

The Final Act: Anatomy of Chapter 6

Of Mice and Men — Junior Cycle Revision Guide



The Story Comes Full Circle

Chapter 1: The Warning



“Hide in the
brush an’ wait
for George.”


Chapter 6: The Return



“I di’n’t forget,
you bet, God
damn.”

The idyllic sanctuary from the beginning of the novel transforms into the setting for the tragic climax.

Inside Lennie's Mind: The Hallucinations



Aunt Clara (Guilt & Conscience)

She scolds him for not looking after George.

“I tried, Aunt Clara, ma'am. I tried and tried.”

The Giant Rabbit (Ultimate Fear)

Represents his fear of abandonment and losing the dream.

“You crazy bastard. You ain't fit to lick the boots of no rabbit... He's gonna beat hell outta you an' then go away an' leave you.”

Breaking the Pattern

“I done another bad thing...
Ain't you gonna give me hell?”

“It don't make no difference.”

Analysis: Lennie expects their usual routine (mimicking their argument from Section 1). George's refusal to be genuinely angry and his total lack of enthusiasm are the first chilling clues that he has made a final, heartbreaking decision.

The Final Gift: Making it Easy for Lennie



Step 1: The Tone

George refuses to shout or scold, keeping his voice steady and reassuring to calm Lennie's panic.



Step 2: The Distraction

George directs Lennie to look out across the river, turning his back so he won't see the gun or feel fear.



Step 3: The Dream

George paints the picture of their farm and tells him he gets to tend the rabbits. Lennie dies completely happy, his mind lost in their shared dream.

The Ultimate Sacrifice

Protection from Curley

Saving Lennie from a brutal, painful, and vengeful lynching at the hands of the mob.



Protection from the Law

Saving Lennie from being locked in a cage or an asylum, which would destroy him.


An Act of Mercy

George pulls the trigger out of profound, painful love, choosing to bear the guilt forever so Lennie doesn't have to suffer.

Parallel Tragedies: Lennie and Candy's Dog

| Candy's Dog | | Lennie Small |
|---|------------------------|---|
| Outlived its usefulness and safety in a harsh world. | The Victims | Outlived his usefulness and safety in a harsh world. |
| Shot in the back of the head so it wouldn't feel a thing. | The Method | Shot in the back of the head so he wouldn't feel a thing. |
| Shot by Carlson (a cold stranger). | The Executioner | Shot by George (a best friend). |
| The shot reverberates across the land, signaling the definitive end of companionship. | The Aftermath | The shot reverberates across the land, signaling the definitive end of companionship. |

The Echo of Regret



“ I ought to of shot
that dog myself...” ”

George learned from Candy's tragic mistake. Candy allowed a stranger with no empathy to kill his only companion, a decision he bitterly regretted. George takes on the terrible, soul-crushing burden of killing Lennie himself to ensure it is done with love and mercy.

A World Without Empathy

Slim
(Deep Understanding)

Carlson
(Total Blindness)

Empathy Spectrum

Comforts George and leads him toward the highway, understanding the profound emotional toll of what George just sacrificed.

Utterly confused by their grief.

"Now what the hell ya suppose is eatin' them two guys."

Carlson's final line reveals the harsh reality of Steinbeck's world—true friendship and self-sacrifice are completely misunderstood by a society hardened by isolation.

Chapter 6 Revision Cheat Sheet



George's Mercy

George makes Lennie's death as peaceful as possible (the tone, the distraction, the dream). It is an act of protective love, not murder.



The Dog Parallel

The shooting mirrors Candy's dog, but George fixes Candy's mistake by refusing to let a cruel stranger do it.



The Tragedy of Isolation

Carlson's final, unfeeling question proves that the men on the ranch are incapable of understanding genuine emotional connection.