**Of Mice and Men Plot Summary**

The novel takes place in the California valley along the Salinas River. There are two settings for the action: the banks of the Salinas River and a nearby ranch. George Milton, small and smart, and his friend Lennie Small, a large man with mild retardation, are on their way to jobs at a ranch. They stop by the Salinas River to take a break from their long walk.

Lennie cannot remember where they are going, and George, annoyed, reminds him about their jobs. Lennie looks in his pocket for his work card and finds a dead mouse, which he found by the side of the road. Lennie likes to pet soft animals, like mice and puppies, but he is very strong and often kills his delicate pets. Lennie tries to hide his mouse from George, who demands it from him and throws it across the river.

That evening, Lennie goes to find his mouse, which makes George very angry. He argues with Lennie, but soon feels bad and tries to console him. George tells Lennie how one day soon they will own a farm of their own, where they will grow their own food and have rabbits Lennie can tend.

The next morning Lennie and George arrive at the ranch. The boss is annoyed because they have arrived late. The boss' son, Curley, is a small man who hates big guys like Lennie. He and George have a small confrontation. Soon after Curley leaves his wife enters. Her provocative dress and pose make George anxious. He warns Lennie to keep away from both Curley and his wife.

Two more workers, Slim and Carlson, come into the bunkhouse. Slim's dog just had puppies, and Lennie is anxious to have something soft to pet. Carlson suggests that Candy, an old man and fellow worker, kill his old smelly sheepdog and take one of Slim's pups.

Slim gives Lennie a pup, and he spends much of the evening out in the barn petting it. George tells Slim what happened at their last job. They were run out of town after Lennie unintentionally assaulted a woman. The woman went to the police and Lennie and George had to leave town.

Candy comes in with his dog and Carlson starts pressuring him to let him kill it. The dog is old and arthritic, but Candy has had him for years. Since he is the only one who wants to keep the dog, Candy reluctantly gives in and lets Carlson shoot his old friend.

George and Lennie start talking again about the farm they hope to get, and Candy overhears and asks if he could come too. He has some money saved up, so George decides he can come. Curley comes into to the bunkhouse, and when he sees a smile on Lennie's face he imagines that Lennie is laughing at him. He attacks Lennie, who doesn't want to fight. In defense, Lennie grabs Curley's hand and badly breaks it without knowing what he has done.

That evening, everyone goes into town, except for Crooks, the crippled Negro stable buck, and Candy, Lennie, and Curley's wife. Crooks lives alone in the barn because he's black. Lennie comes in looking for his puppy. He and Crooks start talking, and Crooks expresses his feelings of loneliness. Lennie tells Crooks about their farm, but Crooks is doubtful. After listening to Candy for a few minutes, Crooks changes his mind and asks if there might be a place for him on the farm.

Curley's wife comes into the barn, making all the men uncomfortable. Candy tells her to leave. She gets mad and criticizes them and their dream, making Crooks angry. She harshly reminds him he is just a worker, and a black worker at that. Crooks silently hangs his head. There is the sound of the men returning, so Curley's wife leaves. As Candy is leaving, Crooks tells him he wouldn't be interested in coming with them after all.

The next afternoon, Lennie is in the barn alone with his puppy. He accidentally killed it with his strong hands. Curley's wife comes in, and sits down next to Lennie. She tells him how she could have been in the movies, but Lennie continues rambling about the rabbits on their farm. When she finds out how much Lennie likes soft things, she offers to let him touch her hair. Lennie strokes too hard and she gets frightened. He tries to quiet her and accidentally breaks her neck. Lennie runs and hides by the banks of the river. Candy finds Curley's wife, and goes to tell George. The other men come in and see what happened, and they get their guns. They want to find Lennie and kill him.

Lennie is sitting by the banks of the river. George shows up, and he assures Lennie he isn't mad at him. Lennie wants to hear about that piece of land they are going to get, and the rabbits for him to tend. George tells him, and when the men are nearly there, George shoots Lennie in the head. The men appear, and Curley and Carlson congratulate George. Slim understands George didn't want to shoot Lennie, and he leads him away, offering him comfort and a drink.

## Of Mice and Men Major Characters

**George Milton:**George is a small man, with a dark face and sharp features. Smart and quick, he often gets Lennie out of trouble. He and Lennie travel together, and George takes care of him. When Lennie kills Curley’s wife, George is forced to shoot his friend.

