StudySync Lesson Plan  
Of Mice and Men

Objectives

1. Engage students in the plot, characters, themes, setting, and language of John Steinbeck’s *Of Mice and Men* so that they are prepared to discuss and write about the excerpt and/or the entire novel.

2. Practice and reinforce the following Grade 9-10 ELA Common Core Standards for reading literature, writing, and speaking and listening:
   - **READING: LITERATURE** – RL.9-10.1-5, 10
   - **WRITING** – W.9-10.1-7, 9, 10
   - **SPEAKING AND LISTENING** – SL.9-10.1-6

Time

160 minutes (with up to an additional 125 minutes of extension possibilities)

Materials

SyncTV Premium Lesson on John Steinbeck’s *Of Mice and Men*

Overview

This excerpt, taken from chapter one in *Of Mice and Men*, reveals the two main characters and sets the stage for the rest of the book. Author John Steinbeck explores the complex nature of human beings and their need for dreams and companionship. Close examination of this excerpt will prepare students to read the entire novel, and to write thoughtful, informed, and textually-rooted responses, consistent with the ELA Common Core Standards for the high school grades.

Background (10 minutes)

1. **Watch the Preview (SL.9-10.1-2).** As a group, watch the video preview of the premium lesson. Use the following questions to spur discussion following the preview:
   - a. What image or images stand out for you and why? What words come to mind after seeing the images in the preview?
   - b. What image or images stand out for you and why? What words come to mind after
seeing the images in the preview?

c. Based on these images, what inferences can you make about the characters in the story?

Extension (additional 10 minutes)

d. **Discuss (SL.9-10.1, 3-4, 6).** The preview brings up the strong friendship between the two main characters. As a class, discuss the qualities of a good friendship. What can a strong friendship survive or overcome? What should best friends be willing to do or not do for each other? Ask students to make a list of ten qualities that a good friendship should have. Have them keep the list to discuss further after reading *Of Mice and Men.*

Engaging the Text (110 minutes)

2. **Read the Text (30 minutes)**

   a. **Read and Annotate (RL.9-10.1-5, 10).** Have students read and annotate the introduction and excerpt from *Of Mice and Men.* If students are completing as a homework assignment, ask them to write any questions they have into the annotation tool—these questions are visible to you after the students submit their writing assignments or beforehand if you use the "Mimic" function to access the students’ accounts.

   b. **Discuss (SL.9-10.1, 3).** Have students get into small groups or pairs and briefly discuss the questions and inferences they had while reading. As a class, discuss the following: How did the images in the preview affect your understanding of the text? What other images came to mind as you read the excerpt?

Extension (additional 20 minutes)

   c. **Listen and Discuss (SL.9-10.1-2).** As a class, listen to the audio reading of the text. Ask students to share how their understanding of the text changed after listening. What images came to mind? What words did the author use to develop the time period?

   d. **Comprehend (RL.9-10.1-4).** Have students complete the multiple-choice questions. Collect papers or discuss answers as a class.

3. **Watch SyncTV (20 minutes)**

   a. **Watch.** Either watch the SyncTV discussion associated with *Of Mice and Men* as a class or ask students to watch it on their individual computers.

   b. **Focus (RL.9-10.3).** Use the portion of the episode from 1:10-1:50 to focus in on how the SyncTV students analyze the roles that George and Lennie play in their friendship. Look closely at how the characters analyze the benefits that each character draws from the friendship.

   c. **Focus (RL.9-10.1).** Examine closely the portion of the episode where the students consider "Why does George go to all that trouble to protect Lennie?" Focus on how Liam uses two specific examples (e.g., "They got no family. They got no place.") from the text to build an argument about why George needs Lennie to have something/someone to look forward to.
d. **Discuss (SL.9-10.1-6).** After watching the model discussion, have a conversation with the class about the ideas discussed in the SyncTV episode that stood out the most. What new thoughts do they have after hearing the students’ discussion? Next, divide students into small groups (3-4 students). Move around the room monitoring the groups as students follow the SyncTV episode as a model to discuss some of the following questions:

   i. What does the author do to show Lennie is mentally slower? Cite specific examples from the text.

   ii. Why do you think George looks after Lennie? How did the two get together, and why have they stayed together?

   iii. Discuss the dream George and Lennie share. What does it symbolize for each of them?

   iv. What is the overall tone of this excerpt? What words or phrases contribute to this feeling?

   v. Do George and Lennie have a good friendship in your opinion? Use specific examples from the text to support your claim. How do you think George and Lennie would respond to the question?

   vi. The title for the book comes from the poem "To a Mouse" by Scottish poet Robert Burns. Read the following stanza (in its English translation), and analyze its relationship to the excerpt, and infer what might happen in the book:

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

**Extension (additional 30 minutes)**

   e. **Write (W.9-10.3-6, 10).** Sometimes a person can have the best intentions or ideas, but things do not go as planned. Have students think of times when this has happened to them. How did they react to the situation? Looking back, would they have done anything differently? Students should write a narrative of one of these times, using descriptive details and other narrative writing traits and crafts (dialogue, sensory language, etc.). Students can complete the assignment as a quick write activity or go through the writing process of planning, revising, editing, and publishing. Be sure to have time for students to share their final writing pieces with the class.

