OF MICE AND MEN
ANSWERS TO STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS

Chapter 1

1. Identify and give a physical description of Lennie and George.

   Lennie was a huge man, shapeless of face with large, pale eyes, with wide, sloping shoulders, and he walked heavily, dragging his feet a little. Lennie is George's friend, who is not very smart but is an extremely strong man and a good worker. George was small and quick, dark of face, with restless eyes and sharp, strong features. He had small, strong hands, slender arms, and a thin and bony nose. George took care of Lennie as they traveled together.

2. What is George's first complaint to Lennie?

   George's first complaint is that Lennie is drinking too much water. This is just the first of a series of complaints George has about Lennie. He is almost always complaining about Lennie, but that doesn't change the fact that he appreciates Lennie's companionship.

3. What trouble did George and Lennie have in Weed?

   All we learn in chapter 1 is that some men came after George and Lennie for something they had done. We later learn that apparently Lennie touched a girl's dress to feel the material. When she tried to move, he got excited and confused and held on even tighter. The girl accused him of trying to rape her, and that's when the men came looking for him.

4. What is in Lennie's pocket? Why does he have it?

   A dead mouse is in Lennie's pocket. He has it because he likes to pet soft things.

5. George bursts into a long speech about what he could do if he were alone. What could he do?

   He could take his money and go to a cat house or out drinking whiskey all night or spend his time playing cards at a pool hall; in short, the things the lonely ranch hands do.

6. Lennie offers to go away and live in a cave. What is George's response?

   He tells Lennie that Lennie wouldn't survive, that he couldn't find any food or take care of himself. Then, he admits to Lennie that he doesn't want him to go.

7. Why are George and Lennie different from the other "guys like us that work on ranches"?

   They are different because each one has the other to look out for him.

8. What are George and Lennie going to do someday?

   Someday George and Lennie are going to have a little piece of land with a little shack. They'll have some animals and some crops -- especially a little alfalfa patch so Lennie can pick it and feed the rabbits. They're going to live off the fat of the land, where no one can tell them to get out or boss them around.

9. What two things does George want Lennie to remember?

   George wants Lennie to remember to not say anything when they talk to the boss and to return to this campsite if he gets into trouble.

10. Why did George want to camp overnight instead of going another quarter of a mile to the ranch?

    At the ranch in the evening there would be too many people for Lennie to deal with at once; he might get confused. Also, it would give Lennie a chance to prove himself as a good worker before everyone would discover how slow he was mentally.

Chapter 2

1. What does George answer when the boss asks what he is trying to put over?

   He says he isn't trying to put anything over, that he and Lennie travel together; they are cousins. He says that Lennie is slow mentally because he got kicked in the head by a horse, but that he is a strong, good worker who follows orders well.

2. Identify and describe Curley.

   Curley was the boss' son. He was a young man with a brown face, brown eyes and a head of tightly curled hair. He wore a work glove on his left hand, and he wore high-heeled boots. Curley was a little man, but had been a boxing champion. He didn't like anybody and was always picking fights.

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3. The swamper said, "Seems like Curley ain't givin' nobody a chance." Explain.

If Curley would fight a big man and win, everyone would think he was very strong and would congratulate him. If Curley would fight a big man and lose, everyone would feel sorry for him and tell the big man to pick on someone his own size. Either way, Curley would come out the favorite of the crowd.

4. What advice does George give Lennie after Curley and the swamper leave?

George tells Lennie to stay away from Curley, that he is nothing but trouble. Lennie replies that he doesn't like this place, and he wants to leave.

5. Identify Slim and Carlson.

Slim and Carlson are other ranch hands. Slim seems very reasonable and respected and tries to understand George and Lennie. Carlson is later responsible for killing Candy's dog.

6. What does Slim have that Lennie wants?

Slim's dog has just had a litter of puppies. Lennie wants one.

Chapter 3

1. Slim and George have a long conversation. Slim says it's funny how George and Lennie go around together. What is George's answer?

He explains that Lennie had no one else to take care of him, and George assumed the responsibility. He admits that Lennie is a pain in the neck sometimes, but that "you kinda get used to going around with a guy and after a while you can't get rid of 'm."

