


约克文学作品辅导丛书

YORK NOTES ON

OF MICE AND MEN

人鼠之间

John Steinbeck



LONGMAN
LITERATURE
GUIDES

9906121

YORK NOTES

General Editors: Professor A.N. Jeffares (University of Stirling) & Professor Suheil Bushrui (American University of Beirut)



9906121

John Steinbeck

OF MICE

AND MEN

江苏工业学院图书馆

Notes by Martin Stephen

BA (LEEDS) PH D (SHEFFIELD)
High Master Manchester Grammar School

藏书章

H37.4:1

611



LONGMAN
YORK PRESS



世界图书出版公司
北京·广州·上海·西安

©Librairie du Liban 1980
This edition of York Notes on
of Mice & Men
is Published by arrangement
with Addison Wesley Longman
Limited, London. 1997
Licensed for sale in the
mainland territory of the
People's Republic of China only.

约克文学作品辅导丛书: 人鼠之间 (斯坦贝克)

M·斯蒂芬 著



英国朗文出版公司出版
世界图书出版公司北京公司重印
北京朝阳门内大街 137 号 邮编: 100010
北京中西印刷厂印刷
世界图书出版公司北京公司发行
各地新华书店和外文书店经销

1998 年 1 月第 1 版 开本: 850×1168 1/32
1998 年 1 月第 1 次印刷 印张: 2.5
印数: 0001-2000 字数: 60 千字
ISBN: 7-5062-3349-5/I·26
著作权合同登记 图字: 01-97-0679 号
定价: 4.70 元

《约克文学作品辅导丛书》介绍

《约克文学作品辅导丛书》(York Notes)系 Longman 集团有限公司(英国)出版。本丛书覆盖了世界各国历代文学名著,原意是辅导英国中学生准备文学课的高级会考或供英国大学生自学参考。因此,它很适合我国高校英语专业学生研读文学作品时参考。

丛书由 A. N. Jeffares 和 S. Bushrui 两位教授任总编。每册的编写者大都是研究有关作家的专家学者,他们又都有在大学讲授文学的经验,比较了解学生理解上的难点。本丛书自问世以来,始终畅销不衰,被使用者普遍认为是英美出版的同类书中质量较高的一种。

丛书每一册都按统一格式对一部作品进行介绍和分析。每一册都有下列五个部分。

① 导言。主要介绍:作者生平,作品产生的社会、历史背景,有关的文学传统或文艺思潮等。

② 内容提要。一般分为两部分:a. 全书的内容概述;b. 每章的内容提要及难词、难句注释,如方言、典故、圣经或文学作品的引语、有关社会文化习俗等。注释恰到好处,对于读懂原作很有帮助。

③ 评论。结合作品的特点,对结构、人物塑造、叙述角度、语言风格、主题思想等进行分析和评论。论述深入浅出,分析力求客观,意在挖掘作品内涵和展示其艺术性。

④ 学习提示。提出学习要点、重要引语和思考题(附参考答案或答案要点)。

⑤ 进一步研读指导。介绍该作品的最佳版本;版本中是否有重大改动;列出供进一步研读的参考书目(包括作者传记、研究有关作品的专著和评论文章等)。

总之,丛书既提供必要的背景知识,又注意启发学生思考;既重视在吃透作品的基础上进行分析,又对进一步研究提供具体指导;因此是一套理想的英语文学辅导材料。

Contents

Part 1: Introduction	<i>page</i> 5
The life of John Steinbeck	5
The work of John Steinbeck	9
The literary and historical background	10
A note on the text	12
Part 2: Summaries	13
A general summary	13
Detailed summaries	14
Part 3: Commentary	30
The title	30
Plot and structure	30
Themes	32
Characterisation	39
Style	48
Part 4: Hints for study	52
Points to select for detailed study	52
Quotations	53
Effective arrangement of material	56
Planning an answer	57
Specimen answers	60
Questions	68
Part 5: Suggestions for further reading	69
The author of these notes	71

Handwritten signature/initials

Part 1

Introduction

The life of John Steinbeck

John Ernst Steinbeck was born on 27 February 1902, in Salinas, California. He was the third of four children, and of mixed German and Irish descent. His parents owned a considerable amount of land, but by American standards were not particularly rich. Steinbeck's mother was a schoolteacher, and encouraged him in his natural inclination to read widely, but there was nothing very remarkable about his childhood. Later on in his life stories were to circulate in Salinas about his poverty as a child, and his promise as a writer and observer of human nature, but these were largely exaggerations, designed to fulfil a need for the 'rags-to-riches' story that people found so attractive. He attended Salinas High School, graduating from there in 1919, and having achieved minor sporting distinction as well as contributing quite frequently to the school magazine.

