Year 9

HOMEWORK

Of Mice and Men



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| --- |
| **English** **Assessment** |
| What went well…?: |
| Even better if…?: |
| What I think…? |
| GRADE: EXCELLENT GOOD SATISFACTORY POOR |
| Teacher Comment: |

Task 1: Key Vocabulary

To understand ‘Of Mice and Men’ you need to get to grips with the context – that is, what sort of place and time the novel is set in. This task introduces some of the terms you will need to understand.

Complete the chart by choosing a word or phrase from underneath the chart which matches the definition, and writing it in the space. One has been done to show you how.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| The writer of ‘Of Mice and Men’ |  |
| The year the novel was first published |  |
| The name for the effect of fertile topsoil blowing away |  |
| George and Lennie carry their possessions in a \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ | bindle |
| A general name for the time the book was set in |  |
| Men and women who move from ranch to ranch looking for work |  |
| The main characters in ‘Of Mice and Men’ |  |
| The thing that workers like George and Lennie would like |  |
| This happened on ‘Black Tuesday’ |  |
| Keeping black and white people separate |  |

dustbowl Wall Street Crash John Steinbeck segregation 1937 migrant workers ~~bindle~~ The Great Depression George and Lennie The American Dream



Task 2: Packing your ‘bindle’

Migrant workers, like George and Lennie in ‘Of Mice and Men’ didn’t have job security or permanent homes; they travelled from place to place, seeking work and staying until they grew bored, the harvest was done and the work ran out, or they had a disagreement with the boss and got ‘canned’.

George and Lennie carry their few possessions in a ‘bindle’.

Imagine that you had to pack up and leave home, taking with you only what you could physically carry. What would you pack?

Below, you need to list the first five things you would pack in your ‘bindle’ (imagine something the size and shape of an average rucksack) and give a reason for taking each item.

Remember, PlayStations and mobile phones might be useless on the road with nowhere to plug them in, so you may wish to focus on practical items, and maybe one luxury. You need to give a reason for including each item.

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REASON \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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REASON \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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ITEM 5 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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Task 3: Women in ‘Of Mice and Men’ 

The female characters in ‘Of Mice and Men’ are few and far between. The only female character who is present in the novel is Curley’s wife, a flirty young woman stuck in a loveless marriage. Your task this week is to research what life was like for women in 1930s America. Find out 10 facts about the position, rights and lifestyles of women in 1930s America. Take care with your writing; check spelling and punctuation are accurate.

This website may provide a starting point: <http://ezinearticles.com/?The-Invisible-Women-of-the-Great-Depression&id=1888970>

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Jot down any other websites or sources you use for research.

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Task 4: Songs for the Great Depression

Read the lyrics from the song below. This song, which came out of the Great Depression, reflects the poverty of the time. Remember, there were no state benefits to help ordinary people in times of hardship; people had to rely on their own resources, or handouts from friends and families.

**"Brother, Can You Spare a Dime," lyrics by Yip Harburg 1931**

They used to tell me I was building a dream, and so I followed the mob,

When there was earth to plow, or guns to bear, I was always there right on the job.

They used to tell me I was building a dream, with peace and glory ahead,

Why should I be standing in line, just waiting for bread?

Once I built a railroad, I made it run, made it race against time.

Once I built a railroad; now it's done. Brother, can you spare a dime?

Once I built a tower, up to the sun, brick, and rivet, and lime;

Once I built a tower, now it's done. Brother, can you spare a dime?

Once in khaki suits, gee we looked swell,

Full of that Yankee Doodly Dum,

Half a million boots went slogging through Hell,

And I was the kid with the drum!

Say, don't you remember, they called me Al; it was Al all the time.

Why don't you remember, I'm your pal? Buddy, can you spare a dime?

Once in khaki suits, gee we looked swell,

Full of that Yankee Doodly Dum,

Half a million boots went slogging through Hell,

And I was the kid with the drum!

Say, don't you remember, they called me Al; it was Al all the time.

Say, don't you remember, I'm your pal? Buddy, can you spare a dime?

There were no iPods in the 1930s; no iTunes, no CDs, no laptops. But of course they had music. Your task is to create a Playlist of ‘Music for the Great Depression’. You can choose any songs you like; they can be from the 1930s up to the modern day. The only criteria are that the song has to fit the theme and has to be a real title. So, you could choose songs about working hard, about travelling around, about poverty, hardship etc. Create a playlist of 10 songs, with the name of the singer or band.

Write your playlist below:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

Task 5: Migrant Workers

Read the text on the next two pages and then answer the questions that follow.

