

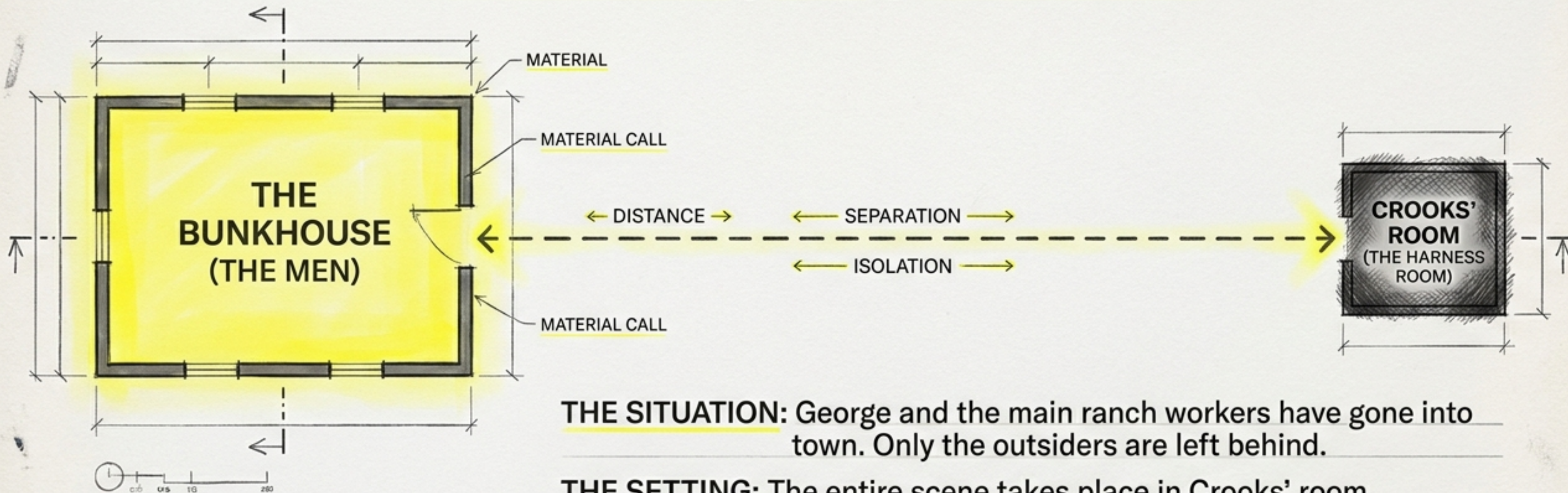


Shadows in the Harness Room

A Junior Cycle Revision Guide to
Section 4 of *Of Mice and Men*

Power Dynamics | The Reality of Racism | The Chain of Loneliness

"A Saturday Night Alone"



THE SITUATION: George and the main ranch workers have gone into town. Only the outsiders are left behind.

THE SETTING: The entire scene takes place in Crooks' room.

THE CRUCIAL DETAIL: Candy has lived on this ranch for years but has never been inside Crooks' room.

THE INSIGHT: Steinbeck uses the physical distance between the buildings to demonstrate the brutal, everyday reality of 1930s racial segregation.

CROSSING THE INVISIBLE LINE

LENNIE
(THE GIANT)

CROOKS
(THE ISOLATED)

WANDERING

DRAWN BY
LIGHT

THE ACTION:

Drawn by the lightbulb, Lennie wanders into the harness room simply looking for company.

THE REACTION: Crooks is immediately suspicious and defensive, telling Lennie he is not welcome.

THE MOTIVATION:

Why is Crooks so angry? His isolation is the only thing he has control over. It is his only defense mechanism against a world that rejects him.

DEFENSIVE
POSE

SUSPICION



Two Different Ways to See the World

Society's Rules

Sees skin color, strict rules, segregation, and a clear hierarchy.

"Cause I'm black...
They say I stink."