Steinbeck then attended Stanford University, with marine biology as his major subject. All through his life he had a deep interest in the workings of the natural world, and this is reflected in his books, many of which contain minutely detailed descriptions of nature. Certainly he was apparently more interested in nature and literature than he was in following a formal course of study. He had to take long periods away from the university in order to work and thus gain money for the continuation of his studies. He held a bewildering variety of part-time and temporary jobs, including working as a ranch-hand near King City (an experience he was to draw upon later when writing *Of Mice and Men*), and was at various times employed as a clerk, a shop assistant, a waiter, and a labourer. Perhaps his strangest job was 'breaking army remounts for officers' gentle behinds': he had to take the semi-wild horses bought by the United States Army and render them fit to be ridden by officers. He received thirty dollars for the basic training, fifty if he put the horses through the training necessary to allow them to be used in the game of polo, and a limp which he said was to last him for months. Throughout his life he had a deep love of horses and dogs.

He contributed several short stories to the Stanford University magazine, the *Spectator*, but left in 1925 without taking a degree, and

went to New York, determined to be a writer. It was a brave decision. His parents had wanted him to be a lawyer, and obtaining his degree would have given him a secure and rewarding job for life. Acting as he did, he had no financial reserves (to get to New York he had to work his way as a seaman aboard a merchant ship) and no professional experience. It was ten years before he had any real success, and in those ten years his resolution to be a writer was tested to the utmost.

He went to New York with high hopes; he left it an apparent failure. He had difficulty in getting a job, but eventually worked on a building site in Madison Avenue. Then a relative used his influence to get him a job as a reporter, but he was dismissed within a short while, and he left New York after only a year, the same way that he had arrived, working his passage on a freighter. From 1926 to 1928 he based himself on the West Coast, in particular round the Lake Tahoe area, taking whatever jobs came his way; at varying times he was employed as a caretaker, a mail-coach driver, and worked in the local fish hatchery. It was here, in 1928, that he met his first wife, Carol Henning. She had come to Lake Tahoe as a tourist, and met Steinbeck when being shown round the fish hatchery. Steinbeck moved to San Francisco, where Carol had a job. They were married in 1930.

Steinbeck's first novel, *Cup of Gold*, was rejected seven times before it finally found a publisher in 1929. A fictionalised account of the buccaneer Sir Henry Morgan, it was a financial failure. Steinbeck's father probably did more than anyone else to keep Steinbeck sane and still writing at this time. When John and his new wife moved to the Monterey Peninsula, Steinbeck's father allowed them to use the family's summer cottage as their home, rent free. He also gave his son an allowance of twenty-five dollars a month to live on, supplemented by whatever Carol could earn. The future must have seemed bleak; Steinbeck had received scant praise and even less money for *Cup of Gold*, and was having great difficulty finding a publisher for his recent work.

1931 saw a turning point in Steinbeck's career, when the firm of McIntosh and Otis agreed to act as his literary agents, a relationship which was to continue for forty years. Steinbeck's abiding gratitude to this firm was shown much later in 1962, when he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. The award brought with it a considerable sum of money, and Steinbeck insisted that McIntosh and Otis take a percentage of this, just as if the award had been a contract which they had obtained for him. In 1932 the firm found a publisher for Steinbeck's novel *Pastures of Heaven*; typically, Steinbeck wrote to a friend, 'They have palmed off the Pastures on somebody.' He was always extremely modest, and even dismissive, about his own work. Also in 1932 he came

to know Edward F. Ricketts, a marine biologist, philosopher, and ecologist, who was to become one of his closest friends and collaborators.

