Of Mice and Men – Notes

Chapter Summaries

1. Two friends, George Milton and Lennie Small, are on their way to a new job at an agricultural ranch. They are job hunting in Soledad after being thrown out of Weed when Lennie mistakenly was accused of attempted rape of a female character, although he only likes to pet nice things like mice. During the 1st chapter George and Lennie bicker and argue and play on each other’s emotions. At the brush, as the 2 characters are so different, they bicker over how they get through life together, and how it would be easier if they went their separate ways and how Lennie is holding George back from his dream.

2. George and Lennie finally get to the ranch where they will be working. They meet several people currently working there. They meet the boss, the janitor, the boss’ son, Curley and his wife, Carlson and Slim (workers on the ranch). Curley takes a disliking to Lennie as he susses him out. Curley also used to be a pro boxer so takes bigger people as always being on the ‘wrong side’ of him. Although George tries to protect Lennie from ‘spilling the beans’ about Lennie’s mental problems, Lennie is discovered when his memory lets him down and says to George and Candy that he wants a puppy to stroke and look after.

3. As George and Lennie get to know more and more people on the ranch, constant interruptions of their familiarisation with Candy lead to the slaughter of Candy’s dog. As their conversation continues they become hypnotised by their dream and conclude that if Candy moves with them their dream could come true in a month’s time. Once again interrupted, Candy irritates Curley as he looks for his wife and Lennie results in a fight. At first Lennie avoids the fight but under George’s instructions Lennie ends Curley with a completely crushed hand. As Curley goes to the doctor, he is blackmailed into defending Lennie and telling he got his hand caught in a machine.

4. It’s Saturday night and everybody goes into town but leaving ‘the weak ones’ behind. With nothing better to do Lennie goes to find the puppies to pet but ends up walking in on Crooks instead. At first Crooks is snide towards Lennie and tries to defend himself, but eventually gives in as Candy enters the room in search of Lennie. As with Lennie, at first Crooks dislikes the idea of inviting him in, but after some though, Candy joins the scene. The 3 workers sit and talk about George and Lennie’s dream but Crooks disagrees that it’s possible. At this point Curley’s wife walks in in request of Curley. She confronts Lennie about Curley’s hand and spoils the conversation. To get rid of Curley’s wife, Candy says the other workers have returned. This is when George finds out and is angered by the fact that Candy and Lennie told Crooks about their dream.

5. The chapter begins with a description of the barn and the day and then the focus is on Lennie and the ‘newly dead’ puppy. Lennie is upset and angry that he killed the pup and fears he won’t be able to tend the rabbits. As Lennie weeps Curley’s wife walks in and begins to flirt with him. As she continues, she eventually asks Lennie to feel her ‘soft’ hair. Doing this Lennie ended up breaking her neck. As she lay in the barn, Lennie ran out of the ranch and hid in the brush. The other workers, after Candy and George, discovered her body and also left the ranch to shoot Lennie. At this point Curley was in control of the other workers.
6. The chapter starts with Lennie panicking in the brush, where in chapter 1 he was told to hide if in trouble. A metaphorical description is used to describe future events in the chapter. George enters the scene and calms Lennie down by once again explaining what they plan to do in the future. As the chapter reaches its climax, George shoots Lennie in the back of the head with Carlson's luger which he stole from the bunkhouse. Lennie's death was very much like Candy's dogs' death – life goes on.