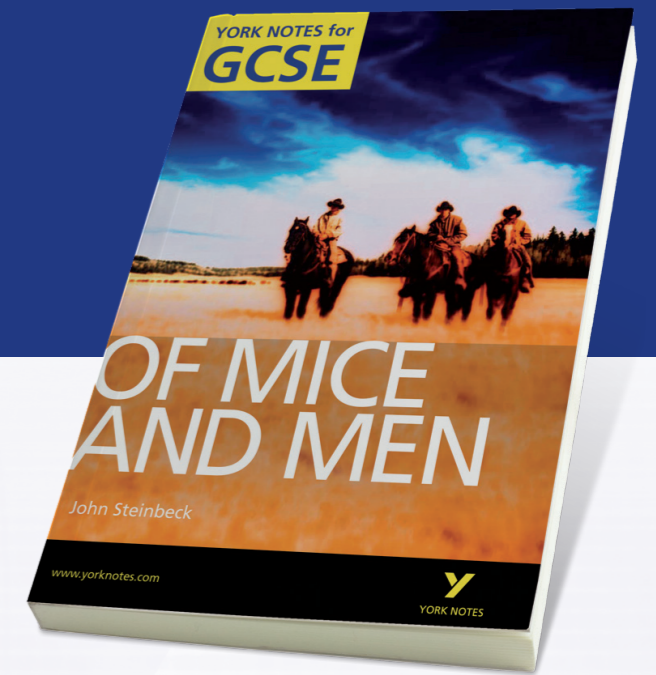


Top 10 Study Tips

The Top 10 things you **need** to know when studying...



Of Mice and Men

1 Read the book!

If you haven't already read the book in class, you should spend a few hours **reading the novel for yourself**. Whilst reading, **highlight** your **favourite moments, any lines that you particularly like** or anything that really **stands out**. Just doing this means that you are **interacting critically with the text**, which will serve you well when you come to study the text more closely.

2 Four key settings

There are four main settings in the novel, which can help you to **contextualise** the **action/plot**. They are:

- a) The pool
- b) The bunk house
- c) Crooks's hut
- d) The barn

Draw a **spider-diagram** for each, noting **what happens** and why **these are important** settings.

3 Context of the novel

Think of the context like the **backdrop to the novel**: without understanding it, the novel will **not make complete sense**. Make sure you are familiar with:

- a) The Great Depression
- b) The American Dream

This will, in turn, give your answers **more depth** and will show **maturity**. But, make sure you apply the **context** to the novel, don't just repeat what you know. How does the **Depression shape** the ranch hands and the life they lead? Understanding this may allow you to **empathise** with the **characters** more fully.

4 Dreams/The American Dream

The themes of **Dreams** and **The American Dream** are both central to your understanding of the novel, so make sure you know them inside out! **The American Dream** doubles up as good **contextual** knowledge, too!

5 Quotations

Get some **key quotations** under your belt for **themes, language and characters** – sometimes you can find quotations that touch on all three. Check out our **'Key quotations'** feature in the **Revise section** of our [Online guide](#) to start you off! Remember: **embed your quotations** into the points in your essay for a more sophisticated answer.

6 Literary terms

Nothing is more **impressive** than being able to **identify literary techniques** used by an author and then **comment on how they are effective**. Grasping some of **Steinbeck's techniques** and using the **proper terms** is a sure way to **boost your grade!** For example, do you know what a **paradox** is? How about **metaphors** and **similes**? Does Steinbeck use **imagery**? Does he **foreshadow** the ending? Always remember to comment on the **effect** of Steinbeck's techniques.

7 Engage with the characters

Really knowing the characters, such as **Lennie** and **George**, will **unlock** the novel for you, and may even lead to you **having your own independent ideas about them**. The characters in *Of Mice and Men* are **very memorable – why?** What is it about the

relationship between **George** and **Lennie** that is so **striking**? What would you have done in George's shoes – was Slim right when he says 'You hadda, George'?

8 Linking key themes with characters/events

Try linking the **key themes** with **characters and events**. For example, ask yourself which characters/events could be closely associated with the following themes:

- a) Loneliness
- b) Vulnerability
- c) Protest and racial prejudice
- d) Dreams and reality

The more you 'map' your ideas, the more likely you are to remember key points and moments about the text as well as developing your own **interpretations**.

For example, did you know that the name of the town, *Soledad*, means 'loneliness' in Spanish? Small **details** like this would be a good way to **make your essays stand out!**

9 Quick check

How much do you really know about the novel? Try to answer these questions – if you don't know the answers, maybe a bit more revision is needed!

- a) How many sections is the novel divided into?
- b) What happened at Weed that caused Lennie and George to leave? In which chapter do we learn about this?
- c) Why is Lennie in the barn when Curley's wife comes in?

- d) How long has Curley been married to his wife?
- e) Who brought up Lennie and handed him over to George to care for?
- f) List the reasons for killing Candy's dog, and then list the reasons for George killing Lennie. How similar are they?
- g) Write down a list of all the times we are told or it is hinted that George and Lennie's dream will never come true. Write down all the other dreams people have in the novel, and decide if any of those have a chance of coming true.

10 Further questions

It is important to practise for exams or assessments by writing extended written responses. Here are a few exam-style questions to get you started. For more, see our **Grade Booster section** in the **print and online [York Notes study guide](#)**:

- a) Explore the ways in which Steinbeck presents dreams as an important theme in the novel. Consider:
 - i) the different dreams he presents;
 - ii) how and why characters are unable to achieve them.
- b) How does Steinbeck present Curley as a character who is important to the novel as a whole?
- c) How does Steinbeck explore the theme of friendship in the novel?