4. **Think (10 minutes)**

   a. **Respond (W.9-10.1, 4, 9).** Ask students to read the "Think" questions, watch the corresponding video clips, and respond to the questions, either in class or for homework.

5. **Write (50 minutes)**

   a. **Discuss (SL.9-10.1).** Read the prompt you have chosen for students, and then solicit questions regarding the prompt or the assignment expectations. Whichever prompt you have chosen, make sure you are clear about the assignment expectations and the rubric by which you and the other students will be evaluating
b. **Organize (RL.9-10.1-5, 10 and W.9-10.1-2, 5).** Ask students to go back and annotate the text with the prompt in mind. They should be organizing their thoughts and the points they'll address in their writing as they make annotations. If you've worked on outlining or other organizational tools for writing, this is a good place to apply them.

c. **Write (W.9-10.1-2, 4-6, 9-10).** Have students go through the writing process of planning, revising, editing, and publishing their writing responses.

d. **Review (W.9-10.4-6).** Use the StudySync "Review" feature to have students complete one to two evaluations of their peers' work based on your chosen review rubric. Have the students look at and reflect upon the peer evaluations of their own writing. What might you do differently in a revision? How might you strengthen the writing and the ideas?

**Extension (additional 40 minutes)**

e. **Write (W.9-10.1-2, 4-6, 9-10).** For homework, have students write an essay using one of the prompts you did not choose to do in class. Students should publish their responses online.

f. **Write (W.9-10.1, 4-6).** Have students look back at the excerpt and the stanza from the poem "To a Mouse." Ask them to write an essay on the importance of dreams. Is it more important to have dreams or be realistic?

g. **Diagram (RL.9-10.1 and W.9-10.2).** Ask students to complete a Venn diagram comparing George and Lennie. Have students add to the comparison chart as they read the book. Then, have students pick a few characteristics to explain in writing. They should cite evidence from the book to support their descriptions.
SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

Key Vocabulary

1. extricate (v.) - to free or release from entanglement; disengage.
2. unintentionally (adj.) - not intentional or deliberate.
3. loyalty (n.) - the state or quality of being loyal; faithfulness to commitments or obligations

Reading Comprehension Questions

1. Which word is the best synonym for bindle as it is used in the passage?
   a. branches
   b. bedding
   c. dinner
   d. self

2. Which best describes George in this excerpt?
   a. selfish
   b. annoyed
   c. apprehensive
   d. condescending

3. Why does George stop telling Lennie about their dream?
   a. It's time to eat.
   b. He's annoyed because Lennie keeps interrupting him.
   c. It's getting dark and he wants to go to bed.
   d. He doesn't think their dream is really possible.

4. How are George and Lennie different from other ranch hands?
   a. They are not alone.
   b. They are older than most.
   c. They have never gotten into trouble.
   d. They work more than most others.

5. Based on the passage, what does Lennie struggle with?
   a. cooking
   b. remembering things
   c. taking care of rabbits
   d. paying attention

6. Which of the following could be considered themes of the excerpt?
   a. survival
   b. friendship
   c. loneliness
   d. all of the above

7. Why don't George and Lennie follow through on their dream now?
   a. Lennie keeps getting into trouble.
   b. They are waiting to find a place to live.
   c. They don't have enough money.
   d. They have to go to work tomorrow.
8. What does Lennie represent to George?
   a. hope
   b. depression
   c. money
   d. both b and c

9. What is probably important to George and Lennie?
   a. religion
   b. loyalty
   c. nature
   d. all of the above

10. What have George and Lennie discussed many times?
    a. Lennie hiding in the brush if he gets into trouble
    b. the differences between them and other ranch hands
    c. the rabbits Lennie will own someday
    d. both b and c

Answer Key

1. B
2. C
3. D
4. A
5. B
6. D
7. C
8. A
9. B
10. D
Further Assignments

1. After reading *Of Mice and Men*, have students look back at their list of characteristics of a good friendship. Discuss whether or not George was a true friend, or revisions they would like to make to their list (did their definition of friendship change after reading the book?). (*RL.9-10.1 and SL.10.1, 3-4, 6*)

2. Have students do research about the time and place in which the story is set. Discuss and write how the setting impacted the decisions of the characters. (*W.9-10.7*)

3. After reading the book, have students conduct a debate about George's final decision with Lennie. Do they condone or condemn his decision? Is this action acceptable in certain circumstances? (*SL.9-10.1, 3-4, 6*)

4. After reading the book, ask students to discuss whether or not George would have made different decisions along the way if he had known how it would all end. Students should offer specific evidence from the book about George's character as support for their opinion. (*RL.9-10.1, 3 and SL.9-10.1, 3-4*)

5. After reading the full text of *Of Mice and Men*, conduct a mock trial in which George is tried for the murder of Lennie. Did he commit murder or an act of mercy? Break students into groups in which some students act as lawyers for the prosecution and defense, while other students play the roles of characters from the book to be called as witnesses. (*SL.9-10.1, 3-4, 6*)

6. Ask students to go back through this excerpt from the novel and identify the different verb tenses used throughout. Each student should develop a list of simple present tense, simple past tense, and other verb tenses. As a class, come together to discuss any sentences which students may have had trouble determining the tense for. (*ELL*)