

CASE FILE: SOLEDAD, CALIFORNIA.

Decoding Of Mice and Men: Section 1

An Investigator's Guide
to Steinbeck's Writer's
Toolkit



OBJECTIVE:
Identify the four
literary tools the
author uses to set
up the story.

The Investigator's Literary Toolkit



Magnifying Glass
(Description): Setting the Scene. How vivid details of the landscape create a specific mood before anyone even speaks.



Fingerprint Ink
(Characterisation): Profiling the Suspects. How physical actions and behaviors reveal who a character truly is.



Wiretap Tape (Dialogue): Decoding Conversations. How the way characters speak to each other reveals hidden relationships and secrets.



Red String (Foreshadowing): Connecting the Clues. How the author drops subtle hints about future dangers.

Tool I: Description – The Scene of the Incident

Vivid Rural Landscape:

The story opens in a place called Soledad. The detailed nature descriptions set a calm, quiet mood before the humans arrive.



Walking Single File:

Two men appear. One leads, the other follows. When the first man stops, the second man bumps into him.

investigator's insight: Even before they speak, the description of them walking single file physically demonstrates that one man is the leader and the other is a follower.

Tool 2: Characterisation – Profiling the Men



Subject A: Lennie

- Behavior: **Child-like character**. Needs to be stopped from drinking too much water.
- Fixations: Fondness for different types of materials. Likes to **pet soft things**.
- Hidden Item: Carrying a **dead mouse** in his pocket (which he tries unsuccessfully to hide).

Constant supervision required!

Sensory obsession

Clue: Lack of understanding consequences

Subject B: George

- Role: **The protector**. Looks out for Lennie, who clearly has a disability.
- Temperament: **Easily frustrated**. Gets enraged by Lennie's actions (like the mouse and complaining about ketchup).

Burden of responsibility

Internal conflict / stress

Relationship Status: Unequal but deeply dependent. George provides survival instructions; Lennie provides companionship.

Tool 3: Dialogue - What They Say
(And What They Hide)

URGENT

Witness Transcript

[REDACTED]

"Lennie needs to keep quiet around the boss until they see him work."

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

"Don't want any trouble like we had in Weed."

[REDACTED]

Lennie can't remember basic information. George uses dialogue to set rules for survival.

Intrigue injected! The author uses dialogue here to make the reader ask: What happened in Weed?

Backstory Unlocked: The Incident in Weed

The Trigger: Lennie decides he wants to touch the fabric of a girl's dress.

The Panic: The girl gets scared and starts screaming.

The Reaction: Out of fear, Lennie grabs her and holds on tightly.

The Intervention: George has to hit Lennie to force him to let go.

The Escape: The two men are chased completely out of the town by a group of men.

Context: This story spills out because George loses his temper when Lennie complains about a lack of ketchup. It reveals the constant danger Lennie's child-like fixations put them in.

The Motive: Escaping to "The Fatta the Lan"

The Reality

- Work for someone else (the boss).
- Ranch workers usually work entirely by themselves, lonely.

This shared story cheers Lennie up, but leaves George annoyed as he realizes he still has to wake up and work for a boss tomorrow.

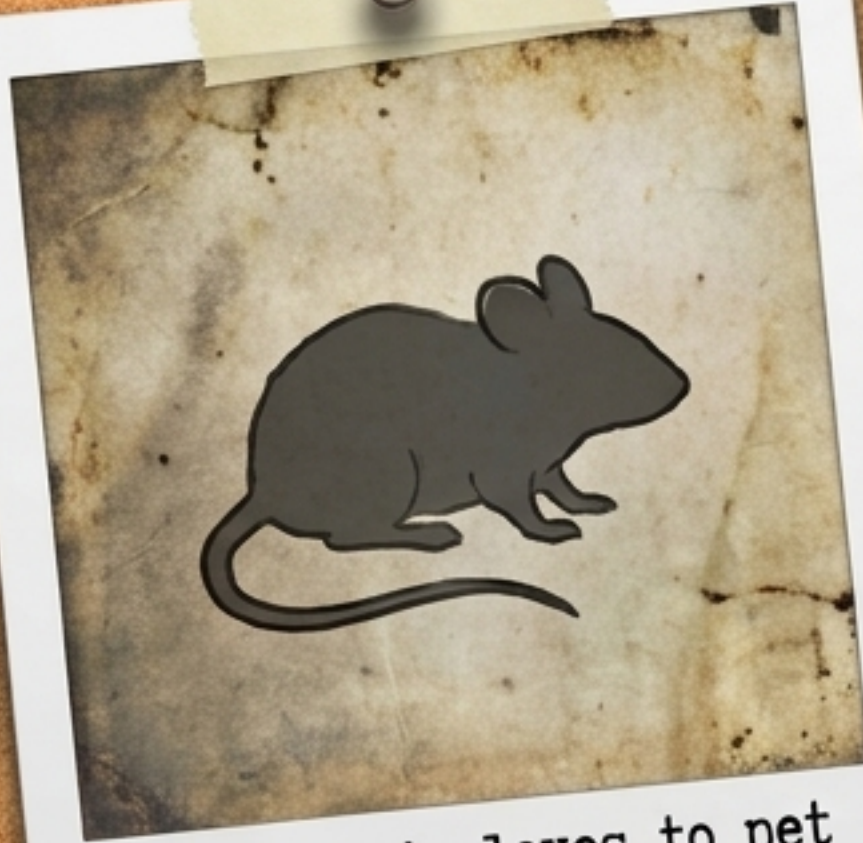
The Dream



- Have each other.
- Get a stake together to buy a small farm and house.
- Live off the fatta the lan (Self-sufficient, grow own food).
- Lennie's special role: Looking after the rabbits.

Tool 4: Foreshadowing - Reading the Warning Signs

Foreshadowing: When an author hints at something that might happen later in the story.



Fact: Lennie loves to pet small creatures.
Problem: He pets them too hard and keeps killing them.

Danger: Lennie doesn't know his own strength.



"Lennie, if you jus' happen to get in trouble like you always done before, I want you to come right here an' hide in the brush."

Danger: George is already planning for disaster.


Synthesis: The Matrix of Chapter I

Description:
Establishes a quiet world that is about to be disrupted.

Characterisation:
Shows us a dangerous imbalance of power (Child-like giant + frustrated protector).

Dialogue: Hides secrets from the boss while revealing past traumas (Weed).

Foreshadowing:
Plants ticking time bombs (Dead mice & hiding in the brush).



A Perfect Opening

Steinbeck doesn't just tell a story; he builds a trap. Every detail from the landscape to a dead mouse is a deliberate tool engineered to make us worry about what happens next.

TO DO: INVESTIGATE

The Open Case: Your Turn to Investigate

- 1. What is your impression of Lennie from what you have read in Section 1?
- 2. What type of relationship do the two men have?
- 3. How does the author use foreshadowing in section 1? What does this tell you about what might happen?
- 4. What is the purpose of the dialogue between the two men?
- 5. Describe what their dream is according to what George and Lennie tell us.

Review the case files above to build your evidence.