

OF MICE AND MEN PRACTICE QUESTIONS

PART A) *In this passage, how does Steinbeck present Slim?*

Steinbeck highly praised Slim and the reader nearly gets the impression that his description is exaggerated for amusement. For example, it says; “and he moved with a majesty only achieved by royalty and master craftsmen.” and “He was capable of killing a fly on the wheeler's butt with a bull whip without touching the mule.” This over-exaggerated description could have been used by Steinbeck to represent the other ranch men's attitudes to Slim. They may compare Slim to one of the cowboys in the magazines that they fantasize. This shows that in every community, there is always one that others look up to and aspire to be like. This contrasts greatly with people like Curley who wants authority but is not liked or respected.

However Steinbeck suggests that Slim isn't smug about his popularity or acts in any way above anyone else as it says; “Like the others he wore blue jeans and a short denim jacket.” This shows how in a ranch everybody's appearance is the same and it may be hard for the men to show their unique identity. This may be why Steinbeck has to exaggerate the description of Slim as all of the men are so similar. It also says; “His hands, large and lean, were as delicate in their action as those of a temple dancer.” This description contrasts greatly with his occupation. Steinbeck is trying to show, through describing Slim, that the ranch men may be thick-skinned and weather-beaten on the outside, but they have personalities and families and memories and feelings human beings in the present day would have. Slim's description contrasts sensitivity with the hard working world of 1930s America.

PART B) *In the rest of the novel, how does Steinbeck show that some people on the ranch are considered more important than others? How does this reflect the society in which the novel is set?*

I noticed that the dress code on the ranch gave a subtle outline of the workers who were less wealthy and the bosses who were taking advantage of people that had no other choice but to work under harsh and tiring conditions to get a non-existent wage. For example, the workers wear denim jeans and jacket. It says, “Both were dressed in denim trousers and in denim coats with brass buttons.” This shows how workers are collectively viewed by people of a higher class than them as less important as they all look the same and can all be exploited in the same way. However the bosses dress individually and more uniquely. For example, in the novel it says; “On his head was a soiled brown Stetson hat, and he wore high-heeled boots and spurs to prove he was not a labouring man.” This may show that the people of 1930s America dressed the way they felt. The workers may have felt worthless or the same as everybody else so they wore the same as everybody else and the bosses may have dressed themselves in pride as they may have felt more unique as they had authority over the workers.

Steinbeck used Candy in the novel to show how some people on the ranch are considered more important than others. Candy is not respected as much as he should be and the view of the others on the ranch is explained when Carlson described Candy's dog, who is old and sore like his owner. For example, Carlson says; “If you want me to, I'll put the old devil out of his misery right now and get it over with. Ain't nothing left for him. Can't eat, can't see, can't even walk without hurtin” This seems very heartless of Carlson but this represented the views of the wider American population. They felt that they were more important than people of a different skin colour, age and gender. This is ever-more fuelled in Steinbeck's ranch-based community that is close-knit but has obvious divides.