

Section C: Modern Prose

Of Mice and Men, John Steinbeck

Question 7 - Discuss the relationship between George and Lennie

The relationship between George and Lennie in the novel, 'Of Mice and Men', is shown to be very close, with the two always having each other's backs, and also at times reflecting a parent-child dynamic.

In the novella, 'Of Mice and Men', the relationship of George and Lennie is seen as a very tight bond, which was extremely rare at the time due to the events of the Great Depression that were taking place. During the period of time that 'Of Mice and Men' was set in, the Dust Bowl and The Great Depression were happening, which was forcing people to leave their towns in order to find work, due to the scarce availability of money and crops. Because of this, many men began to become very closed off, only caring about themselves, doing things for themselves, and thinking about themselves, in order to survive. This, however, is not the case with the main characters of George and Lennie. Although not blood related in any manner, the two are shown to have an immensely tight friendship throughout the novel, always looking out for one another. This can be seen very early on in the text when Lennie believes that George is sick of him, so offers to go and live on a hill by himself. To which George responds, "No - look, I was just fooling, Lennie. Cause I want you to stay with me.". Here we can see that George willingly chooses to be by Lennie's side, which is enforced by the use of the verb, 'want', showing that he likes Lennies company. Another example of when their close relationship can be seen is when George is telling Lennie about the standard of living for most men, and how they will be different. He says, "Guys like us, that work on ranches, are the loneliest guys in the world" and he then goes on to say, "With us it ain't like that. We got a future. We got somebody to talk to that gives a damn about us.". The use of the superlative, 'loneliest' in contrast with the collective pronoun 'we' really emphasises to the reader their tight bond, showing how it is them against the world and they are not like the others. Not only this, but also the use of anaphora of the pronoun 'we', helps to highlight their togetherness and friendship, in comparison to the hundreds of other isolated men.

Furthermore, the relationship of George and Lennie is shown to reflect a parent-child dynamic, which can be seen clearly throughout the novel when George constantly has to take care of Lennie. A prime example of this is shown in section 1, when Lennie begins to drink immense amounts of water from the lake, and is said to be, "snorting into the water like a horse". George responds to this almost immediately, and Steinbeck writes, "Lennie!" He said sharply. "For Gods sake Lennie don't drink so much.". Here, the use of the adverb, "sharply" has connotations of a parent telling off a child, showing George to be the more responsible one, and Lennie to be much more immature. Another example of this parental child dynamic can be seen later on in the text when George asks Lennie to bring him the mouse he killed, and Steinbeck compares Lennies movement to an animal. He writes, "Slowly, like a terrier who doesn't want to bring a ball to its master.". The use of the adverb slowly shows that Lennie is reluctant to bring it to George, almost like a child is reluctant to admit when they've done something wrong, as they know they will be told off. Not only this, but the use of the noun 'master', reinforces this parent to child relationship and slight imbalance of power, showing that George is like the strict adult, always making sure Lennie is not getting in trouble and is doing the right thing.

Additionally, the relationship of George and Lennie is again shown to be very close through Lennies speech early on in the novel. When George is talking about the dream and how they are not like the standard itinerant worker, Lennie cuts in and says, "Cause I got you to look after me, and you got me to look after you.". The repetition of the pronouns 'I' and 'you' really focus in on the fact that to them, it is them versus everyone else, and they know that they will always be fine as long as they have each other. This kind of relationship was extremely rare during this time as no other guys travelled around together or cared for anyone else. The uniqueness and rarity of their bond can be seen later on in the text as well, when the boss of the ranch says to George, "Well I never seen one guy take so much trouble for another guy", showing he is shocked that George even cares about someone other than himself. The use of the verb 'never' shows just how close they are and how rare it is, as the boss, who has probably met hundreds of men working on his ranch, has not ever seen something like this.

As well as this, the close relationship of George and Lennie is seen through George's speech to Slim. He tells him, "Course, Lennies a goddamn nuisance most of the time, but you get used to goin' round with a guy, and you can't get rid of him." This highlights just how tight their bond is, as although George describes him as a nuisance, and knows that sometimes Lennie can cause him problems, he still chooses to stick by his side

Of Mice And Men Papers

Christian G. Meyer



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