

Of Mice and Men Unit Cover Page

Unit Title : *Of Mice and Men*

Grade Level(s): English 3 AP Language and Composition; English 3 G/T AP Language and Composition

Subject/Topic Area(s): American literature

Key Words: American Dream, determinism, Great Depression, media violence, argumentative fallacies

Designed By: Diane Kreger, Pat Grego, Cheryl Vinson

Time Frame: 5 blocks/days

School District: Irving ISD School(s): Irving HS, MacArthur HS, Nimitz HS

Link to Content Standards:

II: Writing in Context: Interpretation and Evaluation

The student will interpret and evaluate both fiction and nonfiction writings according to their historical, social, and cultural context, focusing on writing by American authors.

III: Response to Writing: Analysis, Synthesis, Evaluation

The student will respond to writing selections by analysis (structure, tone, Diction, point of view, syntax, voice, purpose), synthesis (comparison/contrast to other works), and evaluation (effectiveness).

IV: Writing Based on Research

The student will write documented essays and complete products, using both primary and secondary sources, on topics related to American literature and/or correlating historical periods.

VII: Writing Style

The student will develop an effective writing style, focusing on diction (vocabulary, word choice), syntax (sentence structure), and voice.

VIII: Proofreading

The student will proofread his/her writing for errors in punctuation, grammar, spelling, and form.

X: AP Test Preparation

The student will develop and practice procedures for answering objective and free response items such as those on the Advanced Placement Examination in English Language and Composition.

XI: Responding to Literature

The student will read literature, paying special attention to literary elements as well as relating the literature to his/her own life.

Brief Summary of Unit (beginning with unit goals):

In this unit students will begin the year's study of American literature and the American Dream. Students will look at the dream in the context of determinism and the historical impact of the Great Depression. Students will also use this as a unit to evaluate the effects of determinism in contemporary media, especially the effect of violence. In connection with the analysis of the novel and contemporary media, students will write an argumentative paper on the issue and participate in a panel discussion as their introduction to effective argumentation free of argumentative fallacies.

This unit design packet includes:

- completed 3-part design template
- completed Blueprint for performance task(s)
- with related scoring rubric(s)
- directions to students & teachers
- materials & resources listed
- suggested accommodations
- suggested extensions

Status: ___ initial draft ___ field tested ___ reviewed
 ___ anchored

STAGE 1: IDENTIFY DESIRED RESULTS

What overarching understanding(s) are desired?

1. The American Dream is a pervasive element of the American cultural identity.
2. The American Dream represents a social, economic, and literary ideal that suggests that position, wealth, and power can be attained by anyone through hard work.

What are the overarching, essential questions?

1. What is meant by the American Dream?
2. Is the American Dream still a viable element today?
3. Is the American Dream a destructive or empowering force, or a combination of both?
4. What is determinism and what effect does its use in writing produce?

What will students understand as a result as of this unit?

- While the American Dream rests on the need for a common set of beliefs or ideologies, its presence today is diverse, multi-faceted, and paradoxical
- Steinbeck's emphasis on determinism, which focuses on loneliness and isolation of the inner spirit, typifies the struggle to achieve the American Dream as experienced during the 1930's.

What questions will guide this unit?

- How do the characters embody or fail to embody the American Dream in *Of Mice and Men*?
- Do any characters in *OMaM* still perceive the dream as viable at the close of the novel?
- Is the American Dream a destructive or empowering force, or a combination of both in *OMaM*?
- Specifically, how is the characters' faith in the American Dream empowered or destroyed?
- How are teenagers today affected by the determinism present in movies, music, literature, television, and video games?

What key knowledge and skills will students acquire as a result of this unit?

Students will know:

1. background of the Great Depression and migrant workers
2. the characteristics of determinism
3. the American Dream and its presence in contemporary American literature
4. argumentative fallacies

Students will be able to:

1. analyze key symbols and symbol patterns
2. describe and analyze narrative structure of the novel *Of Mice and Men*
3. analyze contrasting elements in a novel
4. analyze the effect of determinism in contemporary media
5. avoid argumentative fallacies in written and oral presentations
6. articulate effective rebuttals in panel discussion

Stage 2: Determining Acceptable Evidence

What evidence will show that students understand the thematic implications of the American Dream and determinism?

Performance Task(s)/Project(s):

1. Produce an editorial agreeing or disagreeing with the belief that determinism in contemporary media is a detriment to our society, using specific references to several forms of media or a sustained argument dealing with a specific group, movie, show, or video game.
2. Defend your editorial stance in a panel discussion.

