



Exploring Junior Cycle Prescribed Fiction Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck

Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck is a novel included as part of the Prescribed Material for Junior Cycle English (For the student cohorts presenting for examination in 2026, 2027, 2028, 2029 and 2030).

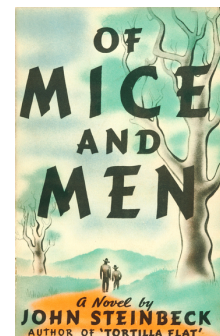


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Please note:

- The following tasks might be completed over a series of lessons.
- You may like to adapt and adjust the tasks to suit your context.
- *Of Mice and Men* covers themes which could be considered sensitive and controversial. You may wish to consult with our READY Framework to support you in your study.



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Before you Read... (Teacher Guidance)

These activities invite students to discuss the idea of the American Dream, reflect on their own hopes and goals, and consider how opportunity and obstacles shape the pursuit of success. Adapt as appropriate for your class.

Group Discussion: The American Dream

1. Write "The American Dream" on the board.
2. In groups, students discuss:
 - What does success mean to you?
 - Does everyone have the same chance to succeed? Why/why not?
3. Take brief feedback from each group.

Self-Reflection: My Own Dream

1. Ask students to reflect on a personal "dream" or goal, big or small.
2. Have them write responses to:
 - What is your dream? Why is it important?
 - What could help you achieve it? What might block it?
 - Does everyone have the same chance to achieve their dreams?



Extract

This extract is taken from chapter one of the Novel *Of Mice and Men*. *Of Mice and Men*, is set during the Great Depression in America. It follows two migrant workers, George and Lennie, who dream of a better life but face tough challenges along the way.

A FEW MILES south of Soledad, the Salinas River drops in close to the hillside bank and runs deep and green. The water is warm too, for it has slipped twinkling over the yellow sands in the sunlight before reaching the narrow pool. On one side of the river the golden foothill slopes curve up to the strong and rocky Gabilan mountains, but on the valley side the water is lined with trees - willows fresh and green with every spring, carrying in their lower leaf junctures the debris of the winter's flooding; and sycamores with mottled, white, recumbent limbs and branches that arch over the pool. On the sandy bank under the trees the leaves lie deep and so crisp that a lizard makes a great skittering if he runs among them. Rabbits come out of the brush to sit on the sand in the evening, and the damp flats are covered with the night tracks of 'coons, and with the spread pads of dogs from the ranches, and with the split-wedge tracks of deer that come to drink in the dark. There is a path through the willows and among the sycamores, a path beaten hard by boys coming down from the ranches to swim in the deep pool, and beaten hard by tramps who come wearily down from the highway in the evening to jungle-up near water. In front of the low horizontal limb of a giant sycamore there is an ash pile made by many fires; the limb is worn smooth by men who have sat on it

Evening of a hot day started the little wind to moving among the leaves. The shade climbed up the hills toward the top. On the sand banks the rabbits sat as quietly as little gray, sculptured stones. And then from the direction of the state highway came the sound of footsteps on crisp sycamore leaves. The rabbits hurried noiselessly for cover. A stilted heron labored up into the air and pounded down river. For a moment the place was lifeless, and then two men emerged from the path and came into the opening by the green pool.

(Steinbeck, John. Of Mice and Men, 1937, p,3).

Activities Based on Extract (Teacher Guidance)

The following may be completed in written or oral format, as individuals or as part of a group activity. Students may like to complete the following activities individually or collaboratively.

Imagery and Symbolism

- Close Reading: Highlight Steinbeck's descriptive words (e.g. twinkling, crisp, skittering).
- Student Task: Ask students to identify two images that create a peaceful mood and one that disturbs it.
- Follow-Up: Lead a short discussion on whether this mix of calm and disturbance might foreshadow events in the novel.

Language and Mood

- Pair Work: Have students reread the description of the river and pool, then discuss its effect on the reader.
- Individual Writing: Ask each student to write a short paragraph explaining why Steinbeck might begin with a detailed setting rather than moving straight into the action.



Reflect and Respond (Teacher Guidance)

The following questions may be based on the extract included or form part of your extended study of the novel. Students may like to complete the following activities individually or collaboratively.

Speech

1. Task Setup: Ask students to prepare a short speech on the theme “Everyone deserves a dream, but not everyone gets the chance to achieve it.”
2. Guidance: Encourage them to use real-life examples, rhetorical devices (repetition, questions, imagery), and finish with their personal view on dreams and fairness.

Script

1. Group Work: Have students plan a short play scene about friendship: two characters by a river or quiet place, one chasing a dream, the other doubting it.
2. Writing: Instruct students to use stage directions and dialogue to show tension between hope and doubt. Optionally, students may draft individual scripts after group planning.

Blog Post

1. Writing Task: Set a blog post titled “Why We Still Dream.” Students should explore why people continue to dream despite challenges.
2. Connections: Prompt them to use modern examples (sports, celebrities, inventors, ordinary people) and compare these with the dreams Steinbeck portrays.

Graphic Short Story

1. Creative Task: Ask students to transform the extract into a comic strip or graphic novel page.
2. Guidance: Encourage use of panels, colour, and expression to capture Steinbeck’s imagery, adding captions or thought bubbles to show what characters might feel in the scene. Display work when complete.