

OF MICE AND MEN

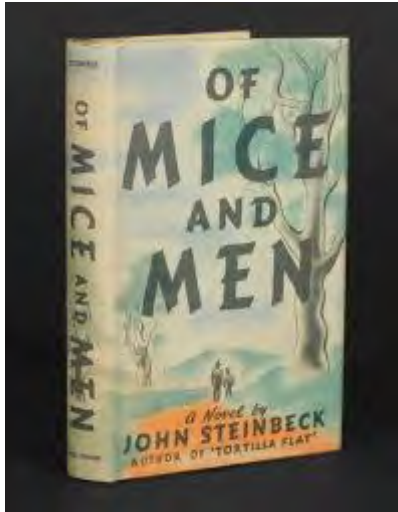
**Sometimes, having the courage to pursue our dreams
helps us better see the light.**

WRITTEN BY JOHN STEINBECK • DIRECTED BY SCOTT P. CALHOON
NOVEMBER 2-11, 2018 • PRIMESTAGE.COM

Welcome to Prime Stage Theatre's 2018-2019, *Season of Courage*

Bringing Literature to Life!

Dear Educator,



To begin our *Season of Courage*, we are pleased to present to you the production *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck.

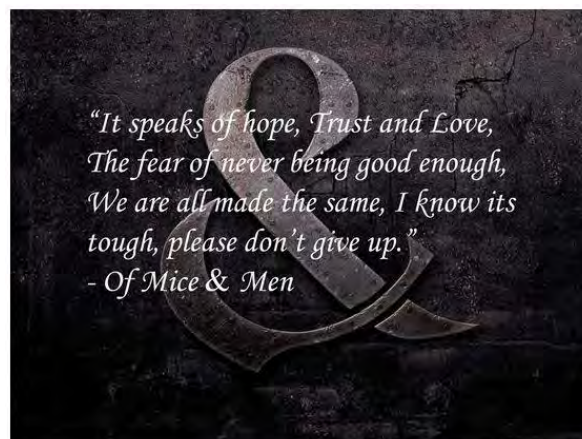
All literature produced by Prime Stage is always drawn from middle and secondary Reading Lists and themes that are in the current Pennsylvania curriculum.

This Resource Guide is designed to provide, teacher instruction, historical background, context, classroom activities and curricular content to help you enliven your students' experience with literature and live theatre. We encourage you to use the theatrical games and creative thinking activities, as well as the Theatre Etiquette suggested activities to spark personal connections with the themes and characters in the story *Of Mice and Men*.

If you have any questions about the information or activities in the guide, please contact me and I will be happy to assist you, *and* I welcome your suggestions and comments!

Linda Haston, Education Director & Teaching Artist
Prime Stage Theatre
lhaston@primestage.com

The activities in this guide are intended to enliven, clarify and enrich the text as you read, and the experience as you watch the literature.



OUR EDUCATION PROGRAMMING

Literacy In ACTion Program (LACT)
Student Matinee Field Trips
Global Learning
Champion of Life Building
Creative Arts Festival
Young Women's Collaborative
Technical Theatre Interns
Professional Development
Teen Dating Awareness
Summer Camps/Teacher Workshops
(New this season!)
Drama Theatre Awards

OUR EDUCATION PROGRAMMING IS FUNDED IN PART BY THE FOLLOWING FOUNDATIONS

Allegheny Regional Asset District
 American Eagle Outfitters
 Jack Buncher Foundation
 Philip Chosky Charitable Education Fund
 Edith L. Trees Charitable Trust
 The Fine Foundation
 Henry C. Frick Education Fund of the Buhl Foundation
 The Grable Foundation
 Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council
 Heinz Endowments
 Macy's Corporation
 Massey Charitable Trust
 W.I. Patterson Charitable Foundation
 Pennsylvania Council on the Arts
 PNC Charitable Foundation

PRIME STAGE THEATRE EDUCATION STAFF

Wayne Brinda, Ed.D
Producing Artistic Director

Linda Haston
Education Director

Ken Lutz
Global Learning Coordinator

Elena Alexandratos
Education Coordinator

Ryan Pontzloff
Education Intern

Mary Windstein
Student Matinee Field Trips



Jason Kmetic
Technical Theatre Intern Director

TEACHER ADVISORY COUNCIL

Education Staff, Tim Devlin, John Dolphin, Brooke Kosar, Josette Kurey, and Sueanne Zoratto



Featured National Standards:

English/Language Arts

Standards Developed by International Reading Association and National Council of Teachers of English

1. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, and aesthetic) of human experience.
2. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context and graphics).
3. Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, and video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.
4. Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, and video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.
5. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.
6. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

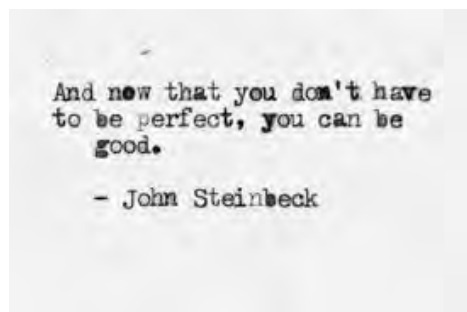
Theatre

NA 5-8.3 Designing by developing environments for improvised and scripted scenes

Students analyze improvised and scripted scenes for technical requirements.

NA5-8.7 Analyzing, evaluating, and constructing meanings from improvised and scripted scenes and from theatre, film, television, and electronic media productions

Students articulate and support the meanings constructed from their and others' dramatic Performances Students use articulated criteria to describe, analyze, and constructively evaluate the perceived effectiveness of artistic choices found in dramatic performances.



NA 9-12.2 Acting by developing, communicating, and sustaining characters in improvisations and informal or formal productions

Students analyze the physical, emotional, and social dimensions of characters found in dramatic texts from various genres and media.

NA 9-12.3 Designing and producing by conceptualizing and realizing artistic interpretations for informal or formal productions

Students analyze a variety of dramatic texts from cultural and historical perspectives to determine production requirements.

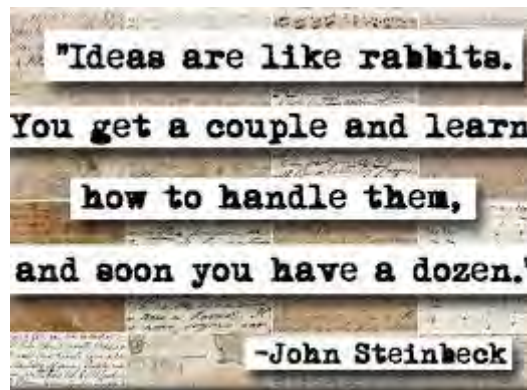
NA9-12.5 Researching by evaluating and synthesizing cultural and historical information to support artistic choices

Students identify and research cultural, historical, and symbolic clues in dramatic texts, and evaluate the validity and practicality of the information to assist in making artistic choices for informal and formal productions.

