

**CASE FILE:
ACTIVE TENSION**

OF MICE AND MEN

CHAPTER 2

The Bunkhouse, The Boss,
and the Building Tension.

Junior Cycle English Revision

A Cold Welcome to the Ranch



The Swamper

Candy, an old, frail man missing an arm, greets them. He represents the **harsh reality of aging workers** who have outlived their usefulness.

WARNING



The Conditions

George finds a can of lice powder by his bed. The environment is basic, **unhygienic, and unforgiving.**

THREAT

**INITIAL ASSESSMENT:
HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT**



The Suspicion

The **Boss is sore as hell** that they are late. From minute one, George and Lennie are **on the back foot.**

CONFLICT

Meet the Locals: Four Vectors of Conflict

Chapter 2 introduces the specific obstacles standing in the way of George and Lennie's dream.



The Boss

Economic Power

Suspicious of their
friendship



Curley

Physical Threat

Insecure and
looking for a fight



Curley's Wife

Social Danger

Flirtatious and
unpredictable



Slim

Quiet Authority

Holds the power of
life and death on
the ranch

The Boss Brings Economic Suspicion



1. The Interaction

- Interrogates George and Lennie because they are late.
- George is forced to lie, claiming Lennie is his cousin who was kicked in the head by a horse.

3. The Conflict

He doubts one man would take care of another unless he was making money out of it. He warns George not to pull any stunts.

2. The Quote

What you sellin'?

4. Exam Insight

The Boss highlights the harsh reality of the 1930s. Unselfish friendship was so rare that people immediately assumed it was a scam to steal someone's pay.

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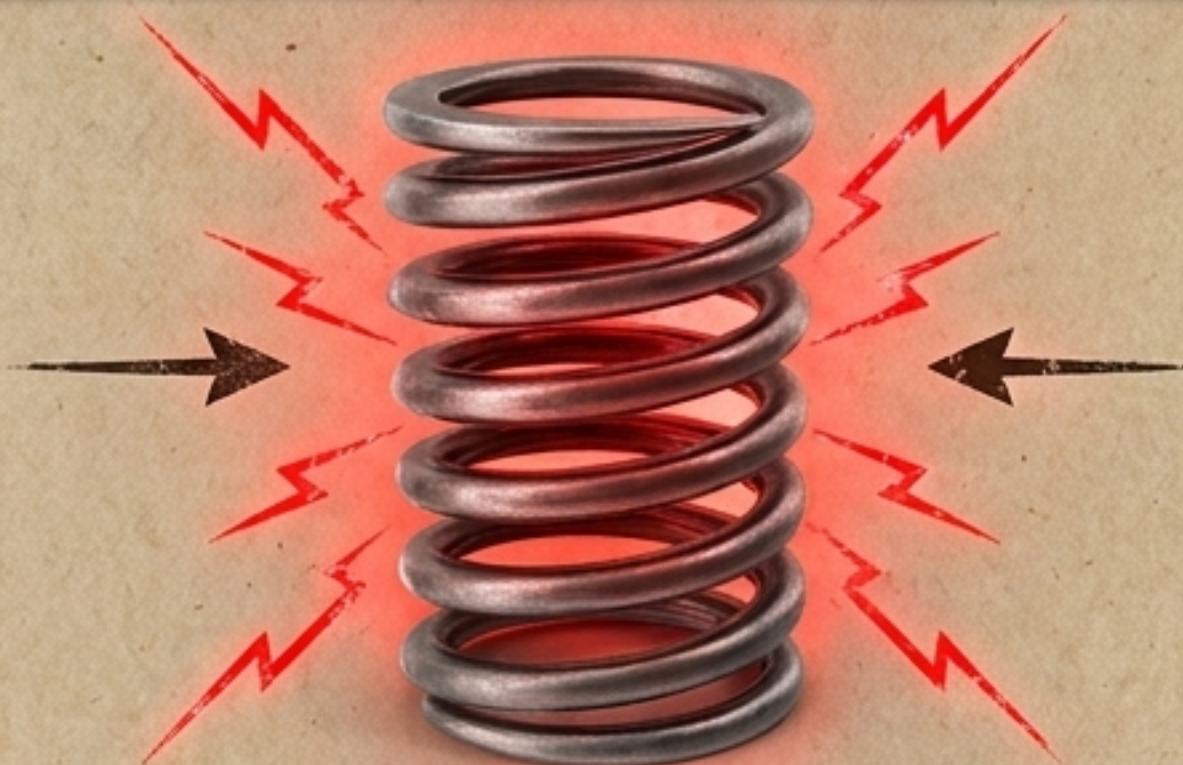
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Curley is a Coiled Physical Threat

The Boss's son. A former boxer with a severe Napoleon Complex.

