“Of Mice and Men” Reading Guide

Instructions: you will complete this reading guide as we read the novel in class. This guide will be collected each day and you will receive points for the completion of the guide as the reading is completed. If you find that you do not have enough room to answer questions in the space provided, you may attach notebook paper to the packet, but be sure to indicate which question that you are answering on the notebook paper.

WORTH: 120 POINTS (2 POINTS/QUESTION)

Chapter 1
1. When George and Lennie approach the river, why does George warn Lennie not to drink too much water?

Write down any words that you come across while reading that you do not know the meaning of. I expect you to have at least ten.

Unknown words:

2. What has George told Lennie about that he always remembers even when he forgets everything else?

3. Why does Lennie have a dead mouse in his pocket?

4. Why does George order Lennie not to talk when they get to the ranch?

5. What happened to all of the mice that Lennie’s Aunt Clara gave him?

6. Why have George and Lennie run away from Weed?

7. What does Lennie want to eat with his beans?

8. Why does George say that migrant workers who travel from farm to farm are the loneliest people in the world?
9. What dream do George and Lennie share?

10. What does George tell Lennie to do if he gets in trouble at their new job site?

Chapter 2
1. Where do the ranch hands keep their personal belongings such as soap, razors and magazines?

2. Candy, the old swamper who shows George and Lennie to their bunks, is missing what limb?

3. What evidence does the old swamper give that the ranch boss is a “pretty nice fella”?

4. What evidence is there that the boss is not a working man?

5. According to the old swamper, what is Curley good at?

6. According to the old swamper, why does Curley wear a work glove on his left hand?

7. What is the general attitude toward Curley’s wife?

8. Describe Slim, the jerkline skinner.

9. Why does Carlson suggest shooting Candy’s dog?

10. What is the understood question that Lennie wants George to ask Slim?
Chapter 3
1. Why does George say Lennie will want to sleep in the barn that Friday night?

2. According to George, how did he end up traveling with Lennie?

3. What happened that made George stop playing dirty tricks on Lennie?

4. Why did George and Lennie have to flee from Weed?

5. Who makes the final decision on whether or not Candy’s old dog should be shot?

6. What is significant about the letter Whit reads from the Western magazine?

7. Why does George agree to let Candy come with them to their dream farm?

8. Why does Curley attack Lennie in the bunk house?

9. Why does Curley agree not to get Lennie fired for crushing his hand?

10. What punishment does Lennie fear he will get for hurting Curley?

Chapter 4
1. Why has Crooks been able to accumulate more personal items than the other ranch hands?
2. What reason does Crooks first give for Lennie not being welcome in his room?

3. According to Crooks, why does a person need a companion?

4. What is Crooks’s initial response to Candy’s account of the dream farm and what evidence is there that his attitude changes?

5. According to Curley’s wife, why are the men afraid to talk to her when there is more than one present?

6. Why doesn’t Curley’s wife like talking to her husband?

7. What reason does Candy give when he says that they are no longer afraid that Curley’s wife will get them fired?

8. What makes Crooks so bold as to confront Curley’s wife and tell her to leave his room?

9. How does Candy finally make Curley’s wife leave the barn?

10. What does George say about Candy and Lennie visiting with Crooks?
Chapter 5
1. What has happened to Lennie’s puppy and why?

2. What two pieces of information does Curley’s wife share with Lennie?

3. Why does Curley’s wife offer to let Lennie caress her hair?

4. How and why does Lennie kill Curley’s wife?

5. Why does George say that they can’t let Lennie escape to live on his own?

6. What is Candy’s greatest fear?

7. When George asks Slim about just trying to catch Lennie instead of killing him, what advice does Slim give George?

8. What makes the men think that Lennie is armed?

9. Where does Curley plan to aim if he shoots Lennie?

10. Who stays with Curley’s wife as the others go off in pursuit of Lennie?

Chapter 6
1. What scenes of death does Steinbeck describe in the beginning of Chapter 6 that parallel the events of the previous chapter and foreshadow the event to come?
2. How does the chapter bring the book full circle?