NA9-12.7 Analyzing, critiquing, and constructing meanings from informal and formal theatre, film, television, and electronic media productions

Students articulate and justify personal aesthetic criteria for critiquing dramatic texts and events that compare perceived artistic intent with the final aesthetic achievement.

Students analyze and critique the whole and the parts of dramatic performances, taking into account the context, and constructively suggest alternative artistic choices.



All Prime Stage productions and Resource Guides address the following:

**Pennsylvania Common Core Standards for *Of Mice and Men*:
Pennsylvania Academic Standards for Reading, Writing, Listening, Speaking**

CC.1.3.9-10.A: Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

CC.1.3.9-10.C: Analyze how complex characters develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

CC.1.3.9-10.D: Determine the point of view of the text and analyze the impact the point of view has on the meaning of the text.

CC.1.3.9-10.E: Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it and manipulate time create an effect.

CC.1.3.9-10.F: Analyze how words and phrases shape meaning and tone in texts.

CC.1.3.9-10.G: Analyze the representation of a subject or a key scene in two different artistic mediums, including what is emphasized or absent in each treatment.

CC.1.3.9-10.H: Analyze how an author draws on and transforms themes, topics, character types, and/or other text elements from source material in a specific work.

CC.1.3.9-10.K: Read and comprehend literary fiction on grade level, reading independently and proficiently.

CC.1.5.9-10.A: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions on grades level topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CC.1.5.9-10.G: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English when speaking based on grade 9-10 level and content.

CC.1.6.11.A: Listen critically and respond to others in small and large group situations. Respond with grade level appropriate questions, ideas, information or opinions.

CC.1.6.11.C: Demonstrate awareness of audience using appropriate volume and clarity in formal speaking presentations.

CC.1.6.11.D: Listen to and acknowledge the contributions of other students well introducing ideas and opinions to enrich the discussion.



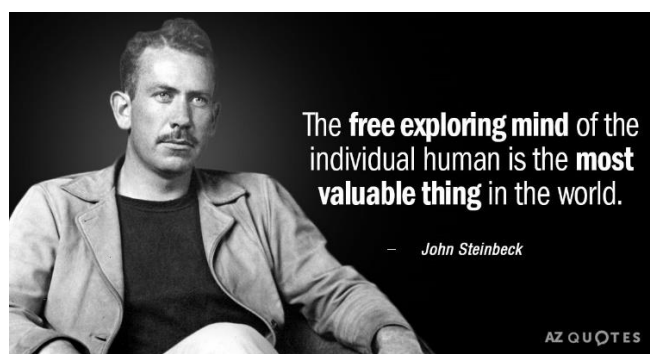
Theatre Etiquette and House Rules

Going to a play is a special experience, one that you will remember for a long time.

Everyone in the audience has been looking forward to seeing the performance. The production team put in many long hours and hard work to mount this performance. If you keep in mind common courtesy for the performers as well as your fellow audience members, everyone's theatre experience will be terrific.

A few reminders for attending the theatre.

- When you arrive, stay with your group at all times, and wait for the ushers to help you find your seat.
- Gum, food, drinks, or candy, are **never** allowed in the theatre.
- Please go to the restroom before seating for performance or at intermission.
- **TURN OFF ALL** cell phones, pagers, beepers, alarms, **anything** that can disturb the production, actors and the audience during the performance.
- Lights will dim just before a performance and then go dark. Show your knowledge by sitting quietly and calmly.
- **Do not talk during the performance.** The actors on stage can hear you which is why you can hear them so well. Laughter is permissible at appropriate times.
- **No** taking of pictures or video recording is allowed.
- **Stay in your seat until the cast has taken their curtain call at the end.** Show your appreciation by clapping. The actors love to hear applause. This shows how much you enjoyed the performance!





John Steinbeck

Author (1902–1968)

John Steinbeck was an American novelist whose Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*, portrayed the plight of migrant workers during the Great Depression.

Who Was John Steinbeck?

John Ernst Steinbeck Jr. (February 27, 1902 to December 20, 1968) was a Nobel and Pulitzer Prize-winning American novelist and the author of *Of Mice and Men*, *The Grapes of*

Wrath and *East of Eden*. Steinbeck dropped out of college and worked as a manual laborer before achieving success as a writer. His works often dealt with social and economic issues. His 1939 novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*, about the migration of a family from the Oklahoma Dust Bowl to California, won a Pulitzer Prize and a National Book Award. Steinbeck served as a war correspondent during World War II, and he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1962.

When and Where Was John Steinbeck Born?

John Steinbeck was born on February 27, 1902, in Salinas, California.

Childhood and Family

John Steinbeck was raised with modest means. His father, John Ernst Steinbeck, tried his hand at several different jobs to keep his family fed: He owned a feed-and-grain store, managed a flour plant and served as treasurer of Monterey County. His mother, Olive Hamilton Steinbeck, was a former schoolteacher.

For the most part, Steinbeck — who grew up with three sisters — had a happy childhood. He was shy but smart. He formed an early appreciation for the land, and in particular California's Salinas Valley, which would greatly inform his later writing. According to accounts, Steinbeck decided to become a writer at the age of 14, often locking himself in his bedroom to write poems and stories.

Education

In 1919 Steinbeck enrolled at Stanford University — a decision that had more to do with pleasing his parents than anything else — but the budding writer would prove to have little use for college.

Over the next six years, Steinbeck drifted in and out of school, eventually dropping out for good in 1925, without a degree.



Early Career

Following Stanford, Steinbeck tried to make a go of it as a freelance writer. He briefly moved to New York City, where he found work as a construction worker and a newspaper reporter, but then scurried back to California, where he took a job as a caretaker in Lake Tahoe and began his writing career.

Later Life

During World War II, John Steinbeck served as a war correspondent for the *New York Herald Tribune*.

Around this same time, he traveled to Mexico to collect marine life with friend Edward F. Ricketts, a marine biologist. Their collaboration resulted in the book *Sea of Cortez* (1941), which describes marine life in the Gulf of California.

John Steinbeck's Wives and Children

John Steinbeck was married three times and had two sons. In 1930 Steinbeck met and married his first wife, Carol Henning. Over the following decade, he poured himself into his writing with Carol's support and paycheck, until the couple divorced in 1942.

Steinbeck was married to his second wife, Gwyndolyn Conger, from 1943 to 1948. The couple had two sons together, Thomas (born 1944) and John (born 1946). In 1950 Steinbeck wed his third wife, Elaine Anderson Scott. The couple remained together until his death in 1968.

When and How Did John Steinbeck Die?

