

Q 10:12 → 10:55

SECTION C: Modern Prose

Indicate which question you are answering by marking a cross in the box . If you change your mind, put a line through the box and then indicate your new question with a cross .

- Chosen question number: Question 4 Question 5 Question 6
 Question 7 Question 8 Question 9
 Question 10 Question 11 Question 12
 Question 13

Plan:

he however ³ has an understanding ~~crooks~~ ^{has been hardened, cynical & scared} of bigger picture. "cruel + aloof" ^{to show vulnerability}
 "I was too in"

The character of Crooks in *Of Mice and Men* personifies the violent and coded off mental-ity of the men at the ranch. Arguably, he is "cruel and aloof", however throughout the novel he offers a deep insight into the emotional barriers that all of the character's are forced to put up. The title of the novel was inspired by a Robert Burns poem in which a field mouse's home is flattened by a plow during harvest. ~~I think Crooks~~ is one interpretation of this is the workers being run down, by and oppressed by the depression in the 1930's. I think Crooks is the character that shows the effects of this



oppression the greater.

Throughout the novel, he expresses ~~sympathy~~ cynicism towards George and Lennie's dream to "jus belong" somewhere, and "live off the fatta the lan'." He tells Lennie "nobody ever gets to heaven, nobody gets no land." His view ~~is~~ echoes how many workers at the time pursued the 'American dream', and moved to California, becoming known as 'Dust Bowl' migrants. In this sense, he is portrayed as cruel, however he allows himself to be vulnerable and open up to Lennie and Candy. The ~~best~~ way this is done is by allowing them into his room, despite saying "I ain't wanted in the bunkhouse, and you ain't wanted in my room." Steinbeck manipulates the settings of the novel to create a divide between crooks, and the rest of the men. Crook's ~~his~~ room is described as a "long box filled with straw." The "straw" gives a sense that he is treated like an animal, due to his race, and his disability - "a crooked back." It can be argued that he is not a "cruel and aloof" character, but has become hardened ~~to avoid~~



to by his treatment, and ~~is now~~ has to continue the cycle of brutality and violence in order to survive. In the 1930's, this hardening was common, as many ^{who} workers travelled alone, and ~~for~~ for whom roving was habitual, had to develop this tough outer shell in order to survive. In reality, the agriculture laborers ~~are~~ actually contained much ethnic diversity, however Steinbeck ignores this and uses race ~~to~~ to create another divide between Crooks and the rest of the characters. His eyes are described as being "lined with pain." This clear image evoked sympathy in the reader, but the way in which it is matter of factly described reflect how Crooks is used to it, just as he is used to mistreatment. In many ways, Crooks is a ~~tragic~~ tragic character, as he is forced to become "cruel", shown ^{also} by his mockery of Lennie, and "aloof", in order to survive.

Despite displaying a negative outlook on life, Crooks allows his guard down, secondly, by becoming caught up in Lennie's dream that him and George share. ~~to~~ Lennie's power



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is evident, as he ~~at~~ caused Crooks to ~~not~~ accept him being in his room. This is significant as it shows that often, quietness and listening, lead to greater understanding than violence or forcefulness. This is echoed by him being "prince of the ranch" not through violence, but through having a tone that "invited confidence." Lennie has a similar effect on Crooks. They discuss how one day him and George will "just belong" somewhere. Crooks becomes enraptured by this idea, and due to Lennie's kindhearted nature he invites Crooks to be a part of it. In this moment, Crooks isn't portrayed as "cruel and aloof", as through forming a companionship with Lennie he has allowed himself to engage with emotions and concepts he such as hope, that he had long ago shut down inside his mind. When the novel was published in 1937, tension was growing between the underpaid and oppressed labourers, and California's rich agribusiness. This led to strikes taking place. This is symbolic as many of these workers felt lonely and isolated, despite being surrounded by roughly 350,000 other migrants who



were all united by feelings of despair. Crooks as a character ~~shows~~ represents the isolation felt by each man, and how it is often a much easier course of action ~~to~~ to allow hatred ~~to~~ to define your personality than to look to your fellow man and try to understand them.

Towards the end of the interaction between Candy, Crooks and Lennie, George enters Crooks' room. He berates Lennie for causing trouble by being where he shouldn't be, and dismissed his invitation to Crooks to share in their dream. ~~At~~ This shows ~~Lennie~~ George to always be the sensible one in their companionship. Crooks calls out "this foolin'. I wouldn't want to go no place like that." This is a deep insight into Crooks' true nature, and how easily he opened himself up, and allowed vulnerability. He feels the need to, however, protect himself by returning back to his "alone" state, to stop him being hurt. ^{At a different point} ~~later~~ in the novel he talks of the inner conflict men face over saving for the future or having small pleasures now, for example "gettin' ruse



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shots of coin." However, his cynicism is rather empty as his true nature has been betrayed to the reader. He says how after a while men "get wantin' to fight all ~~in one of his jobs~~ the time." This shows how he himself also believed that during this time period society has become distorted. Instead of protecting the weak, characters such as Curley prey on them.

In one of his journals, Steinbeck wrote that he believed the purpose of fiction was to allow people to understand each other. He said "you can't hate men if you know them." Crooks carries this message throughout the novel, challenging the reader to ~~see~~ look more deeply into a character that seems, on the surface "cruel and aloof." Once a deeper understanding has been gained, Crooks is no longer a detestable character. In actual fact, he is very relatable, and makes the novel even more appealing than it ~~was~~ would be without his presence.

