

Of Mice and Men

Character Descriptions

Lennie Small - A migrant worker who is mentally handicapped, large, and very strong. He depends on his friend George to give him advice and protect him in situations he does not understand. His enormous strength and his pleasure in petting soft animals are a dangerous combination. He shares the dream of owning a farm with George, but he does not understand the implications of that dream.

George Milton - A migrant worker who protects and cares for Lennie. George dreams of someday owning his own land, but he realizes the difficulty of making this dream come true. Lennie's friend, George gives the big man advice and tries to watch out for him, ultimately taking responsibility for not only his life but also his death.

Slim - The leader of the mule team whom everyone respects. Slim becomes an ally to George and helps protect Lennie when he gets in trouble with Curley. Slim has compassion and insight, and he understands George and Lennie's situation. He alone realizes, at the end of the novel, the reason for George's decision.

Candy - Sometimes called "the swamper," he is an old handyman who lost his hand in a ranch accident and is kept on the payroll. Afraid that he will eventually be fired when he can no longer do his chores, he convinces George to let him join their dream of a farm because he can bring the necessary money to the scheme. He owns an old sheep dog that will become a symbol of Lennie before the novel ends.

Crooks - The black stable worker who cares for the horses. A symbol of racial injustice, Crooks is isolated from the other hands because of his skin color. He also convinces Lennie to let him join their dream of land, but he must give up that dream.

Carlson - The insensitive ranch hand who shoots Candy's dog. He owns a Luger, which George later uses to mercifully kill Lennie.

Curley - The son of the ranch owner, Curley is a mean little guy who picks fights with bigger guys like Lennie. He is recently married and extremely jealous of any man who looks at or talks with his wife. Lennie crushes his hand, earning Curley's future enmity.

Curley's wife - The only character in the novel who is given no name, she is Curley's possession. She taunts and provokes the ranch hands into talking with her, an action that causes Curley to beat them up. George sees her as a "tart," but Lennie is fascinated by her soft hair and looks. She is unsympathetically portrayed as a female tease until the final scene, in which the reader hears about her earlier dreams. Lonely and restless, she married too quickly to a husband who neglects her.

The Boss - The stocky, well-dressed man in charge of the ranch, and Curley's father. He is never named and appears only once, but seems to be a fair-minded man. Candy happily reports that the boss once delivered a gallon of whiskey to the ranch-hands on Christmas Day.

Whit - A laborer on the Salinas ranch where George and Lennie go to work. Whit enjoys a good time, and regularly spends all his money at the whorehouse in town. Aggressive, nosy, and always looking to be where the action is, Whit seems to seek out and enjoy any drama or tension on the ranch.