Steinbeck died of heart disease on December 20, 1968, at his home in New York City.

The following is courtesy of the National Steinbeck Center

In 1902, Salinas, California was a prosperous farming community, founded about fifty years earlier.



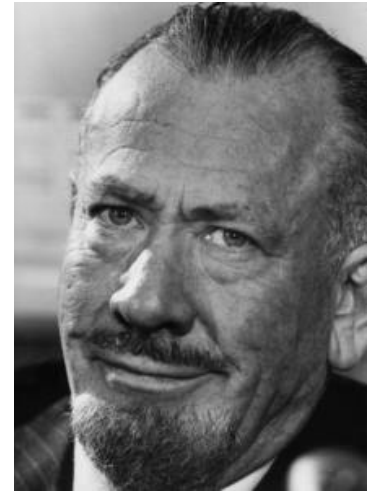
Agriculture was the region's pay dirt. Only fifteen miles from the Pacific, the 50-mile long Salinas Valley was cool and often foggy, temperatures moderate, and the soil rich beyond measure. Ranchers and farmers thrived. Growing wheat and barley in the 19th century, sugar beets in the late 1890s and vegetables and lettuce in the opening decades of the 20th century, growers and shippers' fortunes would soar during John Steinbeck's childhood and teens. By the time he went to college in 1919, the valley was about to ship lettuce across America in refrigerated railroad cars. Lettuce became the "green gold" of the Salinas Valley.

John Steinbeck was born in Salinas in 1902, in a stately home on Central Ave (now open as a popular luncheon spot). During his childhood, Salinas had a population of about 5000, was the county seat of



Monterey County, and a trading and shipping center for the lower Salinas Valley. The geography and demographics of the valley, the “Salad Bowl of the Nation,” stamped the young boy’s sensibilities. A strong sense of place is evident in his fiction: “I think I would like to write the story of this whole valley,” he wrote to a friend in 1933, when he was 31 years old, “of all the little towns and all the farms and the ranches in the wilder hills. I can see how I would like to do it so that it would be the valley of the world.” In 1952 he published his epic novel about the Salinas Valley, *East of Eden*.

In fact, Steinbeck would grow up to tell stories that many area Salinas Valley ranchers and farmers would rather not be told—embedded in his novels was Salinas gossip; his characters were often lonely, misunderstood farmers and ranchers; and in his books, dreams of ordinary workers are dashed—his books tell of failed dreams of land ownership in California. *The Grapes of Wrath*, his signature novel, published in 1939, traces the journey of the Joad family from Oklahoma to California, where they find not the fabled land of their dreams but a place with few jobs, low wages, and inadequate worker housing. Steinbeck’s novel excoriated the greed of the Associated Farmers, business interests in California. That position did not make him a popular figure in his hometown of Salinas.



Today, Steinbeck’s status has risen in Salinas, and the writer who vowed to put his slice of central California on the map of the world—and did so—who was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1962; and who put the city of Salinas on the map of the world is a favored son.



The National Steinbeck Center, a museum and cultural center in downtown Salinas, pays tribute to his life and lasting impact on American letters and on American identity. The Steinbeck museum explores his ecological vision, his commitment to social engagement, and his many stories about the working class—all of which insure his work is deeply relevant today. Steinbeck’s books have been published in more than 45 languages, and he is, truly, a citizen of Salinas as well as a citizen of the world.



Early Years: Salinas to Stanford: 1902-1925



When Steinbeck was born, his father, John Ernst Steinbeck, was a manager at Sperry Flour mill in Salinas. His mother had been a school teacher, and she was sturdily committed to literature and intellectual pursuits (Steinbeck claimed that he and his sisters were “blooded with culture.”) He had two older sisters, Esther and Beth, and a younger sister, Mary—the sister he was very close to growing up.

Steinbeck’s childhood was placid enough—although early on he saw himself as an outsider and a rebel. He was a restless and curious child. When he was 11, his father lost his job at Sperry Flour when the plant closed, and Steinbeck felt the

deep shame of his father’s loss and subsequent failures as a businessman— a feed and grain store Mr. Steinbeck purchased failed to prosper. Only when young Steinbeck was in college did the family fortunes stabilize and Mr. Steinbeck became Monterey county treasurer.

When he was four, Steinbeck was given his own pony, Jill, an inspiration for his later series of stories, *The Red Pony*.

John was a reader. On his ninth birthday, his Aunt Mollie gave him a copy of Thomas Malory’s *Le Morte d’Arthur*: “When I first read it, I must have been already enamored of words because the old and obsolete words delighted me.” Steinbeck and his younger sister Mary would imagine the turrets of Camelot in the sandstone erosions in the Pastures of Heaven, a secluded valley a few miles from Salinas where Aunt Mollie lived. Some twenty years later, Steinbeck would adopt Arthurian tropes and chapter headings in his novel *Tortilla Flat*. In the late 1950s he and his third wife, Elaine, traveled to England and Wales to research Arthurian legends in preparation for a modernized text of the Arthurian tales. Though the work was never completed in Steinbeck’s lifetime, *The Acts of King Arthur and his Noble Knights* was published posthumously in 1976.



DIRECTOR NOTES

OF MICE AND MEN, by John Steinbeck, is a story about an unusual friendship between two migrant ranch workers during the depression. A key theme in the piece is loneliness, experienced by numerous characters for a variety of reasons. John Steinbeck shows us a multitude of characters dealing with this emotion, an elderly, crippled worker that may soon be turned away as he becomes less useful, a black worker that is segregated from the others due to his skin color, a woman that has no one that she can talk to as there are no other women and she is forbidden by her jealous husband to fraternize with the men on the ranch. Crooks, the black male, and Curly's wife both speak on the need for someone to talk to and that without companionship, a person could lose their mind. George and Lennie, however, have each other. They have a symbiotic relationship due in part to George's feelings of responsibility for Lennie but also for his need for someone to talk to. Only together can their dream of a better future seem to be a possibility. Only together can they achieve a place in the world that they can call their own and feel respected as individuals.



In this production, we will focus on the connections between the characters but also on the lack of connections which will put George and Lennie's friendship front and center. We will show that George needs Lennie just as much as Lennie needs George even though Lennie constantly gets into trouble due to his childlike need to touch and feel soft things. We will show how George needs someone there to talk with and to dream with which makes life worth living. Without this, life is a drudgery of one day followed by another and then another that are all the same and meaningless to the worth of one's soul.

In this production, we have to deal with characters that are less educated than we are today, including one in particular that has an intellectual disability. Portraying characters such as this can be challenging. To that end, Prime Stage enlisted the help of professionals in the psychiatric field from UPMC. Their assistance with creating believable, realistic characters, actions, and delivery of the spoken words has been truly appreciated. They helped us get into Lennie's mind and understand how it works and how to show that realistically to the audience.

