

Of Mice and Men, John Steinbeck, published in America in 1937 toward the end of the Great Depression.

The Wall Street Crash, 1929	During the 1920s, America's economy was growing very quickly by building a huge amount of new houses, machinery and products including food. Huge amounts of money were given to new businesses that seemed like they were going to make a lot of money in the future. However, America had actually made too many things in the 1920s so that by 1929, there was too much stuff and not enough people to buy it all. This meant all the things America had been making, including all the food it was growing suddenly became very cheap and businesses lost huge amounts of money. Everyone lost money, but the working class suffered the worst.	The novel explores the effects of The Wall Street Crash and The Great Depression on working class farmers. George and Lennie are forced to travel hundreds of miles across America searching for work so that they don't starve to death. When they do find work, they endure poor working conditions and low pay but have to accept it out of desperation.	Infantile	Childlike; immature
			Shrewd	Smart; quick witted
			Ambition	Determination to achieve
			Aspiration	Future goals
			Zoomorphism	Humans with animal qualities
			Advantageous	Favourable; useful
			Peril	Danger
The Great Depression, 1929 until late 1930s	Millions of people were fired because the businesses couldn't afford to pay them anymore – by 1933, 25% of Americans didn't have a job (13 million people) and those who could find work were often underpaid and mistreated because they were so desperate. The worst hit group of people were farmers. Farmers were kicked off their own land because they couldn't pay their loans to the bank. Food became expensive again and 7 million people starved in the 1930s including hundreds of thousands of children. There was minimal support for people without jobs available.	Prior to The Great Depression, most families owned their own farms and were able to support themselves independently. The novel explores the effect of working-class people not being able to own the land they work on – the workers are exploited by the rich owners of the land and are powerless to fight back.	Precarious	Unstable; close to failure
			Allusion	Reference to another idea
			Unattainable	Impossible to achieve
			Practical	Useful; unemotional
			Futility	Useless; pointless
			Astute	Able to analyse situations well
The Dust Bowl, 1930s	Dust storms caused by drought (lack of rain) in the middle of America made growing crops nearly impossible. People from this area had to travel hundreds of miles to states without drought to try and find work, such as California on the West Coast.	America was a new country and promised freedom and equality for all, but the novel also shows how brutal and wild the country was.	Discrimination	Mistreatment due to prejudice
			Prejudice	Judging before knowing
			Apathy	Not caring
Itinerant workers	People forced to travel to find work were called 'itinerant workers'. They had no place to call home, took any job available, and suffered terrible living conditions.	George and Lennie dream of a home of their own while being forced to search for work.	Euthanasia	Killing to prevent suffering
			Mistreat	Treat badly
The American Dream	'The American Dream' is a name given to a shared belief in America that all people should be free, and that freedom means giving people the opportunity to achieve wealth and success through hard work. In other words, nothing comes free, you must earn it, but there are no limits to what you can earn if you work hard.	The novel shows how this dream is impossible for some people because not all people are born equal in America. Black people, disabled people, elderly, poor, and women are all oppressed.	Isolated	Lonely; separated
			Economy	A country's money and goods
			Oppression	Harsh or cruel treatment
			Ostracised	Exiled (kicked out); outcast
Mental disabilities	Nowadays we understand how the brain works much better than 100 years ago. People with mental disabilities were mistreated and isolated in 1930s America.	Lennie reveals how innocent people who rely on others are vulnerable and abused in America.	Patriarchy	Men have power over women
			Equality	Fair and equal treatment
Patriarchy in 1930s America	Women were widely viewed as inferior to men. Women in middle class families were expected to be domestic and submissive, and women in working class families had to work as well but were paid half what men were paid for the same jobs. Men were typically very controlling of the women in their family e.g. wives and daughters	Curley's wife is frustrated by the confinement and restriction of her middle-class wife. She is forbidden from following her dreams of acting, and even from socialising, but often rebels.	Dystopia	Worst imaginable world
			Utopia	Best imaginable world
			Conform	Obedying; following ideas
			Subvert	Disobeying; going against ideas
Utilitarianism	A philosophical theory by Mill which states that you can work out whether an action is good or bad by thinking about how it will affect people. A good action causes pleasure or the least suffering for the most amount of people possible; a bad action causes suffering for many but pleasure for few.	The novel shows how callous and cold-hearted utilitarianism can be at times – Candy's dog is killed because the smell it makes causes suffering to all the men in the bunk room.	George: "Guys like us, that work on ranches, are the loneliest guys in the world." Crooks: "I seen hundreds of men come by on the road an' on the ranches, with their bindles on their back an' that same damn thing in their heads . . . every damn one of 'em's got a little piece of land in his head. An' never a God damn one of 'em ever gets it." Crooks: "A guy needs somebody—to be near him. A guy goes nuts if he ain't got nobody." Lennie: "We could live offa the fatta the lan" Candy: "I ought to of shot that dog myself, George. I shouldn't ought to of let no stranger shoot my dog."	
Social welfare	Any type of assistance from the government given to people in need for free or cheap, such as healthcare, education, food banks, benefits and council housing. America has typically had very little social welfare, possibly due to the belief in the American Dream where people are encouraged to look after themselves.	George and Lennie are completely dependent of finding a job to survive – George is extremely anxious about Lennie getting them kicked off the farm as there is no support if this happens.		
Race in 1930s America	The Great Depression affected black people worse than white people. America already had a racist history due to slavery. Slavery was illegal by the 1930s, but black people were still considered inferior to white people. In most areas, black people were segregated from white people, and endured cruel mistreatment.	Crooks is isolated and dehumanised by the white workers. He lives with the animals and is forbidden from socialising. His intelligence and kindness contrasts his oppressors' cruelty.		