The tide of events seemed to be turning in Steinbeck's favour, but despite this the next two or three years were not happy ones. *To A God Unknown* was published in 1933, but the depression had hit the United States, and Steinbeck's publishers were financially insecure, on the brink of bankruptcy. In addition, both his mother and his father were seriously ill; his mother died in 1934, his father in 1936. It was the illness of his father that hit Steinbeck especially hard. His mother, paralysed, took a year to die, but his father took even longer, and for his last two or three years was a desperately unhappy and senile old man, physically incapable and mentally stagnant.

Steinbeck's first real success was the novel *Tortilla Flat*, published in 1935. *Of Mice and Men*, published in 1937, was even more of a commercial success. Both books were eventually made into films, but *Of Mice and Men* was also dramatised, and won a Drama Critics' Award. It was made the monthly selection of the Book-of-the-Month Club, which guaranteed it wide publicity and huge sales. Steinbeck loved to travel, and a portion of the money from his two successful novels went into financing a trip he made with migrant workers to California; this was to form the basis of what is still probably his best-known work, *The Grapes of Wrath*, which was published in 1939 and was awarded the prestigious Pulitzer Prize in 1940. It too was made into a highly successful film. Steinbeck had written to the publishers of *The Grapes of Wrath* before publication warning them to print only a small number of copies; he prophesied, 'This will not be a successful book.' It is generally recognised today as one of the best novels to have emerged from the United States this century.

Success seems to have altered Steinbeck little; it removed financial worry, but replaced it with others. He was now a public figure, but disliked the adulation that his position brought him, and worried that flattery might somehow reduce his powers as a novelist. He was soon receiving up to seventy-five letters a day, some of them abusive (a Mr Lemuel Gadberry wrote to him saying that he had felt degraded after reading *Of Mice and Men*, and cheated of two dollars), and being besieged by autograph hunters and people begging for money. A girl he had known in childhood accused him, falsely, of fathering her child, an accusation which caused him much pain. Steinbeck, always a lonely man, struggled to maintain his balance and artistic integrity in the new world into which his success had brought him. He was more able to deal with the criticisms launched at his books, in particular *The Grapes of Wrath*. Right-wing elements and rich farmers protested stridently

that he was a dangerous revolutionary, a Communist, a Jewish sympathiser, and a liar, none of which were true, whilst left-wing elements damned him for daring to state that man could achieve dignity and self-respect in impossible economic conditions, and condemned him for not demanding revolution. So heated was the debate that the playwright Edward Albee, a friend of Steinbeck's, wrote to him to warn of possible attempts on his life. Steinbeck dismissed the threats stoically; his life up to this point had taught him how to bear adverse criticism much more easily than praise.

However, further personal problems were coming his way. In 1940 he had been to Hollywood and met a professional singer called Gwendolyn Conger. He fell in love with her, and his marriage to Carol began to disintegrate. He suffered much before he finally divorced Carol and married Gwendolyn in 1942. He was later to say that his marriage to Carol was the story of two people who hurt each other for eleven years, but this was probably an exaggeration uttered in the heat of the moment. He never lost touch completely with Carol, asked after her in letters to friends, and was deeply touched when she was one of the first people to write to him on the occasion of his winning his Nobel Prize. Unfortunately, this second marriage was even shorter than his first. Gwendolyn bore him two sons, Thomas in 1944 and John in 1946, but signs of strain were becoming evident in the marriage by 1944, and in 1948 Gwendolyn obtained a divorce on the grounds of incompatibility. The early bitterness of the break-up seems to have dissolved after a while, and Steinbeck was allowed relatively free access to his sons.

Meanwhile he was heavily occupied in the Second World War, from about 1941 to its end in 1945. He wrote propaganda for the government, and became a war correspondent for the *New York Herald Tribune*; he had a film, *Lifeboat*, directed by Alfred Hitchcock, and became involved with him and Twentieth Century-Fox in a fierce dispute over what Steinbeck saw as distortions of his original script.

The year 1948 was another climactic year; apart from his divorce, he lost his greatest friend Edward Ricketts, who was killed when his car was hit by a train, and this accident plunged him into a deep depression. But in 1950 he married his third wife, Elaine Scott, a divorcee who had been working in Hollywood. Of her he wrote, 'It is the first peace I have had with a woman', and this marriage was to prove by far the most successful of the three.