It's important to note that each of the characters in this show have their own set of circumstances in dealing with loneliness and exclusion. They struggle to find a place in society that they wish to be for their own self-respect and to be accepted by others. These are, of course, timeless, universal issues that we all deal with in our lives.

The audience should note that there is strong language and situations included in the telling of this play. This is necessary in keeping with the reality of the time, place and characters and the lives they lead.

Scott Calhoun, Director
Prime Stage production of "Of Mice & Men," November, 2018



COSTUME DESIGN NOTES

“Classic” literature is called that for a reason. The John Steinbeck story “Of Mice and Men” meets the definition because it has a timeless quality in its exploration of the themes of the predatory nature in human beings that seeks to oppress others; that of fraternal friendship and its fragility in such a world of human behavior and the fragility of the “American Dream” representing freedom, contentment and safety.



Because human nature, despite education, can be base, the recurring literary device of presenting women as a corrupt influence is an important motif in “Of Mice and Men”. Juxtaposing loneliness and companionship as well as strength and weakness, Steinbeck created a fictional world of the 1930’s south of Soledad, California but it could represent any decade in the modern world.

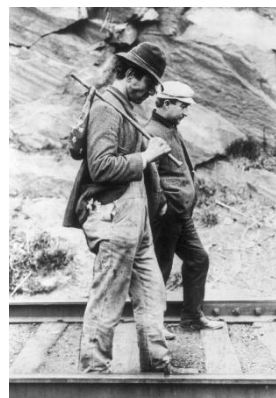
The job of a costume designer is to explore the basis of the characters as individuals in this group setting and to support the storytelling (directing and performance) with clothing for each performer. Attention to the poverty of the time, the nature of the work the farm hands perform, the individual character motivation (Curley’s wife aspires to movie star status) and period fashion fabrics and textures will be translated into costume choices that will mirror the set design to create a world that is fascinating and grimly horrifying.



Special attention for live performance costumes (including footwear) is required to keep the design grounded in the early 1930’s. This encompasses special patterning for work attire like overalls (which looked slightly different in that era), accurate fabric choices and painting/aging/distressing the costumes (whether new or pulled from stock).

It is the fervent hope of competent designers that an immersive experience is shared and that such storytelling affects change through the interpretation of classic works of literature. It is through live performance that our culture continues to interpret such things as history and human behavior and may the characters John Steinbeck created continue to affect our thinking and spark our imaginations.

Kim Brown, Costume Designer
Prime Stage production of “Of Mice and Men,” November, 2018



SCENIC DESIGN

Set Designer's model



While designing the set for *Of Mice and Men*, the director and I talked about creating a world that would encompass multiple zones, each holding a separate meaning to the characters that entered those individual spaces. We divided the playing space into three distinct sections.

The first section lives at the downstage portion of the set, directly in front of the audience. This area represents the riverbank where we first meet George and Lennie

traveling across the country. It is here that George tells Lennie that he must remember this place and always come back to it if he ended up in any trouble. This riverbank is a refuge for the main characters nestled in the crook of the river, in the wide-open wilderness under the stars. It is here that George and Lennie are free to dream about their futures and desires in the world.

The second and largest portion of the set is a raked wooden platform that represents the majority of locations in the play. This platform transforms between the bunkhouse, Crook's room, and the barn. The shape of the platform is defined and rigid; it is unchanging in the fact that it is structural and confining. The characters are trapped within its imaginary walls, and although they may dream of the ideal life they are unable to achieve it while here.

The third and final portion of the set resides far upstage away from the audience and the rest of the of action of the play. Among a field of tall grasses and discarded farm equipment, the characters sit in isolation. Here, they are alone in their thoughts and are unable to interact or connect with the other characters.

By creating these various worlds for the actors to play in, our hope is to better examine Steinbeck's characters and understand their self-identities and how each one of them dream.

JohnMichael Bodach, Scenic Designer
Prime Stage production of "Of Mice and Men," November, 2018



LIGHTING DESIGN



Layers. The lighting design is all about creating layers. Inspiration is taken from the artwork of the Works Project Administration, whose artists created lush murals and paintings that depicted life in the Depression era, and the rich textures of the California farm landscape. Layering textures of light like a painter's brush strokes, the visual world is crafted much the same way the dreams of the characters are. It's beautiful, but difficult to hold. Of equal importance is the use of shadow. There are dark places in these dreams that men create. The use of these techniques fills and define the world *Of Mice and Men*.

J.R. Shaw, Lighting Designer
Prime Stage production of "Of Mice and Men," November, 2018



OF MICE AND MEN PLOT SUMMARY

The story opens with the description of a riverbed in rural California, a beautiful, wooded area at the base of “golden foothill slopes.” A path runs to the river, used by boys going swimming and riffraff coming down from the highway. Two men walk along the path. The first, George, is small, wiry, and sharp-featured, while his companion, Lennie, is large and awkward. They are both dressed in denim, farmhand attire.

As they reach a clearing, Lennie stops to drink from the river, and George warns him not to drink too much or he will get sick, as he did the night before. As their conversation continues, it becomes clear that the larger man has a mild mental disability, and that his companion looks out for his safety. George begins to complain about the bus driver who dropped them off a long way from their intended destination—a ranch on which they are due to begin work. Lennie interrupts him to ask where they are going. His companion impatiently reminds him of their movements over the past few days, and then notices that Lennie is holding a dead mouse. George takes it away from him. Lennie insists that he is not responsible for killing the mouse, that he just wanted to pet it, but George loses his temper and throws it across the stream. George warns Lennie that they are going to work on a ranch, and that he must behave himself when they meet the boss. George does not want any trouble of the kind they encountered in Weed, the last place they worked.



Corey Reiger as George and Liam Macik as Lennie

George decides that they will stay in the clearing for the night, and as they prepare their bean supper, Lennie crosses the stream and recovers the mouse, only to have George find him out immediately and take the mouse away again. Apparently, Lennie’s Aunt Clara used to give him mice to pet, but he tends to “break” small creatures unintentionally when he shows his affection for them, killing them because he doesn’t know his own strength. As the two men sit down to eat, Lennie asks for ketchup. This request launches George into a long speech about Lennie’s ungratefulness. George complains that he could get along much better if he didn’t have to care for Lennie. He uses the incident that got them chased out of Weed as a case in point. Lennie, a lover of soft things, stroked the fabric of a girl’s dress, and would not let go. The locals assumed he assaulted her and ran them out of town.





