

Name \_\_\_\_\_

## Exploring 'Of Mice and Men': Themes, Characters, and Purpose

### Open-Ended Response Answer Key

1. Lennie Small is a character characterized by his physical strength and mental challenges. His innocence and reliance on George create both heartwarming moments and conflicts. His innocence leads to unintentional harm, and his physical strength makes him a source of both protection and danger. Lennie's character serves as a focal point for exploring themes of friendship, dreams, and vulnerability.
2. Crooks faces discrimination and isolation as the only African American worker on the ranch. His experiences reflect the racial dynamics of the time, as he is forced to live separately from the other workers. Crooks' isolation and his desire for connection provide insight into the broader issues of racism and discrimination during the Great Depression.
3. The characters' dreams serve as powerful symbols in the story. George and Lennie's dream of owning land represents hope and independence. Candy's dream of joining them reflects a desire for companionship and stability. Curley's wife's dream symbolizes her unfulfilled aspirations. These dreams drive the characters' actions and reveal their motivations, highlighting the theme of the human pursuit of better lives.
4. George's role as Lennie's protector and caregiver is central to the story's emotional core. Their friendship is defined by loyalty and mutual support, and George's determination to ensure Lennie's safety drives many of the novella's conflicts. Their relationship provides heartwarming moments and ultimately leads to a tragic moral dilemma.