Critics and readers are continually re-discovering forgotten novels by Steinbeck and hailing them as masterpieces, but it is probably true to say that after 1943 he only produced three novels that are still widely read today—*Cannery Row* (1944), *East of Eden* (1952), and *The*

Winter of Our Discontent (1961). Nevertheless, he was far from inactive. He travelled widely, and visited Russia and the Iron Curtain countries on the suggestion of the American government. He saw his eldest son go off to fight in the Vietnam war, and went out there himself as a war correspondent. He developed warm relationships with three Presidents of the United States—Theodore Roosevelt, Lyndon B. Johnson, and John F. Kennedy—and an almost random selection of some of the people he met and knew would include film stars, politicians and princesses, with motor car magnates and film producers. He became fascinated by *Le Morte Darthur*, a fifteenth-century version of the legend of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table written by the Englishman Sir Thomas Malory (d.1471), and did much research in England for an uncompleted modern version of the story, which Steinbeck saw as having great relevance to modern-day society. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1962, and died of heart disease in 1968. He was buried in Salinas, California.

Steinbeck was a modest, lonely man, given to moods of black depression, and never at peace with himself. He was never content with his work, always seeking the next step forward and restlessly searching for the final expression of his art. His letters manifest a great love of animals and outdoor pursuits; what is equally obvious from his books is that beneath this lay an even deeper love of humanity, especially the plain working man, born out of a clear understanding of his strengths and weaknesses.

The work of John Steinbeck

For some years now it has been fashionable to sneer gently at the work of Steinbeck, and dismiss him as not being a writer of the first rank. If the decision about his greatness and stature as a writer had been left to the professional critics, then he would probably by now have been regarded as a moderately worthwhile but essentially minor talent. The criticisms are not hard to find. Even Steinbeck's most ardent admirers would not deny that his non-fiction work is uninspiring. He has been accused of sentimentality, uneven style, melodrama, and muddled thinking. He has been described as a 'regional' novelist, a man capable of writing only about certain small areas of his own country, and thereby limited in his scope. It has been said also that his work is shallow, seeking at heart only to comfort the reader, and not challenge his basic preconceptions or stimulate him to thought. Conservatives have criticised his works as being Communist, whilst Communists have damned him for not demanding the revolution. It has been said that his

work lacks real thought, and is designed for a readership who want the appearance of a novel for intellectuals, but not its content.

Two things have stopped this view of Steinbeck's work from achieving total dominance. The first is a small band of critics who have steadfastly refused to accept Steinbeck as anything less than one of the greatest twentieth-century American writers. More telling has been the influence of the reading public, who have continued to buy and read his novels in vast quantities. His work has been translated into almost every major world language, and a modern paperback edition of *Of Mice and Men* such as that issued by Pan Books has gone through no less than six printings in only four years. Possibly as a result of overwhelming public support Steinbeck has now begun to receive a much kinder press, and his reputation as one of America's greatest novelists now seems secure.

Steinbeck is known above all by two of his novels—*Of Mice and Men* (1937), and *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939)—and the latter is essential reading for any student of his work. He wrote many other novels, and any selection from them is bound to be open to criticism. Of the shorter works, the best-known are *Tortilla Flat* (1935), *Cannery Row* (1945), and *The Pearl* (1947); all are short, and very readable. Of the longer novels, the most worthwhile are probably *East of Eden* (1952) and *The Winter of Our Discontent* (1961). Also very worthwhile is *Journal of a Novel: The 'East of Eden' Letters*; published in 1969 after his death, this is an account of his feelings and thoughts whilst writing *East of Eden*, written at the same time as he was writing the novel. It is arguably more interesting than the novel itself.

Steinbeck's work cannot be classified into neat categories; his mind ranged too far and wide for that to be possible. There are not great intellectual surprises in his work, but there is a deep and abiding sympathy for ordinary men and women. His literary skills include the accurate and evocative presentation of colloquial and vernacular speech, the ability to describe nature in simple terms that yet manage to gain symbolic overtones, a great sense of drama and climax, and the ability to describe very vividly the tensions and relationships that exist within a tightly knit group of people. Perhaps one of his greatest skills is an ability to create an atmosphere, be it that of the bunk-house, the migrant camp, or the dawn over the Salinas River.