**Lennie Small:**George’s companion. Lennie is a big man with great strength; his body and features are round and undefined. He is mildly retarded, and his speech is slow and simple. He loves soft things, and this desire often gets him in trouble. This is the case when Lennie kills Curley’s wife.

**Aunt Clara:**Lennie’s aunt, who asked George to take care of Lennie before she died.

**Candy:**An old man who works at the ranch, who lost his hand in a farming accident. He has an old sheepdog that Carlson kills out of mercy. Candy is a friend to George and Lennie, and plans to buy the farm with them.

**Curley:**The boss' son. He is a small, belligerent man, who especially dislikes big guys like Lennie. The only married worker, he wears a glove full of Vaseline on his hand, to keep it soft for his wife. He is very suspicious of the workers, and frequently asks if any of them are sleeping with his wife. None of the workers like him, but they put up with him.

**Curley's wife:**Curley's provocative spouse. She does not like her husband, and spends much of her time hanging around the workers. She is a pretty woman, but most of the men think she’s troublesome and bold. She is often sad and frustrated that her life did not turn out any better, since in her youth a man offered to put her in the movies. Lennie kills her by mistake, when feeling her soft hair.

**Slim:**A quiet man with a great presence. He is the best worker on the ranch, and very respected. Sensitive and wise, he offers advice and comfort to the men.

**Carlson:**Another worker. He kills Candy’s old sheepdog and later argues that Lennie should be killed for killing Curley's wife. George steals his gun, a Luger, and uses it to shoot Lennie.

**Crooks:**The crippled Negro stable buck. He lives alone in the barn, and is not allowed to enter the other men’s quarters because he’s black. He almost joins Lennie, George, and Candy in their plan to buy a farm.

**boss:**The man who owns and runs the farm. He is also Curley's father.

**Whit:**Another worker.

**Bill Tenner:**A man who used to work on the ranch. He wrote a letter that got published in a rancher's magazine.

**Susy:**The woman who owns the bordello the men often visit.

**Andy Cushman:**A guy Lennie and George knew when they were little. He ended up in jail because of a seductive woman.

## Of Mice and Men Objects/Places

**Salinas River:**The River is south of Soledad and very close to the ranch. The novel begins and ends on the banks of the river. It is also Lennie’s hiding place if he gets into any trouble.

**Soledad:**The town south of the ranch, in the California valley.

**Gabilan Mountains:**The mountain range near the ranch and the river.

**Mice:**Lennie loves to pet soft things. Mice are no exception. But Lennie often kills his tiny pets accidentally, when his petting gets too rough. He and George have an argument in the first chapter when Lennie wants to keep a dead mouse and George won’t let him.

**Weed:**The last town where Lennie and George had a job. They had to leave when Lennie unintentionally assaulted a woman. The woman was wearing a red dress, and Lennie tried to touch it. She got scared and started to struggle, which made Lennie confused and caused him to hold on tightly. George heard them, and he had to hit Lennie with a fence post to make him let go. The woman went to the police and told them she was raped. George and Lennie hid in irrigation ditches until night, when they left town. George is careful when he talks about Weed; he doesn’t want the wrong people to know (like the boss or Curley) what happened there. George does confide the story to Slim, and shares with him his worry that something like that will happen again.

**Rabbits:**The farm the men hope to get will have rabbits for Lennie to tend (and pet). Lennie is excited at the idea of this larger pet, because he is less likely to hurt a rabbit than a tiny mouse.

**Candy's sheepdog:**Candy has had his sheepdog since it was a pup. The arthritic, half-blind dog is his only companion. When Carlson urges Candy to kill it, or to let him kill it, Candy gives in and lets Carlson shoot it. He later feels bad he didn't shoot the dog himself. Candy's relationship to his dog is very similar to George's relationship with Lennie.

**Curley's glove:**The glove is full of Vaseline, to keep his left hand soft for his wife. All the men find it disgusting.

**Pulp magazine:**A type of magazine the men read to pass the time. Bill Tenner’s letter is in one.

**Puppies:**Lennie is hopeful that because a puppy is bigger than a mouse, it will be strong enough to support his petting. Slim gives him one of his dog’s puppies, which Lennie plays with and pets constantly until he accidentally kills it.

**Carlson's Luger:**This is the gun Carlson uses to shoot Candy’s sheepdog. George will steal it and use it to shoot Lennie.