

Of Mice and Men

CHAPTERS 5 & 6 ENRICHMENT ACTIVITY

Thematic Analysis: Dreams

A theme is a general concept or idea, such as love, justice, or sorrow. One of the major themes in *Of Mice and Men* is the elusiveness of dreams; several characters' hopes have been dashed by the end of the novella.

DIRECTIONS: Identify the dream of each of the following characters, and explain how that dream is destroyed.

George and Lennie
Dream: How it dies:
Crooks
Dream: How it dies:
Candy
Dream: How it dies:
Curley's Wife
Dream: How it dies:

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!

The title *Of Mice and Men* is taken from a poem by Robert Burns. "To a Mouse" describes how a mouse's home is destroyed by a farmer's plow even though the mouse thinks he has discovered an invulnerable site. Steinbeck borrowed a significant line in the poem to use as his title: "The best laid plans of mice and men often go awry." That is, even the best ideas can fail.

Writing Prompt: Do you agree with Burns' comment about plans and dreams? Why do you think we still continue to dream despite that many dreams are never realized and many plans are defeated? Write a well-organized paragraph, following the format below.

I. Topic Sentence: Mention the title of poem, the author of the poem and the theme of the poem. address how Burns views dreams in the poem? (i.e. In *To a Mouse*, Robert Burns views dreams with pessimism.)

A. Fact #1: (transition, lead-in, quote) To lead into the quote, briefly explain what happens to the mouse and then connect it to the quote: "The best laid plans of mice and men often go awry."

1. Analysis: How does the mouse's difficulty illustrate Burns' viewpoint on the worthlessness of dreams?
2. Analysis: How does the mouse's misfortune show the folly of dreams?

B. Fact #2: Remember to begin with a transition that relates the new fact to the previous sentence. (i.e. Despite Burns' pessimistic view of dreams, they are important...)

1. Analysis: Are dreams important even if they don't come true?
2. Analysis: How do dreams improve our lives?

C. Concluding Sentence: Restate the topic sentence in a new way. No facts here.