

## George and Lennie

### George

George and Lennie are the protagonists of the novel and the story centers around them coming to the ranch and on their dream, even though this was the dream shared by many itinerant workers at the time. However, Steinbeck does not idolize George to the reader in the way he does Lennie. This is because to all of the good characters, they all have their flaws; this is true of real life and thus Steinbeck creates a believable tale instead of a fictional one. The belief of the cyclical narrative and it being a true retelling of the 1930s relies of Steinbeck's ability to show the reader how the itinerant workers really were. Although George has hope, he is still a very cynical and wary character, not trusting anyone other than Lennie and Slim, and finally Candy after he has accessed Candy for himself.

"George's voice became deeper. He repeated his words rhythmically as though he had said them many times before."

- a consistency which isn't what the itinerant workers normally have is provide by the rhythm of this voice.
- the rhythm provides a comfort in the words and imagination. It suggests that George wants to escape just as much as Lennie and he says it to remind Lennie and himself of the dream and the reason they are working.

George can be seen as the hero because the main protagonist, Lennie, looks to him as the hero. He accepts full responsibility for Lennie and takes care of him, only because Lennie's Aunt Clara asked him too.

"Well, I never seen one guy take so much trouble for another guy. I just like to know what your interest is." (Boss)

- George needs Lennie because it sets them apart from the other itinerant workers who work alone and are lonely. If they can achieve being together and are different in this way, then they should be able to achieve the dream together even though it is not achieved by many of the itinerant workers.

George and Lennie are opposites "behind him walked his opposite" and although Lennie is bigger than George, George acts as the father figure for Lennie and thus is strict with them and treats him as he would a child.

"Good boy! That's fine, Lennie"

- George also congratulates Lennie as though he was a child and gives him these rewards for being good (as he will be able to tend the rabbits if he is good).

George is described as similar to a fox. Although he is small, he has the brains to be able to get them the jobs they want. He emphasizes Lennie's talents at being able to do all types of "buckin' barley".

"small, strong hands, slender arms, thin and bony nose"

- George is not weak and with his "strong hands" he is able to discipline Lennie in the way a father would.

George is always playing solitaire (shown in Section 3). It is something that he is able to control and which stays with him. "Deliberate solitaire hand" shows this and that amongst all the moving and transience of an itinerant worker's life, he has this controllable and constant part. Additionally, solitaire is played only by one person, therefore Steinbeck attempts to show how George feels very lonely despite Lennie being with him.

George installs his trust into Slim because of Slim's natural leadership. He tells Slim "Used to play jokes on 'im 'cause he was too dumb to care" referring to Lennie. George feels guilty for abusing Lennie as Lennie idolizes him so much and has never hurt George.

George is wary of women, even those in the cathouse he doesn't think are worth anything and looks down upon them. He particularly hates Curley's wife, calling her "poison". He can sense the danger of her enticing Lennie with her soft hair and redness, like the girl in Weed did.

George needs to be the one to kill Lennie at the end of the novel because it is the most humane thing to do. Carlson killing Candy's dog shows George that he needs to kill Lennie, especially when Candy says "I ought to of shot that dog myself, George. I shouldn't ought to of let no stranger shoot my dog". George needs to kill Lennie because Lennie is to George what the dog was to Candy and to be loving and kind George needs to make Lennie die without glee from anyone else and also to make Lennie happy before he dies.

"What the hell kind of bed you giving us, anyways. We don't want no pants rabbits" – George is clean-living and healthy and still cares about how he is seen unlike Carlson who has just accepted that he is an itinerant worker.

"I seen the guys that go around the ranches on their own. That ain't no good. They don't have no fun. After a long time they get mean." – George is caring but also frightened of being lonely.

"Get 'im Lennie." – George has a sense of justice and will not allow Lennie to be beaten up. Even though George has sensed danger in Curley, he does not want Lennie to be taken advantage of and thus he tells him to just go and "get 'im"

### **Lennie**

Lennie Small is the main protagonist of the novel. He is named ironically but the sense of smallness adds to his childlike quality and the simplicity of him (also shown through the monosyllable of the surname).

His initial description:

"A huge man, shapeless of face, with large pale eyes, and wide sloping shoulders; and walked heavily dragging his feet a little, the way a bear drags his paws"

Lennie is immediately likened to a bear, which shows his strength. His movements show Lennie's animalistic power and also how he sees things exactly as they are as an animal would. The comparisons to animals mean Steinbeck presents Lennie as instinctive and simple.

"Snorting into the water like a horse" uses a simile to compare Lennie to a horse and show the uncivilized and animalistic side to him.

"imitated George exactly"

"looked over to George to see whether he has it just right" – for Lennie George is the father figure and everything that George does and the way he does it is correct and should be followed by Lennie.

"like a terrier who doesn't want to bring a ball to its master" shows that George overrules Lennie and that Lennie is treated like a child. It also shows that Lennie feels guilty when he disobeys George and the image of a dog pleading with its master is given to the reader to show this naivety and innocence.

"I'd leave it all for you" shows that Lennie is caring and he would always put George first no matter what in order for George to love and care for Lennie.

Lennie follows orders of George as a child would a parent: "Lennie's closed hand slowly obeyed". Lennie wants to try and protect George because George protects Lennie. He does not understand his own strength because he has a childlike nature. There is a juxtaposition of Lennie's violence and his innocence. Lennie cannot function in the normal world but he dies happy when George knows he can no longer protect him. He is happy as he thinks he will be with George and tend the rabbits and that their dream will come true.

"Lennie made an elaborate pantomime of innocence" implies he is not as innocent as he claims to be and that he is like a child and wants to constantly play and imagine things which happen. This is the reason he loves the idea of the American Dream so much, because he is able to imagine and he has this vivid imagination which only a child would be able to believe. Lennie has manipulation over George. "Lennie spoke craftily" shows that he knows George will calm down, but George also knows that Lennie is manipulating him. George gives Lennie something to look forward to, "Like you done before" shows that although Lennie has heard the same thing repeatedly he needs George to remind him of all the details and for him to create the idyllic image of the American Dream.

"Lennie broke in" could be used to show the excitement that he has someone compared to the other lonely itinerant workers or it could be used out of fear that if George left him he would become one of the lonely workers.

Lennie is the reason that they had to leave Weed. In Weed, Lennie felt the woman's dress because he liked the texture of it and then the woman accused him of raping her. This is mirrored in the way he touches animals because of their soft fur.

Lennie "wore his blue denim coat over his shoulders like a cape" and Steinbeck uses this to show the child aspect of Lennie. It uses the imagery of a child wearing a cape in order to be a superhero and Lennie does this in order to show his happiness with the puppy, while also being irritated that George has told him to come back into the bunkhouse.

"Why do you got to get killed? You ain't so little as mice. I didn't bounce you hard." – Lennie blames the animals he kills for their own death because they are "tiny" and he is unwilling to blame himself, like a child.