


Knowledge Organiser: Of mice and Men			What the exam will look like?
Literary Heritage: Modern Literature	Human Experience: Crime, Punishment And Friendship	Genre: Drama/tragedy	

Context – Of Mice and Men was written by John Steinbeck in	
John Steinbeck was born in Salinas, California in 1902. Although his family was wealthy, he was interested in the lives of the farm labourers and spent time working with them. He used his experiences as material for his writing. On October 29 1929, millions of dollars were wiped out in the Wall Street Crash. It led to the People losing their life savings and a third of America's population became unemployed. A series of droughts in southern mid-western states like Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas led to failed harvests and dried-up land. Farmers were forced to move off their land: they could not repay the bankloans which had helped buy the farms and had to sell what they owned to pay their debts. Racism/sexism were common, especially in Southern states due to economic climate, & history of slavery	Steinbeck encourages us to empathise with the plight of migrant workers during the Great Depression. The American Dream is shown to be impossible: reality defeats idealism. The novella explores the human need for companionship and the tragedy of loneliness. Steinbeck reveals the predatory nature of mankind: the powerless are targeted by the powerful. Steinbeck explores the tension between the inevitability of fate and the fragility of human dreams. Finally Steinbeck explores the contrasts of NaturevsMan. 

Steinbeck’s Use of Language
Colloquial - This informal style of speaking represents the way that men like this would really have spoken, so Steinbeck is presenting the characters in a realistic way: <i>Ever’ time he comes into the bunk house I can smell him for two, three days. Why’n’t you ...’</i>
Descriptive of the natural world: Steinbeck’s rich description is very different from his direct way of describing the events in the novel. This shows the beauty and power of nature in a difficult time, a place where characters like George and Lennie can escape the challenges of every day life: <i>Already the sun had left the valley to go climbing up the slopes of the Gabilan Mountains, and the hilltops were rosy in the sun. But by the pool among the mottled sycamores, a pleasant shade had fallen.</i> ”

Themes – A theme is an idea or message that runs throughout a text.	
Dreams: Introduced at the start of the book through George’s description to Lennie of the farm that they hope one day to own together, they continue to discuss this throughout the text, with Candy also becoming involved and making it finally seem possible. This dream is very important to the men because it represents freedom and having control over their own lives, which they do not have while moving around looking for work.	Loneliness: The name of the town close to the ranch where the novel is set is Soledad, which translates from Spanish to ‘solitude’, so loneliness is immediately established as an important theme in Of Mice and Men. Most of the characters on the ranch are lonely. George and Lennie stand out because their friendship means that they are not isolated and this is very unusual, making some others (like the Boss) suspicious of them. Steinbeck shows how the lifestyle that the men lead is very damaging to their relationships, making them lack compassion for others.
Companionship: Companionship in Of Mice and Men is primarily demonstrated through the friendship of George and Lennie, as there are no other meaningful relationships between people in the book. The unusualness of their bond is emphasised throughout the novel, particularly through the contrast with the other characters who are isolated and lonely. Apart from Slim, the men on the ranch find it difficult to understand why George and Lennie stick together. Many of the other characters are searching for companionship but are unable to find it. By the end of the book, all of the characters are lonely in some way, even George, who has now lost his friendship with Lennie because Lennie is dead. George and Lennie’s friendship was the only friendship evident in the text.	

Tier Two Vocabulary:
Emerge. Companion. Despair. Mimic. Anguish. Contorted. Authority. Reprimand. Creep. Conceal. Woe. Confide. Discontent. Poverty. Prejudice. Opportunity. Migrant. Depression. Cruel. Writhed. Hesitate. Mercy.

Chapter-by-Chapter Summary – Alongside key quotations.		
Chapters 1	Thursday evening: George and Lennie stay by the Salina’s River. They talk of their dream ahead of going to the ranch to start their new job.	George “Guys like us...that work on ranches, are the loneliest guys in the world. They got no family. They don’t belong no place...”
Chapter 2	Friday morning: George and Lennie arrive at Tyler Ranch. They meet Candy, The Boss, Curley and Curley’s Wife. George warns Lennie to stay away from Curley’s Wife.	A girl was standing there looking in. She had full, rouged lips and wide-spaced eyes, heavily made up. Her fingernails were red. Her hair hung in little rolled clusters, like sausages
Chapter 3	Friday evening: After a long day’s work, the ranch hands relax in the bunk house. Here Carlson, one of the ranch workers, insists on shooting Candy’s old dog. Candy offers to help G&L fund their dream. George has a fight with Curley, meaning Curley has to go to hospital.	Candy – : “I ought to of shot that dog myself, George. I shouldn’t of ought to let no stranger shoot my dog.”
	Saturday evening: Whilst all of the men are in town, George goes to see Crooks. Candy and Curley’s Wife soon join them Crooks is mean to Lennie and Curley’s Wife threatens Crooks.	Crooks – “Ever’body wants a little piece of lan’. I read plenty of books out here. Nobody never gets to heaven, and nobody gets no land.
Chapters 5	Sunday afternoon: Lennie accidentally kills his puppy by being heavy handed. Whilst the men are playing horseshoes, Curley’s Wife comes into the barn to talk to Lennie. She talks about her dreams. She lets him touch her hair, then he kills her by accident.	<i>Curley’s wife:</i> And the meanness and the plannings and the discontent and the ache for attention were all gone from her face. She was very pretty and simple, and her face was sweet and young.”
Chapter 6	Sunday evening: Lennie is scared of the consequences of his actions and runs to hide in the brush, just like George told him to. George uses Carlon’s gun to shoot him in the back of his head whilst telling him about their dream.	<i>‘A water snake glided...A silent head and beak lanced down and plucked it out by the head,, and the beak swallowed the little snake while its tail waved frantically.’</i>

Main Character and Quotes	
Curley’s Wife - The only female character in the story, Curley’s wife is never given a name and is only mentioned in reference to her husband. The men on the farm refer to her as a “tramp,” a “tart,” and a “looloo.” Dressed in fancy, feathered red shoes, she represents the temptation of female sexuality in a male-dominated world. Steinbeck depicts Curley’s wife not as a villain, but rather as a victim. Like the ranch-hands, she is desperately lonely and has broken dreams of a better life.	Lennie - A large, lumbering, childlike migrant worker. Due to his mild mental disability, Lennie completely depends upon George, his friend and traveling companion, for guidance and protection. The two men share a vision of a farm that they will own together, a vision that Lennie believes in wholeheartedly. Gentle and kind, Lennie nevertheless does not understand his own strength. His love of petting soft things, such as small animals, dresses, and people’s hair, leads to disaster.
Candy - An aging ranch handyman, Candy lost his hand in an accident and worries about his future on the ranch. Fearing that his age is making him useless, he seizes on George’s description of the farm he and Lennie will have, offering his life’s savings if he can join George and Lennie in owning the land.	George - A small, wiry, quick-witted man who travels with, and cares for, Lennie. Although he frequently speaks of how much better his life would be without his caretaking responsibilities, George is obviously devoted to Lennie. George’s behavior is motivated by the desire to protect Lennie and, eventually, deliver them both to the farm of their dreams.