3. What two imaginary visitors does Lennie have while sitting on the river bank?

4. What is the subject of the conversation Lennie has with his first visitor?

5. What does his second visitor tell Lennie that recalls an earlier conversation he had with Crooks?

6. How is George and Lennie’s conversation similar to the one that they had by the pool in Chapter 1?

7. Where has George gotten the gun he takes from his front pocket while sitting with Lennie on the river bank?

8. What evidence is there that George is having a terribly difficult time bringing himself to shoot Lennie?

9. What lie does George tell about the way Lennie died?

10. What evidence is there that Slim understands what has really happened there on the river bank?
Of Mice and Men Idioms

An idiom is a traditional way of saying something. Often an idiom, such as “under the weather,” does not seem to make sense if taken literally. Someone unfamiliar with English would probably not understand that to be “under the weather” is to be sick. Idioms are often a product of place and time, and since you weren’t around in 1930’s central California, this list will be helpful to you in decoding Of Mice and Men.

Chapter One

- blow their stake: Lose and/or spend all their money
- blowin' in our jack: losing, spending, or gambling away all our money
- bustin’ a gut: Your gut is your stomach area. To bust a gut is to engage in very hard physical labor -- so hard that you ache all over -- even in your gut.
- in hot water: to be in hot water is to be in trouble.
- jungle-up: During the Great Depression, many wanderers (hoboes and tramps) would settle for the night in groups. These areas would be known as hobo jungles. To jungle-up is to camp out for the evening in the company of other like companions of the road.
- live off the fatta the lan': Live off the fat of the land. The fat of the land is an expression that refers to having the best of everything. In the case of Lennie and George and their dream for a place of their own, it also means that they believe they will be able to survive and prosper by simply relying on what they can grow and raise -- that the land is so "fat" they will need nothing else to be happy.

Chapter Two

- bum steer: bum, in this instance, means false or erroneous. A bum steer is false information or directions.
- canned: fired (also “get the can”)
- clear out: leave for good
- done quite a bit in the ring: The ring here refers to a boxing ring. Candy is making a reference to the fact that Curley has done some boxing.
- Drink hearty: in other words, "Drink up, drink well, have a good time!"
- flapper: mouth
- game: courageous
- gang up: attack as a group
- got the eye: Candy is referring to the fact that, instead of being faithful to her husband, Curley's wife tends to look around at other men.
- in heat: For a female animal (in this case, a dog), to be in heat (also known as estrus) is to be in a state of sexual excitement when she will accept mating from a male.
• jail bait: a girl below the legal age of consent for sex; an underage girl who tempts a man to sexual intimacy which is punishable by imprisonment
• licked: beat; loses the fight
• old lady: mother, or, in this case, Lennie's Aunt Clara.
• old man: in this case, father
• pants is full of ants: To have "ants in one's pants" is to be nervous and restless.
• pants rabbits: any type of parasites, such as lice; especially those that might affect the genital area
• picking scraps: A scrap is a fight or argument. To pick a scrap is to provoke fights or quarrels.
• plug himself up for a fighter: to "plug oneself up" is to advertise or display oneself; to boast. George is referring to the fact that Curley may want to prove what a good fighter he is by going after Lennie.
• poison: A woman who is poison is one who can only mean trouble, especially to a man.
• poke: A poke is a wallet or purse. Poke also refers to money; especially all the money one has.
• pokin' your big ears into our business: eavesdropping; listening in, uninvited, on a private conversation
• poop: energy; desire
• rassel: lift, carry, and handle; especially something heavy and awkward
• rattrap: a rattrap is a hopeless situation; one that no good can come from. George is warning Lennie to stay away from Curley's wife because getting involved with her would only result in a bad situation.
• scrappy: aggressive; fond of fighting and arguing
• shove off: leave
• shove out of here: get out of here
• slang her pups: gave birth to her pups
• sore as hell: extremely angry
• take the rap: take the blame; be the one who gets into trouble
• tangles: fights; argues
• two bits: a quarter; twenty-five cents
• what stake you got in this guy: In this case, a stake is an interest (financial, personal, etc.) in a person or thing. The boss is asking George what interest he has in Lennie.
• what the hell's he got on his shoulder: This refers to the expression "to have a chip on one's shoulder," which is used to describe someone who is bad tempered, easily angered, or always ready for a fight. George is wondering why Curley seems so bad tempered.

