**Quotes for Part b of the Of Mice and Men question: context.**

**Attitudes to Women**

Chapter 1

“God, you're a lot of trouble," said George. "I could get along so easy and so nice if I didn't have you on my tail. I could live so easy and maybe have a girl." For a moment Lennie lay quiet, and then he said hopefully, "We gonna work on a ranch, George."

*George is expressing another “dream” here. He sees having a “girl” as part of a normal life which he can’t have because of the Depression.*

Chapter 2

"Seems like Curley is cockier'n ever since he got married."George grunted. "Maybe he's showin' off for his wife."

"Well, that glove's fulla Vaseline."

"Vaseline? What the hell for?"

"Well, I will tell ya what—Curley says he's keepin' that hand soft for his wife."

*Curly sees women as trophies or prizes to be boasted about, not as people. His wife is a possession.*

Chapter 3

George said, "She’s gonna make a mess. They’s gonna be a bad mess about her. She’s a jail bait all set on the trigger. That Curley got his work cut out for him. Ranch with a bunch of guys on it ain’t no place for a girl, specially like her."

*Women are seen as destabilizing to a male environment – they are expected to be wives and mothers...or whores.*

George sighed. "You give me a good whore house every time," he said. "A guy can go in an' get drunk and get ever'thing outa his system all at once, an' no messes. And he knows how much it's gonna set him back. These here jail baits is just set on the trigger of the hoosegow."

*Like the other men, George sees women as commodities that can bought for “thirty-five cents”. They are there to satisfy certain needs.*

Chapter 4

Candy's face had grown redder and redder, but before she was done speaking, he had control of himself. He was the master of the situation. "I might of knew," he said gently. "Maybe you just better go along an' roll your hoop. We ain't got nothing to say to you at all. We know what we got, and we don't care whether you know it or not."

*Candy sees her as inferior to him because she is a woman, and a young women at that. He feels he can tell her what to do. Women were seen as the “weaker” sex at this time.*

**Racism and Prejudice**

Chapter 1

" We're gonna go in an' see the boss. Now, look—I'll give him the work tickets, but you ain't gonna say a word. You jus' stand there and don't say nothing. If he finds out what a crazy bastard you are, we won't get no job, but if he sees ya work before he hears ya talk, we're set."

*There is little understanding of learning difficulties in 1930’s America. Lennie would be seen as “crazy”. He would be locked up in an asylum if George didn't look after him. Crooks calls it the “booby hatch”*

Chapter 2

George patted a wrinkle out of his bed, and sat down. "[The boss gave] the stable buck hell?" he asked.

"Sure. Ya see the stable buck's a nigger."

"Nigger, huh?"

*Candy says this as if being black explains everything – and it does. Black people are seen as inferior beings so it’s fine to take out your anger on them.*

"Yes sir. Jesus, we had fun. They let the nigger come in that night. Little skinner name of Smitty took after the nigger. Done pretty good, too. The guys wouldn't let him use his feet, so the nigger got him. If he coulda used his feet, Smitty says he woulda killed the nigger. The guys said on account of the nigger's got a crooked back, Smitty can't use his feet." He paused in relish of the memory.

*Black people are seen as entertainment – at his time black singers are popular with white people. White singers even blacked up (Google Al Jolsen).*

Chapter 4

"…You go on get outta my room. I ain’t wanted in the bunk house, and you ain’t wanted in my room."  "Why ain’t you wanted?" Lennie asked.  "’Cause I’m black…"

Crooks said darkly, "Guys don't come into a colored man's room very much."

*Segregation is a fact of life in 1930’s America. Although California is a northern state, and in law black people are equal, in practice they are not permitted to live with white people or to marry them.*

She turned on him in scorn. "Listen, Nigger," she said. "You know what I can do to you if you open your trap?"

*Curly’s wife is referring to the fact that if she says he has touched her or tried to attack her he will be lynched – no questions asked. There are plenty of horrific images of this happening. Just put ‘lynching’ into Google images but be prepared for a shock. White people were seldom prosecuted for lynching negroes.*

**Visions of America and The American Dream**

Chapter 1

“There is a path through the willows and among the sycamores, a path beaten hard by boys coming down from the ranches to swim in the deep pool, and beaten hard by tramps who come wearily down from the highway in the evening to jungle-up near water.”

*Tramps exist at time are emblematic of the poverty which exists across America because of the Wall Street crash. Steinbeck seems to be suggesting that some of the boys will grow up to be tramps if the situation does not improve.*

"Guys like us, that work on ranches, are the loneliest guys in the world. They got no family. They don't belong no place. They come to a ranch an' work up a stake and then they go inta town and blow their stake, and the first thing you know they're poundin' their tail on some other ranch. They ain't got nothing to look ahead to."

*The American Dream of owning land and having a sense of belonging seems very far away from this vision of America. Steinbeck is suggesting that you cannot build a successful nation with men like these.*

Chapter 2

"For two bits I'd shove out of here. If we can get jus' a few dollars in the poke we'll shove off and go up the American River and pan gold. We can make maybe a couple of dollars a day there, and we might hit a pocket."

*This is the ultimate American Dream, however few people struck it rich panning for gold. The people who got rich were the shopkeepers who sold boots and shovels and the innkeepers who sold them liquor.*

“…he moved with a majesty only achieved by royalty and master craftsman. He was a jerkline skinner, the prince of the ranch, capable of driving ten, sixteen, even twenty mules with a single line to the leaders. He was capable of killing a fly on the wheeler's butt with a bull whip without touching the mule. There was a gravity in his manner and a quiet so profound that all talk stopped when he spoke, His authority was so great that his word was taken on any subject, be it politics or love. This was Slim, the jerkline skinner.”

