
The Theme of Loneliness in the Novella Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck

The relationship between abundance and isolation is conveyed in a variety of assorted techniques in John Steinbeck's, *Of Mice And Men*. Therefore, this poetically expressed non-fiction novella is mainly regarding the concept of loneliness when it comes to the protagonists in the story, which are Lennie and George. Furthermore, acknowledging the contrast between Lennie and George's personas, it is safe for it to be said that factors such as mental illness and habitual behaviors have an influential impact on the characters' seclusion. Consequently, there is no doubt that humans in general crave contact with others in order to live a meaningful life. After taking this into consideration, Lennie, Crooks, Candy, and Curley's wife can be derived as victims of loneliness.

It is evident that loneliness is presented constantly throughout this story. Specifically, George's responsibility for taking care of Lennie and the American Dream are attempts to break the continuous pattern of isolation. As a result, when the two men had arguments, George would always refer to Lennie as a burden, which prevented him from living the lonesome life he had always wanted. In the text, Steinbeck writes, "...if I was alone I could live so easily... an' whatta I got, I got you!" (Steinbeck 11). George's outburst supports the fact that he wishes to live in solitude, meaning a life without Lennie. By all means, without George, Lennie would live a

life full of sorrow without him knowing it. People would take advantage of his mental retardation, and as George stated, "somebody'd shoot you for a coyote if you was by yourself" (Steinbeck 13). In addition, loneliness always seemed to interfere with George and Lennie's relationship.

However, Lennie and George are not the only characters who face loneliness in Steinbeck's *Of Mice And Men*. Although loneliness is demonstrated in all the characters throughout the story to some degree, Crooks and Candy's isolation is most evident. Candy often tried to fight his upcoming loneliness by refusing to be kept apart by his dog. Unfortunately, Curley insisted on killing the only companion Candy had, which brought him his tragic loneliness. The quote, "Candy did not answer. The silence fell on the room again. It came out of the night and invaded the room" (Steinbeck 49), supports the idea of how Candy begins to suffer from isolation as soon as he no longer has anyone to be with. Even though time has passed since Candy's tragedy, he continues to remain in despair and desolates himself from the rest of the ranch workers. Following this theory, Crooks is also a victim of loneliness along with Lennie and Candy. His physical disability and skin color is very much like Lennie's mental illness. Crooks is

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often looked down on and persistently made to seem different from the rest of the ranch workers. “Cause I’m black. They play cards in there, but I can’t play because I’m black. They say I stink” (Steinbeck 68). The previous quote supports the idea of Crooks being discriminated against due to his skin color and polar opposite characteristics. Although, his physical traits are not the only thing that isolate him from everyone else. His lack of respect when it comes to other’s business is

what also secludes him. Both Candy and Crooks’ desire to be liberated and live a tranquil life is revealed when they are interested in The American Dream, introduced to them by Lennie and George.

The pattern of only men living desolate lives is soon broken when Curley’s wife is proven to be a lonely character in the story. She too has been afflicted by isolation, due to her being the only female in the ranch. As if her gender was not already enough to make her exceptionally different from everyone else, her husband, Curley, has forbidden her talk to anyone. Curley’s wife rebels against him by flirting with all the ranch workers and giving them “the eye”. This is because of Curley not paying any attention to her, so psychologically, she

craves flattery. As *Of Mice And Men* comes to an end, Curley’s wife expresses her thoughts to Lennie. “Why can’t I talk to you? I never get to talk to nobody. I get awful lonely” (Steinbeck 86). This quote accurately proves the fact that Curley’s wife feels extremely lonely because of her limitation set by her husband when it comes to communication. While it is true that Curley’s wife had a few malicious actions here and there, they were not all intentional, judging by how she was emotionally abused by her husband.

Overall, the characters stated to be lonely and isolated were proven to have either been either physically or emotionally unstable. Factors such as discrimination, ignorance, restraint, and mockery all affect the internal state of someone. Loneliness does not always occur by simple isolating actions that others do. Even though the state of loneliness can be sorrowful, everyone must go through it in order to value and see the beauty in association.

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