After this tirade, George feels sorry for losing his temper and apologizes by telling Lennie's favorite story, the plan for their future happiness. The life of a ranch-hand, according to George, is one of the loneliest in the world, and most men working on ranches have no one to look out for them. But he and Lennie have each other, and someday, as soon as they manage to save enough money, they will buy a farm together and, as Lennie puts it, "live off the fatta the lan'." They will grow their own food, raise livestock, and keep rabbits, which Lennie will tend. This familiar story cheers both of them up. As night falls, George tells Lennie that if he encounters any trouble while working at the ranch, he is to return to this clearing, hide in the bushes, and wait for George to come.

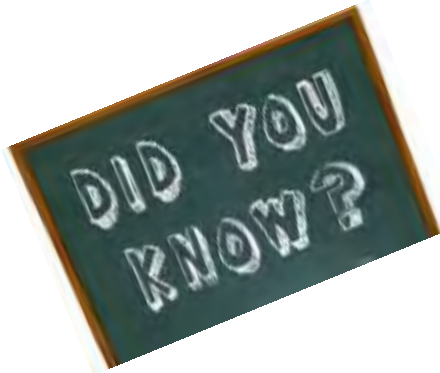
Based on the classic novella by John Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men* is the tale of two great friends and their struggle to live the American dream. George and Lennie have been traveling together from ranch to ranch for years, working hard to make ends meet and save enough for a place of their own. The two are opposites: George is intelligent, quick and small, while Lennie is slow-minded, childlike, and giant. Though they are different, they care deeply about each

other. They have been dreaming for years to save enough for a little land of their own, and when they are both hired to a new job they believe that they may finally achieve their goal. But trouble begins to brew when one of the bosses' wife becomes too interested in the infatuated Lennie... Tragic yet beautiful, *Of Mice and Men* is an extremely popular play that has become a staple of American theatre.

Liam Macik as Lennie and Sam Lothard as Crooks



Fun Facts About “Of Mice and Men”



Of Mice and Men was John Steinbeck’s first attempt at writing a novel-play (a novel that could also function as a script). It has six scenes in groups of two chapters each, producing three acts.

Something That Happened was Steinbeck’s original title for *Of Mice and Men*. He chose that title to mean that the events in the book were simply “something that happened” for which nobody could be blamed. However, he changed the title to *Of Mice and Men* after reading Robert Burn’s poem *To a Mouse, On Turning Her Up in Her Next with a Plow*, which describes the plowman’s regret for accidentally destroying a mouse’s home. The title was specifically inspired by these lines: “The best laid schemes o’ mice and men/Gang aft a -

gley, and lea’v us nought for grief and pain, /For promised joy.”

* * *

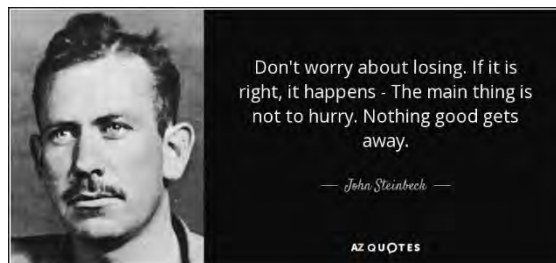
Steinbeck’s dog, Max, ate an early draft of *Of Mice and Men*.

* * *

In high school, Steinbeck once worked as a ranch hand; and while in college, he also worked on neighboring farms (especially Spreckels Sugar Ranch) which relied on the cheap labor of migrant workers. He’d obviously drawn from his work experiences for *Of Mice and Men*. For instance, this is what he cited as his inspiration for Lennie in an interview with *The New York Times* in 1937: “I was a bindlestiff myself for quite a spell. I worked in the same country that the story is laid in. The characters are composites to a certain extent. Lennie was a real person. He’s in an insane asylum in California right now. I worked alongside him for many weeks. He didn’t kill a girl. He killed a ranch foreman. Got sore because the boss had fired his pal and stuck a pitchfork right through his stomach. I hate to tell you how many times I saw him do it. We couldn’t stop him until it was too late.”

* * *

Of Mice and Men appears on the American Library Association’s list of the *Most Challenged Books of the 21st Century*. Reasons cited for its banning throughout the years: promoting euthanasia, condoning racial slurs, being anti-business, containing profanity and using vulgar and offensive language. *Of Mice and Men* has been challenged over 50 times since its publication in 1936, but many of the bans and restrictions have been lifted. In fact, it is often required reading in high schools in America, Australia, Ireland, Britain, New Zealand and Canada.



**ACTIVITY IDEA! **

ADAPT A SCENE FROM "OF MICE & MEN"

SCRIPT FORMATTING TIPS:

Select a short passage from "Of Mice & Men" novel, and write your own script in the space below. You may want to continue a scene featured or choose a different part of the book. Once your script is written, assign roles, and take turns acting out the different versions your class has created.

CAPITALIZE the name of the CHARACTER who is speaking.

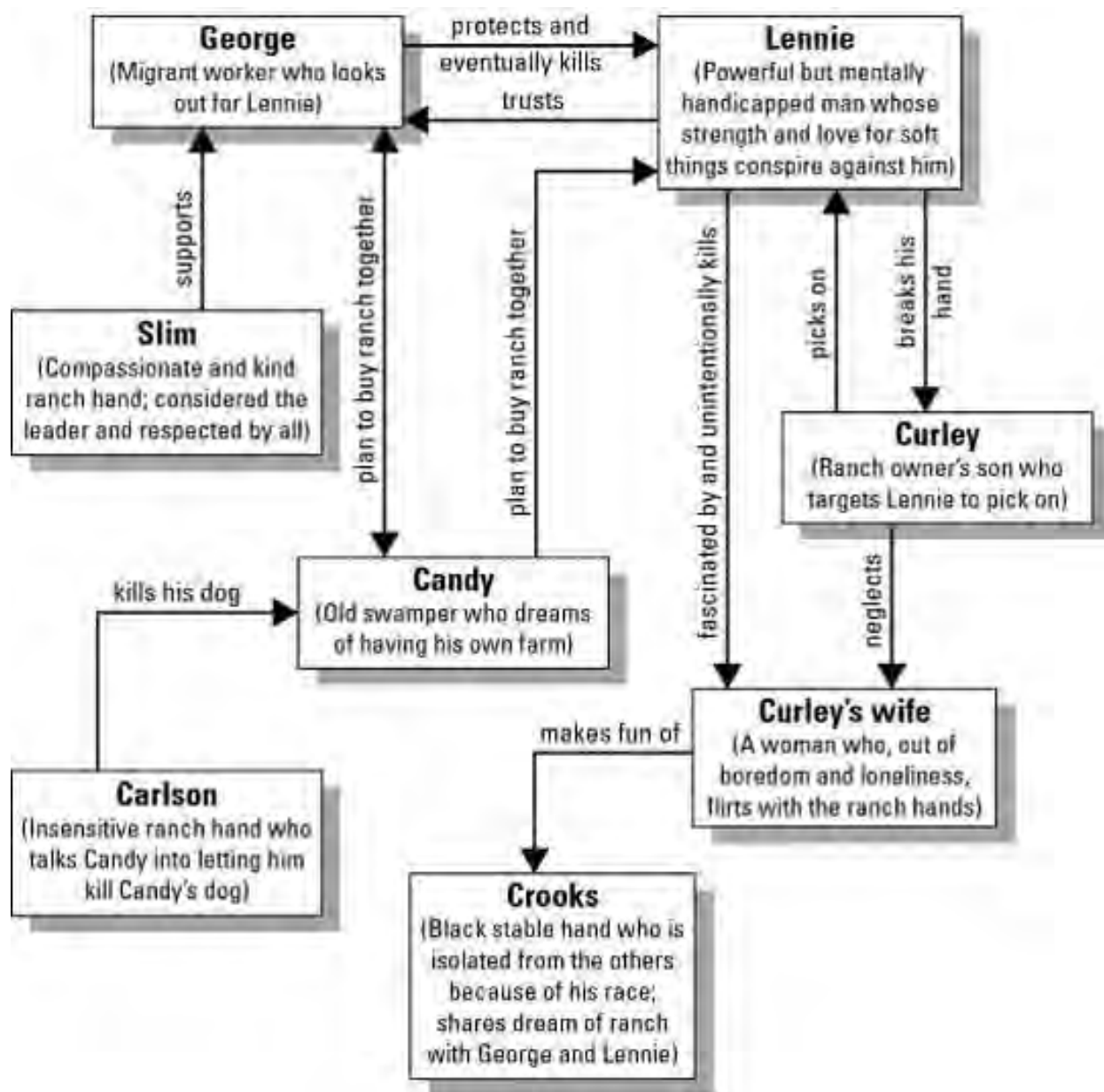
(Put stage directions in parentheses.)

