

Name _____ Date _____

American Literature

Socratic Seminar on *Of Mice and Men*

We will be discussing John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* in Socratic Seminar form. In a Socratic Seminar, a group of students discusses a set of questions or issues while the rest of the class listens carefully and takes notes on 1) the content of the discussion and 2) the manner in which it is conducted. The groups then switch so that each student has an opportunity to discuss and observe.

Part One

In Prepare responses to the following questions. Include references to the text, as well as observations based on your own experiences and any additional questions you have about the topic. Follow response to literature guidelines.

1) Is George right to kill Lennie?

Think about

- George's relationship with Lennie
- the options available to George
- what might have happened to Lennie if George had not killed him
- whether you believe that killing someone- as an act of mercy or some other "good" reason- can ever be justified

2) How do you imagine Lennie's death will change George's life? In your opinion, will his life be better or worse?

3) If you believe that George and Lennie's dream dies, who or what is most responsible?

Think about

- the connection between Lennie and George's dream and their relationship
- the roles that different individuals play in the death of the dream
- the role that society or some other force might play in the death of the dream

4) We never find out what Curley's wife's actual name is. Why do you think this is so? Do you think Steinbeck depicts Curley's wife as a sympathetic or unappealing character? Justify your opinion with specific reasons.

5) What would you say Lennie symbolizes, or represents, in the novel? Could he be seen as representing a part of George that George must lose at the conclusion of the novel?

Think about

- a symbol as a person, place or thing that stands for something other than itself
- the traits that Lennie possesses
- the situations and concerns of the people for whom Steinbeck was writing during the Great Depression

6) 6. Consider the theme of fate versus free will. Describe two characters who seem to be victims of circumstance and explain the course their lives take in the novel. What do you think Steinbeck is telling us about how much control we have over our lives?

Seminar Guidelines

- Your written preparation for the seminar is worth 25 points.
- Your oral participation in the seminar is worth 15 points. I will be watching and listening for your comments. No credit will be given for irrelevant contributions; points will be taken away for disruptive or discourteous comments.
- Remember that the purpose of the seminar is for you to articulate your ideas and learn from one another. Everyone must be respectful and feel comfortable in order for this to happen.
- Maintain eye contact with your colleagues during the discussion. Show that you are listening to each other and taking each other seriously.
- Wait until each person finishes his/her thought before adding to or questioning the idea at hand.
- Students in the outer circle should quietly listen and take notes on the discussion.

EVALUATION:

Written responses: ____/25

Participation: ____/15

OVERALL: ____ 40