*Slim represents the ideal of manhood at the time – the “Marlborough man” if you like. Strong, authorative and wise. He is however a rarity.*

Chapter 3

 "…If I was bright, if I was even a little bit smart, I'd have my own little place, an' I'd be bringin' in my own crops, 'stead of doin' all the work and not getting what comes up outa the ground." *If this were true, then there would be a lot fewer men working the ranches – the odds are stacked against George. It’s called the American Dream because few can achieve it.*

"Sure," said George. "All kin's a vegetables in the garden, and if we want a little whisky we can sell a few eggs or something, or some milk. We'd jus' live there. We'd belong there. There wouldn't be no more runnin' round the country and gettin' fed by a Jap cook. No, sir, we'd have our own place where we belonged and not sleep in no bunk house."*Again this is a dream of an idyllic America – it sounds perfect (but notice that it does not include women!)*

*At the time there were a lot of Japanese and Chinese immigrants who found work in kitchens as cooks. They were considered second class citizens.*

Chapter 4

“Ever’body wants a little piece of lan’. I read plenty of books out here. Nobody never gets to heaven, and nobody gets no land. It’s just in their head. They’re all the time talkin’ about it, but it’s jus’ in their head." *Sadly, Crooks is right. By the 1930’s the great land-grab has happened and there is no land to be had.*

"I tell you I ain't used to livin' like this. I coulda made somethin' of myself." She said darkly, "Maybe I will yet." And then her words tumbled out in a passion of communication, as though she hurried before her listener could be taken away. "I lived right in Salinas," she said. "Come there when I was a kid. Well, a show come through, an' I met one of the actors. He says I could go with that show. But my ol' lady wouldn' let me. She says because I was on'y fifteen. But the guy says I coulda. If I'd went, I wouldn't be livin' like this, you bet." *The dream of being a film star is new in the 1930’s, but it must have been very attractive to girls growning up in rural America. Of course the reality was not as glamorous as it appeared. Female stars in particular were seen as commodities and were “owned” by the big studios. They were expected to appear sexy and desirable on screen but highly moral off screen. Every aspect of their lives was controlled – even their weight and what they ate.*

"Then—it’s all off?" Candy asked sulkily. George didn’t answer his question. George said, "I’ll work my month an’ I’ll take my fifty bucks an’ I’ll stay all night in some lousy cat house. Or I’ll set in some poolroom til ever’body goes home. An’ then I’ll come back an’ work another month an’ I’ll have fifty bucks more." *This is the reality for the men. It is very far from the American Dream: a sad and lonely existence which ends in poverty.*

**Masculinity and the Ranch Workers**

Chapter 1

“God, you're a lot of trouble," said George. "I could get along so easy and so nice if I didn't have you on my tail. I could live so easy and maybe have a girl." For a moment Lennie lay quiet, and then he said hopefully, "We gonna work on a ranch, George."

*Working on the ranches means that the men do not have relationships – what woman would be willing to trail around the country while her man finds work? Where would she live?*

"Guys like us, that work on ranches, are the loneliest guys in the world. They got no family. They don't belong no place. They come to a ranch an' work up a stake and then they go inta town and blow their stake, and the first thing you know they're poundin' their tail on some other ranch. They ain't got nothing to look ahead to."

*The men lead a hopeless existence. They are not able to build a future for themselves. These are not the sort of men on whom a nation can be built.*

“…he moved with a majesty only achieved by royalty and master craftsman. He was a jerkline skinner, the prince of the ranch, capable of driving ten, sixteen, even twenty mules with a single line to the leaders. He was capable of killing a fly on the wheeler's butt with a bull whip without touching the mule. There was a gravity in his manner and a quiet so profound that all talk stopped when he spoke, His authority was so great that his word was taken on any subject, be it politics or love. This was Slim, the jerkline skinner.”

*Slim represents the ideal of manhood at the time – the “Marlborough man” if you like. Strong, authorative and wise. He is however a rarity.*

"I’ll try to catch him," said Curley. His eyes passed over the new men and he stopped. He glanced coldly at George and then at Lennie. His arms gradually bent at the elbows and his hands closed into fists. He stiffened and went into a slight crouch. His glance was at once calculating and pugnacious. Lennie squirmed under the look and shifted his feet nervously. Curley stepped gingerly close to him. "You the new guys the old man was waitin’ for?"

*Curly represents an aggressive type of masculinity. He feels the need to constantly assert his authority over people with his fists – we suspect that this extends to his wife.*

But Carlson was standing over George. "How'd you do it?" he asked.

"I just done it," George said tiredly.

"Did he have my gun?"

"Yeah. He had your gun."

"An' you got it away from him and you took it an' you killed him?"

"Yeah. Tha's how." George's voice was almost a whisper. He looked steadily athis right hand that had held the gun.

Slim twitched George's elbow. "Come on, George. Me an' you'll go an' in get a drink."

George let himself be helped to his feet. "Yeah, a drink."

Slim said, "You hadda, George. I swear you hadda. Come on with me." He led george into the entrance of trail and up toward the highway.

Curley and Carlson looked after them. And Carison said, "Now what the hell ya suppose is eatin' them two guys?"*Where Slim is calm and understanding, Carlson has no idea why George would feel a sense of grief and loss. These are two contrasting types of masculinity. Carlson has lost the ability to empathise with others.*