

Lesson plan / teacher's notes

Introduce the idea that Steinbeck uses images of darkness and light throughout his novella as a stylistic technique.

- 1) As pupils come into the classroom and settle down, give random students pieces of card with quotations/statements on them, as printed out below. Do not explain why they have been given them at this point.
- 2) When the pupils are ready to begin, give a short introduction about the use of light and darkness in the novel. Explain that it is not used by accident, but it is part of Steinbeck's craft. Today, we will look at examples of this technique and we need to think originally and interpretatively about why he has done this and what effect it has on the reader.
- 3) On the board, have two bubbles drawn with the headings: 'Darkness' and 'Light'. Have one towards the left hand side and one towards the right hand side because pupils will need to link their quote to one area, or they can put it in the middle if they don't know or if it applies to both images. There are no right or wrong answers about this but it encourages students to be interpretative and make decisions for them.
- 4) Tell pupils that they will all be involved, whether they have been given a key quote or not. They will all be involved in thinking interpretatively and sharing their ideas with the whole class. Pupils will need to record the 'thought shower' in their exercise books as it builds on the board. If they disagree with where the quote has been placed, they can put it where they like in their book.
- 5) Invite the pupil with 'Quote 1' up to the front of the class, where they effectively act as the teacher. They read the quote out and stick it on the board in the place they choose. They have to read it aloud and allow students adequate time to copy it down. They have to explain why they have chosen to attach it to 'Darkness', 'Light' or if they have placed it in-between. Then they must manage a response to the interpretation of the quote (prompts are used underneath the quotes themselves). This means that they ask the class and as students put their hands up; they take ideas and record them on the board. Meanwhile, all the other students record the quotes and interpretations in their own books.
- 6) Do the same for all the quotes/statements. At the end of the lesson, pupils should have two 'thought showers' and should be familiar with images of darkness and light in *Of Mice and Men*.
- 7) In the plenary session, or even through an essay, they should consolidate all that they have learned on this. They should consider that
 - Steinbeck uses a pattern that the reader becomes familiar with so they know what is being represented by the images of darkness and light.
 - He uses this technique because of the connotations we associate with darkness and light.
 - He links these images to key characters and locations.
 - Sometimes, darkness or 'light lifting' can mean more than one thing. In relation to Lennie, for example, the fact that the hilltops are rosy after he has died suggests that he is better off dead and will be happier in heaven.

1

“Although there was evening brightness showing through the windows of the bunkhouse, inside it was dusk”.

This shows that the light tries to get in but never manages to penetrate the darkness. This is important to the themes of the story because ...

2 Crooks' eyes

“lay deep in his head, and because of their depth seemed to glitter with intensity”.

The combination of darkness and light here implies ...

3

“In the stable buck’s room a small electric globe threw a meagre yellow light”.

The light in Crooks’ room is ‘meagre’.
This suggests ...

4 When Curley's wife first appears in the bunkhouse, both Lennie and George notice that the rectangle of sunshine in the doorway is cut off. This represents ...

5

Just before Curley's wife dies

“the sun streaks climbed up
the wall”

This suggests that ...

6

After Curley's wife has died:

“the sun streaks were high on the wall by now, and the light was growing soft in the barn.”

This implies ...

7

As the story reaches its tragic conclusion:

“The light climbed out of the valley.”

This implies that ...

8 As Lennie's captors advance on him:

“Already the sun had left the valley to go climbing up the slopes of the Gabilan Mountains, and the hill tops were rosy in the sun”

This quote suggests ...