

## Vocabulary Study *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck

*Note: The words, definitions, and quotations in the first section are given in the order as they appear in the text.*

### Chapter One

anguish  
brusque  
contemplate  
debris  
elaborate

juncture  
mimic  
morose  
recumbent  
stake

**1. juncture** (*juhngk-cher*) *n.* the line or point at which two bodies are joined; joint or articulation; seam; the act of joining

derivatives: junction

“ . . . but on the valley side the water is lined with trees—willows fresh and green with every spring, carrying in their lower leaf **junctures** the debris of the winter’s flooding; and sycamores with mottled, white, recumbent limbs and branches that arch over the pool” (1).

**2. debris** (*duh-bree, dey-bree*) *n.* the scattered remains of something broken or destroyed; rubble or wreckage; carelessly discarded refuse; litter

derivatives: none

“ . . . but on the valley side the water is lined with trees—willows fresh and green with every spring, carrying in their lower leaf junctures the **debris** of the winter’s flooding; and sycamores with mottled, white, recumbent limbs and branches that arch over the pool” (1).

**3. recumbent** (*ri-kuhm-buhnt*) *adj.* lying down, especially in a position of comfort or rest; reclining; resting; idle

derivatives: recumbency, recumbence, recumbently

“ . . . but on the valley side the water is lined with trees—willows fresh and green with every spring, carrying in their lower leaf junctures the debris of the winter’s flooding; and sycamores with mottled, white, **recumbent** limbs and branches that arch over the pool” (1).

4. **morose** (*muh-rohs*) *adj.* sullen; melancholy; gloomy

derivatives: morosely, moroseness

“George stared **morosely** at the water” (4).

5. **brusque** (*bruhs-k*) *adj.* abrupt and curt in manner or speech; discourteously blunt

derivatives: brusquely, brusqueness

“‘Awright,’ he said **brusquely**” (8).

6. **contemplate** (*kon-tuh m-pleyt*) *v.* to consider carefully and at length; meditate on or ponder

derivatives: contemplated, contemplating, contemplates

“Lennie hesitated, backed away, looked wildly at the brush line as though he **contemplated** running for his freedom” (8).

7. **elaborate** (*ih-lab-er-it*) *adj.* planned or executed with painstaking attention to numerous parts or details. Intricate and rich in detail

derivatives: elaborated, elaborating, elaborates

“He took on the **elaborate** manner of little girls when they are mimicking one another” (11).

8. **mimic** (*mim-ik*) *v.* to copy or imitate closely, especially in speech, expression, and gesture; ape; to copy or imitate so as to ridicule; mock

derivatives: mimicked, mimicking, mimics

“He took on the elaborate manner of little girls when they are **mimicking** one another” (11).

**9. anguish** (ang-gwish) *n.* agonizing physical or mental pain; torment

derivatives: anguished, anguishing, anguishes

“He looked across the fire at Lennie’s **anguished** face. . .” (11).

**10. stake** (steyk) *n.* an amount of money; to possess, claim, or reserve a share of (land, profit, glory, etc.)

derivatives: none

“They come to a ranch an’ work up a **stake**. . .” (13).

## Chapter Two

abrupt  
apprehensive  
complacent  
derogatory  
mollify

ominous  
pugnacious  
scourge  
scowl  
vicious

**1. scourge** (skurj) *n.* a source of widespread dreadful affliction and devastation such as that caused by pestilence or war; a means of inflicting severe suffering, vengeance, or punishment.

derivatives: scourged, scouring, scourges

“Says ‘positively kills lice, roaches and other **scourges**’” (18).

**2. scowl** (skoul) *v.* to wrinkle or contract the brow as an expression of anger or disapproval

derivatives: scowled, scowling, scowls

“George **scowled** at him. . .” (22).

**3. abrupt** (uh-bruhpt) *adj.* unexpectedly sudden; surprisingly curt; brusque

derivatives: abruptly, abruptness

“He turned **abruptly** and went to the door. . .” (23).