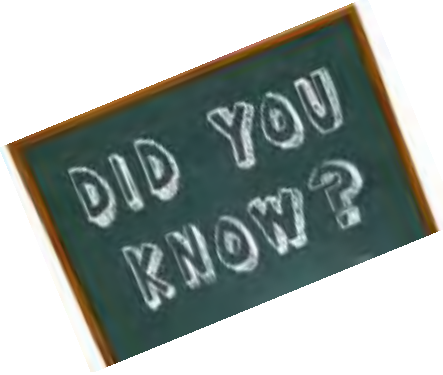
This scene is from Chapter _____, Page(s) _____.

(Add on additional pages as needed.)



OF MICE AND MEN CHARACTER MAP





Psychological and Sociological Profile of the Main Characters of Lennie and George By Michele and Martin Lubetsky, UPMC Consultants for Prime Stage’s Production of *Of Mice and Men*

LENNIE

- Size of big, strong adult
- Acts and talks in a child-like manner
- Acts like a kid imitating his dad (George)
- Eager to make George happy, again like a kid pleasing his dad
- He needs to be looked after, and George seems to need someone to take care of
- Repeats asking questions, likes routine and predictable schedule and activities
- Seems to forget answers, unclear if real memory deficit
- Needs to hear same stories over and over, maybe to calm and feel secure
- Fixates on certain things, like rabbits, touching soft objects, again maybe to calm and feel secure and safe
- Thinks in a concrete, literal way and not understand abstractions, such as consequence of his actions and death
- Difficulty understanding adult consequences and what is serious, but rather what will make George happy or mad
- Innocence and Simplicity in the way that he does not understand adult world rules, relationships, and results of his actions
- Impulsive behavior and emotional reactions, quick to react and become fearful, scared and then not think about his behavior
- Not stop and think ahead
- Trusting and not suspicious of others intent, not read their emotions, not second guess their intent
- Self-talk as a way to process information, to self-calm, says thoughts in his head out loud
- George’s voice in his head as his guide or director of his thoughts

GEORGE

- Lennie’s protector
- Needs someone to take care of
- Does not understand Lennie’s limitations
- Makes decisions for Lennie

**DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY
INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY**

- used to be called mental retardation
- about 1% of population
- ranges mild, moderate, severe, profound
- 85% mild intellectual disability

- 1- Below average intellectual functioning IQ, ability to learn, reason, make decisions, solve problems
- 2- Limitations in Adaptive behaviors, skills necessary for day to day life, such as being able to communicate effectively, interact with others, take care of oneself, independent living, getting and maintaining employment.



MILD

- Conceptual – difficulty with abstract thinking, executive functions-planning, strategizing, priority setting, cognitive flexibility, short term memory, functional skills-reading, money management, concrete approach to problems
- Social – immature in social interactions, difficulty perceiving peers social cues, more concrete communication/conversation, difficulty in regulating emotion and behavior for age, limited understanding of risk and social judgement, at risk for being manipulated by others
- Practical – support in complex daily living tasks, grocery shopping, nutritious food, getting a job, health care and legal decisions

MODERATE

- Conceptual – support needed for simple academic skills, and help with daily conceptual task or others take over responsibility
- Social – obvious difference from peers, simple social communication, difficulty with social cues, support to make friendships
- Practical – can learn to do self-help feeding and hygiene care after teaching and practice, learn household chores, more support for employment in simplified job expectations

SEVERE & PROFOUND

- Dependent on other adults providing support and supervised living.





LACT LESSON PLANS FOR *OF MICE AND MEN*

WORKSHOP I

Theatrical Warm-up and Get students engaged!

Objective: Students will develop physical awareness as it relates to self-expression and vocal production. Stretching limbers, the muscles and connective tissues so that they can move with the demands of any dramatic situation.

Procedure:

