Book review

*Lord of the Flies* by William Golding

After you have read the book, look at these front covers from different editions of *Lord of the Flies*.

In pairs, discuss which one you think best represents:

- a. the novel’s events
- b. the novel’s characters
- c. the novel’s themes.

![Front covers of different editions of Lord of the Flies](image)

**Task:** After you have read the book, write a detailed review remembering to pay attention to the accuracy of your spelling, paragraphing, sentence structures and punctuation.

Make sure you include typical features that are usually found in a book review:

- a. paragraphs and ideas that are organised clearly to guide the reader through the review
- b. an individual, often ‘chatty’ voice - it could be serious or include some gentle humour
- c. written in present tense
- d. a lively and entertaining opening sentence to grab the attention and interest of the intended audience
- e. some details of the subject but without giving too much away
- f. strengths of the book
- g. weaknesses of the book
- h. final paragraph to sum up the writer’s opinion and recommendation.
Review of *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck

John Steinbeck’s *Of Mice and Men* is a touching tale of the friendship between two men set against the backdrop of the United States during the depression of the 1930s. Subtle in its characterisation, the book addresses the real hopes and dreams of working-class America. Steinbeck’s short novel raises the lives of the poor and dispossessed to a higher, symbolic level. Its powerful ending is climactic and shocking to the extreme, and we come to an understanding of the tragedy of life. Regardless of the sufferings of those who live it, life goes on.

The novel opens with two workers who are crossing the country on foot to find work. George is a cynical, irresolute man. George looks after his companion, Lennie, treating him like a brother. Lennie is a giant man of incredible strength, but has a mental disability that makes him slow-to-learn and almost child-like. George and Lennie had to flee the last town because Lennie touched a woman’s dress and he’d been accused of rape.

They begin to work at a ranch, and they share their dream: they want to own their own piece of land and farm for themselves. These people, like them, feel dispossessed and unable to control their own lives. The ranch becomes a microcosm of the American underclass at that time.

The climactic moment of the novel revolves around Lennie’s love of soft things. He pets the hair of Curley’s wife, but she gets scared. In the resulting struggle, Lennie kills her and runs away.

The farmhands form a lynch mob to punish Lennie, but George finds him first. George understands that Lennie cannot live in the world, and he wants to save him the pain and terror of being lynched, so he shoots him in the back of the head.

The literary power of *Of Mice and Men* rests firmly on the relationship between the two central characters, their friendship and their shared dream. These two men are so very different, but they come together, stay together, and support each other in a world full of people who are destitute and alone. Their brotherhood and fellowship is an achievement of enormous humanity.

They sincerely believe in their dream. All they want is a small piece of land that they can call their own. They want to grow their own crops, and they want to breed rabbits. That dream cements their relationship and strikes a chord so convincingly for the reader. George and Lennie’s dream is the American dream. Their desires are both very particular to the 1930’s but also universal.

*Of Mice and Men* is a tale of friendship that triumphs over the odds. But, the novel is also extremely telling about the society in which it is set. Without becoming dogmatic or formulaic, the novel examines many of the prejudices at the time: racism, sexism and prejudice towards those with disabilities. The power of John Steinbeck’s writing is that he treats these issues in purely human terms. He sees society’s prejudices in terms of individual tragedies, and his characters attempt to escape from those prejudices.

In a way, *Of Mice and Men* is an extremely despondent novel. The novel shows the dreams of a small group of people and then contrasts these dreams with a reality that is unreachable, which they cannot achieve. Even though the dream never becomes reality, Steinbeck does leave us with an optimistic message. George and Lennie do not achieve their dream, but their friendship stands out as a shining example of how people can live and love even in a word of alienation and disconnectedness.

*Adapted from a review by James Topham on classiclit.about.com*