**4. vicious** (vish-uh s) *adj.* having the nature of vice; evil, immoral, or depraved; spiteful; malicious

derivatives: viciously, viciousness

“‘Be a damn good thing if you was,’ George said **viciously**” (23).

**5. mollify** (*mol-uh-fahy*) *v.* to calm in temper or feeling; soothe; to lessen in intensity; temper, to reduce the rigidity of; soften

derivatives: mollified, mollifying, mollifies, mollifiable, mollification, mollifier, mollifyingly

“Damn right he don’t,’ said George, slightly **mollified**. . .” (24).

**6. pugnacious** (*puhg-ney-shuh s*) *adj.* combative in nature; belligerent

derivatives: pugnaciously, pugnaciousness, pugnacity

“His glance was at once calculating and **pugnacious**” (25).

**7. ominous** (*om-uh-nuh s*) *adj.* menacing; threatening; of or being an omen, especially an evil one

derivatives: ominously, ominousness

“He said **ominously**, ‘Well, he better watch out for Lennie . . .’” (27).

**8. derogatory** (*dih-rog-uh-tawr-ee, -tohr-ee*) *adj.* disparaging; belittling; tending to detract or diminish

derivatives: derogatorily, derogatoriness

“He had drawn a **derogatory** statement from George” (27).

**9. apprehensive** (*ap-ri-hen-siv*) *adj.* anxious or fearful about the future; uneasy

derivatives: apprehensively, apprehensiveness

“She was suddenly **apprehensive**” (32).

**10. complacent** (*kuh m-pley-suh nt*) *adj.* contented to a fault; self-satisfied and unconcerned  
eager to please; complaisant

derivative: complacently

“Lennie . . . smiled **complacently** at the compliment” (34).

### Chapter Three

bemuse  
bleat  
cower  
derision  
euchre

magazine  
receptive  
reprehensible  
sarcastic  
smoke

**1. derision** (dih-**rizz**-uh n) *n.* contemptuous or jeering laughter; ridicule; an object of ridicule; a laughingstock

derivative: deride

“Through the door came the thuds and occasional clangs of a horseshoe game, and now and then the sound of voices raised in approval or **derision**” (38).

**2. receptive** (ri-**sep**-tiv) *adj.* capable of or qualified for receiving; ready or willing to receive favorably

derivatives: receptively, receptiveness, receptivity

“He just sat back quiet and **receptive**” (39).

**3. euchre** (yoo-ker) *n.* a card game played usually with the highest 32 cards, in which each player is dealt 5 cards and the player making the trump is required to take at least 3 tricks to win

derivatives: euchred, euchring, euchres

““Anybody like to play a little **euchre**?”” (48)

**4. magazine** (mag-uh-**zeen**, **mag**-uh-zeen) *n.* a compartment in some types of firearms, often a small detachable box, in which cartridges are held to be fed into the firing chamber

derivatives: mag-a-zin-ish, mag-a-zin-y

“He laid them on his bed and then brought out the pistol, took out the **magazine** and snapped the loaded shell from the chamber. Then he fell to cleaning the barrel with the little rod” (53).

**5. sarcastic** (sahr-kas-tik) *adj.* expressing or marked by sarcasm; having or marked by a feeling of bitterness and a biting or cutting quality

derivative: sarcastically

“Whit said **sarcastically**, ‘He spends half his time lookin’ for her, and the rest of the time she’s lookin’ for him’” (53).

**6. smoke** (smohk) *n.* to preserve (meat or fish) by exposure to the aromatic smoke of burning hardwood, usually after pickling in salt or brine

derivatives: smoked, smoking, smokes

“I could build a smoke house like the one gran’pa had, an’ when we kill a pig we can **smoke** the bacon and the hams. . .” (57).

**7. reprehensible** (rep-ri-hen-suh-buh l) *adj.* deserving rebuke or censure; blameworthy

derivatives: reprehensibility, reprehensibly

“When Candy spoke they both jumped as though they had been caught doing something **reprehensible**” (59).

