

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt *Of Mice and Men, Day 1*



Key Paragraph

“They had walked in single file down the path, and even in the open one stayed behind the other. Both were dressed in denim trousers and in denim coats with brass buttons. Both wore black, shapeless hats and both carried tight blanket rolls slung over their shoulders. The first man was small and quick, dark of face, with restless eyes and sharp, strong features. Every part of him was defined: small, strong hands, slender arms, a thin and bony nose. Behind him walked his opposite, a huge man, shapeless of face, with large, pale eyes, with side sloping shoulders; and he walked heavily, dragging his feet a little, the way a bear drags his paws. His arms did not swing at his sides, but hung loosely.”

The author John Steinbeck describes George and Lennie as pure opposites. George also points out how George and Lennie’s friendship makes them different from other farmers. Conflict arises between different types of individual and groups because they hold different beliefs and view points. Is it possible to be friends with the “enemy”? **Write an argumentative** paragraph supporting or disproving that people that are different or opposite can be friends. Support your position with three examples.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt *Of Mice and Men, Day 2*



Key Paragraph

“George went on. ‘With us it ain’t like that. We got a future. We got somebody to talk to that gives a damn about us. We don’t have to sit in no bar room blowin’ in our jack jus’ because we got no place else to go. If them other guys gets in jail they can rot for all anybody gives a damn. But not us.’

Lennie broke in. *‘But not us! An’ why? Because...because I got you to look after me, and you got me to look after you, and that’s why.’* He laughed delightedly. ‘Go on now, George!’”

Lennie and George have big dreams for their future. They want to make positive changes in their lives and have hope for a better tomorrow. What are your dreams for the next year? **Write an argumentative paragraph** to convince your parent, teacher or friend that you will achieve your goal.

Support your answer by clearly stating three-step action plan.

When answering the question above, consider the following:

- How will you motivate yourself to not giving up.
- What are the things that you will need to do to achieve those goals?
- What are some of the obstacles that might keep you from reaching your goal and how do you plan to overcome those obstacles?

1. What are your future dreams?

2. Why is it important to keep moving forward in the direction of your dreams?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt *Of Mice and Men, Day 3*



Key Paragraph

“The boss deliberately put the little book in his pocket. He hooked his thumbs in his belt and squinted one eye nearly closed. ‘Say—what you sellin’?’

‘Huh?’

‘I said what stake you got in this guy? You takin’ his pay away from him?’

‘No, ‘course I ain’t. Why ya think I’m sellin’ him out?’

‘Well, I never seen one guy take so much trouble for another guy. I just like to know what your interest is.’ ”

George and Lennie do everything together and travel to new jobs together. Describe the relationship between Lennie and George in detail. Do you think Lennie would be able to survive without George? **Write an argumentative paragraph** defending whether you believe Lennie could survive without George or not. Include three reasons to support your answer.

When answering the question above, consider the following:

- How does George try to protect Lennie?
- Is this relationship one-sided or does George benefit from having Lennie around?
- Does George learn anything or gain anything from having Lennie with him?

1. Describe a time when you depended on a friend for help or a friend depended on you.

2. Was this a healthy friendship? Why or why not?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt *Of Mice and Men, Day 4*



Key Paragraph

“I’ll try to catch him,” said Curley. His eyes passed over the new men and he stopped. He glanced coldly at George and then at Lennie. His arms gradually bent at the elbows and his hands closed into fists. He stiffened and went into a slight crouch. His glance was at once calculating and pugnacious. Lennie squirmed under the look and shifted his feet nervously. Curley stepped gingerly close to him. ‘You the new guys the old man was waitin’ for?’ ”

Curley causes a lot of trouble but is never punished by the boss because he is the boss’s son. However, everyone knows life would be easier if Curley got his act together. Pretend you are a rancher with George and Lennie. In a letter to the boss, **write an argumentative paragraph** that proves Curley is mistreating other ranchers. Support your argument with evidence from the reading.

