

How is the character of *George* presented in Chapters one and two of the novella?

Our first glimpse of *George* as 'small and quick with restless eyes' suggests that he is 'restlessly' looking for something he doesn't have. This is reinforced at the end of the chapter when he tells the story of the dream 'rhythmically' suggesting that, like a fairy tale, he has told it many times before and that he also finds comfort in it. Their companionship is what separates *George* and *Lennie* from the other migrant workers; 'the loneliest guys in the world,' because their companionship means that they have someone to 'give a damn about them, however *George* interrupts himself: '.. nuts! I ain't got time for no more' which suggests to the reader that *George* is aware that the fairy tale of the dream is just that - a fairy tale which is unlikely to come true. His impatience stems from his realisation of the gulf between the dream and their reality. Earlier in the chapter he looks 'morosely' at the water - the adverb suggests his dissatisfaction with the hard life and low status of the migrant worker.

Steinbeck suggests that *George* needs *Lennie* as much as *Lennie* needs *George* - their relationship is symbiotic: 'I want you to stay with me.' When *George* realises he has 'been mean' he looks 'ashamedly' suggesting that his anger with *Lennie* is rooted more in the harsh life he is forced to lead than a real anger at *Lennie*, while the adverb 'ashamedly' reinforces the idea of *George* as a father figure to *Lennie*; one who can get impatient but is ultimately protective as is seen when he warns *Lennie* about the dangers of stagnant water

*George* also speaks to *Lennie* as if he is a dog: 'Good Boy', suggesting that their relationship is founded on *George* taking responsibility for *Lennie* as a good owner might for their dog. Steinbeck here gives us a positive picture of *George's* responsible nature. Unlike many other migrant workers he is prepared to look after someone weaker than himself. This suggests that companionship is more important to *George* than 'getting on so easy' without *Lennie*. His sympathy for *Lennie* is shown in the phrase 'poor bastard' said 'softly'. Again the adverb is a telling clue, this time to the softer side of *George's* nature and his promise to *Lennie* of a pup reinforces the idea of him as a kind father figure to *Lennie*. But Steinbeck also uses the character of *George* to foreshadow trouble to come 'If you get in trouble like you done before... hide in the brush'. This warning is repeated several times in chapter two suggesting that trouble is inevitable

In chapter two, Steinbeck emphasise further *George's* difference from the average migrant worker. His comment about *Curley*: 'that's a dirty thing to tell around' suggests that *George* has more sensitivity, while his disgust at the

thought of fleas and lice shows that he hasn't yet been brutalised by the harsh world in which he lives. When the boss asks: 'what stake you got in this guy' and assumes George must be taking Lennie's pay, Steinbeck reminds us how unusual it was for migrant workers to : ' take so much trouble for another guy' in a world where survival of the fittest was the norm. George is shown as a caring character in an uncaring world.

Steinbeck does however use the motif of George playing solitaire-mentioned three times in this chapter, to foreshadow George's eventual loneliness : solitaire is a game for one player and the word itself links back to the name of the town, Soledad, to highlight the loneliness of the migrant worker.

It is , finally, by having Slim, the undisputed 'prince of the ranch' look ' approvingly 'at George for complimenting Lennie's work ethic that Steinbeck validates George's character as a 'nice guy' , encouraging the reader to both like and admire him.