The literary and historical background

The 1920s are sometimes referred to as the 'Lost Generation' period in American literature. American involvement in the First World War (1914–18) had embittered many artists and intellectuals, who were

disgusted by the materialism, extravagance, and narrow-mindedness that they thought dominated American society. In particular they hated what they saw as the smugness and unquestioning obedience to outdated and inadequate codes of behaviour that seemed to typify much of American society. Large numbers of American writers and artists went to Paris, forming an expatriate colony there. In general the 'Lost Generation' writers were hostile towards American society, satirical, and rebellious. Sinclair Lewis (1885–1951), whose best-known novel is *Babbitt* (1922), Sherwood Anderson (1876–1941), and Ernest Hemingway (1898–1961) are some of the better-known writers of this period. The 1920s were also a boom time. Whilst there was vast poverty in the country, there was also vast wealth. Share values were climbing to unprecedented heights on the Wall Street Stock Exchange, and there was a frantic hurry to invest and share in the wealth that at last seemed to be available to everybody. The 1920s also marked the rise of the great gangsters; the Government had brought in Prohibition, an attempt to ban or at least severely restrict the sale of alcohol. The measure did nothing to stop the popular demand for alcoholic drinks, and organised crime stepped in to fill this need. Loathsome and perverted as the crime syndicates may have been, ironically they often performed a vital social function, in that they were often the only agencies to bother with the vast immigrant ghettos that were forming in the major American cities. One novelist who caught the peculiar blend of extravagance and corruption that was prevalent at the time was F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896–1940), whose novel *The Great Gatsby* is the classic of its time.

All this was to change with startling rapidity. Share prices plummeted in 1929, and for the next ten years the western industrialised nations were caught in the grip of a world-wide economic depression, without the economic knowledge necessary for changing the situation, and with no machinery for coping with the vast numbers of people who found themselves unemployed and with no way of supporting either themselves or their families. It was not only industry that was hit; demand for all goods decreased, and farmers in particular were hard-hit. Unprecedented droughts hit some parts of the nation. The small farmers who worked the land lacked modern farming methods and machinery; drought and bad farming techniques led to the loss of top-soil from the fields, and the creation of vast 'dust-bowls' in what had once been productive land. Poor crops meant that the farmers were unable to pay back the money they had borrowed to buy the land in the first place, or were unable to support themselves on the meagre products of their land. They were evicted, or left of their own accord, and joined the vast tide of migration to the western states, especially California, where

there was rumoured to be prosperity and wealth for all. The rumours were ill-founded; California and the surrounding states were soon choked with migrants, and conditions were no better for them than they had been in their original homes, or were much worse. It is this migration that is pictured in Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*.

By about 1937, the situation was changing for the better. President Roosevelt, more by accident than by design, had hit on some of the measures necessary to jerk the nation out of economic depression. His 'New Deal' poured thousands of millions of dollars into the ailing economy to stimulate demand and avert the very real threat of total social disintegration. Nevertheless, the process of recovery was to prove long and arduous. The novels of the thirties are often different in tone from those of the twenties, and reflect the economic collapse and the suffering it brought in its trail. Anger gives way to sympathy, and a search after the reasons behind social and economic collapse replaces satirical attack. The novelist James T. Farrell (b.1904) made his name with a series of novels on the Chicago poor, and though different in many ways, *The Grapes of Wrath* is generally recognised as belonging to the same 'proletarian literature' group as Farrell's work. A different group was composed of authors such as William Faulkner (1897-1962) and Thomas Wolfe (1900-36), who, whilst not ignoring social problems, tended to write more regional work, that is books whose stories and characters are based firmly on one particular area.

It would be wrong to classify Steinbeck as simply one of the 'proletarian writers'; his concern for poor people is evident, but whatever his accusers may have said, he does little social probing; it is not the reasons for human behaviour that concern him so much as its actualities. Similarly, he is in part a regional novelist, in that the area around the Salinas River is described frequently in his novels, but it is not the region that is the mainspring of his inspiration. It may be the background of a novel, but the foreground is occupied by people who are human enough to have come from almost any area.

A note on the text

Of Mice and Men was first published by William Heinemann, London, 1937, and by Viking Press, New York, 1937.