- Begin with movement/vocal warm-up

Start with head/neck roles

The Puppet –

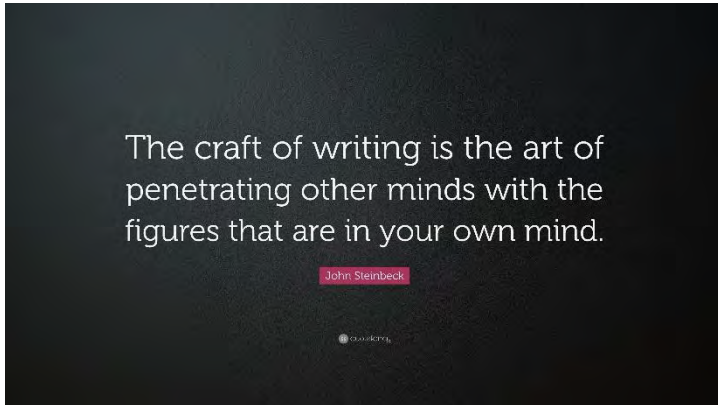
1. Stand in a circle with some room around you to move.
2. Imagine a string is attached to each of your shoulders. Let the string pull your shoulders up to the ceiling. Try and touch the ceiling with your shoulders. Really try.
3. Now imagine the string is attached to your elbows. Let it lift your elbows to the ceiling. Try and touch the ceiling with your elbows.
4. Now imagine the string is attached to your wrists. Try and touch the ceiling with your wrists.
5. Now imagine the string is attached to your fingertips. Try and touch the ceiling with your fingertips. Stretch and reach to the ceiling.
6. Release your spine from the waist with a big “uhhh” sound. Hang bent over at the waist like a rag doll, relaxing everything in your body but those few muscles required to keep you on your feet.
7. Breathe a big sigh and let out any tension remaining.
8. Now roll up your spine, stacking one vertebra atop the other. Leave your head, shoulders and arms released until the very last minute when your head will float into place above the spine.
9. Breathe another big sigh and release the tension.
10. Repeat the entire exercise double time.

6-8 minutes -----



VOCABULARY – READING AND RESPONDING TO TEXT

Objective: Students will strengthen inter-personal skills with knowledge of vocabulary used in different ways throughout their reading and writing. Using and understanding different vocabulary will also expedite comprehension and focus. It allows for **audibility**: projecting your voice so your audience can hear and understand you; **pronunciation**: recognizing words before you say them and pronounce all sounds correctly; **articulation**: using your tongue, mouth and lips to pronounce all the sounds correctly; **vocal variety/expression**: using appropriate pitch, volume and flow.



Pennsylvania Academic Standards for Reading, Writing, Listening, Speaking
The following standards are addressed in this lesson plan:

1.6.11.A: Listen critically and respond to others in small and large group situations. Respond with grade level appropriate questions, ideas, information or opinions.

1.6.11.C: Demonstrate awareness of audience using appropriate volume and clarity in formal speaking

presentations.

1.6.11.D: Listen to and acknowledge the contributions of other students well introducing ideas and opinions to enrich the discussion

Vocabulary

Objective: Students will strengthen inter-personal skills with knowledge of vocabulary used in different ways throughout their reading of *OF MICE AND MEN*. Using and understanding different vocabulary will also expedite comprehension and focus.

Divide class into teams. Use vocabulary cards and distribute copies to the students for example:

juncture
debris
tramp
emerge
embrace
despair
lumber
elaborate
contemplate
scoff
anguish

Ask students to refer to the definitions they wrote on their vocabulary cards to answer each question below. The questions require them to apply the meaning of the words to their own experiences.



1. What is an experience that makes you feel **anguish**?
2. When have you seen **debris**?
3. Describe a **tramp** character from a movie.
4. Tell about a **calamitous** event from the news.
5. What would you describe with the word **pugnacious**?

20 minutes

Objective: Students will strengthen inter-personal skills with knowledge of vocabulary used in different ways throughout their reading. Using and understanding different vocabulary will also expedite comprehension and focus.

- **Comprehension Focus**

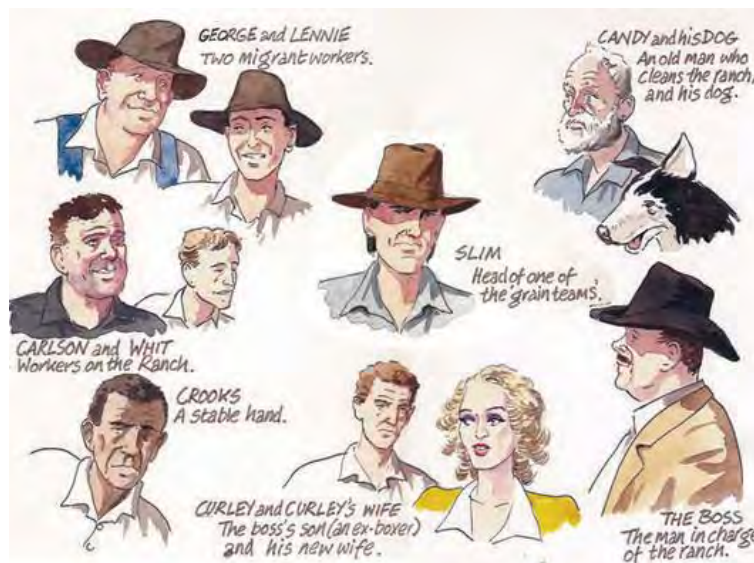
Analyze Theme

Community vs Individual

Of Mice and Men teaches a grim lesson about the nature of human existence. Nearly all of the characters, including George, Lennie, Candy, Crooks, and Curley’s wife, admit, at one time or another, to having a profound sense of loneliness and isolation. Each desires the comfort of a friend but will settle for the attentive ear of a stranger. The characters are rendered helpless by their isolation, and yet, even at their weakest, they seek to destroy those who are even weaker than they. Perhaps the most powerful example of this cruel tendency is when Crooks criticizes Lennie’s dream of the farm and his dependence on George. Having just admitted his own vulnerabilities—he is a black man with a crooked back who longs for companionship—Crooks zeroes in on Lennie’s own weaknesses.

Divide students into teams

1. Using some of the characters in *Of Mice and Men* distribute “Character” cards to the teams.
2. Allow them to discuss amongst themselves (along with instructor) for 4 minutes how the characters contribute to the theme and movement of the play.





WORKSHOP II

Objective: Students will develop physical awareness as it relates to self-expression and vocal production. Stretching limbers the muscles and connective tissues so that they can move with the demands of any dramatic situation.

Procedure:

- Begin with movement/vocal warm-up from Workshop I

6-8 minutes

Theatre Game: Observing Change

This exercise focuses entirely on your power of observation. It becomes more difficult for your partner as your attention to detail improves. This exercise will all also discipline the student to focus and observe the performance for comprehension and clarity.

1. Sit on the classroom floor across from a partner.
2. Spend two minutes observing everything about your partner in as much detail as possible.
3. Turn away. Your partner will then change three small things about his or her appearance.
4. Turn back when your partner is ready.
5. Try and guess the three changes.
6. Switch roles.

This exercise can be done with four students at a time so that the class can observe changes.

20 minutes

Objective: Training students on how to be an “audience” member.

Theatre Etiquette

1. Bring in a playbill – explain the importance of reading the contents of the Playbill.
2. Bring in picture of the set – explain the importance of observing the set and how important it is to the movement and tone of the play.

Explain how important it is to respect performers on stage by being quiet and listening to the performance. Students will learn the proper way to attend a theatrical performance by being observant and focused on the playbill, the set the language and will thus have an enjoyable experience and be able to ask intelligent questions at the Q&A after the performance.

