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Humanities ¾

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**Discrimination within *Of Men and Mice***

Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, “We must learn to live together as brothers or perish together as fools.” The message that Martin Luther King, Jr. was sending is that we should either learn to live peacefully and not discriminate against one another or live a sad life of discrimination because of our ethnicities and, gender. The novella *Of Mice and Men,* by John Steinbeck, takes place during The Great Depression on a ranch in central california. Readers are introduced to a couple of characters who are discriminated against because of their ethnicity, level of intelligence, their gender and their age. Although Lennie and George are the main characters, there are other important characters including Crooks, the only colored man on the ranch, Curley’s wife, a woman that is viewed as an object, and Candy, an elderly man that has no say in anything because of his age. These characters all have a great impact in the book because of the strong portrayals of discrimination, loneliness and ostracization they are faced with. Steinbeck brings forth the discrimination against all of these characters to show his displeasure with society’s unjust perspectives and social hierarchies.

Curley’s wife is discriminated against in the novella *Of Mice and Men* because she is a woman. One example of this is “Listen to me, you crazy bastard. Don’t you even take a look at that bitch. I dont care what she says and what she does. I seen em poison before, but I never seen no piece of jailbait worse than her.You leave her be”.(Steinbeck 32). George threatens Lennie after Lennie calls Curley’s wife “purty” because George is worried that she is going to get Lennie in trouble. George refers to Curley’s wife as jailbait to show how poorly women were treated and how they are referred to as objects instead of people. However, this is not the only quote that shows how Curley’s wife is discriminated against in the novella. For instance, “Know what I think? well, I think Curley’s married...a tart” (Steinbeck 28). The men on the ranch think Curley’s wife is a slut. They refer to her as “tart” because she is giving the other men the “eye”. According to the men’s perspective she is flirting with them even though she is married, when really she is simpl y lonely. Their assumptions, name calling and quick judgements show how women were controlled by men and viewed poorly. Curley’s wife is constantly viewed as an object which shows how women were discriminated against that period of time.

Another form of discrimination in this book is discrimination against the elderly shown through the character Candy. Candy is discriminated against because he is an elderly man. One example "You seen what they done to my dog tonight? They says he wasn't no good to himself nor nobody else. When they can me here I wisht somebody'd shoot me. But they won't do nothing like that. I won't have no place to go, an' I can't get no more jobs" (Steinbeck 60). This quote shows how Candy is discriminated against because of his age. Because Candy is old he is not important to anyone anymore because he is thought of as being useless. The men on the ranch say his dog is not any good to himself or to anyone else and Candy thinks that the man are talking about him since he is also old. .However this is not the only quote that shows how discriminated the elderly men are in this novella. For instance, “I lost my hand right here on the ranch.Thats why they didn't can me.They give me a job swampin’”(Steinbeck 60 ).This quote also shows how Candy is discriminated against because of his age and disability.Candy feels discriminated and says that the only reason they have not “canned him” because he lost his hand on the ranch. This shows how elderly people are discriminated on the ranch. Candy’s age and disability causes him to be discriminated.

The characters in the novella *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck are discriminated because of their color gender, and age.Throughout the novella *Of Mice and Men* characters such as Crooks Candy, and Curley’s wife etc face discrimination, and they are treated poorly because of their gender ethnicity, and age. Curleys wife discriminated by her gender, and treated as an object ,Crooks is discriminated upon because he is african american, and cannot go into the bunk house because of his color Also Candy s discriminated against because of his age, and has no rights because he is an elderly man. All these characters are significant of discrimination during the 1900’s. People can benefit from learning about the discrimination in the novella *Of Mice and Men* by treating each other as equal, and respecting each other.

**Work Cited**

Steinbeck, John. *Of Mice and Men*. New York: Penguin Books, 1993

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