

Plot	
Chapter 1	George and Lennie are chased out of Weed. Whilst making their way to the ranch for work, they set up camp for the night. We learn about their relationship and their dream about owning their own ranch.
Chapter 2	At the ranch, they meet most of the main characters: Candy, Curley, Curley's wife, Slim and the Boss. George realises that Curley is potentially a dangerous character and he warns Lennie to stay away from Curley's flirtatious wife.
Chapter 3	Candy's dog is shot by Carlson because he is old and suffering. Candy overhears George and Lennie discussing their dream of owning a ranch and he offers them all his savings to become involved in it. Curley picks a fight with Lennie in front of the men. Lennie crushes his hand and humiliates him.
Chapter 4	Candy, Crooks, Lennie and Curley's wife are left on the ranch as everyone else goes into town. Crooks has a momentary hope of being part of the dream until Curley's wife cruelly belittles him and reminds him of his position as a black man.
Chapter 5	Lennie kills his puppy. He accidentally kills Curley's wife by breaking her neck when he was stroking her hair. Curley and the men form a posse to hunt Lennie down. George knows he has to kill Lennie himself.
Chapter 6	George finds Lennie in the brush and as he tells him about their dream ranch, he shoots him in the back of the head.

Themes		
Loneliness	Dreams	Natural world
Prejudice	Friendship	Violence
Survival of the fittest	Marginalisation	Victims
The weak and the strong	Animals	Justice

Assessment Objectives	
AO1	Respond to texts critically and imaginatively; select and evaluate relevant textual detail to illustrate and support interpretations.
AO2	Explain how language, structure and form contribute to writers' presentation of ideas, themes and settings.
AO4	Relate texts to their social, cultural and historical contexts; explain how texts have been influential and significant to self, and other readers in different contexts and at different times.

Vocabulary			
Mood	Stereotype	Isolation	Misogyny
Atmosphere	American Dream	Personification	Segregation
Novella	Itinerant	Hostility	Pessimistic
Symbolism	Derogatory	Futile	

Context
The Wall Street Crash happened in 1929 when the prices on the New York Stock Exchange collapsed. Many people blamed the banks for this disaster because they risked people's deposits on the Stock Market. The consequences of this were difficult to accept because The Roaring Twenties were a boom time of prosperity and the feeling that life was improving again after WW1.
America was plunged into The Great Depression after the stock market crashed. By winter 1932, the country was in the greatest economic depression of its history with over 13 million people unemployed and many people starving and homeless.
The Dust Bowl occurred when a series of dust storms in 1930s America caused major damage to agricultural land in some states. This meant much of the land could not be farmed and as a result farmers lost their livelihoods and were forced into an itinerant lifestyle.
The American Dream was the dream of a life that could be better, richer and more fulfilling for everyone. People dreamed of having their own land and being independent after the effects of the Wall Street Crash. America had always been seen as the 'land of opportunity' where any dream could be achieved through hard work.
As a result of the economic and agricultural problems, many farmers migrated to California as people thought it provided a better chance of employment. George and Lennie are examples of these migrant workers who move from ranch to ranch looking for work and having to accept low wages. This was a very insecure and unstable way of life.

Character	
Lennie Small	A huge man but with a child like understanding of the world. He has a selective, short-term memory and always gets in trouble. He looks up to George as a father figure and takes pleasure in hearing of the dream ranch and the rabbits they will have.
George Milton	He is the opposite of Lennie both in size and intelligence. He is no saintly hero and, although he loves Lennie, he becomes easily frustrated and annoyed with him. He protects Lennie and kills him to spare him from Curley's torture.
Slim	Slim is the well respected and admired ranch foreman. He is a wise figure with 'god-like' eyes whose opinions and decisions the men respect. He decides to shoot Candy's dog.
Candy	He is the crippled old 'swamper'. After his dog is shot, he makes George and Lennie's dream become more of a reality by offering them all his savings.
Crooks	Crooks in the 'negro stable buck' who is segregated from the white workers because of his skin colour and lives close to the animals. At first, he is bitter and cynical when Lennie tells him about the dream but finds himself being drawn into it. His hope for the future is destroyed when Curley's wife crushes his dignity and threatens his life.
Curley's Wife	She is the only woman on the ranch and her lack of worth in the eyes of the men is suggested by the fact she is not named; she is just a possession of her husband. She is lonely but the men see her a negative light and think 'she got the eye'. Sadly, her dream of becoming a movie star ends with her death at Lennie's hands.
Curley	Curley is a violent bully and the son of the Boss. His real reason for hunting down Lennie is in revenge for the humiliation of having his hand crushed, rather than for the death of his wife.
Carlson	Carlson shoots Candy's dog and is a representative figure of the tough, unfeeling men on the ranch.