*Rigid notes
in the lines*

Rigid news

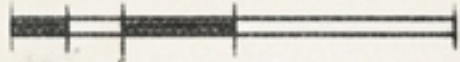
Lennie's Mind

Sees only a potential friend to talk to.
Lennie doesn't see black or white.

He innocently asks Crooks why he isn't wanted, completely failing to understand racism.

*Transcategoration
in the view.*

*Unmifiedly
contained*

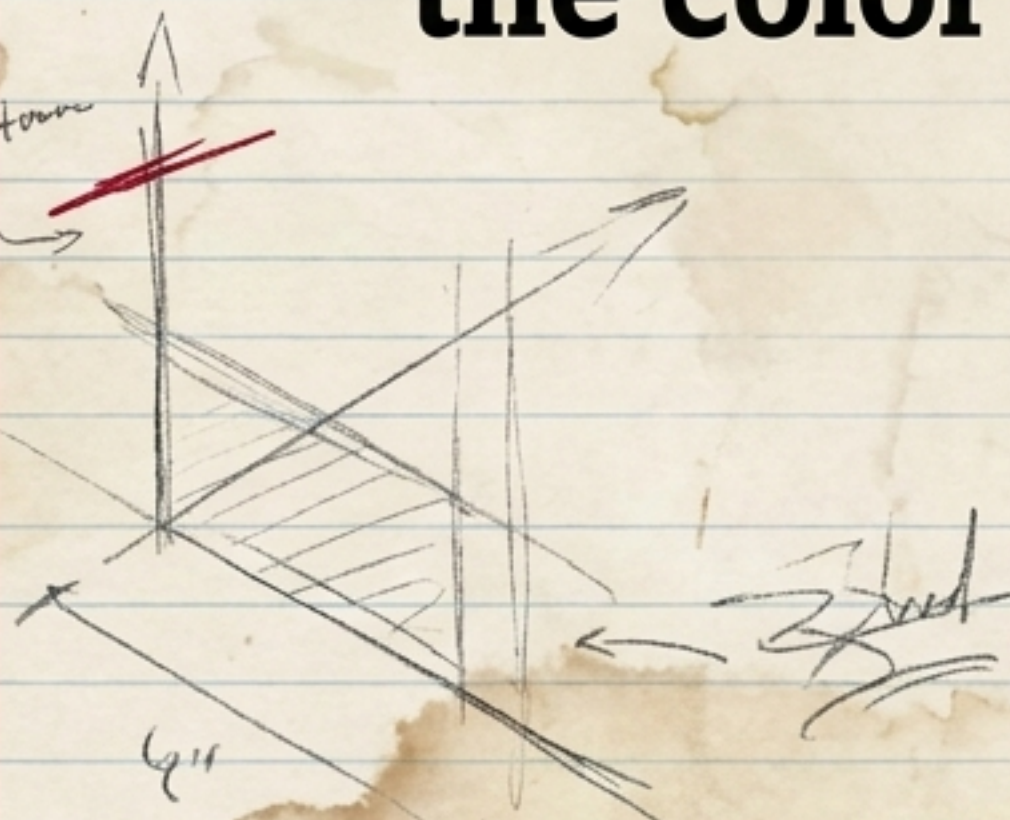


Racism is a Taught Behavior

“The Core Concept: Lennie is treated as stupid by the other men. Yet, he is the only person who does not judge Crooks by the color of his skin.”

The Takeaway: Nobody is born racist. Steinbeck uses Lennie's innocence to prove that prejudice is a rule invented and taught by society. Because Lennie struggles to learn society's rules, he never learned how to be racist.

*Man of the hour
construction*



*There flow for the
idea to not
color- use this*

The Chain Reaction of Cruelty



The Concept: People who are oppressed rarely team up. Instead, they look for someone even weaker to pick on to feel a brief moment of power.

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to Lennics.

Step 1: Society racially oppresses and isolates Crooks.

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of feel moment.

Step 2: Crooks feels completely powerless, bitter, and lonely.

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completely
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and lones.

