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In the classic American novella Of Mice and Men, by John Steinbeck, George Milton and Lennie Small are introduced as two typical migrant ranch workers, who are dealing with the tribulation brought about while working during the Great Depression. The story follows these two men, the closest of friends, but truly polar opposites in terms of intelligence and personality. The trial and tribulation bring great despair to both of these individuals and lead up to a very climactic and dramatic conclusion, the death of Lennie, at the hands of none other than his best friend and guardian, George. Though murder by nature is violent, George sees the killing of his dear friend Lennie, as his greatest act of compassion and love towards him. Was he right? Was this act justified? The answer is yes. His actions were in fact those of a true friend and were absolutely justified.

Some may argue, 'he was *not* right, he was *not* justified, and that was *not* the actions of a compassionate friend.' An argument may be made that Lennie may have been guilty of the crime in deed, however, truly innocent in thought. One might say, 'He was not trying to bring hurt or destruction or pain. Such a tragedy was in a way, inevitable. The true culprit was, both, society's lack of understanding, and sadly, but frankly, their disinterest in the mentally handicapped. Because of this, Lennie didn't deserve to die.'

Ethically, many people believe that murder in any form is never the right choice, that there is always another way. What gives George the right to make the decision on whether or

not to take away Lennie's life? No one should have the right to take away another humans life.' But the reality is George had taken the responsibility of being Lennie's guardian. This is what gave him the right. Lennie didn't have the mental faculties to understand the consequences of his own actions and so passed on to George the responsibility of carrying on such weighty decisions.

Furthermore, as his guardian, George needed to at times protect his protégé from himself. Had George ran away with Lennie again, the same mistake could have repeated itself. We study history to learn from our mistakes and not repeat them, with this mindset can we not see how George was doing the same, learning from Lennie's history, and not wanting to repeat that mistake? When the companions left from Weed, California, they were hoping to find a new life, yet trouble seemed to follow them, history repeated itself and Lennie got in trouble. Tragically, this time the mistake meant death. George's decision showed that he sought to protect the lives that could have been easily taken away, in George's mind he could have been saving lives, even his own.

To a degree it is understandable that some readers may feel that there had to be another option to taking Lennie's life. That even in view of Lennie's actions, surely murder was not the most compassionate choice George could have made. There is logic to this argument but within the context of the plot, there simply was no other choice. Had George let Lennie live, only agony would have resulted. There is also the matter of true friendship. It was George's loyal friendship towards Lennie that motivated him towards inevitable action. What could have driven this man to kill his best friend? In one word, love! George loved Lennie so much, that he felt the only way to take away Lennie's current and potentially future pain was to end his life. He killed Lennie because he loved him, he couldn't bear the thought of Lennie's predictable suffering and constant pain.,

It is clear that Lennie was in deep despair over his own actions, and over his lack of self-control. The fact is that Lennie knew something was wrong with himself, the fact that he knows he is doing something wrong, yet he doesn't know how to fix it. So ultimately George felt he had no choice but to bring a cessation to the profound misery and turmoil that Lennie was constantly experiencing.

Simply put, George made the right choice, a difficult one, but the right choice nonetheless. The fact that he killed Lennie does not mean he wanted Lennie to die. Knowing that Lennie was going to die, he saw it fit to make that death, as swift and painless as possible. The bottom line is that George loved Lennie, he loved Lennie so much that he made a decision, though difficult, to take Lennie's life, and give Lennie a much deserved peacefulness. Had George let Lennie live things would have gotten worse, and Lennie would have continued to suffer. All in all, George wanted Lennie to find peace, to no longer suffer or worry, or be in pain. George's decision to kill Lennie the way he did, shows that George gave Lennie the one thing he couldn't get on his own, true peace to the end.