

Honors 11 Summer Reading and Writing Assignment

Honors 11 is a challenging English course that operates as a survey of American literature, exploring the American Dream from the Puritan time period up until the modern era. Your preparation is vital for the success of our opening days of school as our discussion of this work will begin immediately.

The primary purpose of this assignment is to engage with a great work of literature through thoughtful, analytical writing. It will give us a baseline from which to improve, in a course that will stretch you as a reader, a writer, and a thinker. This assignment is your first opportunity to present yourself as a student who is ready for the demands of the Honors English 11 curriculum.

To begin the work, you can purchase any copy of John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*.

Directions

1. Before reading the story, read the directions for "Connections to the Text" on page 3 of this document, select two prompts, and write a 250-word response for each.
2. Read the directions and prompts for "Critical Analysis" on page 5 of this document. Keep the prompts in mind as you read *Of Mice and Men*. Use them to help guide your annotations of the text.
3. Read and review "[How to Mark a Book](#)" for guidance on the value and methods of annotating.
4. Read and annotate Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*. Focus your annotations on characters, content, motifs, symbols, themes, and style as you bear in mind the guidance provided in "How to Mark a Book" and the prompts you reviewed on the Critical Analysis page.

5. Select TWO of the “Critical Analysis” prompts on page 5 and provide a roughly 500 word written response to each, keeping the following in mind:
 - a. Writing must be analytical. The analysis is about the why and the how of the novel, not the what. Do not write a summary of the story; do not simply explain what you know about characters, plot, or setting.
 - b. Responses should seek to interpret the story, making argumentative claims. Claims must be supported with quotations from the text, cited in MLA format. Please follow [this link](#) for a refresher on MLA format.
 - c. **Do not use secondary sources or external sources.** Utilizing the internet and subpar resources, like LitCharts, Sparknotes, Course Hero, or AI to interpret the text does not turn you into a good thinker. If you are struggling, be patient and take some time to think and/or free-write before writing your critical analysis. Do not be afraid to be wrong—it is from this that our greatest growth can be born.
 - d. Responses must be typed. They will be submitted to Turnitin on the first day of class. Please be mindful of this when writing→plagiarism will result in a failing grade. Again you are asked not to use secondary sources, if you do use them, you must cite them to avoid plagiarism. Use of any generative text sources like ChatGPT will not be accepted or tolerated.
6. Read and annotate Robert Burns's “To a Mouse” on page 7. Focus your annotations on poetic devices such as diction, syntax, and form. Follow the directions after the poem to complete this part of the assignment.

Of Mice and Men: Connections to the Text

Before reading *Of Mice and Men*, choose two of the following prompts and, on an MLA formatted document, write a first-person narrative that explores the context, people, and events involved. You may share a personal experience that connects to these statements or you may choose to create a fictional first-person narrative. Please indicate whether your response is fact or fiction.

1. Believing that an unhappy situation is only temporary makes it more bearable.
2. Feeling responsible for someone can be a burden.
3. Men will not allow their friends to become burdens.
4. Women need friends more than men do.
5. It is more acceptable for women to love their female friends than it is for men to love their male friends.
6. Of the many feelings that hurt – grief, anger, resentment, jealousy, loneliness – loneliness hurts the most.
7. If a person has a dream to cling to, he or she can survive against the odds.
8. Society cannot defeat an individual.
9. A flaw within our own personality can defeat us.
10. Dreaming is for dreamers, and dreamers go nowhere. Be real.
11. There are times when euthanasia (mercy killing) can be justified.
12. Friends understand and look out for one another.
13. It is good to have friends who are different from us.
14. Lonely people are sad.
15. True friendships sometimes require us to sacrifice ourselves.
16. I stand up for my friends when others make fun of or talk badly about them.
17. I stand up for complete strangers when other people pick on them.
18. I will stand up for a family member before I will stand up for a friend.

