gonna hurt nobody nor steal from ’em,” what does George seem to be thinking of at that moment?

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**4:** What is Slim suggesting when he says, “Never you mind . . . A guy got to sometimes”?

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**5:** How would you describe George’s emotional state after he shoots Lennie? Support your answer with evidence from the text.

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