Chapter Three
• bucks: dollars
• crack: A crack refers to an attempt or a try. In this instance, a crack means one session of sexual intercourse with a prostitute.
• cut off his wind: wind, in this case, refers to breath or the ability to breathe. When someone is hit in the stomach and has his wind cut off, that person may have trouble breathing for a time.
• flat bust: completely broke; without any money
• flop: sexual intercourse with a prostitute
• goo-goos: silly young men; idiots; perhaps those who are a little lovestruck
• hoosegow: jail
• looloo: a sexy woman
• make it stick: To make something stick is to be successful. Curley was not successful in his attempt to scare or intimidate Slim.
• old lady: in this case, wife
• on the county: on welfare; on public relief
• people: family
• punk: an insignificant person; someone of no importance
• rabbits in: jumps in
• roll up a stake: save up some money
• scram: leave, usually in a hurry
• set on the trigger: Someone set on the trigger is on the verge of causing (just about to cause) trouble.
• set you back: cost
• shot: one drink (an ounce) of liquor
• start a party out to lynch: To lynch is to murder someone, usually by hanging, without following a legal procedure. A lynch party is a mob of people who take the law in their own hands and are determined to illegally kill someone. According to George, some men in the town of Weed wanted to capture Lennie and kill him.
• throw a litter: give birth. A litter is the young of an animal that were born at the same time.
• throw a scare: scare, intimidate
• welter: a welterweight; a boxer who weighs 136 to 147 pounds
• wing-ding: a terrific person; someone to be admired
• yella-jackets in his drawers: Yellow-jackets are a form of wasps (see a picture of some wasps). Drawers, in this case, are underwear. Whit's description of Curley is a lot like saying that he has ants in his pants; that is, that he is restless and nervous.
• yella: yellow; a coward

Chapter Four
• baloney: nonsense
• booby hatch: insane asylum; a place designed to house people who are mentally unstable
• corn: whiskey made from corn
• cover 'im up: protect him; make excuses for him; cover up for him
• doped out: figured out
• old lady: in this case, the mother dog
• put me in pitchers: put me in pictures; gotten me a job as an actress in the movies (motion pictures)
• right cross: in boxing, a punch delivered by the boxer's right fist
• screwy: crazy
• sellin' me: trying to make me believe
• set: sit; sit down
• strung up on a tree: hanged, lynched
• take you out in a box: in this case, the box is a coffin. Crooks is telling Candy that the old man will remain where he is until he dies.
• took a powder: left
• went with shows: been an entertainer on the stage.

Chapter Five
we'd never do her: "her," in this case, refers to their plan to own a farm. George is saying that he thinks they all knew
Reading Guide Answers for *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck

**Chapter 1**
1. George says Lennie will be sick like he was the night before.
2. Lennie always remembers that he will be the one to tend the rabbits on their dream farm.
3. He is carrying it in his pocket so he can pet it as they walk. He likes to pet soft things.
4. George says that if the boss hears Lennie talk before he sees Lennie work, the two men won’t have a chance of getting the job.
5. He killed the mice by petting them too hard.
6. Lennie tried to feel a girl’s dress. He wanted to pet the dress but she thought he was attacking her.
7. Lennie wants ketchup to put on his beans.
8. He says migrant workers are lonely because they don’t have any family, they don’t belong anywhere, and they have nothing to look forward to.
9. They share the dream of buying a small farm together and working it. On this farm Lennie will tend the rabbits and pet them whenever he wants.
10. George tells Lennie to come to this spot where they are camping and hide in the bushes until George comes for him.

**Chapter 2**
1. Each ranch hand keeps his personal items in the apple box nailed over his bunk for that purpose.
2. Candy, the old swamper, is missing a hand.
3. Candy says that the boss brought a whole gallon of whiskey to the men in the bunkhouse for Christmas.
4. The boss wears high-heeled boots and spurs.
5. Candy says Curley is good at boxing.
6. Candy says Curley wears the work glove full of Vaseline to keep his hand soft for his new wife.
7. The men think she is flirting with them. Candy calls her a tart; George calls her a tramp. Lennie thinks she is pretty.
8. Slim is a master craftsman. He is an expert with the mules and his authority is respected more than anyone else’s on the ranch.
9. Carlson suggests shooting Candy’s dog because it is so old and it stinks.
10. Lennie wants George to ask Slim if Lennie can have one of the puppies Slim’s dog has just delivered.

