

Alisha Anil  
Dr. Mary Warner  
ENGL 112B  
22 November 2023

### Friendship and Loneliness Taught Through *Of Mice and Men*

#### **Rationale:**

For young adults, it is vital for them to understand how friendship and loneliness can affect a person. As human beings, we go through many hardships in life that help us learn and grow to become better human beings. The book *Of Mice and Men* offers a fresh perspective on both loneliness and friendship. John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* follows the characters George and Lennie who travel miles on foot to seek employment at a ranch after losing their previous job. George, being an intelligent but small man, leads the way and is responsible for taking care of Lennie, a giant but mentally retarded man – whose inability to learn or control his emotional and physical strength always gets them into trouble and subsequently fired from jobs.

I chose the book *Of Mice and Men* because I have read it many times, and it teaches a valuable lesson about compassion and companionship. It deals with racism; the character named Crooks is black. His boss, Curly, always makes crude comments directing at his race and due to him being black, Crooks seems to keep his guard up making him seem tough especially around George and Lennie. The book also conveys the message of not judging a book by its cover. Lennie seems harmful due to his enormous size, but he is a sweetheart. He has a child-like mind and possesses the innocence and sweetness of a child so that teaches the lesson of not judging a person based on their appearance.

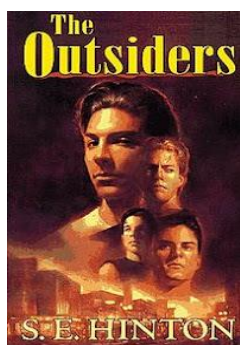
All the texts that I decided to choose for my Unit of Study follow the theme of friendship and what it means to be and feel lonely. This topic remains a universal topic because no matter what age a person might be, loneliness and friendship are always going to be prevalent in one's

life. That is why the topic of friendship and loneliness is so vital to teach to young adults because the more they are aware of the importance of friendship and the inevitability of loneliness, the more prepared they are for certain changes such as losing friends or finding new ones.

### **Similar Texts to *Of Mice and Men* by Steinback**

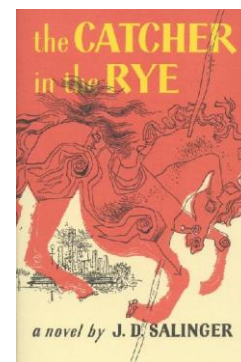
*The Outsiders* by S.E Hinton: *The Outsiders* is about two weeks in the life of a 14-year-old boy.

The novel tells the story of Ponyboy Curtis and his struggles with right and wrong in a society in which he believes that he is an outsider.

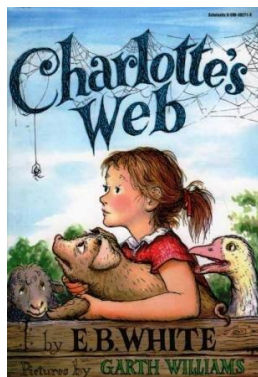


*No One Here is Lonely* by Sarah Everett: Eden has always had two loves: her best friend, Lacey, and her crush, Will. And then, simultaneously, she loses them both. Will to a car accident and Lacey to the inevitable growing up and growing apart.

*Catcher in the Rye* by J.D Salinger: The city is beautiful and terrible, in all its neon loneliness and seedy glamour, its mingled sense of possibility and emptiness. Holden passes through it like a ghost, thinking always of his kid sister Phoebe, the only person who really understands him, and his determination to escape the phonies and find a life of true meaning.



*Charlotte's Web* by E.B White: Some Pig. Humble. Radiant. These are the words in Charlotte's Web, high up in Zuckerman's barn. Charlotte's spiderweb tells of her feelings for a little pig named Wilbur, who simply wants a friend. They also express the love of a girl named Fern, who saved Wilbur's life when he was born the runt of his litter.



### **Introducing the Unit**

To introduce the unit, I would have students write a brief response on what friendship and loneliness mean to them. We will then take time discussing what everyone produced; this creates the opportunity for students to share their unique responses to the class and get a feel for what the book is going to be about.

To gain the interest of the students, I would like to show an episode of the cartoon *Family Guy*. The episode I would show is called “High School English” and in that episode, the characters portray the story of the book *Of Mice and Men* along with other young adult classics. I

will not show students the whole episode, I would just like to show students the part where *Of Mice and Men* starts to get portrayed; I would just show the beginning because the episode does spoil the ending. The show itself is satire and should not be taken seriously and I would remind the students that it is just a loose interpretation. The reason I think showing *Family Guy's* interpretation would be beneficial is because it will really get the students engaged into the text; the program caters to their attention span.