Candy's observation

"He's mad at 'em because he ain't a big guy."



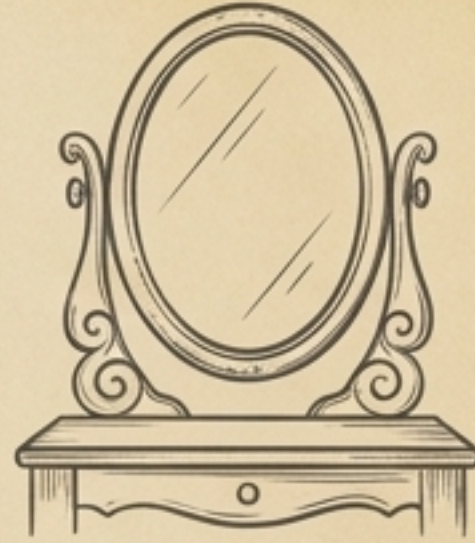
George's warning

"Don't know no rules."

THE DANGER: Curley immediately sizes up Lennie and gets aggressive just because Lennie is big. If Curley starts a fight, George knows Lennie's lack of restraint will end in absolute disaster.

THREAT LEVEL: HIGH

Curley's Wife Introduces Unpredictable Danger



She wears heavy makeup, speaks with a nasal voice, and deliberately flirts with the ranch hands while looking for her husband.

Lennie's Infatuation
Calls her "real purty."

George's Terror
Calls her a "bitch" and "jail bait," ordering Lennie to stay away.

Exam Insight

Notice how she is never given a name by the author. She is defined only by her relationship to Curley, highlighting the severe lack of power women had in this era.

Slim & Candy Represent Respect vs. Vulnerability

Slim: The King of the Ranch

Role: The jerkline skinner. Highly respected by all. Impressed by George and Lennie traveling together.

The Brutal Reality: He casually drowns four of his dog's nine pups because the mother couldn't feed them.

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Candy: The Discarded Worker

Role: The old swamper with the ancient, almost blind dog.

The Brutal Reality: Carlson wants to shoot Candy's old dog because it's "useless."

EVIDENCE

The Lesson: The ranch has no room for weakness. This directly mirrors the fate of anyone who outlives their usefulness or cannot survive on their own.

The Web of Tension: Why George is Panicking

The Boss is watching their every move, suspicious of their bond.

Curley's Wife attracts Lennie's innocent but dangerous attention.

Lennie

George

Curley wants to physically fight Lennie to prove his own toughness.

Lennie is completely surrounded by triggers. George knows they desperately need money, but the ranch is a rapidly arming minefield.

Warning Signs: Foreshadowing in Chapter 2

DANGER

Lennie's Correct Instinct

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"I don't like this place...
I wanna get outa here."

Lennie's animal-like intuition tells him the ranch is unsafe.

Foreshadowing (n.):
A literary device where the author gives a hint or warning about something that will happen later in the story.

The Pups

Slim drowning the weak pups proves the vulnerable do not survive here. What does this mean for the vulnerable Lennie?

The Warning

George's fear that Lennie "don't know no rules" in a fight hints at uncontrollable future violence.

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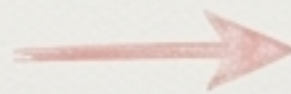
Chapter 2 Review: Junior Cycle Exam Prep

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Theme: Isolation & Suspicion

Evidence: **The Boss's interrogation.**

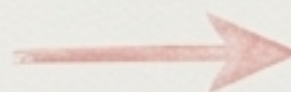


Explanation: Proves that genuine **friendship and loyalty were almost non-existent** in 1930s America. People assumed the worst of each other.



Theme: Survival of the Fittest

Evidence: **Slim's drowned pups and Candy's old dog.**

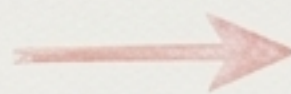


Explanation: Establishes the brutal law of the ranch—**weakness is a liability that gets punished.**



Plot: Character Dynamics

Evidence: **Curley's aggression and his Wife's flirtation.**



Explanation: Every new character introduced in this chapter deliberately **pushes Lennie closer to a violent breaking point.** The pressure cooker is sealed.