2. Identify Candy.

Candy is the swamper. He is an older man who has at some time lost one hand. He has an old dog he raised from a pup and although he realizes that the dog must be in misery, he can't bring himself to shoot it.

3. What did Carlson do with his Luger? Why?

Carlson shot Candy's dog to put it out of its misery because Candy couldn't bring himself to do it.

4. What card game does George play?

George plays solitaire.

5. Describe Curley's wife. What's the problem about her?

Curley's wife dresses and acts like a tramp, according to the men. The problem is that she is lonesome since Curley won't let her talk to anyone. She keeps coming around the bunkhouse and barn to talk to the men (and to make advances), and then Curley gets jealous and mad with the men and tries to start fights.

6. What will Lennie's job be when he and George get their land?

Lennie's job will be to tend the rabbits.

7. What does Candy want when he hears about George's and Lennie's plans? What is he willing to contribute?

Candy wants to join George and Lennie on their land. He is willing to put up several hundred dollars he has saved.

8. Why did Curley fight with Lennie? What happened?

Lennie was smiling, thinking about the land when Carlson and Candy were verbally attacking Curley. Curley sees Lennie smiling and assumes he is laughing at him. Curley begins beating on Lennie, who remains with his hands at his sides until George tells him several times to go ahead and fight back. Lennie grabs Curley's hand, and although he wasn't trying to hurt him, he crushes the hand, breaking several bones.

Chapter 4

1. Identify Crooks.

Crooks is the black stable hand. He has apparently worked on this ranch for some time, judging from his accumulated possessions.

2. Lennie tells Crooks about the land. What is his reply at first?

Crooks tells Lennie that he is nuts. He says he's seen hundreds of hands come and go with the same dream of having a piece of land, and none of them ever actually did get any land. "Nobody gets to heaven, and nobody gets no land. It's just in their head."

3. What does Crooks want when he believes there might really be land?

He wants to join the men on the land and will work for free, for just being able to live there.

4. Why did Curley's wife come to the barn?

She was looking for Curley, she said, but she actually came to talk to the men and find some company.

5. Why did Crooks change his mind after Curley's wife left?

He realized that the dream could never come true for him. He was a Negro who had just been put in his place by a white woman, and this fact brought back the harsh reality of his life.

Chapter 5

1. What happened to Lennie's puppy? What is his reaction?

Lennie's puppy died because he handled it too roughly. He knows George is going to be mad, and he thinks George won't let him tend the rabbits now.

2. Why did Curley's wife come to see Lennie?

Curley's wife came to see Lennie because she figured out that he crushed Curley's hand and wouldn't be afraid of Curley anymore -- he was the most likely candidate for her advances at this time.

3. What did she tell Lennie?

She told Lennie that she didn't like Curley and that she had had other opportunities to go places and make something of herself, but she couldn't take advantage of them, so she married Curley as the next most likely way to get out of her hometown.

4. Why did Lennie kill Curley's wife?

Curley's wife invited him to feel her soft hair. As we may have guessed from the foreshadowing event in Weed, he gets a little too rough and when Curley's wife starts to struggle, he gets confused and holds even tighter. When she starts to yell, Lennie thinks George will hear and will be mad that he is communicating with the woman, so he covers her mouth. Lennie gets more and more confused as to what to do (thinking that between the puppy's death and his talking to Curley's wife, George is going to be furious). Finally, he shakes her and her neck snaps.

5. What was George's reaction when he found out about Curley's wife's death?

He didn't want the men to think he had anything to do with it, and then he tried to think how he could protect Lennie. He went and got his hat and coat and the Luger before he joined the men.

6. What was Curley's reaction to his wife's death?

Curley was furious, and right away assumed Lennie had done it. He was out for revenge to kill Lennie.

Chapter 6

1. How and why did George kill Lennie?

George met Lennie at the old campsite and tried to tell him he wasn't mad. He realized that the only way to protect Lennie from the devastating punishment which would be inflicted upon him was to kill him. He made up with Lennie and talked to him about the land, making Lennie look across the water to "see" it. Then he shot him with the Luger in the most humane way possible. George did what he had to do as Lennie's friend.

2. Who is the only one who really understands what George did?

When the men arrived, Slim was the only one who could sympathize with George. Because of their earlier conversation, he understood the relationship between George and Lennie.