19. Best friends should be willing to sacrifice everything for one another.

20. People with mental or developmental disabilities do not know when they are being made fun of.

Each response is worth 15 points and should:

- Maintain a clear specific focus on the selected prompt
- Provide substantial, specific, and illustrative detail
- Be free of grammar and usage errors, while maintaining an interesting selection of word choice and syntax

Of Mice and Men: Critical Analysis

Choose two of the prompts below and write a multi-paragraph, approximately 500 word response that properly integrates and cites quotations from the text.

Option #1:

Think about different characters in *Of Mice and Men*, and the power that they have. What different kinds of power do different characters have? Where does it come from? What do they do with it? How does it help them, or hurt them?

Option #2:

Many works of literature contain a character that intentionally deceives others. The character's dishonesty may be intended either to help or to hurt. Such a character may choose to mislead others for a variety of reasons. In a well-written response, analyze the motives for the character's deception and discuss how the deception contributes to the meaning of the work as a whole.

Option #3:

Analyze Steinbeck's portrayal of Curley's wife as the lone female on the all-male ranch. In what ways does Curley's wife exercise power over others and in what ways is she subject to the power of others? What impression does he create of women? Use direct quotations and specific examples to support your views.

Option #4:

References to animals abound in the novel, which is essentially about people on a ranch. Examine the significance of animal imagery throughout the novel. What do the animal references convey about human relationships?

Each response is worth 30 points and should:

- Observe MLA format
- Maintain a clear specific focus on the selected prompt
- Provide substantial, specific, and illustrative detail
- Includes at least one quotation per paragraph from the text that is effectively integrated with lead-in and cited correctly
- Demonstrates a clear organizational strategy through multiple paragraphs and transitions
- Provides evidence of independent thinking
- Be free of grammar and usage errors, while maintaining an interesting selection of word choice and sophisticated syntax

Of Mice and Men: Poetic Connections

Directions: Steinbeck named his novella after a line in this poem by Robert Burns. Read and annotate the poem below before answering BOTH questions at the end. Each response should be approximately 300 words and include a direct citation from the poem.

“To a Mouse” by Robert Burns

Small, sleek, cowering, timorous beast,

O, what a panic is in your breast!

You need not start away so hasty

With hurrying scamper!

I would be loath to run and chase you,

With murdering plough-staff.

I'm truly sorry man's dominion

Has broken Nature's social union,

And justifies that ill opinion

Which makes thee startle

At me, thy poor, earth born companion

And fellow mortal!

I doubt not, sometimes, but you may steal;

What then? Poor beast, you must live!

An odd ear in twenty-four sheaves

Is a small request;
I will get a blessing with what is left,
And never miss it.

Your small house, too, in ruin!
It's feeble walls the winds are scattering!
And nothing now, to build a new one,
Of coarse grass green!
And bleak December's winds coming,
Both bitter and keen!

You saw the fields laid bare and wasted,
And weary winter coming fast,
And cozy here, beneath the blast,
You thought to dwell,
Till crash! the cruel plough past
Out through your cell.

That small bit heap of leaves and stubble,
Has cost you many a weary nibble!
Now you are turned out, for all your trouble,
Without house or holding,
To endure the winter's sleety dribble,
And hoar-frost cold.

But Mouse, you are not alone,
In proving foresight may be vain:
The best laid schemes of mice and men
Go often askew,
And leaves us nothing but grief and pain,
For promised joy!

Still you are blest, compared with me!
The present only touches you:
But oh! I backward cast my eye,
On prospects dreary!
And forward, though I cannot see,
I guess and fear!

Written Responses:

1. How does the poet's comparison of mice and men in the final two stanzas contribute to the poem's overall meaning? How does this connect to Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*?
2. Identify the tone of the poem and how the poet crafts the tone through his selection of diction and syntax. How does this tone connect to Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*?

Each response is worth 15 points and should:

- Maintain a clear specific focus on the selected prompt
- Provide substantial, specific, and illustrative detail
- Be free of grammar and usage errors, while maintaining an interesting selection of word choice and syntax