Is she Miss Dynamite?

Read each of the boxes and find answers to them in your copy of the novel. Make a note of the relevant page number(s) and add your answers to the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2a.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2b.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3a.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3b.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Of Mice and Men  

Curley’s wife: Miss Dynamite or lonely victim?

Now complete the chart below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POINT</th>
<th>QUOTATION</th>
<th>EXPLANATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. The fact that George 

thinks she will be trouble 

prepares the reader for future 

events. We begin to dislike 

someone with so little self-

respect. This highlights the 

prejudice against women in 

the novel. | | |
| 2a. Steinbeck’s description of 

her when she first appears 

suggests that she is clearly 

overdressed for ranch life. | ‘Her finger-nails were red’ | |
| 2b. We are only aware of her 

dream in Chapter 5; by then 

we begin to realise why she 

dresses so glamorously and 

acts so provocatively – her 

dream is to become a movie 

star. | ‘… she made a small 

grand gesture with her arm 

and hand to show that she 

could act’ | |
| 3a. Her body language is 

inviting and provocative. | ‘… so that her body was 

thrown forward’ | |
| 3b. In terms of her actions, all 

this character spends a lot of 

time flirting with men. | ‘… she said playfully’ | |
| 4. She is constantly 

searching for her husband, 

though this may be an 

excuse to mingle with the 

other men. | ‘I’m looking for Curley’ | She is desperate for company. |
| 5. George is wary, almost 

scared of her. He seems to 

be aware of what might 

happen. | | |
Of Mice and Men

Curley’s wife: Miss Dynamite or lonely victim?

Or is she just a victim of a shattered dream?

After Lennie kills her, Steinbeck describes her in detail to show how different she looks.

1. Read the section from Chapter 5 which begins: ‘Curley’s wife lay with a half covering of yellow hay’ ... and ends ‘and movement stopped for much, much more than a moment.’.

2. Now annotate your text or pull out quotations which illustrate the following things:

   • All the negative aspects of the character disappear: we feel sorry for this victim of a lonely situation.

   • Reminds us of her unfulfilled dream of becoming a popular, glamorous actress.

   • Use of colour to show her beauty in death.

   • One long sentence emphasises the moment of peace in death, of time standing still before the men find her body.

   • Steinbeck provides a contrast with her flirty/aggressive previous attitude (and this creates sympathy for her).

   • Suggestive of death as opposed to sensuality.

   • Steinbeck shows us how, in death, she is changed for the better.

   • Reference to a lack of sound or movement to emphasise death and create a sense of expectancy.

3. Extension question. In this section of the novel, how is loneliness or isolation suggested in the way Steinbeck describes the scene?
Discussion question

In a letter, John Steinbeck wrote of Curley’s wife: ‘she’s a nice girl and not a floozy’. Discuss and explain your own impression of Curley’s wife.

- Discuss the ways in which Curley’s wife is a ‘floozy’. Focus on Steinbeck’s description (look back at your explanation chart), characters’ opinions, her dialogue, her attitude towards men or Crooks, her actions and her body language.

- Discuss the ways in which Curley’s wife appears to be a victim rather than a floozy. Discuss her dream, her confessions to Lennie, her loneliness or despair, and any other things she experiences that the reader might be able to sympathise with.

- How straightforward a character is she? How realistic do you think Steinbeck has made her seem? How successful do you think he was in his aim to present her as a ‘nice girl’ rather than a ‘floozy’?
Is she Miss Dynamite?

Read each of the boxes and find answers to them in your copy of the novel. Make a note of the relevant page number(s) and add your answers to the table below.

---

1. Candy tells George about her before she enters. Is **Steinbeck** preparing the reader? Or is he prejudicing the reader?

2a. Why is she out of place on a working ranch?

2b. What does her appearance suggest about her?

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CURLEY’S WIFE

---

3a. What do you notice about her body language as she speaks?

3b. How does she talk to George and Lennie?

---

4. Why is she in the bunkhouse?

Clues: look at her explanation and how she leaves.

---

5. How does **George** feel about her and how is this shown?

---

Her appearance

---

**Actions**

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<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
<td>I think that Steinbeck is helping the reader to know what she is like before we meet her because ... OR I think Steinbeck is getting the reader to think she is ... because ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2a.</td>
<td></td>
<td>She looks out of place on a working ranch because ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2b.</td>
<td></td>
<td>The way she looks makes us think that she is ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3a.</td>
<td></td>
<td>When she speaks, her body language is saying ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3b.</td>
<td></td>
<td>The way she talks to George and Lennie is ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
<td>She is in the bunk house because ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td></td>
<td>George feels ... We know this because ...</td>
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Curley’s wife: Miss Dynamite or lonely victim?

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<td>1. George thinks she will be trouble.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We begin to dislike her because she does not respect herself.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women are looked down on in the novel.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2a. She is overdressed for ranch life.</td>
<td>‘Her finger-nails were red’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2b. In Chapter 5 we find out her dream is to be a movie star.</td>
<td>‘… she made a small grand gesture with her arm and hand to show that she could act’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3a. Her body language is sexy.</td>
<td>‘… so that her body was thrown forward’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3b. This character spends a lot of time flirting with men.</td>
<td>‘… she said playfully’</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. She is always looking for her husband. This may be an excuse to talk with the other men.</td>
<td>‘I’m looking for Curley’</td>
<td>She is lonely.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. George is very wary of her.</td>
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Or is she just a victim of a shattered dream?

After Lennie kills her, Steinbeck describes her in detail to show how different she looks.

4. Read the section from Chapter 5 which begins: ‘Curley’s wife lay with a half covering of yellow hay’ ... and ends ‘and movement stopped for much, much more than a moment.’.

5. Now annotate your text or pull out quotations which illustrate the following things:

- All the bad aspects of the character disappear: we feel sorry for this victim of a lonely situation.
- Reminds us of her shattered dream of becoming a popular actress.
- Use of colour to show her beauty in death.
- One long sentence emphasises the moment of peace in death.
- Steinbeck provides a contrast with her flirty previous attitude.
- Suggests death and peace.
- Steinbeck shows us how, in death, she is changed for the better.
- Reference to a lack of sound or movement to emphasise death. This also creates a sense that we’re waiting for something ...
In a letter John Steinbeck wrote of Curley’s wife: ‘she’s a nice girl and not a floozy’. Discuss and explain your own impression of Curley’s wife.

Answer these questions first, then use them in your writing.

1. A floozy?
   - Curley’s wife is a ‘floozy’ because …
   - She looks like …
   - Other characters think she is … For example …
   - I think her attitude towards men is … For example …
   - I think that the things she does, such as …, mean she is …

2. A victim?
   - Curley’s wife is a victim because …
   - Her dream is …
   - She tells Lennie that …
   - She is lonely. We know this because …
   - The reader is able to feel sorry for her because …

3. A ‘nice girl’?
   - I think she is a straightforward / complex character because …
   - I think that Steinbeck has / has not made her realistic because …
   - Steinbeck wanted to make her a ‘nice girl’. He has been successful / unsuccessful in this. I think this because …