

John Steinbeck said, *Of Mice and Men* was about 'everybody's daydreams'. Show how the dreams in the novel reflect the time and place in which it is set.

Look at what the essay title is asking ... and then look again. How do the dreams reflect 1930s America?

Are the characters dreaming of owning a fast car; an iPod; a second home in France? No, they are dreaming about having some independence, freedom, a home, some love. These are all things most of us take for granted.

Give an overview of what life was like in 1930s USA and then in each paragraph this should run like a thread. For example, in writing about Crooks's dream you should comment on Steinbeck's portrayal of him surrendering the dream quickly, which illustrates his recognition that he does not have any rights in reality.

You must refer to Steinbeck throughout and explore how he crafts the novel to show the time and place. If you write about the characters' dreams but fail to mention anywhere that Steinbeck makes them do particular things then you can not achieve the top band marks as you are not showing an awareness of the writer's craft.

You must look at the novel as a whole as well as individual characters. If each of your paragraphs starts with something such as, 'Another person who has a dream is ...' then you will not gain any higher than a B. You need to show understanding that it is more than each character's dream that conveys the time and place.

In order to be achieving an A/A* band answer you need to include such ideas as:

- * the fact that the novel begins and ends in the same setting with very little changed gives the entire novel a dreamlike quality.
- * the references to light and dark throughout the novel imply a dream-like state. As the novel progresses so the shadows lengthen.
- * You have to make reference to *how* Steinbeck uses language.
- * Every point you make must have evidence (ie a quotation from the novel) and every quotation must be analysed. This is the only way you can discuss how the writer uses language for a particular effect.

Your writing must be fluent and each paragraph should link together to create a cohesive whole. For example if you write about the dream-like structure of the novel, mentioning the lush idyllic landscape the novel begins and finishes with , your next paragraph could begin:

'This verdant paradise contrasts starkly with the bare reality of the bunkhouse at the ranch where the men have no privacy or opportunity for solitude, 'QUOTE'. Steinbeck illustrates to the reader the harsh realities of life as a migrant worker in which even George's game of Solitaire is interrupted by others.

Your essay must be longer than two sides of paper, otherwise you have not written enough. Please write in 11 or 12 size font and use 1½ line spacing.

A few other things to remember:

It's a novel, not a documentary – always refer to what Steinbeck does to his characters and how he conveys or presents information to the reader.

Consider the overall story and setting – it's about two itinerant workers over a period of a few days living in a bunk house: the story follows a chronological time frame and gives the reader an insight into their lives (arrival at the ranch, being employed, introduction, settling in, working, going to the brothel, playing cards etc). Apart from the death of Curley's wife nothing particularly exciting happens: this can be seen as an illustration from everyday 1930s life.

It's important to write about the failure of the dreams – this shows us as much about the time and place in which the novel is set as of the dreams themselves.

Link every paragraph to the essay title.

Don't repeat the same phrase in every paragraph – do more than write, 'this reflects the time and place in which it is set.' Investigate how Steinbeck does this.

Go for the PEA technique, even if your quotation is very short (the best sort).

Attribute each of your quotations to a character – they are meaningless out of context.

Great if you have used websites for research, but make sure the writing is your own. Even paraphrased sentences are unacceptable to the examiner and your whole folder will be confiscated – not just this essay.