Quiz(zes), Test(s), Prompt(s):

1. reading check for summer reading
2. AP timed writings – one body paragraph w/3 chunks for literary analysis
Suggested prompts:
 - a. Explain how Steinbeck's symbolic use of hands reveals the essence of that character. Discuss three characters who have symbolic references/meanings regarding the description of their hands. Relate this directly to the specific character traits/personality of the character. (What does the outer, physical description of the hands reveal about the inner quality of the character?)
 - b. Choose one specific setting or three different settings in the novel and discuss some type of contrast involving the atmosphere (feeling) of each setting. Discuss Steinbeck's ability to convey contrast of an atmosphere of a given setting by focusing on specific characters and situations. Be very specific and precise with each setting, as well as all explanation involving the changes in atmosphere. EX. a church --- the atmosphere at Sunday service --- the atmosphere of a funeral --- the atmosphere of a wedding (The physical room is the same; however, the decorations, lighting, music, dress, emotions will be different – also the atmosphere!)
3. AP multiple choice practice
4. Prompt for response:
"Guys like us that work on ranches is the loneliest guys in the world. They ain't got no family. They don't belong no place.... They ain't got nothin' to look ahead to.... With us it ain't like that. We got a future....we got somebody to talk to that gives a damn about us....Because I got you to look after me....and you got me to look after you....and that's why!"
5. traditional objective/essay test option

Other Evidence: (observations, work samples, dialogues, etc.)

- reading/dialectical journal
- class discussion
- observation of panel discussion participation in various roles

Student Self-Assessment:

- exit responses – What did you K(now), W(hat do you still need to know), What did you L(earn)
- self-selected contribution to class portfolio
- self-assessment of editorial

Stage 3: Plan Learning Experiences and Instruction

This unit takes approximately 5 block periods. Since this unit starts the year, the actual number of days may be more than 5 with the inclusion of other beginning of the year activities.

- Introduce the concept of the American Dream, discussion and quote response (suggested quote for reaction paragraph – Ch 1 “Guys like us that work on ranches is the loneliest guys in the world. They ain’t got no family. They don’t belong no place.... They ain’t got nothin’ to look ahead to.... With us it ain’t like that. We got a future....we got somebody to talk to that gives a damn about us....Because I got you to look after me....and you got me to look after you....and that’s why!”). Weave the unit understandings and questions into this introduction also.
- Analyze the characters and setting in relation to the concept of determinism.
- Analyze Steinbeck’s use of foreshadowing within the background atmosphere of violence, prejudice, and cruelty.
- Each student will find an article in popular magazines or from the internet on contemporary media violence.
- Evaluate through discussion or written response whether the dream is empowering or destructive in the novel. Review use of quotation support.
- Introduce performance task prompt and discuss pros and cons of contemporary media.
- Use the articles students found to introduce argumentative fallacies and look for examples in the articles and/or editorials appropriate to the prompt.
- Prepare formal paper; review and revise to avoid argumentative fallacies. Review persuasive essay organization and elaboration techniques.
- Discuss and model appropriate behavior for panel discussion.
- Conduct panel discussion. To close this lesson, students will complete a self and peer critique.
- Work in where appropriate a summer reading check test and a traditional objective/essay test. Use AP type prompts and multiple choice selections. See Acceptable Evidence section for prompt suggestions.
- Other forms of students’ self-assessment and other acceptable evidence are to be used where appropriate at the teacher’s discretion and as time permits.

***Of Mice and Men* Performance Task 1 & 2 Matrix**

Setting and Role:

- Recent episodes of violence in schools and other public places have prompted increasing criticism of contemporary movies, television, video games, music, and literature. You are writing an editorial response to this criticism to present for publication and an upcoming panel discussion of contemporary media.

Goal or Challenge:

- To formulate an effective written argument incorporating the characteristics of determinism and the content and effects of contemporary media without resorting to faulty argumentation.
- To participate in various roles in a panel discussion using effective oral argumentation skills

Product/Performance and Purpose:

- First, brainstorm objections to and defenses of contemporary media with specific examples
- Next, find at least one article that could be tied to this issue.
- Then, prepare the formal paper. (final version is typed)
- Afterwards, analyze the argumentation to determine if any fallacies appear and revise if necessary.
- Finally, rotate roles within the panel discussion demonstrating oral skills in defending your position, questioning the views and arguments of others, and practicing courteous argumentation

Audience:

- Your paper must be acceptable for submission to a newspaper editorial section.
- Content of written and oral argument must be appropriate for use in a classroom discussion with your peers and teacher.

Criteria for Success:

- Your written and oral argument must...
 - clearly support your view without using argumentative fallacies
 - indicate comprehension of the elements of determinism in literature and other media
 - indicate how this concept of determinism affects societal attitudes towards success, the American Dream, and the inner spirit