When answering the question above, consider the following:

- Is Curley of a higher rank than the other man working there?
- If so, what gives him this higher rank? Does Curley seem to have more power than the other men?
- How does he exert this power?
- Why does his wife become so important to the men?
- Does she threaten how Curley is viewed by the other men? If so, how?

1. When do you feel insecure?
2. What is a healthy way to deal with insecurities?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt *Of Mice and Men, Day 5*



Key Paragraph

“Lennie cried out suddenly—‘I don’t like this place, George. This ain’t no good place. I wanna get outa here.’

‘We gotta keep it till we get a stake. We can’t help it, Lennie. We’ll get out jus’ as soon as we can. I don’t like it no better than you do.’ He went back to the table and set out a new solitaire hand. ‘No, I don’t like it,’ he said. ‘For two bits I’d shove out of here. If we can get jus’ a few dollars in the poke we’ll shove off and go up the American River and pan gold. We can make maybe a couple of dollars a day there, and we might hit a pocket.’ ”

Lennie’s instincts seem to be telling him that they should leave the ranch, but George doesn’t listen. Pretend you are Lennie, in a letter to George **write an argumentative paragraph** to persuade George that they should leave the farm. Include three reasons to support Lennie’s argument.

1. Describe a time that you did or did not listen to your instincts.
2. Do you trust your instincts? Why or why not?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt *Of Mice and Men, Day 6*



Key Paragraph

“ ‘Oh, I dunno. Hardly none of the guys ever travel together. I hardly never seen two guys travel together. You know how the hands are, they just come in and get their bunk and work a month, and then they quit and go out alone. Never seem to give a damn about nobody. It jus’ seems kinds funny a cuckoo like him and a smart little guy like you travelin’ together.’

‘He ain’t no cuckoo,’ said George. ‘He’s dumb as hell, but he ain’t crazy. An’ I ain’t so bright neither, or I wouldn’t be buckin’ barley for my fifty and found. If I was bright, if I was even a little bit smart, I’d have my own little place, an’ I’d be bringin’ in my own crops, ‘stead of doin’ all the work and not getting what comes up outa the ground.’ George fell silent. He wanted to talk. Slim neither encouraged nor discouraged him. He just sat back, quiet and receptive.”

It seems that George doesn’t mind sharing his personal dreams for the future with Slim, even though he has practically just met Slim. How does Slim convince George that he is worthy of his trust? **Write an argumentative paragraph** supporting or disproving that Slim is trustworthy. Provide three reasons to support your position.

1. What type of people do you find trustworthy?
2. Are you trustworthy? why or why not?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Of Mice and Men, Day 7



Key Paragraph

“ ‘I don’t see no reason for it,’ said Carlson. He went to his bunk, pulled his bag from underneath it and took out a Luger pistol. ‘Let’s get it over with,’ he said. ‘We can’t sleep with him stinkin’ around in here.’ He put the pistol in his hip pocket.

Candy looked a long time at Slim to try to find some reversal. And Slim gave him none. At last Candy said softly and hopelessly, ‘Awright—take im.’ He did not look down at the dog at all. He lay back on his bunk and crossed his arms behind his head and stared at the ceiling.”

Slim tries to convince Candy to put his old dog out of its misery, in the end, Carlson shoots Candy’s dog. **Write an argumentative paragraph** supporting or disproving that Carlson should kill Old Candy’s dog. Support your position with three reasons.

When answering the question above, consider the following:

- Do you think Candy wants Carlson to shoot his dog?
- If not, then why does he let Carlson?
- Why don’t the other men stand up against Carlson and stand up for Candy and his dog?
- What does this say about the relationships among the men?
- Does Old Candy’s age mean that he is taken less seriously by the other men?

1. Describe a time when you had to make a tough decision.
2. How did you decide?
3. Who supported you?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Of Mice and Men, Day 8



Key Paragraph

“Lennie watched him with wide eyes, and old Candy watched him too. Lennie said softly, ‘We could live offa the fatta the lan’.’

