

Year 9 English w/c 22nd June

'Of Mice & Men' Week 4: Chapter Three

Task 1: plot summary (Chapter Three)

Read Chapter Three and complete the summary by filling in the blanks.

George and _____ sit in the bunk house. George tells Slim about his _____ with Lennie and explains _____ they had to leave _____. Lennie arrives, _____ the puppy Slim has given him. _____ makes him take it back to the barn.

Candy and _____ come in. _____ tells Candy he ought to shoot his old dog. _____ Candy agrees. Carlson takes the dog away. _____ and Slim go to _____ an injured mule.

The rest of the men start talking about _____. Then Curley appears, looking for his wife. _____ of Slim, he rushes out to the barn. Some of the others _____, leaving George and Lennie _____ with Candy. George and Lennie talk about their _____ of the farm, and Candy offers to _____ his savings if they let him join them.

The other men return. _____ and Slim are _____. Curley turns on Lennie, who _____ his hand. Slim tells Carlson to get Curley to a _____. Curley agrees to say he caught his hand in a machine.

George Curley Weed Slim Carlson Suspicious doctor

tend cuddling pool Eventually Soledad shoot

grin arguing alone dream Carlson crushes Crooks

women why follow friendship

Task 2: vocabulary & glossary

The words and definitions below have been jumbled up. Find these words in the chapter and read them in context then try to match the words with their correct meanings. Use a dictionary to check your answers (online dictionaries are available). Add to your own glossary of words and definitions that you began for Chapters One and Two. Include these words and any other words you have found tricky in this chapter.

welter

A slang word for 'jail'

reprehensible

Willing to listen

rheumatism

To bring under control or quieten

receptive

Mockery and ridicule

derision

Short for 'welterweight' – a small boxer

subdue

Pain and inflammation in the joints or muscles

hoosegow

Deserving rebuke or condemnation

Task 3: characterisation – Slim

Think about the character of Slim. Slim is generally seen as the moral centre of the novel. Beyond that, however, some critics find him uninteresting. According to this point of view, Slim isn't a properly rounded character: he's just a tool used by Steinbeck to tell his readers what their moral stance ought to be. For instance, we might easily suspect, as the boss does, that George is taking advantage of Lennie in some way. Slim's acceptance of George's account of their friendship shows that this is not so.

A more interesting way of putting this is to say that Slim represents the author. With his 'calm', 'Godlike', 'level and unwinking' eyes he, like the author, sees and knows everything. What Slim thinks can, therefore, be taken as representative of the authorial viewpoint.

However, some critics believe it is a mistake to reduce Slim to the role of the author's moral mouthpiece. Such commentators point to the ambiguities in Slim's character and argue that he is disturbingly complex.

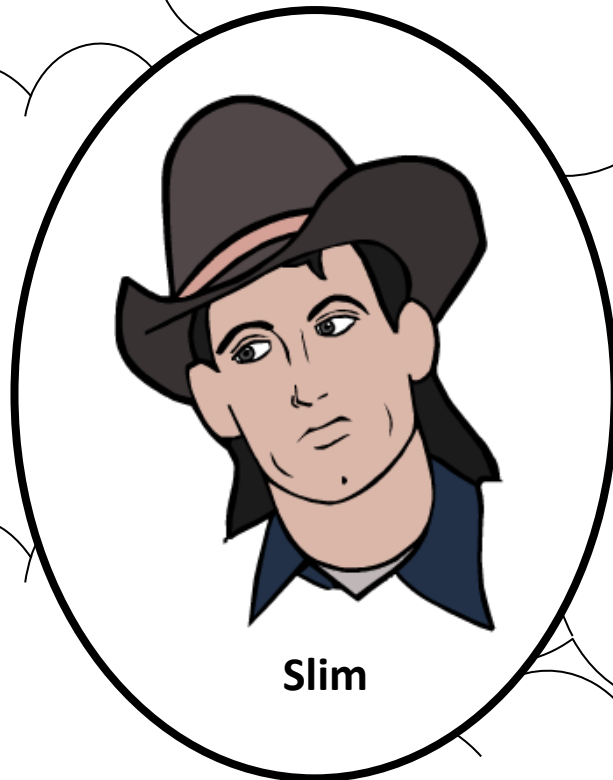
Think: which aspects of Slim's character could be interpreted in both a positive and a negative way?

If we conclude that Slim is flawed, can we still take his word on the moral issues in the novel – or do these issues defy any easy resolution?

Aspects of Slim's character and behaviour that you may find it useful to consider include:

- his absolute authority over the other men
- his mysterious, 'Godlike' power of knowing everything and seeing everything
- Whit's statement "Nobody don't know what Slim can do" (this may be extrapolated from the immediate situation (the prospective fist-fight) to encompass Slim's essential character, lending him an enigmatic and slightly dangerous quality)
- Slim's greeting to Curley's wife ("Hi, Good-lookin'") - a courtesy, a kindly acknowledgment of her need for admiration, or an inappropriate flirtation?
- his statement to Candy – "I wish't somebody'd shoot me if I got old an' a cripple" – at best tactless, at worst a cruel insult or even a form of intimidation
- whether he is motivated by genuine compassion in persuading Candy to have his old dog shot, or whether he, like the other men, simply finds it a nuisance.

Mind-map everything you know about Slim. Try to select short quotations to support each point.



Task 4: character hot-seating

Candy

Imagine you are Candy. How do you feel when...

...the others tell you to have your dog shot? _____

...Carlson shoots your old dog? _____

...you hear George and Lennie talking about the farm? _____

...Curley attacks Lennie and Lennie crushes his hand? _____



Lennie

Imagine you are Lennie. How do you feel when...

...George tells you to take your puppy back to the barn? _____

...George is talking about Curley's wife? _____

...you talk with George and Candy about the farm? _____

...Curley attacks you? _____



George

Imagine you are George. How do you feel when...

...you are talking to Slim? _____

...Candy asks if he can join you and Lennie on the farm? _____

...the others are telling Candy to shoot his dog? _____

...Curley attacks Lennie and Lennie crushes his hand? _____



Slim

Imagine you are Slim. How do you feel when...

...you talk with George? _____

...you and the other men tell Candy he should shoot his dog...? _____

...Curley asks you if you've seen his wife? _____

...Curley attacks Lennie and Lennie crushes his hand? _____



Extension Task: additional questions & activities

1. Why do you think Candy finally agrees to have his dog shot? (**Hint:** there may be more than one reason.)
2. Why does Candy want to join George and Lennie in their dream of the farm?
3. What is the significance of Candy saying “I should’ve shot that dog myself” at the moment he does?
4. Why does Curley agree to say that he caught his hand in a machine?
5. Imagine you are one of the characters in the novel. Write an account of events in the bunk house that evening using the first person narrative voice. Try to imitate the characters’ style of speech!
6. The dialogue in the novel sounds more authentic because it uses a lot of contemporary slang. Use the Internet to track down the meanings of some of the following and add them to your glossary: whing-ding; looloo; yella-jackets; jail bait; set on the trigger; kewpie doll; goo-goos; handy; can; punk.