20 minutes

END Workshop II





WORKSHOP III

AFTER THE PRODUCTION

Evaluation, Reflection and Comprehension

Objective: To evaluate the learning experience of the play and comprehension quality of the experience. Reflections on student experience.

Procedure: Initiate and participate with students in collaborative discussion on various aspects of the play. A Q&A period on paper and/or verbally for the entire session.

To properly evaluate the learning experience for the students, the Instructor can pose questions on paper from Workshops I and II and the theatre experience. **40 minutes**

"The things we admire in men, kindness and generosity, openness, honesty, understanding, and feeling are the concomitants of failure in our system. And those traits we detest, sharpness, greed, acquisitiveness, meanness, egotism, and self-interest are the traits of success. And while men admire the quality of the first they love the produce of the second."

- Novelist and Nobel laureate John Steinbeck (1902-1968).



OF MICE AND MEN
AGREE/DISAGREE QUESTIONNAIRE

Before seeing the production, *Of Mice and Men*, respond as to whether you agree or disagree with each statement by providing a check (✓) if you agree or an X if you disagree.

After seeing the play, examine your answers in the before column and respond again in the after column. Have any of your answers changed?

Before

After

	I now have more of an appreciation of live theatre.	
	Does the novel/play change how you view the depression?	
	If the same story had been written today but set in the current climate, would it be different?	
	Are people treated any different in the novel/play than today?	
	Does the novel/play effect you differently.	
	Do you feel we are still close to being in another depression today?	
	Did the novel/play change your view on whether there is still a divide between classes of people today?	
	Life experience provides better education than reading books.	
	The United States is currently an equal opportunity nation.	
	I have a better respect for people who are mentally challenged.	





John Steinbeck's Books

John Steinbeck wrote 31 books over the course of his career. His most well-known novels include *Of Mice and Men* (1937), *Grapes of Wrath* (1939) and *East of Eden* (1952).

'Of Mice and Men' (1937)

Two poor migrant workers, George and Lennie, are working for the American dream in California during the Great Depression. Lennie, who has a mild mental disability, is steadfastly faithful to his friend

George, but he has a habit of getting into trouble. Their goal: to own an acre of land and a shack. After they both secure jobs working the fields of the Salinas Valley — Steinbeck's own hometown — their dream seems more attainable than ever. However Lennie's inclinations eventually get him into trouble again, spiraling to a tragic conclusion for both men. The book was later transformed into a Broadway play and three movies.

The Grapes of Wrath' (1939)

Widely considered Steinbeck's finest and most ambitious novel, this book tells the story of a dispossessed Oklahoma family and their struggle to carve out a new life in California at the height of the Great Depression, the book captured the mood and angst of the nation during this time period. At the height of its popularity, *The Grapes of Wrath* sold 10,000 copies per week.

'The Pearl' (1947)

This story, based on a Mexican folktale, explores human nature and the potential of love. Kino, a poor diver who gathers pearls from the ocean floor, lives with his wife Juana and their infant son Coyotito by the sea. On the same day Coyotito is stung by a scorpion and is turned away by the town doctor because they can't afford care, Kino finds the largest [pearl](#) he's ever seen on one of his dives. The pearl, which brings the potential of great fortune, ignites the neighbors' jealousy, eventually becoming a dangerous agent of evil.

'East of Eden' (1952)

Once again set in Steinbeck's hometown of Salinas, California, this story follows the intersecting stories of two farming families, the Trasks and the Hamiltons, from the Civil War to World War I, as their lives reenact the fall of Adam and Eve and the rivalry of Cain and Abel. The book was later adapted into a 1955 film directed by [Elia Kazan](#) and starring [James Dean](#) in his first major movie role. Dean was later nominated for an Academy Award for his performance, which he received posthumously.



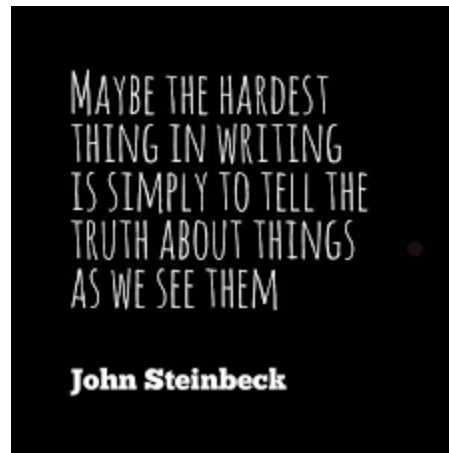
Some of Steinbeck's other works include *Cup of Gold* (1929), *The Pastures of Heaven* (1932) and *To a God Unknown* (1933), all of which received tepid reviews. It wasn't until *Tortilla Flat* (1935), a humorous novel about paisano life in the Monterey region was released, that the writer achieved real success.

Steinbeck struck a more serious tone with *In Dubious Battle* (1936) and *The Long Valley* (1938), a collection of short stories. He continued to write in his later years, with credits including *Cannery Row* (1945), *Burning Bright* (1950), *The Winter of Our Discontent* (1961) and *Travels with Charley: In Search of America* (1962).

John Steinbeck's Awards

In 1940 Steinbeck earned Steinbeck a Pulitzer Prize for *The Grapes of Wrath*.

In 1962, the author received the Nobel Prize for Literature — "for his realistic and imaginative writings, combining as they do sympathetic humour and keen social perception." Upon receiving the award, Steinbeck said the writer's duty was "dredging up to the light our dark and dangerous dreams for the purpose of improvement."



Please go to our website: www.primestage.com to find this form and send it back directly online! Or you can mail it to us at: Prime Stage Theatre P.O. Box 99446 Pittsburgh, PA 15233.

THE RESOURCE GUIDE STUDENT EVALUATION FORM

YOUR NAME _____

NAME OF SCHOOL _____

GRADE _____ NAME OF TEACHER _____

What part/parts of this story did you enjoy when you were seeing the play?

What part/parts of this play confused you while reading or watching the play?

What part/parts of the stage version helped you understand the book?

What did you learn from reading or seeing this play?

Which character would you like to play?



Please go to our website: www.primestage.com to find this form and send it back directly online! Or you can mail it to us at: Prime Stage Theatre P.O. Box 99446 Pittsburgh, PA 15233.

THE RESOURCE GUIDE TEACHER EVALUATION FORM

Prime Stage constantly assesses the work provided by our education department. Your feedback is vital to our ongoing need for funding for this program. Please fill out the following forms and mail or email them to the address given below. Thank you.

YOUR NAME _____

NAME OF SCHOOL _____

EMAIL ADDRESS _____

Which part(s) of the play and experience you find most helpful for you and your students?

Was the guide useful to you?

Which part(s) did you find most helpful?

How can we improve the theatrical for the future?