**Chapter 3**
1. George says Lennie will want to sleep with the puppy Slim has said Lennie can have when it is weaned.
2. George says that he and Lennie are both from Auburn and that he knew Lennie’s Aunt Clara.
who raised him. He says that when the aunt died Lennie had just come along with him to work.
3. The last time George played a trick on Lennie, he told Lennie to jump into a river and Lennie did even though he couldn’t swim. Before George got him out, he almost drowned. Lennie, however, was thankful to George for getting him out instead of angry for telling him to jump in.
4. George says that he and Lennie had to flee from Weed because Lennie was accused of trying to rape a girl there. In fact, he had only been trying to feel the dress she was wearing.
5. Slim is the one who makes the final decision.
6. The letter was written by a former ranch hand they had known.
7. Candy offers to give George $350, his life’s savings, if they will let him come along. With his money they should be able to buy the farm at the end of the next month so George agrees to let him in on their dream.
8. Curley attacks Lennie because he thinks Lennie is laughing at him after Carlson has called him “yella as a frog belly.” In fact, Lennie is smiling at the idea in his head of their farm.
9. Slim convinces Curley that if he tells, everyone will laugh at him for getting beaten up by a retarded man.
10. George has told Lennie that he will not let Lennie tend the rabbits if he does one more bad thing. Lennie is afraid this will be that bad thing.

Chapter 4
1. Because of the type of job he has and because Crooks is crippled, he is more permanent than the other men, so he can accumulate personal items without having to worry about how he will carry them with him to the next job.
2. Crooks says at first that Lennie is not welcome in his room because Crooks is not welcome in the bunkhouse.
3. Crooks says that a person who stays alone too long goes “nuts.”
4. Crooks says that the dream will never materialize. He says he has seen hundreds of men chasing the same dream and never catching it. But when he hears that they have the money for the farm in the bank, he becomes more convinced and even offers to work for free if they will let him come with them.
5. Curley’s wife says that the men are “scared of each other... scared the rest is goin’ to get something on you.”
6. Curley’s wife doesn’t like talking to her husband because all he ever wants to talk about is beating up people.
7. Candy explains that they are no longer afraid because they now have somewhere else to go—their own farm.
8. He forgets his own limitations as a black man of the 1930s because Lennie and Candy have come in and treated him as an equal. For a moment, he later explains, he forgot how powerless he really is there.
9. Candy gets Curley’s wife to leave the barn by telling her that he has heard the other men returning from town.
10. George tells them that they should not be in Crooks’s room and that they should not have told him about the farm.

Chapter 5
1. Lennie has killed his puppy by bouncing it too hard.
2. Curley’s wife tells him about her dream to be an actress, and she tells him her secret that she does not like Curley.
3. Curley’s wife says that she shares Lennie’s fondness of soft things and since she regards him
as “a big baby,” she sees no harm in letting him feel the softness of her hair.
4. Lennie kills Curley’s wife by breaking her neck because he is shaking her, trying to make her be quiet so he won’t get into trouble.
5. George says that Lennie will starve out on his own.
6. Candy’s greatest fear is that they will not get the farm.
7. Slim tells George that if they just catch Lennie, he would be strapped down and caged, which would be worse than death.
8. The men think that Lennie is armed because Carlson comes into the barn and announces that his gun is missing.
9. Curley is planning to shoot Lennie in the stomach.
10. Candy stays with Curley’s wife.

Chapter 6
1. A water snake gliding in the pool is caught by a heron and eaten while its tail waves frantically, and a strong wind blows into the clearing and dies down.
2. The book begins and ends at the pool by the clearing.
3. While sitting by the clearing Lennie is visited by a hallucination of his Aunt Clara and of a gigantic rabbit.
4. Aunt Clara accuses Lennie of doing bad things. She tells him how George is always doing nice things for Lennie and taking care of him.
5. The rabbit tells Lennie that George isn’t going to let Lennie tend the rabbits and that he’s going to beat him with a stick. Like Crooks, the gigantic rabbit says that George is going to leave Lennie and never come back.
6. As in the first chapter, George tells Lennie how easy his life would be if he was alone. And Lennie tells George that he will run off to the hills and find a cave to live in by himself.
7. George has taken the gun he has from Carlson’s bunk.
8. The first time George raises the gun to the back of Lennie’s head, he can’t pull the trigger and lays the gun down again. The second time, when he does fire the gun, his hand is shaking violently.
9. George lets the men believe that he took the gun from Lennie and then shot him in the same attitude as they would have.
10. Slim shows that he understands what George has done as he consoles George and tells him that he has only done what he had to do.