‘Sure,’ said George. ‘All kin’s a vegetables in the garden, and if we want a little whisky we can sell a few eggs or something, or some milk. We’d just live there. We’d belong there. There wouldn’t be no more runnin’ round the country and gettin’ fed by a Jap cook. No, sir, we’d have our own place where we belonged and not sleep in no bunk house.’ ”

George retells Lennie about their future dreams living on their own land where they could harvest their own garden. This story brings comfort to Lennie. **Write an argumentative paragraph** explaining how repeating this story bring comfort to George and Lennie. Provide three personal examples or three examples from the novel on how imagining a better future is comforting and encouraging.

1. Describe a story you like repeating.
2. Why do you repeat this story?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt *Of Mice and Men, Day 9*



Key Paragraph

“He said miserably, ‘You seen what they done to my dog tonight? They says he wasn’t no good to himself nor nobody else. When they can me here I wisht somebody’d shoot me. But they won’t do nothing like that. I won’t have no place to go, an’ I can’t get no more jobs. I’ll have thirty dollars more comin’, time you guys is ready to quit.’ ”

Curley becomes angry and takes it out on Lennie. George tells Lennie to fight back. What happens to Lennie once George tells him to fight back? Do you think it is dangerous that Lennie cannot seem to control his anger once it is released? Should Lennie be punished for something he does when he is controlled by his anger? **Write an argumentative paragraph** defending whether you believe Lennie should be punished or not. Include three reasons to support your answer.

1. Have you ever had an experience where you feel like you are out of control? Explain this experience.
2. How do you maintain your control?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt *Of Mice and Men, Day 10*



Key Paragraph

“Crooks laughed again. ‘A guy can talk to you an’ be sure you won’t go blabbin’. Couple of weeks an’ them pups’ll be all right. George knows what he’s about. Jus’ talks, an’ you don’t understand nothing.’ He leaned forward excitedly. ‘This is just a nigger talkin’, see? You couldn’t remember it anyways. I seen it over an’ over—a guy talkin’ to another guy and it don’t make no difference if he don’t hear or understand. The thing is, they’re talkin’, or they’re settin’ still not talkin’. It don’t make no difference, no difference.’ His excitement had increased until he pounded his knee with his hand. ‘George can tell you screwy things, and it don’t matter. It’s just the talking. It’s just bein’ with another guy. That’s all.’ He paused.”

When talking to Lennie, Crooks says that it’s good just to have someone to talk to whom you can trust not to “go blabbin’.” Do you think it is important to have someone in your life that you can trust? Why or why not? **Write an argumentative paragraph** that proves comradeship helps comfort people through a tough time. Support your claim with three examples from the reading or from your own life.

1. Describe someone in your life whom you trust.
2. What are the kinds of things that you might tell that person?
3. What makes them trustworthy?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Of Mice and Men, Day 11



Key Paragraph

“ ‘You’re nuts.’ Crooks was scornful. ‘I seen hunderds of men come by on the road an’ on the ranches with their bindles on their back an’ that same damn thing in their heads. Hunderds of them. They come, an’ they quit an’ go on; an’ every damn one of ‘em’s got a little piece of land in his head. An’ never a God damn one of ‘em ever gets it. Just like heaven. Ever’body wants a little piece of lan’. I read plenty of books out here. Nobody ever gets to heaven, and nobody gets no land. It’s just in their head. They’re all the time talkin’ about it, but it’s jus’ in their head.’ ”

This novel, aside from the few appearances from Curley’s wife, is largely about the relationships between men. When Lennie and George arrive, many of the men are surprised that they have been traveling together. Do you think that men should be able to form close relationships? Are George and Lennie an exception to this rule? **Write an argumentative paragraph** defending whether you believe men can form close relationships. Include three reasons to support your answer from the novel or from your own life.

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt *Of Mice and Men, Day 12*



Key Paragraph

“Crooks stood up from his bunk and faced her. ‘I had enough,’ he said coldly. ‘You got no rights messing around in here at all. Now you jus’ get out, an’ get out quick. If you don’t, I’m gonna ast the boss not to ever let you come in the barn no more.’

She turned on him in scorn. ‘Listen, Nigger,’ she said. ‘You know what I can do to you if you open your trap?’

Crooks stared hopelessly at her, and then he sat down on his bunk and drew into himself.