**8. bemuse** (bih-myooz) *v.* to cause to be bewildered; confuse

derivatives: bemused, bemusing, bemuses, bemusedly, bemusement

“They all sat still, all **bemused** by the beauty of the thing. . .” (60).

**9. bleat** (bleet) *n.* the characteristic cry of a goat or sheep; a whining, feeble complaint

derivatives: bleated, bleating, bleats

“Lennie covered his face with huge paws and **bleated** with terror” (63).





**10. cower** (kou-er) v. to cringe in fear

derivatives: cowered, cowering, cowers

“He crouched **cowering** against the wall” (64).

## Chapter Four

aloof  
arouse  
contemptuous  
intensity  
maul

meager  
persuasive  
scornful  
spectacles  
subside

**1. maul** (mawl) *v.* to handle or use roughly

derivatives: mauled, mauling, mauls

“And [Crooks] had books, too; a tattered dictionary and a **mauled** copy of the California civil code for 1905” (67).

**2. spectacles** (spek-tuh-kuh ls) *n.* a pair of eyeglasses.

“A large pair of large gold-rimmed **spectacles** hung from a nail on the wall above his bed” (67).

**3. aloof** (uh-loof) *adj.* distant physically or emotionally; reserved and remote. *adv.* at a distance but within view; apart

derivatives: aloofly, aloofness

“...Crooks was a proud, **aloof** man” (67).

**4. intensity** (in-ten-si-tee) *n.* exceptionally great concentration, power, or force

derivative: intensities

“...his eyes . . . seemed to glitter with **intensity**” (67).

**5. meager** (mee-ger) *adj.* deficient in quantity, fullness, or extent; scanty; deficient in richness, fertility, or vigor; feeble:

derivatives: meagerly, meagerness

“. . . a small electric globe threw a **meager** yellow light” (67).

**6. persuasive** (per-swey-siv) *adj.* tending or having the power to persuade

derivatives: persuasively, persuasiveness

“His voice grew soft and **persuasive**” (71).

**7. scorn** (skawrn) *n.* contempt or disdain felt toward a person or object considered despicable or unworthy

derivatives: scorned, scorning, scorns

“Crooks was **scornful**” (74).

**8. contemptuous** (kuh n-temp-choo-uh s) *adj.* manifesting or feeling contempt; scornful

derivatives: contemptuously, contemptuousness

“‘Awright,’ she said **contemptuously**” (78).

**9. arouse** (uh-rouz) *v.* to stir up; excite

derivatives: aroused, arousing, arouses

“There was no personality, no ego—nothing to **arouse** either like or dislike” (81).

**10. subside** (suh b-sahyd) *v.* to become less agitated or active; abate

derivatives: subsided, subsiding, subsides

“Candy **subsided**. ‘No . . .’ he agreed. ‘nobody’d listen to us’” (81).

## Chapters Five and Six

crafty  
emphasis  
faint  
gust  
hover

monotonous  
sulky  
sullen  
talon  
writhe

**1. talon** (*tal-uh n*) *n.* something similar to or suggestive of an animal's claw

“...over the pile hung the four-**taloned** Jackson fork suspended from its pulley” (84).

**2. sullen** (*suhl-uh n*) *adj.* showing a brooding ill humor or silent resentment; morose or sulky

derivatives: sullener, sullenest, sullenly, sullenness

“He looked **sullenly** up at her” (86).

**3. writhe** (*rahyth*) *v.* to twist, as in pain, struggle, or embarrassment

derivatives: writhed, writhing, writhes

“Her feet battered on the hay and she **writhed** to be free. . .” (91).

**4. hover** (*huhv-er*) *v.* to remain in an uncertain state; waver

derivatives: hovered, hovering, hovers

“... a moment settled and **hovered** and remained for much more than a moment” (93).

**5. sulky** (*suhl-kee*) *adj.* sullenly aloof or withdrawn; gloomy; dismal

derivatives: sulkier, sulkiest

“‘Then—it’s all off?’ Candy asked **sulkily**” (95).