Another way I would like to introduce the text is to provide the students with a vocab list that would include important vocabulary from the book itself. This is beneficial because students will get an idea of the type of language used in *Of Mice and Men*. Students will also be more prepared to start the book because if one gets confused about a certain word, they will have a list to guide them and assist them while reading. My high school teacher implemented this, and I found that extremely helpful because not only was I able to learn new vocabulary, but I was also able to understand the book to its fullest extent.

### **Working Through the Text**

Working through the text, I would have students read about 10-15 pages and the next time I see them, we will have a discussion on the pages they were supposed to read. Assuming the students do the reading, the discussion would allow students to share their thoughts and opinions on what they have read. I do not plan to quiz the students on the reading but if it becomes clear that they are not doing the reading, I will simply quiz on parts they were supposed to read prior to class.

Additionally, I would have students do character analysis every now and then to help them keep track of character development. When something significant happens in the book, it is vital for students to understand how and why that affects the characters. In *Of Mice and Men*, there

are so many significant moments that show tremendous character development so executing a character analysis every now and then would help them keep track of significant changes in characters.

I would also have students discover themes other than friendship and loneliness. In *Of Mice and Men*, there are so many themes such as fear and freedom so I think it would be helpful to discuss all themes presented in the text. I would also have the students identify any lessons they take from the book; this allows them to reflect on the text.

### **Beyond the Text**

Working beyond the text, I would like to inform the students about the importance of friendship. There are many ways to illustrate how important friendships can be; I plan to have students do some research of their own and I would have them draft a short essay (including one peer reviewed source) that demonstrates the significance of having true friendships. Since loneliness is also a prominent theme of the book, I would have students make illustrations of what loneliness would either look or feel like. For example, I plan to provide students with blank printer paper, and I will inform them to draw what they think loneliness would look and feel. These strategies will help the students understand the book better and consider their perspectives.

I would also have students write a final essay on the book; this would give us an opportunity to discuss writing techniques. To prepare for the essay, I would have students produce their own thesis statements and we can discuss what makes a strong thesis statement. I plan to give students sample thesis statements; students will be able to choose from the sample thesis statements, but they will have to work on their own to make that thesis more personalized. I would also work with students on integrating quotes. I would like to give them an activity that includes quotes from *Of Mice and Men* that they will have to integrate into sentences, and we

will discuss what not to do when integrating such as do not list dialog, no run-ons, no repetition, etc. This would be super beneficial for students in terms of how to properly integrate a quote.

### **Concluding the Unit**

To conclude, I would like students to have a full discussion of the book. The discussion would be in the form of a Socratic Seminar. I would design a set of complex questions for the students to answer and have a rubric that would state the assignment expectations. To get a good grade, each student will have to speak at least three times and their questions/comments must be added to the discussion. For example, one cannot just say, "I agree." I would also like the students to take notes on the discussion, so everyone can keep track of it. This allows students to remain active throughout the seminar.

### Works Cited

Everett, Sarah. "No One Here Is Lonely by Sarah Everett." *Brightly Shop*, Penguin Random House, 21 Apr. 2020, [www.readbrightly.com/books/9780553538717/no-one-here-is-lonely-by-sarah-everett/](http://www.readbrightly.com/books/9780553538717/no-one-here-is-lonely-by-sarah-everett/). Accessed 24 Nov. 2023

Hinton, S.E. "The Outsiders." *Goodreads*, Goodreads, [www.goodreads.com/book/show/231804.The\\_Outsiders](http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/231804.The_Outsiders). Accessed 23 Nov. 2023.

"Of Mice and Men Summary." *Book Analysis*, 6 May 2023, [bookanalysis.com/john-steinbeck/of-mice-and-men/summary/](http://bookanalysis.com/john-steinbeck/of-mice-and-men/summary/). Accessed 20 Nov. 2023

Salinger, J.D. "The Catcher in the Rye." *Goodreads*, Goodreads, [www.goodreads.com/book/show/5107.The\\_Catcher\\_in\\_the\\_Rye](http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/5107.The_Catcher_in_the_Rye). Accessed 22 Nov. 2023.

White, E.B. "Charlotte's Web." *Goodreads*, Goodreads, [www.goodreads.com/book/show/24178.Charlotte\\_s\\_Web](http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/24178.Charlotte_s_Web). Accessed 23 Nov. 2023.

