

ENG 200-095

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Exploring Gender Inequality and the Search for Love in *Of Mice and Men*

When it comes to love, men and women are treated differently because of how society sees gender roles. Women often have less power than men, and that affects how they find love and respect. Throughout history, women have been told they are not as important as men. They must follow certain rules about how they should act and look. This means they sometimes must deal with unfair treatment when it comes to love. They might have to put up with things like being controlled by their partner, feeling pressure to look a certain way, or not being treated as equals.

Women have had to deal with a lot of unfair treatment just to find love. They might feel like they are not good enough or that they must do everything their partner wants. Society's idea that men are better than women has made it hard for women to get respect. The lack of respect for women comes from old ideas that say men are better. These beliefs have been around for a long time and are supported by things like religion, culture, and history. In this kind of society, it is tough for women to find love. They must deal with a lot of challenges, like feeling like they are not as important as men or feeling like they must be perfect to be loved.

Of Mice and Men by John Steinbeck shows us a lot about how men and women are treated differently, and how women want to find for love. This paper will discuss how men and women are treated differently in books and real life and the importance of feminism and gender studies to help us become aware of these disparities and combat them in our daily lives. By

studying how women have been treated in stories, it shows us that there is unfairness and a power difference between the sexes. This makes women wonder why they are treated differently. Why do people always think women are less capable and know less than men? These ideas mostly come from men who see women as less important. From a human perspective, women are incredibly valuable, but men often decide what women should do, what they should not do, what they should wear, where they can go, and every other aspect of their lives.

Another key component in this story that shows sexual inequality is the fact that the only female character in the story does not have a name of her own. She is only referred to in reference to her husband. This shows the lack of respect for her as an individual because she does not have her own autonomy. This is not fair to her personhood. She is further isolated without a name by being called derogatory terms.

Curley's wife in "Of Mice and Men" is treated badly because she is a woman. The men on the ranch see her as a problem and warn others to stay away from her. According to Heavilin, "smearing the girl character with a broad brush, calling her 'a bitch,' 'poison,' 'jailbait'" (11). They call her mean names like "jailbait" and "tart" just because she is a woman. They do not think she is a real person with feelings; they only care about how she looks. Curley's wife feels stuck as Curley's wife and wants friends and attention. When she dies, some men blame her, saying she should not have talked to Lennie. The men act tough and mean because they think that is how men should be. Curley's wife is a sad character because she is treated badly just because she is a woman. It is saddening when people do not know about inside of that person and how they feel, choosing to judge them.

In a review of the famous *Of Mice and Men*, Heavilin quotes, “In the 1930s, things were hard for everyone because of the Great Depression. Women did not have many chances to work outside the home like men did. This made it tough for them to find love and happiness in a world where they were supposed to stay at home” (9). This shows us the context in which the book *Of Mice and Men* was written and the dynamics between men and women during this time.

Curley's wife felt lonely because her husband did not give her much attention. So, she talked to other men on the ranch to feel better. She wanted someone to care for her and be nice to her, which Curley did not do. This made her upset and caused problems, especially with Lennie. She tried to be friends with him because she was lonely. Things went wrong, and Lennie accidentally hurt her. Her death shows what can happen when people feel alone in their relationships and look for love in the wrong places.

Curley got mad at his wife for talking with other men, thinking it was bad. A man can talk to his wife about what bothers him, but he should do it in a respectful way. Everyone should be free to talk to whoever they want. A husband and wife should trust each other and talk about their feelings without making the other feel sad. It is not fair for one person to control the other. Curley's wife just wanted someone to talk to because she felt alone. Curley's anger made things worse and pushed her away. In a good relationship, both partners should care about each other's feelings and give each other space.

According to Walkuski in Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, “In addition to gender, the thematic concept of violence is prominent in the novel. The death of Curley's wife is an obvious example of violence in the novel” (9). It goes without saying that when someone is killed (by accident or on purpose) by another person, it is perpetrated violence.

In *Of Mice and Men*, violence is a big part of the story, like how men and women are treated. Curley's wife's death shows this violence. She dies when Lennie accidentally hurts her while trying to calm her down. It shows how things can go wrong when people get too angry. The death of Curley's wife also shows how she did not have much power. She tried to make friends and find love, but she ended up getting hurt because she could not control what happened to her. Curley was mean to her, and it seemed like something bad might happen because of that.

While discussing the morals in the book, *Hart* states, "Of Mice and Men presents dramatic situations and characterizations that allow us to see and hear and feel ethical dilemmas and such social problems such as racism, sexism, and economic exploitation in an immediate, firsthand way" (33-34). Throughout the book, Steinbeck provokes the reader to reflect on these major societal issues through dramatized examples of injustices, most notably violence and sexism towards women.

In *Of Mice and Men* we see how men and women are treated differently and the challenges women face in finding love and respect. Throughout history, women have had a tough time compared to men. They have been treated unfairly and not given the same chances. Curley's wife in the story shows us this. She is the only woman on the ranch and is treated badly by the men. They call her names like "bitch," "poison," and "jailbait." They do not see her as a person with feelings; they only care about how she looks. Curley's wife wants friends and attention, but she is stuck as Curley's wife. When she dies, some blame her, which is not fair. It shows how society sees women as less important. "Of Mice and Men" talks about big issues like sexism, violence, and power differences. Feminism and gender studies help us understand these problems. We need to recognize and challenge stereotypes about gender. Everyone deserves

equal respect and opportunities, no matter their gender. The book teaches us to strive for a world where everyone is treated fairly and with kindness.

Works Cited

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