The Title

The title of the novella is from a poem called *Ode to a Mouse* by the Scottish poet, Robert Burns. It is a pessimistic poem as it describes how easily hopes and dreams can be destroyed. The lines,

'The best laid plans of mice and men

Gang aft agaly'

remind us of how none of the characters will ever achieve their hopes and dreams and adds to the depressing message of the novella.

Time Frame

- The events of the novella take place over 3 full days.
- It opens with George and Lennie camping on a Thursday night on their way to the ranch.
- On Friday evening, Candy's dog is shot, and Lennie breaks Curley's hand.
- On Saturday, the men go into town and the 'weak' characters are left behind.
- On Sunday afternoon, Lennie kills Curley's wife. In the evening George shoots Lennie

You are advised to spend about 40 minutes on this question.

Show how John Steinbeck uses the character of Crooks to highlight some aspects of American society in the 1930s. [20 marks]

John Steinbeck uses the character of Crooks to highlight several aspects of American society, including the racism and prejudice against black people, the loneliness of most Americans, who wandered from job to job, and also the realisation that the American Dream, whatever version they have, will never come true, but will instead be destroyed.

Firstly John Steinbeck uses the character of Crooks to show the racism against the black people who had recently been released from slavery. This is evident from the start of the book when Candy tells George that Crooks 'gets it' from the Boss every time the Boss is angry. Crooks is unable to do anything about it because he is a black man with a crippled back, who, if fired, will be unable to find work with anyone else. This is again displayed further on in the novel when Curley's wife claims that she can 'get [him] strung up so fast it ain't even funny' if he gets her 'into trouble'. This again highlights the fact of racism in American society as it shows that black people were considered as less than married white women; women weren't thought of highly in American society, but only as objects to admire and possess. Racism is also evident in Candy's use of the 'n' word when referring to Crooks, because, although Candy has no particular objection to Crooks, it shows that he views Crooks' position as justified and rightful or else he wouldn't deign to use that language.

Steinbeck also uses Crooks to illustrate the loneliness that was felt by the black people and also the travelling workers in American society who had nothing to do other than wander by themselves looking for work. This is evident in Crooks' refusal to allow Lennie into his room, but eventually obliges, which shows that although he resents the idea of people who hurt him, he is still willing to let Lennie in because he wants company and also because Lennie is unlikely to grasp the meaning of racism.

Steinbeck portrays the realisation that the American Dream is nothing but an illusion through Crooks as he is willing to join in with the dream with Lennie and Candy. However, when Curley's wife enters the room, he tells the others he was 'just fooling' showing that because Crooks has been subject to racism and prejudice for the majority of his life, it is easier for him to accept the fake nature of the American Dream. I think that whilst Crooks was able to forget that he was discriminated against, due to the company that was present, Lennie, 'a dum-dum' and Candy 'a lousy old sheep', he was able to believe in the dream. However, it was shattered as soon as reality pervaded the room in the form of Curley's wife, who has her own dream, that she thinks will come true unlike everyone else's.

Finally, Steinbeck uses Crooks to show the things that the black population of America dreamt about because as Lennie enters the room, Crooks is reading a book about civil rights and quotes its contents to him at the start of their conversation. 'You have no right being in a black man's room' shows that Crooks is considered low down on the social ladder but is also concerned about preserving what little dignity and self respect he has left. He is eager to ensure that people don't violate his rights. Furthermore, he probably wants to be treated as a normal person, as he accepts the invitation to join the white workers in the bunkhouse at Christmas, even though they prompt pick a fight with him and use him as entertainment.

Overall, I think that Steinbeck uses the character of Crooks to show the main problems with American society in the 1930s, particularly towards black people and also towards lower class workers and people who didn't have a lot of money.

Commentary

The answer remains focused throughout with key words from the question present in each paragraph. There is assured use of relevant detail from different sections of the text and the exploration of the impact of Crooks' presentation becomes more confident as the response develops. Here is some detailed reference to salient events and relationships and the times he lives in.

You are advised to spend about 20 minutes on this question.

Look closely at the way George speaks and behaves here. What does it reveal about his character? [10]

George said, 'What was it you wanted to see me about?' Candy pointed at Curley's wife. George stared. 'What's the matter with her?' he asked. He stepped closer, and then he echoed Candy's words. 'Oh, Jesus Christ!' He was down on his knees beside her. He put his hand over her heart. And finally, when he stood up, slowly and stiffly, his face was as hard and tight as wood, and his eyes were hard.