**6. faint** (feynt) *adj.* lacking strength or vigor; feeble; lacking conviction, boldness, or courage; timid

derivatives: fainter, faintest

“The sound of the men grew **fainter**” (98).

**7. gust** (guhst) *n.* a strong, abrupt rush of wind.

derivatives: gusted, gusting, gusts

“A far rush of wind and a **gust** drove through the tops of the trees like a wave” (99).

**8. monotonous** (muh-not-n-uh s) *adj.* sounded or spoken in an unvarying tone; lacking in variety

derivatives: monotonously, monotonousness

“His voice was **monotonous**, had no emphasis” (103).

**9. emphasis** (em-fuh-sis) *n.* special forcefulness of expression that gives importance to something singled out; stress

derivative: emphases

“His voice was monotonous, had no **emphasis**” (103).

**10. crafty** (kraf-tee) *adj.* skillful in underhand or evil schemes; cunning; deceitful; sly

derivatives: craftier, craftiest, craftily

“Lennie said **craftily**—‘Tell me like you done before’” (104).

**Complete List of Vocabulary Words for *Of Mice and Men***

abrupt	maul
aloof	meager
anguish	mimic
apprehensive	mollify
arouse	monotonous
bemuse	morose
bleat	ominous
brusque	persuasive
complacent	pugnacious
contemptuous	receptive
cover	reprehensible
crafty	sarcastic
debris	scornful
derision	scourge
derogatory	scowl
elaborate	smoke
emphasis	spectacles
euchre	stake
faint	subside
gust	sulky
hover	sullen
intensity	talon
junction	vicious
magazine	writhe

*Of Mice and Men*  
**Fill-in-the Blank Activity**  
**Chapter One**

anguish  
brusque  
contemplate  
debris  
elaborate

juncture  
mimic  
morose  
recumbent  
stake

1. George looks back on the past with \_\_\_\_\_ feelings and a general lack of stability.
2. Because many people think Lennie is a little slow mentally and he talks differently, they like to \_\_\_\_\_ his speech habits.
3. When George and Lennie leave the previous job hurriedly, they must \_\_\_\_\_ their future realistically.
4. At a \_\_\_\_\_ in the road, the men must make a decision about which way to go.
5. George believes that a man must have a \_\_\_\_\_ on a piece of land to be truly independent.
6. Although Lennie simply wants to be with George on his own farm, he gets a look of \_\_\_\_\_ when he fears George will leave him.
7. The men trudge through ankle high \_\_\_\_\_ when they pass through the woods.
8. George is a little \_\_\_\_\_ in his tone to Lennie about where they will find work.
9. As they plan their future, George \_\_\_\_\_ on his idea of one day owning a farm of his own.
10. In a \_\_\_\_\_ position, the two friends watch the stars and discuss both the problems of the past and the promise of the future.

***Of Mice and Men***  
**Fill-in-the-Blank Activity**  
**Chapter Two**

abrupt  
apprehensive  
complacent  
derogatory  
mollify

ominous  
pugnacious  
scourge  
scowl  
vicious

1. With a \_\_\_\_\_ on his face, George waits for the foreman to make a decision.
2. Lennie has a \_\_\_\_\_ attitude about where they will finally settle down to work.
3. Unfortunately, George has to \_\_\_\_\_ a boss more times than not because of Lennie's slow ways.
4. In the times of the depression, many farms faced a \_\_\_\_\_ of insects that often decimated the crops.
5. With a/an \_\_\_\_\_ turn, the foreman walked away, expecting both men to follow him submissively.
6. George is a little \_\_\_\_\_ about how Lennie will work out with the new job; his size helps out, but his strength can also be a negative force.
7. With a/an \_\_\_\_\_ look on his face, Curley seems to be looking for trouble.
8. Curley's \_\_\_\_\_ stature and attitude alert George that he needs to watch out for Lennie more closely than ever.
9. Lennie does not always understand why someone would be \_\_\_\_\_ to want to attack him unprovoked; perhaps it was because his size intimidated most men.
10. Making his dislike clear with a \_\_\_\_\_ comment, Candy shows he does not welcome the two new ranch hands.