Evolution: Additioned
their users, the weve
crooks's to Lennie.

Step 3: Crooks realizes he is intellectually superior to Lennie, and uses that advantage to torment him.



A Moment of Cruel Power



"I tell ya a guy gets too lonely an' he gets sick."



Cruelty born of loneliness

Shifting Power Dynamic

The Game: Crooks meanly asks Lennie to imagine what would happen if George got killed and never came back.

The Reaction: Lennie panics, gets angry, and shouts. Crooks has to quickly back down.

The True Motive: Crooks isn't naturally evil. For the first time in his life, he has the upper hand. He uses it to make Lennie feel the exact same panic and isolation that he is forced to feel every single day.

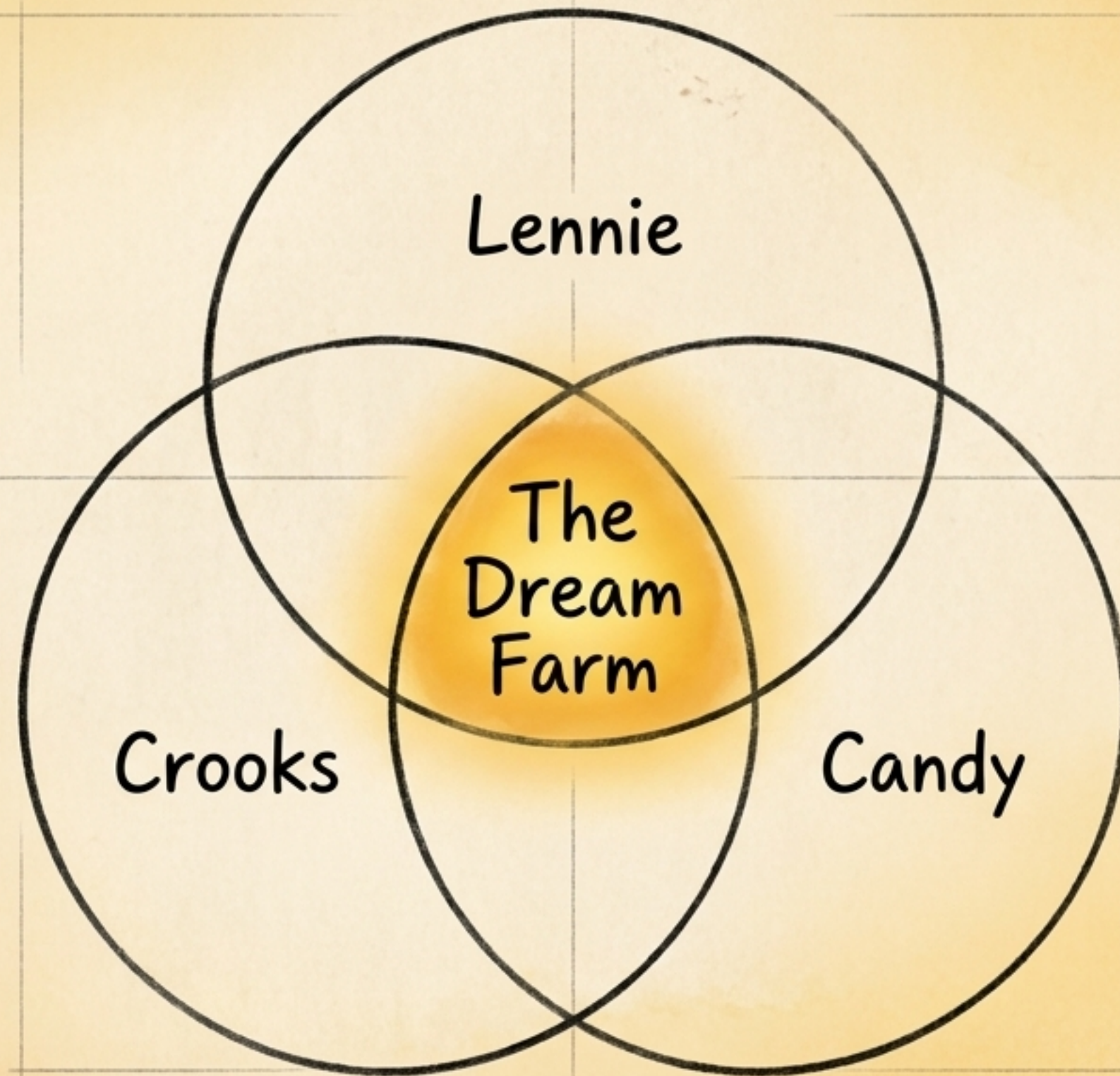
Shifting Power Dynamic

A Temporary Spark of Hope



The Event: Candy arrives. The three men begin to discuss the dream of buying their own piece of land.

The Shift: Crooks is deeply skeptical at first, stating he has seen hundreds of guys with the same plan who never get land.



The Magic of the Dream: The excitement is contagious. Sensing they might actually do it, Crooks offers to work the land. For a few brief minutes, racism and the ranch hierarchy completely vanish.



The Intruder in the Harness Room

The Entrance:

Curley's wife enters, claiming she is looking for Curley. Candy aggressively tells her to leave.

The Real Motive:

She reveals her own deep isolation. She shares her broken dream of being in the movies.

The Author's Choice:

Steinbeck never gives her a name. She is defined entirely as Curley's possession, trapped at the bottom of the gender hierarchy—which makes her desperate for control.

'Think I don't like to talk to somebody ever' once in a while.'



A Collision of Outcasts

Crooks Finds Courage: Buoyed by the the newfound confidence of having white men in his room and sharing the dream, Crooks stands up to her.

“You got no rights comin’ in a colored man’s room.”

15°

The Retaliation: Candy proudly tells her they have their own place to go, but just laughs. When Lennie accidentally reveals the truth about Curley’s hand, the tension snaps. Curley’s wife turns her nasty streak directly onto Crooks.

30°