There are no textual problems with Steinbeck's works. The best edition for the majority of students is that issued by Pan Books, in association with William Heinemann (London, 1974). Sixteen other titles by Steinbeck are also available in the same series.

Part 2

Summaries

of OF MICE AND MEN

A general summary

One warm evening, two men walk down from the highway to a pool by the Salinas River. George is small, dark, and moves quickly, whilst it soon becomes apparent that Lennie, huge and blank-faced, is half-witted. They are off to take up work on a nearby ranch, but George tells Lennie not to say a word when they arrive; they have had to leave their previous job for some unspecified reason to do with Lennie. Before they go to sleep, Lennie makes George tell him a story he has obviously heard many times before, how when they get a little money together they will run a small farm, with rabbits and other animals on it for Lennie to look after. They start work at the farm, and meet Curley, the violent and argumentative son of the ranch owner, who has recently married a girl who is already showing signs of wanting to be unfaithful to him. Frightened that there will be trouble between Curley and Lennie, George arranges to meet Lennie by the pool where they spent the previous night, if there is any trouble. They meet Slim, the chief horse and mule driver, and a man with natural authority. Talking to him, George reveals that they were 'run out' of Weed, where they had previously been working, when Lennie was wrongly accused of trying to rape a girl. Lennie is given a young puppy, and Carlson, a farm-hand, makes Candy, an old man who cleans up round the farm, let his old dog be shot, because it smells and is too old to be of any further use. Depressed over the loss of his dog, Candy hears George telling Lennie about their plan for a little farm, and offers to put up half the money if they will let him come in with them. Curley breaks in, and starts a fight with Lennie, but after taking a battering, Lennie crushes Curley's hand; Slim makes Curley say that his hand was injured in an accident in a machine. One evening when nearly everyone has gone out to the local town, Lennie enters Crooks's hut; Crooks is a crippled and embittered negro who works on the farm in the stables. Lennie and Candy tell Crooks about their plan for a farm, but they are interrupted by Curley's wife, who threatens Crooks with a false rape charge when she is asked to leave the hut. Later Lennie kills the pup he has been given, not knowing his own strength, and while he is trying to bury it

in the straw that lies on the floor of the barn Curley's wife comes in. They talk, and she asks him to stroke her hair. She panics when she feels Lennie's strength, and by accident Lennie breaks her neck. When the body is found, it is obvious that Lennie is the murderer, and a hunt is started for him. Deciding that Lennie could not bear life in prison, and that he does not want him lynched by the farm-hands, George goes to where he knows Lennie will be, and shoots him. Only Slim understands why he had to do this.

Detailed summaries

There are no chapter divisions in *Of Mice and Men*, but there are a number of readily recognisable sections to the book, and most texts leave a clear line between them. The section numbers will not be found in the text, but for reference purposes page numbers are given for each section from the Pan-edition, and the first line of each section is supplied to enable the student to find them more easily.

Section 1. Pages 7–20: *'A few miles south of Soledad, the Salinas River ...'*

SUMMARY: The book opens with a description of the country around the Salinas River, south of Soledad. Two men come down to a pool by the river from the highway; George is small and dark, Lennie huge and ponderous. Lennie drinks from the stagnant water of the pool, and is told off for doing so by George. The two men are heading for work on a nearby ranch, but have been dropped off short of their destination by a bus-driver. It is obvious that Lennie is a half-wit, and George makes him get rid of a dead mouse he has been petting in his pocket.

Before the two men settle down to share a can of beans for supper, George gives Lennie strict instructions not to say anything when they meet the boss of the ranch the next day, because, 'If he finds out what a crazy bastard you are, we won't get no job', and makes Lennie throw the dead mouse away when he secretly goes to retrieve it. It emerges that in Weed, where they were previously working, Lennie stroked the material of a girl's dress, frightening her and giving rise to a rape charge. The two men had to hide in an irrigation ditch and flee the town. George gets angry with Lennie—'You crazy son-of-a-bitch. You keep me in hot water all the time'—but then relents, and as the sun sets, tells Lennie a story they have obviously been through many times before; Lennie almost knows it off by heart, but demands to hear it again from George. It is their dream, about how they are going to buy