

Of Mice and Men Inquiry

Introduction

In order to better appreciate the novella, *Of Mice and Men*, by John Steinbeck, you are going to conduct an inquiry in which you examine the time period, setting, and issues during the author's life and when he wrote the novella.

Through this inquiry you will...

- Gain a better understanding of the social, cultural, and economic factors that influenced the author
- Gain an appreciation for migrant workers in the Salinas Valley of California during the 1930s (during the Great Depression).
- Gain a better understanding of the context of the novel
- Gain and understanding how many of the societal, cultural, and economic factors in Steinbeck's world and see how they can influence an author and be greatly reflected in a literary work.
- Recognize the differences and similarities in our world today (Connect to Canada now).
- Conduct research and create a poster/prezi/PowerPoint related to the historical context of the novel.
- Learn how to use ebsco Host to find secondary sources:
<https://thsslibrary.wordpress.com/research-resources/ebsco-database/>
- Evaluate your research in regards to: relevancy, accuracy, and reliability.
- Think critically, creatively, and reflectively to explore ideas within, between, and beyond texts
- Construct meaningful personal connections between self, text, and world
- Learn how to reference research and create a Works Cited page using the proper format.

Essential Question: What are the social, cultural, and economic issues that influenced John Steinbeck's writing of this novella and how do they resonate today?

Process:

- Students will be working in groups no larger than four.
- Each group's research will provide information that effectively answers the task and questions.
- As a member of the group, each student will explore webpages from sites that pertain to *Of Mice and Men* or issues/topics relevant to the novella. Each student will be given specific questions/topics to explore in a related genre.

Each student will:

- Conduct and assemble research to answer the questions in his/her section. (Remember, the questions are a guide and you may include more than just these answers).
- Find visuals relevant to the research, which will be used for the group's presentation.
- Help the group assemble the presentation.
- Submit a Works Cited page of sources used in the project.

**The final product must contain text and visuals from all four categories. (Be original! Avoid using trite photos from the movie)

Instructions:

- Each group member will be assigned one of the specific roles (decide as a group).
- While researching consider taking "Cornell" notes to record your information. See example format here: <http://coe.jmu.edu/learningtoolbox/cornellnotes.html>
- Research the internet using the Library Database: <https://thsslibrary.wordpress.com/research-resources/ebsco-database/>
- Remember to copy/paste the **URL** of the file you take the passage from so you can identify and document your sources when preparing a **Works Cited page**. (It's a good idea to include this in your Cornell notes).
- Stay focused on finding information that enables you to answer the question presented in the task

Instructions: Decide which role each group member will research. All roles **MUST** be represented. Also answer the additional questions at the bottom of this page.

Psychiatrist's Questions:

- What is a mental disability and how does it impact a person's everyday life?
- What are some of the difficulties faced when caring for a mentally disabled person?
- What kinds of support are available for people who care for the mentally disabled- today and in the 1930s?
- What role does friendship play in caring for the mentally disabled?

For the visual aspect of the presentation, consider creating a collage (poster or digital) of literature book covers and film posters that have stories about mentally disabled people.

Biographer's Questions:

- List some of the major facts about Steinbeck's life.
- What philosophy of life is revealed in Steinbeck's Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech? Give a brief definition of that philosophy.
- What influenced Steinbeck to write the novella, *Of Mice and Men*?
- What are other major works written by Steinbeck?
- Who are some of the recipients of the Steinbeck award? What is the purpose of the award?

For the visual aspect, consider creating a collage (poster or digital) of photos of Steinbeck and the covers of his most significant novels.

Geographer's Questions:

- What are the geographical features of California's Salinas River Valley?
- What is the Salinas Valley known as?
- What kinds of jobs are available there?
- What was John Steinbeck's relationship to the Salinas Valley?
- Identify specific locations relevant to *Of Mice and Men*

For the visual component, consider creating a map (poster or digital) of the area with significant locations identified.

Sociologist's Questions:

- When was the Great Depression?
- What are some of the factors that caused the Great Depression?
- Who were the migrant workers and how did the Great Depression affect them?
- Migrant workers still exist today. Where are they in North America? Who are they? What kind of jobs do they do? What difficulties might migrant workers experience today? How is the issue of migrant workers significant today? Explain.

For the visual aspect, consider developing a collage of photos (poster or digital) of migrant workers of the 1930s or a combination of migrant workers of the 1930s and today.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS: Other issues to research: Please add these to your list. I suggest you divide them equally among your group members.

- Research women's roles, expectations, and sexism in the 1930s. Likely you'll notice a big difference from society today; however, include issues women still face in contemporary society.
- Research the treatment of the elderly and elderly in the work force.
- Research the treatment of physically disabled people. Also, what happened if you were injured on the job in the 1930s?
- Research racism past and present in Canada and the US