Candy said, 'What done it?'

George looked coldly at him. 'Ain't you got any idear?' he asked. And Candy was silent. 'I should of knew,' George said hopelessly. 'I guess maybe way back in my head I did.'

Candy asked, 'What we gonna do now, George? What we gonna do now?'

George was a long time in answering. 'Guess... e gotta tell the...guys. I guess we gotta get 'im an' lock 'im up. We can't let 'im get away. Why, the poor bastard'd starve.' And he tried to reassure himself. 'Maybe they'll lock 'im up an' be nice to 'im.'

But Candy said excitedly, 'We oughtta let 'im get away. You don't know that Curley. Curley gon'ta wanta get 'im lynched. Curley'll get 'im killed.'

George watched Candy's lips. 'Yeah,' he said at last, 'that's right, Curley will. An' the other guys will.' And he looked back at Curley's wife.

Now Candy spoke his greatest fear. 'You an' me can get that little place, can't we, George? You an' me can go there an' live nice, can't we, George? Can't we?'

Before George answered, Candy dropped his head and looked down at the hay. He knew. George said softly, '- I think I knowed from the very first. I think I knowed we'd never do her. He usta like to hear about it so much I got to thinking maybe we would.'

'Then - it's all off?' Candy asked sulkily.

George didn't answer his question. George said, 'I'll work my month an' I'll take my fifty bucks an' I'll stay all night in some lousy cat house. Or I'll set in some pool-room till ever'body goes home. An' then I'll come back an' work another month an' I'll have fifty bucks more.'

Candy said, 'He's such a nice fella. I didn't think he'd do nothing like this.'

George still stared at Curley's wife. 'Lennie never done it in meanness,' he said. 'All the time he done bad things, but he never done one of 'em mean.' He straightened up and looked back at Candy. 'Now listen. We gotta tell the guys. They got to bring him in, I guess. They ain't no way out. Maybe they won't hurt 'im.' He said sharply, 'I ain't gonna let 'em hurt Lennie. Now you listen. The guys might think I was in on it. I'm gonna go in the bunk house. Then in a minute you come out and tell the guys about her, and I'll come along and make like I never seen her. Will you do that? So the guys won't think I was in on it?'

Candy said, 'Sure, George. Sure I'll do that.'

'OK. Give me a couple minutes then, and you come runnin' out an' tell like you jus' found her. I'm going now'. George turned and went quickly out of the barn.

At the start of the extract Steinbeck presents the character of George as a quick thinker as when he realises that Curley's wife is dead, despite his exclamation of 'Oh Jesus Christ!', he makes a speedy recovery and acts fast, immediately getting 'down on his knees beside her'. His methodical approach to checking to make sure she was dead is demonstrated by the declarative sentence 'He put his hand over her heart' and reflects his calm, measured attitude towards the bad news.

George's character is also presented as rather distant, as he removes all emotion from his face, 'his face was as hard and tight as wood, and his eyes were hard'. This presents him as quite cold and implies that he is almost resigned to the fact that Lennie has killed Curley's wife and has already accepted it. He looked 'coldly' at Candy and this adverb suggests that he has put up a protective façade or shield to try to hide the fact that he is affected by the incident. However, his true feelings are exposed as he admits in defeat 'hopelessly' that 'I should of knew', even stating 'I guess maybe way back in my head I did', which also suggests that he already had an idea of the events that would occur, presenting him as perceptive and also emphasising his relationship with Lennie as he knows him well.

It is evident that George cares deeply for Lennie as he hesitates, demonstrated by the use of ellipsis, 'Guess...we gotta tell the...guys' which implies that he doesn't want to 'lock' Lennie up. His concern for Lennie shines through, 'Why, the poor bastard'd starve', which shows he cares for his well being. The fact that he 'was a long time in answering' before he admits that 'we can't let him get away' suggests that his real feeling won't allow Lennie to escape.

George is also presented as defeated as he speaks 'softly' and his dedication to Lennie is shown at the end of the extract as he says 'sharply' that 'I ain't gona let 'em hurt Lennie' and this dialogue shows how defensive he is of his friend, even when Lennie is clearly in the wrong, which also portrays him as loyal.

George's insistence that 'Lennie never done it in meanness' could suggest his denial of the gravity of the incident yet he is not delusional and realises that 'there ain't no way out'. He moves on from the event quickly, forming a plan which reflects his intelligence. He orders Candy 'Now you listen' and his use of an imperative shows that he knows how to assert his power.

Commentary

A totally focused response with detailed coverage of the extract. Integrated quotations are used effectively in the analysis of language. Comments are evaluative, perceptive and cogent.