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*Information primarily taken from *Sparknotes.com* and *Clifnotes.com*

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| <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">AUTHOR</p> |  <p>JOHN STEINBECK</p> | <p>John Steinbeck was born in 1902 in Salinas, California, a region that became the setting for much of his fiction, including <i>Of Mice and Men</i>. As a teenager, he spent his summers working as a hired hand on neighboring ranches, where his experiences of rural California and its people [made a great impact on him].</p> <p>In 1919, he enrolled at Stanford University, where he studied intermittently for the next six years before finally leaving without having earned a degree.</p> | <p>For the next five years, he worked as a reporter and then as caretaker for a Lake Tahoe estate while he completed his first novel, an adventure story called <i>Cup of Gold</i>, which was published in 1929.</p> <p>Steinbeck's best-known works deal intimately with the plight of desperately poor California wanderers, who, despite the cruelty of their circumstances, often triumph spiritually.</p> | <p>Steinbeck sets <i>Of Mice and Men</i> (1937) against the backdrop of Depression-era America. The economic conditions of the time victimized workers like George and Lennie, whose quest for land was thwarted by cruel and powerful forces beyond their control, but whose tragedy was marked, ultimately, by steadfast compassion and love.</p> <p>Steinbeck died in New York City in 1968.</p> |
| <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">The book's TITLE</p> | <p>The title of John Steinbeck's novel <i>Of Mice and Men</i> is taken from the poem of Robert Burns, "To a Mouse, On Turning Her Up in Her Nest with a Plow," written in November of 1785. In that poem, Burns writes that:</p> | <p><i>The best laid schemes o' mice and men Gang aft a-gley [often go astray], And lea'v us nought but grief and pain, For promised joy.</i></p> |  | <p>At the beginning of <i>Of Mice and Men</i>, we learn about George and Lennie's dream of owning their own ranch, living off the fat of the land, and raising rabbits. Just when it appears that George and Lennie will get their dream farm, fate steps in, and those plans go astray.</p> |
| <p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">BUNDLESTIFF (Tramp)</p> | <p>"Hobo" conjures a mythic American figure, strolling along the railroad tracks in tattered clothing, a bristly chin, dirty face and a stogie clamped in the mouth, enjoying the open road but obviously poor, all his belongings tied in a bundle and hanging from a stick over his shoulder.</p> <p><small>taken from book review by Mark Wyman: ilcaonline.org</small></p> |   | <p>The real hoboes, however, were the harvesters, railroad builders, miners, forest fire fighters and timber workers that powered the American economy from the Civil War through World War I. During the 1930s Great Depression the hobo life again emerged, as young and old hopped a passing freight, hoping to find that elusive job.</p> | <p>As large farms and small orchards grew, they were the wheat shuckers, apple knockers, cotton pickers and hop cutters the farmer needed. They filled logging camps and railroad track gangs.</p> <p>Their movement was an uncoordinated tide, swamping some towns while others hungrily longed for workers. The local population welcomed them at harvest time but then wanted them fast gone when the crop was picked.</p> |

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| VICTIMS OF BIGOTRY | <p>African-Americans</p>  | <p>Women</p>  | <p><i>Those with</i> Mental and Physical Handicaps</p>  | <p>A theme in this story:</p>  <p>The Predatory Nature of Human Experience</p> |
| Other THEMES | <p>Idealized Male Friendship</p>  | <p>Impossibility of the American Dream</p>  | <p>The Corrupting Power of Women</p>  | <p>Loneliness</p>  |
| WORDS TO KNOW |  <p>Bunkhouse: single-room building filled with beds for the ranch hands</p> | <p>Cathouse: house of prostitution</p>  |  <p>Kewpie-doll Lamp: <i>THIS</i> very tacky thing</p> | <p>Swamper: janitor on the ranch</p>  |
| |  <p>Muleskinner: the head worker on a ranch</p> | <p>Stablebuck: the worker in charge of the animals on the ranch</p>  |  <p>Lightweight or Welter: a boxer</p> | <p>Bucking Barley: throwing large bags of barley onto a truck</p>  |