She closed on him. ‘You know what I could do?’

Crooks seemed to grow smaller, and he pressed himself against the wall. ‘Yes, ma’am.’ ”

Curley’s wife comes into the barn while the men are away and threatens Crooks. How is Curley’s wife described? Do you think Steinbeck means to represent all women in the character of Curley’s wife? **Write an argumentative paragraph** defending whether you believe Steinbeck means to represent all women in the same type of character.

When answering the question above, consider the following:

- How does Curley’s wife disrupt the relationships among the men?
 - Why do you think we never learn her name?
 - What does she represent?
1. Describe your past pets. How did you take care of them?
 2. If they have passed away, how did they die?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt

Of Mice and Men, Day 13



Key Paragraph

“She struggled violently under his hands. Her feet battered on the hay and she writhed to be free; and from under Lennie’s hand came a muffled screaming. Lennie began to cry with fright. ‘Oh! Please don’t do none of that,’ he begged. ‘George gonna say I done a bad thing. He ain’t gonna let me tend no rabbits.’ He moved his hand a little and a hoarse cry came out. Then Lennie grew angry. ‘Now don’t,’ he said. ‘I don’t want you to yell. You gonna get me in trouble jus’ like George says you will. Now don’t you do that.’ And she continued to struggle, and her eyes were wild with terror. He shook her then, and he was angry with her. ‘Don’t you go yellin’,’ he said, and he shook her; and her body flopped like a fish. And then she was still, for Lennie had broken her neck.”

Curley’s wife tells Lennie about the life she could have had and lets him touch her hair. Lennie panics and won’t let go of Curley’s wife’s hair and eventually breaks her neck. **Do you think Lennie deserves to be punished for what he did to Curley’s wife?** Write an argumentative paragraph **defending whether you believe Lennie deserves to be punished for murdering Curley’s wife?**

When answering the question above, consider the following:

- Does it matter if he didn’t mean to kill her?
- How much does intention weigh on guilt?
- Do you think that because someone doesn’t mean to do something bad, they shouldn’t be punished for it?

1. Describe a time when you intended to do something nice and it went terribly wrong.
2. How did you fix the situation?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt *Of Mice and Men, Day 14*



Key Paragraph

“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 other 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 comes looking for Lennie and finds the body of Curley’s wife. He then goes and gets George. Pretend you are Candy. **Write an argumentative paragraph** explaining you are angry at Curley’s wife. What does her death represent for Candy? Is he justified in feeling that anger? Why doesn’t he feel angry with Lennie? Include three reasons to support your answer.

1. Can you remember a time in your life when one of your dreams seemed to be lost?
2. How did you react to this loss?

Character Based Literacy Program Writing Prompt *Of Mice and Men, Day 15*



Key Paragraph

“Lennie said, ‘I thought you was mad at me, George.’

‘No,’ said George. ‘No, Lennie. I ain’t mad. I never been mad, an’ I ain’t now. That’s a thing I want ya to know.’

The voices came close now. George raised the gun and listened to the voices.

Lennie begged, ‘Le’s do it now. Le’s get that place now.’

‘Sure, right now. I gotta. We gotta.’

And George raised the gun and steadied it, and he brought the muzzle of it close to the back of Lennie’s head. The hand shook violently, but his face set and his hand steadied. He pulled the trigger. The crash of the shot rolled up the hills and rolled down again. Lennie jarred, and then settled slowly forward to the sand, and he lay without quivering.”

George meets Lennie by the river and tells him about the ranch again. George shoots Lennie in the back of the head. Write an argumentative paragraph **defending whether you believe George was justified in shooting Lennie?** Write a second argumentative paragraph **defending whether you believe George should be punished for killing Lennie?** Include three reasons to support your answer for each paragraph.

When answering the question above, consider the following:

- Did George kill Lennie to protect him or to punish him?
- Why does George choose to shoot Lennie in the back of the head? Is this cowardly, or was George trying to protect Lennie from feeling pain?

1. Describe a time when you helped a friend in trouble.
2. How did you make the situation better or worse?