

Of Mice and Men: Steinbeck’s Social Criticisms Essay (+80 points Assessment)

Directions: Steinbeck wrote *Of Mice and Men* to expose the injustices of society that existed in his time as well as in ours. Select one of the prompts below and write an essay that examines a topic of his implied social criticisms about American culture and values.

The term **social criticism** often refers to a type of disapproval or criticism that a writer feels towards malicious or severely flawed conditions in a society.

Of Mice and Men was published in 1937 in the midst of the Great Depression and the Dustbowl — arguably two of the greatest economic and ecological disasters in American history. Steinbeck witnessed firsthand the poverty, the despair, and the imbalance of power that existed between migrant farm laborers and California farmers. In his acceptance speech for the 1962 Nobel Prize for Literature, Steinbeck articulated what he believed is a writer’s purpose and responsibility. He told his audience: “[A writer] is charged with exposing our many grievous faults and failures, with dredging up to the light our dark and dangerous dreams for the purpose of improvement” (Steinbeck).

Timeline:	Due:
Outline (+5 Practice)	_____
First Draft (+10 Practice)	_____
*In-class Peer Review	_____
**Final Paper (+80 Assessment)	_____

*I will not grade your final essay until someone has peer-reviewed your first draft.
**Remember if you do not score 70% on your Final Paper, it will be entered as 0 and missing until you demonstrate mastery of the writing skills.

Paper Requirements:

- 3-4 pages double-spaced typed
- 12 point font (Times New Roman)
- 1-inch margins all sides
- Header in upper left-hand corner: (MLA) Name, Teacher’s Name, Class Title, Date
- Title of the Paper Centered below the header
- No more than 1 double space between the title of the paper and opening paragraph

Sources:

Burns, Robert. "To A Mouse Poem By Robert Burns - Poem Hunter". Poemhunter.Com, 2012, <http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/to-a-mouse/>. Accessed 31 Oct 2015.

Steinbeck, John. "Banquet Speech." *Nobelprize.org*. Nobel Media AB 2014. Web. 12 Oct 2016. <<https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1962/steinbeck/25229-john-steinbeck-banquet-speech-1962/>>.

Steinbeck, John. *Of Mice and Men*. New York, N.Y., U.S.A: Penguin Books, 1994. Print.

Prompts:

1. Compare two characters who possess different **levels of power**. What does each character have power over? Why? Where do they lack power in other areas? **How does Steinbeck use examples of power or powerlessness to show his opinion about American society?** Use direct quotations and specific examples to support your claim(s).
 2. Select **1-2** characters whose experience with either alienation or discrimination on a small scale may represent a problem in society on a large scale. **How does Steinbeck use examples of alienation or discrimination to show his opinion about American society?** Use direct quotations and specific examples to support your claim(s).
 3. Analyze the dream of living “off the fatta the lan” and how it influences the characters in the novel (George, Lennie, Candy, Crooks, or Curley’s wife). **What does Steinbeck say about the impossibility of the American Dream through these characters?** At the same time, what is the power of the dream, even if it is fruitless? Use direct quotations and specific examples to support your claim(s).
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Task:

1. Choose a prompt that interests you.
2. Break the prompt down into parts you need to address.
3. Draft a thesis statement below.

Prompt Breakdown:

Break apart the prompt and identify the different pieces embedded into it.

What is the prompt asking? What are the different elements I need to cover? Start with verbs.

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Thesis Draft:

One sentence argumentative claim that answers the prompt.
