Diana Leon Humanities-1/2 20 Feb. 2014

**Discrimination**

Eleanor Roosevelt once said, “The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.” The characters in *Of Mice and Men* follow this quote because they each have a dream yet do not see what they are capable of doing to make it happen. The novella *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck is about a pair named George and Lennie who have formed together like family and find jobs together. They come upon a ranch that they know they can make money and hopefully not get into any more trouble. Lennie is not treated as equal as others on the ranch similar to Crooks, an African American, and Curley’s wife. To show the theme of discrimination, Steinbeck includes the characters of Lennie, Crooks and Curley’s wife in his novella. Through these three characters Steinbeck shows his displeasure with the way people treat each other.

Steinbeck uses Lennie as an example of discrimination because of his mental disabilities. An example of Lennie being discriminated against is when George says, “‘ Tell you what made me stop that. One day a bunch of guys was standin’ around upon the Sacramento River. I was feelin’ pretty smart. I turns to Lennie and says, ‘Jump in’. An he jumps. Couldn’t swim a stroke. He damn near drowned before we could get him. An’ he was so damn nice for pullen’ him out. Clean forgot I told him to jump in. Well, I ain’t gone nothing like that no more ’” (Steinbeck 40). This quote shows that Steinbeck is trying to state that Lennie’s mental disability does not allow him to be in control of himself. Lennie is not capable of knowing what is right and what is not and how people can take advantage of that inability. However this is not the only example of Lennie’s character being discriminated against his mental disability. For instance, “‘ So you forgot that awready, did you? I gotta tell you again, do I? Jesus Christ, you’re a crazy bastard! ’” (Steinbeck 4). This illustrates that George is frustrated with Lennie’s short term memory and has to explain things over again. Since George does not seem to hide his frustration he calls Lennie names. Lennie represents discrimination because of the way people treat him based on his disability.

Another example against discrimination that Steinbeck uses is racism. An example of discrimination against Crooks is when he says, “‘ Cause I’m black. They play cards in there, but I can’t play because I’m black. They say I stink. Well, I tell you all of you stink to me ’” (Steinbeck 68). This quote illustrates that Crooks is not able to do much on the ranch other than his job because he is black. However, Steinbeck shows that Crooks is not treated fairly because of his race. On the other hand, this is not the only example Steinbeck shows discrimination against racism. For instance, Crooks is told, “‘ Listen Nigger,’ she said. ‘You know what I can do to you if you open your trap? ”’ (Steinbeck 80). This states that if Crooks says or does something to defend himself he would get punished for it. Steinbeck shows that someone can easily get Crooks punished just because he is black and has no rights. Therefore, Crooks is another example Steinbeck uses to show discrimination.

Curley’s wife is another character that Steinbeck uses to show discrimination against gender inequality. One example is how the men talk about her, “‘ I seen her give Slim the eye. Curley never seen it. An’ I seen her give Carlson the eye.’ George pretended a lack of interest. ‘Looks like we was gonna have fun.’ The swamper stood up from his box. ‘Know what I think?’ George did not answer. ‘Well, I think Curley’s married….a tart ”’ (Steinbeck 28). This shows that Curley’s wife is seen as property and is not able to have conversations with the other unmarried men on the ranch. The men think that a married woman should stay in the house. But this is not the only way Curley’s wife represents gender inequality. For example when George is talking to Lennie, ‘‘‘ Don’t you ever look at that bitch. I don’t care what she says and what she does. I seen ‘em poison before, but I never seen no piece of jail bait worse than her. You leave her be ”’ (Steinbeck 32). This is an example of how Curley’s wife wants to get attention, but George warns that she can get him and Lennie in big trouble causing them to lose their jobs on the ranch. Therefore, Steinbeck uses Curley’s wife as an example of gender inequality.

Steinbeck uses Lennie, Crooks and Curley’s wife to show the theme of discrimination through his novella. John Steinbeck shows discrimination against mental disability, racism and gender inequality and shows how it has affected them. Each character is treated differently based on their characteristics. Everyone could learn from Steinbeck’s understanding of discrimination and how it can be stopped.

**Work Cited**

Steinbeck, John. *Of Mice and Men.* New York: Penguin Books, 1993.