Mood, atmosphere and character

Starter
Give student pairs the handout Setting the scene and mood: different versions. Ask them to find at least four differences in the two versions and jot down their ideas about how the differences give different impressions of George and Lennie. A simpler question: how do we feel about George/Lennie in one version? How do we feel about them in the other? Give a couple of pairs the resource on OHT so that they can easily feed their ideas to the whole class. Get the ‘OHT pairs’ to feed back to the class. Encourage questioning and challenging. Insist on justifications.

Main
Show the Setting the scene and mood: different versions OHT to draw the class’s attention to any points that have not been touched on in the starter feedback. If possible, try not to say or indicate which is the published version: simply point to differences in the effect of phrases and words. Concentrate in particular on the left-hand column’s
- use of imagery (e.g. ‘... as quietly as little grey, sculptured stones’ - line 2)
- emphasis of visual (and sensual) detail (e.g. ‘... crisp sycamore leaves’ - line 6)
- use of ‘hard-working’, economical, powerful verbs (e.g. ‘... laboured up into the air and pounded downriver’ - lines 8-9)

Development
Give student pairs the handout First impressions of George and Lennie: different versions. Tell them that this is a continuation of the previous handout. Tell them to carry on finding differences and annotating the sheets with the different impressions we get of George and Lennie. (A couple of pairs could work on OHTs to facilitate feedback.)

Review
Take some feedback from the task. Now show Last impressions OHT. Explain that this is taken from the end of the novel. Which version is the published one? Which is better? How does the writer convey mood and control our feelings about George and Lennie? This is a challenging ending, and may well be used for the next lesson.

Note: this lesson prepares for a good coursework task: How does Steinbeck control the reader’s first and last impressions of George and Lennie?
### Setting the scene and mood: different versions

**Spot the differences**

What difference in effect does each version have? Which version did Steinbeck publish in *Of Mice and Men*?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Version</th>
<th>Revised Version</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The shade climbed up the hills toward the top. On the sand-banks the rabbits sat as quietly as little grey, sculptured stones. And then from the direction of the state highway came the sound of footsteps on crisp sycamore leaves. The rabbits hurried noiselessly for cover. A stilted heron laboured up into the air and pounded downriver. For a moment the place was lifeless, and then two men emerged from the path and came into the opening by the green pool.</td>
<td>The shade rose towards the top of the hills. On the sand-banks rabbits sat quietly, and then from the direction of the state highway came the sound of footsteps crunching noisily. Rabbits rushed for cover. A tall heron flapped up into the air and flew heavily downriver. For a moment the place was silent, and then two men appeared on the path and came into the opening by the stagnant pool.</td>
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First impressions of George and Lennie: different versions

They had walked in single file down the path, and even in the open one stayed behind the other. Both were dressed in denim trousers and in denim coats with brass buttons. Both wore black, shapeless hats and both carried tight blanket rolls slung over their shoulders. The first man was small and quick, dark of face, with restless eyes and sharp, strong features. Every part of him was defined: small, strong hands, slender arms, a thin and bony nose. Behind him walked his opposite, a huge man, shapeless of face, with large, pale eyes, with wide, sloping shoulders; and he walked heavily, dragging his feet a little, the way a bear drags his paws.

They had had been walking one in front of the other, and even in the open one man stayed behind the other. Both wore denim trousers, denim coats with brass buttons and black, shapeless hats, and they both carried tight blanket rolls on their shoulders. The front man was small and lively with a dark face, restless eyes and a strong, creased face. Every part of him was sharp and neat, small and thin. Behind him walked his opposite: a huge man with a blubbery face. He had big eyes and wide, round shoulders. He walked clumsily, dragging his feet.
The deep green pool of the Salinas River was still in the late afternoon. Already the sun had left the valley to go climbing up the slopes of the Gabilan mountains, and the hilltops were rosy in the sun. But by the pool among the mottled sycamores, a pleasant shade had fallen.

A watersnake glided smoothly up the pool, twisting its periscope head from side to side; and it swam the length of the pool and came to the legs of a motionless heron that stood in the shallows. A silent head and beak lanced down and plucked it out by the head, and the beak swallowed the little snake while its tail waved frantically.

A far rush of wind sounded and a gust drove through the tops of the trees like a wave. The sycamore leaves turned up their silver sides, the brown, dry leaves on the ground scudded a few feet. And row on row of tiny wind waves flowed up the pool’s green surface.

As quickly as it had come, the wind died, and the clearing was quiet again. The heron stood in the shallows, motionless and waiting. Another little watersnake swam up the pool, turning its periscope head from side to side.