*Of Mice and Men*  
**Fill-in-the Blank Activity**  
**Chapter Three**

bemuse  
bleat  
cower  
derision  
euchre

magazine  
receptive  
reprehensible  
sarcastic  
smoke

1. Most of the men are \_\_\_\_\_ to George and Lennie, believing the new hands will help out with all the work around the ranch.
2. George joined the other men at the game table when they opened up a new game of \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Most of the meat went into the \_\_\_\_\_ house for curing.
4. Curley's wife \_\_\_\_\_ when he started screaming at her and questioning her whereabouts.
5. Lennie is \_\_\_\_\_ by Curley's wife's behavior and wants to talk to her.
6. With \_\_\_\_\_ characteristic of a bully, Curley talks down to everyone on the ranch, believing in his own superiority.
7. Goats and sheep make a strange \_\_\_\_\_ sound when they are taken for slaughter.
8. Candy clipped the \_\_\_\_\_ into the revolver after he filled it with bullets.
9. Lennie is too naïve to understand the \_\_\_\_\_ tone of voice Curley uses when he ridicules the workers.
10. Although Curley's wife was innocent of doing anything \_\_\_\_\_, she is always blamed by her husband because he does not trust her.

*Of Mice and Men*  
**Fill-in-the Blank Activity**  
**Chapter Four**

aloof  
arouse  
contemptuous  
intensity  
maul

meager  
persuasive  
scornful  
spectacles  
subside

1. In order to avoid \_\_\_\_\_ suspicion about their plans, George and Lennie only tell Candy, and the old ranch hand decides he want to be partners with the two men.
2. At first Crooks is \_\_\_\_\_ about the men’s desire to “live offa tha’ fat a tha land.”
3. They know they must have more than their \_\_\_\_\_ savings to make their plan a reality.
4. At first Crooks is \_\_\_\_\_ and stays away from the men; then he slowly changes his demeanor and becomes more friendly.
5. Lennie does not understand that when he \_\_\_\_\_ a small creature, he can harm it unknowingly.
6. Crooks takes care that his \_\_\_\_\_ are always close by so he could read the magazines each evening.
7. With great \_\_\_\_\_, Crooks and Candy listen to George’s plan, hoping they can somehow take part in its outcome.
8. Crooks can offer a \_\_\_\_\_ argument when he tells George how he can help out with the opportunity to own their own land.
9. Lennie is oblivious to Curley’s wife’s \_\_\_\_\_ behavior, thinking the big man is not worth her time.
10. As plans for owning a farm involve more than just George and Lennie, the men’s worries begin to \_\_\_\_\_, and they think it might just work out.

*Of Mice and Men*  
**Fill-in-the Blank Activity**  
**Chapters Five and Six**

crafty  
emphasis  
faint  
gust  
hover

monotonous  
sulky  
sullen  
talon  
writhe

1. George's grip on Lennie's arm is as unrelenting as the \_\_\_\_\_ of a pitchfork holding the bale of hay.
2. Lennie \_\_\_\_\_ over the body of Curley's wife, shaking her in disbelief when she fails to regain consciousness.
3. As Lennie struggles to keep Curley's wife from moving away from him, he holds tighter, and she begins to \_\_\_\_\_ in terror.
4. Stroking the puppy and talking to it in a singsong, \_\_\_\_\_ tone, the big man does not realize he has once again squeezed an animal too tightly.
5. With \_\_\_\_\_ on getting Lennie as far away as possible, George rushes through the bunkhouse concerned that they will get caught.
6. Lennie, far from being \_\_\_\_\_ does not know how to be deceptive about what he has done.
7. Voices of Slim and Carlson, searching desperately for the killer of Curley's wife, grow \_\_\_\_\_, and George believes Lennie might be safe.
8. A \_\_\_\_\_ of wind brings the sound of men's pounding footsteps closer to the river in the woods.
9. A \_\_\_\_\_ Lennie, dejected that once again he has caused himself and George to be on the move, refuses to move ahead any faster.
10. Waiting by the river, Lennie \_\_\_\_\_ asks if George is going to yell at him for ruining their chances at owning their own place.

