

Chad Petrie

Doctor Genevieve Later

ENGL 4360

Major Paper

Lennie's rights are stripped away at the end of the book *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck when he is murdered by his friend George. The banning element of euthanasia, killing somebody for their own good, is a huge controversy in this book. However, in my opinion, Lennie is not killed for his own good and is instead murdered by a man whom he trusts, George. Lennie's dream of living on the land that him and George are planning to buy is taken away from him when George pulls the trigger, disregarding Lennie's ambitions and what he wants. When George pulls the trigger, he not only takes Lennie's life but also his rights.

Lennie never has an opportunity to defend himself for the accidental murder of Curley's wife and is instead sentenced to death by the beliefs of other characters influencing George's opinion. "'Well, you ain't bein' kind to him keepin' him alive,' said Carlson." (Steinbeck 44). George hears this conversation referring to putting Candy's dog *out of his misery* which may have helped formed George's opinion that he was doing Lennie a favour by taking his life. Although it doesn't justify the fact that he still took the life of someone without hearing the other side of the story. George and Lennie have gotten out of tough situations in the past and I believe if George wasn't slightly influenced by the opinions of other characters in the book, they could've gotten out of this.

Multiple characters have the same opinion on euthanasia, being that euthanasia is good and that *if you're in a position of suffering someone is doing you a favour by taking your life.*

“Carl’s right, Candy. That dog ain’t no good to himself. I wisht somebody’d shoot me if I got old an’ a cripple.” (Steinbeck 44). I would argue based on the theme of multiple characters sharing the same opinion on euthanasia that Steinbeck’s opinion on the subject is the same. However, Lennie is not suffering. Lennie is not old or crippled. He is physically healthy and is in no way, except for his possible mental condition, suffering enough for someone to take his life for his own good.

Lennie’s opinion is never considered when George pulls the trigger. George believes he is ending Lennie’s suffering or eventual suffering, but George doesn’t have the right to make that decision. Making a mistake does not give you the right to kill another person especially without hearing their perspective on what happened. George’s action of killing Lennie is not justified beyond George’s thoughts that it’s the right thing to do. There is evidence that Curley would have killed Lennie if George didn’t, but nothing was set in stone. George could have escaped with Lennie again or peacefully bring him in to determine the proper punishment for Lennie’s actions giving Lennie a chance to explain. There is also an argument that Lennie would have been put in a mental hospital or psych ward and that’s why George killed him. I think if that were to happen to Lennie it would be justified based on his actions of killing Curley’s wife and he would still be alive. George doesn’t get to determine what happens to Lennie and by murdering Lennie he takes any chance Lennie has of possibly being free again.

Lennie’s decision is made for him without his best interest in mind. This book is taught that euthanasia is good, but the situation of Lennie accidentally murdering Curley’s wife is not one where euthanasia should even be considered. If Lennie is brought to trial or taken to a mental hospital at least he gets an opportunity to state what happened, but he never gets that

opportunity and on top of that George believes he's doing the right thing for Lennie without knowing what Lennie wants. "Nobody never gets to heaven, and nobody gets no land. It's just in their head." (Steinbeck 73). If this is the case, then George killing Lennie isn't putting him in a better place. The killing is a murder and if Lennie isn't getting into heaven or getting the land with George that he wants then I can't see how George ending Lennie's so called suffering as anything else but murder.

Everyone in the book has rights except for the animals and based on the result of euthanasia at the end of the book, Lennie. "I ought to of shot that dog myself, George. I shouldn't ought to of let no stranger shoot my dog." (Steinbeck 61). This goes back to George's opinion being shaped by the beliefs of other characters in the book. George doesn't want to have the same regret that Candy had of letting someone else put down his *dog* which I would argue impacted George's decision to take Lennie's life.

The relationship between Candy and his dog have weird similarities with the relationship between George and Lennie. I would argue that Lennie does resemble George's *dog* per say as he follows George everywhere and gets into trouble anywhere he goes, which George has to get them out of. On the contrary though Lennie is also very loyal to George and relies on him in many ways as George is the only one who understands him. Lennie is also dependant on George in many ways and George is the only person Lennie has left after his aunt passed away. This point allows me to understanding opposing viewpoints on euthanasia in this book as no one knew or understood Lennie as much as George did. However, the one person who understands Lennie more than George, is Lennie and that's why I still believe that George

didn't have the right to make that decision for him without knowing for certain that Lennie wanted George to kill him which is never stated.

I believe *Of Mice and Men* will continue to be banned in many schools across North America as the theme of euthanasia is not justified and parents may be worried about their children's opinions and perspectives on euthanasia being persuaded by the book. Children could interpret the text as euthanasia is justified if someone makes a mistake, such as accidental murder, which I believe to be completely false. George's perspective is influenced by the opinions of his peers and readers, especially young adults. Children could also have the same result as George as their opinions on euthanasia could also be influenced or possibly shaped by *Of Mice and Men*.

Works Cited

Steinbeck, John. *Of Mice and Men*. Affordable Classics, 2023.