A complex set of interacting forces both economic and ecological, brought migrant workers to California. Following World War I, a recession led to a drop in the market price of farm crops and caused Great Plains farmers to increase their productivity through mechanization and the cultivation of more land. This increase in farming activity required an increase in spending that caused many farmers to borrow, and to spend more than they could really afford. The stock market crash in 1929 made this unstable economic situation worse. Many independent farmers lost their farms when banks came to collect on their notes, while tenant farmers were turned out when economic pressure was brought to bear on large landholders. The attempts of these displaced agricultural workers to find other work were met with frustration due to a 30 percent unemployment rate.

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| Todd recording Frank and Myra Pipkin **Frank and Myra Pipkin being recorded by Charles L. Todd at Shafter FSA Camp, Shafter, California, 1941.** Photo by Robert Hemmig.  |

At the same time, the increase in farming activity placed greater strain on the land. As the naturally occurring grasslands of the southern Great Plains were replaced with cultivated fields, the rich soil lost its ability to retain moisture and nutrients and began to erode. Soil conservation practices were not widely employed by farmers during this era, so when a seven-year drought began in 1931, followed by the coming of dust storms in 1932, many of the farms literally dried up and blew away creating what became known as the "Dust Bowl." Driven by the Great Depression, drought, and dust storms, thousands of farmers packed up their families and made the difficult journey to California where they hoped to find work. So, refugees packed up their few, poor belongings and moved looking for a brighter future.

Why did so many of the refugees pin their hopes for a better life on California? One reason was that the state's mild climate allowed for a long growing season and a diversity of crops with staggered planting and harvesting cycles. For people whose lives had revolved around farming, this seemed like an ideal place to look for work. There was a widespread belief that California was a veritable promised land.

However, it soon became apparent that California was emphatically not the promised land of the migrants' dreams. Although the weather was comparatively balmy and farmers' fields were bountiful with produce, Californians also felt the effects of the Depression. Local and state infrastructures were already overburdened, and the steady stream of newly arriving migrants was more than the system could bear. After struggling to make it to California, many found themselves turned away at its borders. Those who did cross over into California found that there were many more people seeking work than there were jobs available.

Migrants who found employment soon learned that this excess of workers caused a significant reduction in the going wage rate. Even with an entire family working, migrants could not support themselves on these low wages. Many set up camps along irrigation ditches in the farmers' fields. These "ditchbank" camps fostered poor sanitary conditions and created a public health problem.

Arrival in California did not put an end to the migrants' travels; they still had to move from place to place to find work. In an attempt to maintain a steady income, workers had to follow the harvest around the state. When potatoes were ready to be picked, the migrants needed to be where the potatoes were. The same principle applied to harvesting cotton, lemons, oranges, peas, and other crops. For this reason, migrant populations were most dense in agricultural centres.

Adapted from: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/afctshtml/tsme.html>

Now answer the questions on the next page.

Migrant Workers

1. What year was the stock market crash?

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1. What was the unemployment rate in 1939?

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1. Look at paragraph 2. List three reasons why farms became less efficient, fertile and productive.

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1. Why did California seem to be a better place if you were a farmer? Give one reason.

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1. Was California the ‘promised land’ that people expected? Support your answer with a quotation from paragraph 4 or 5.

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Task 6: ‘READ ALL ABOUT IT!’

Newspaper headlines reflect the time they were written in and can tell the story of an era in ‘soundbites’.

Look at these headlines from May 24th 2013:

Woolwich soldier named as drummer Lee Rigby

Lee Rigby: A True Hero

Afghanistan veteran leaves widow and two-year-old son

Woolwich suspects were known to MI5

Now, look again at the text for Task 5: ‘Migrant Workers’ and pick out 5 main events to create a headline for. One has been done as an example. Find 5 more and write an appropriate headline. Try to use puns or alliteration in your headlines?

EXAMPLE

Text: ‘a recession led to a drop in the market price of farm crops’

Headline: Crop prices crash as recession bites!

Text: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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Extension Task (a): An interview with John Steinbeck

Read the text below and then move on to the related task.

John Steinbeck, American author and winner of the Nobel Prize in 1962, was a leading writer of novels about the working class and was a major spokesman for the victims of the Great Depression (a downturn in the American system of producing, distributing, and using goods and services in the 1930s, and during which time millions of people lost their jobs).