## Multiple Choice Exam *Of Mice and Men*

1. feeling of great physical or mental pain
  - a. morose
  - b. anguish
  - c. mollify
  - d. persuasive
  - e. arouse
2. in a mean way; bitterly
  - a. recumbent
  - b. brusque
  - c. derogatory
  - d. sarcastic
  - e. complacent
3. able and willing to listen to and accept information, new ideas, etc.
  - a. deceptive
  - b. reprehensive
  - c. apprehensive
  - d. sulky
  - e. receptive
4. became less excited; calmed down
  - a. arouse
  - b. subside
  - c. faint
  - d. crafty
  - e. mimick
5. in a threatening way
  - a. morose
  - b. anguish
  - c. abrupt
  - d. complacent
  - e. ominous
6. something that is deserving of criticism
  - a. persuasive
  - b. recumbent
  - c. reprehensible
  - d. brusque
  - e. mimic
7. suddenly; almost rudely
  - a. reprehensible
  - b. abrupt
  - c. pugnacious
  - d. complacent
  - e. crafty
8. full of contempt or scorn
  - a. contemptuous
  - b. sullen
  - c. sulky
  - d. aloof
  - e. meager
9. force; expression; stress
  - a. elaborate
  - b. persuasive
  - c. emphasis
  - d. monotonous
  - e. bemuse
10. treat roughly or clumsily
  - a. mimick
  - b. maul
  - c. scowl
  - d. derogatorily
  - e. apprehensively
11. preoccupied; deep in thought
  - a. abrupt
  - b. morose
  - c. receptive
  - d. bemuse
  - e. cower

12. eager and ready to fight  
a. recumbent  
b. elaborate  
c. aroused  
d. maul  
e. pugnacious
13. still; without movement  
a. writhe  
b. recumbent  
c. mollify  
d. complacent  
e. hover
14. cruel; in a mean way  
a. vicious  
b. anguish  
c. stake  
d. sarcastic  
e. cower
15. a finger-like claw  
a. juncture  
b. stake  
c. debris  
d. gust  
e. talon
16. the part of the gun that holds the bullets  
a. talon  
b. scourge  
c. magazine  
d. reception  
e. mollification
17. in a gloomy manner  
a. sulky  
b. anguish  
c. faint  
d. crafty  
e. sarcastic
18. quick; blunt; abrupt; almost rude  
a. subside  
b. contemptuous  
c. persuasive  
d. brusque  
e. morose
19. linger; stay suspended  
a. gust  
b. mollify  
c. apprehend  
d. arouse  
e. hover
20. distant; removed; cool  
a. aloof  
b. recumbent  
c. morose  
d. sulky  
e. sullen
21. twist  
a. hover  
b. mollify  
c. bleat  
d. writhe  
e. deride
22. in a pleased, satisfied manner  
a. intensity  
b. deride  
c. receptive  
d. sarcastic  
e. complacent
23. an amount of money  
a. euchre  
b. stake  
c. juncture  
d. debris  
e. talon

24. where two things come together

- a. elaborate
- b. spectacle
- c. juncture
- d. bemusement
- e. intensity

25. to ridicule a person

- a. apprehend
- b. derogatory
- c. mimic
- d. cower
- e. derision

## **Writing Assignment** ***Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck**

John Steinbeck said that *Of Mice and Men* “is a parable about commitment, loneliness, hope, loss, drawing its power from the fact that these universal truths are grounded in the realistic contrast of friendship and shared dreams.” In the novel, George and Lenny travel together from job to job, sustained only by each other and their dream of one day owning their own farm. Consider how the relationship between George and Lenny reflects Steinbeck’s description of the novel. Then write a well-developed essay in which you analyze how their friendship and shared dream reveal the meaning of the work as a whole.