The Brutal Reality of the 1930s

“I could get you
hung up on a
tree so easy it
aint even funny.”

What Does This Mean?

She is explicitly threatening him with lynching (murder by a racist mob).

The Power Dynamic

Even though she is a young woman trapped in an abusive marriage, her status as a white woman gives her absolute life-or-death power over Crooks. The cycle of the weak preying on the weak reaches its most terrifying peak.

The Crushing Weight of Society

The Physical Reaction: As the scene unfolds, Steinbeck describes Crooks physically shrinking into himself. The newfound confidence is instantly destroyed.

The Surrender: He accepts his place at the absolute bottom of society.

"You guys comin' in an settin' made me forget. What she says is true."

The Result: The brief moment of equality and hope is completely crushed by the weaponization of racism.



The Invisible Hierarchy of the Ranch

Top Tier - Curley's Wife

Trapped and powerless regarding her gender, but holds absolute, terrifying power through her race.

Middle Tier - Candy & Lennie

Hold some racial privilege giving a false sense of security, but are vulnerable due to age and mental disability.

Bottom Tier - Crooks

Briefly felt powerful teasing Lennie, but is brutally reminded that society places him at the absolute bottom.

Perceived Power
vs.
Real Power



Back to Where We Started



The Interruption:

George returns from town and is angry to find Lennie in the harness room.

The Retraction:

Crooks immediately tells Candy to forget what he said about going to the farm.

The Final Image:

The chapter ends exactly as it began: Crooks is left completely alone in the shadows, rubbing his crooked back. The dream was an illusion; the harsh realities of loneliness remain unbroken.

Core Junior Cycle Takeaways



Racism is Learned: Steinbeck uses Lennie's innocence to prove that prejudice is taught by society, not something we are born with.



Preying on the Weak: The psychological cycle—lonely, powerless people hurt those below them just to feel a brief moment of control.



The Reality of Power: Curley's wife's threat demonstrates the brutal, life-or-death reality of racial power dynamics in the 1930s.