John Ernst Steinbeck was born on February 27, 1902, in Salinas, California, the only son of John Ernst Steinbeck Sr. and Olive Hamilton. His father was a bookkeeper and accountant who served for many years as the treasurer of Monterey County, California. Steinbeck received his love of literature from his mother, who was interested in the arts. His favorite book, and a main influence on his writing, was Sir Thomas Malory's (c. 1408–1471) *Le Morte d'Arthur,* a collection of the legends of King Arthur. Steinbeck decided while in high school that he wanted to be a writer. He also enjoyed playing sports and worked during the summer on various ranches.

Steinbeck worked as a laboratory assistant and farm laborer to support himself through six years of study at Stanford University, where he took only those courses that interested him without seeking a degree. In 1925 he traveled to New York (by way of the Panama Canal) on a freighter (boat that carries inventory). After arriving in New York, he worked as a reporter and as part of a construction crew building Madison Square Garden. During this time he was also collecting impressions for his first novel. *Cup of Gold* (1929) was an unsuccessful attempt at romance involving the pirate Henry Morgan.

Undiscouraged, Steinbeck returned to California to begin work as a writer of serious fiction. A collection of short stories, *The Pastures of Heaven* (1932), contained vivid descriptions of rural (farm) life among the "unfinished children of nature" in his native California valley. His second novel, *To a God Unknown* (1933), was his strongest statement about man's relationship to the land. With *Tortilla Flat* (1935) Steinbeck received critical and popular success; there are many critics who consider it his most artistically satisfying work.



*John Steinbeck.*

Steinbeck next dealt with the problems of labor unions in *In Dubious Battle* (1936), an effective story of a strike (when workers all decide to stop working as a form of protest against unfair treatment) by local grape pickers. *Of Mice and Men* (1937), first conceived as a play, is a tightly constructed novella (short novel) about an unusual friendship between two migrant workers (laborers who travel to wherever there is available work, usually on farms). Although the book is powerfully written and often moving, some critics feel that it lacks a moral vision.

(Please note, I have left American spellings, e.g. ‘labor’ unchanged.)

Source: <http://www.notablebiographies.com/Sc-St/Steinbeck-John.html>

Extension Task (a): The Interview

Imagine you have the opportunity to interview John Steinbeck, the writer of ‘Of Mice and Men’. You may have read quite a lot of the book, and some questions may be about the novel, how he deals with the issue of racism, or why there are no strong female characters in his book perhaps. You can also base questions on the information from his biography. You need to write 10 questions that you would ask the writer if you got the chance to meet him.

Write your questions below:

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Extension Task (b): Looking at the start of the novel

Read the passage below and then complete the questions and tasks on the next page. Don’t worry if you have not read the introduction in class yet; just try your best with the task.



A few miles south of Soledad, the Salinas River drops in close to the hillside bank and runs deep and green. The water is warm too, for it has slipped twinkling over the yellow sands in the sunlight before reaching the narrow pool. On one side of the river the golden foothill slopes curve up to the strong and rocky Gabilan mountains, but on the valley side the water is lined with trees—willows fresh and green with every spring, carrying in their lower leaf junctures the debris of the winter’s flooding; and sycamores with mottled, white, recumbent limbs and branches that arch over the pool. On the sandy bank under the trees the leaves lie deep and so crisp that a lizard makes a great skittering if he runs among them. Rabbits come out of the brush to sit on the sand in the evening, and the damp flats are covered with the night tracks of ’coons, and with the spread pads of dogs from the ranches, and with the split-wedge tracks of deer that come to drink in the dark.

There is a path through the willows and among the sycamores, a path beaten hard by boys coming down from the ranches to swim in the deep pool, and beaten hard by tramps who come wearily down from the highway in the evening to jungleup near water. In front of the low horizontal limb of a giant sycamore there is an ash pile made by many fires; the limb is worn smooth by men who have sat on it.

Evening of a hot day started the little wind to moving among the leaves. The shade climbed up the hills toward the top. On the sand banks the rabbits sat as quietly as little gray, sculptured stones. And then from the direction of the state highway came the sound of footsteps on crisp sycamore leaves. The rabbits hurried noiselessly for cover. A stilted heron labored up into the air and pounded down river. For a moment the place was lifeless, and then two men emerged from the path and came into the opening by the green pool.

The start of the novel: looking at the language:

[1] Paragraph 1 is very descriptive. Did you understand all of the language?

Use a good dictionary to find a definition for each of the following words:

Juncture \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Debris \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Mottled \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Recumbent \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

[2] Pick out four examples of animals mentioned in the first paragraph.

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[3] What three different groups of people are mentioned in paragraph 2?

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What do they all have in common?

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[4] The extract appeals to many of our senses. Write down a word or phrase that appeals to each of the following senses. You will have to read the passage very carefully.

Sight: ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Touch: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Hearing: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_