English Novels Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Essay Test, *Of Mice and Men*

Each response must

* be a minimum of one paragraph (at least EIGHT sentences in length)
* be introduced with a topic sentence
* clearly state the argument (your thesis statement)
* contain two or three examples to support your argument
* rely on textual EVIDENCE
* contain at least ONE QUOTE
* avoid use of the first person “I”…no “I think..” I believe”…

Choose **THREE** of the following topics to write responses to. You may complete additional responses for extra credit. Each response is worth 20 points, for a total of 60 points.

**Essay Questions:**

1. The belief in the American Dream—the belief that anyone can achieve a better life through hard work—has always been an important part of the American character. In *Of Mice and Men,* does Steinbeck seem to be supporting the belief in the American Dream or rejecting it?
2. The theme of friendship is a strong one in *Of Mice and Men*. What is Steinbeck saying about friendship? In answering the question, analyze one or more friendships in the book—George & Lennie, Candy & George, George & Slim, or another of your choice—and discuss what each person gives to and gains from friendship.
3. Emily Dickinson writes:

‘Hope’ is a thing with feathers—

That perches in the soul—

And sings the tune without the words—

And never stops—at all—

What is the function of hope in the novel, and how does Dickinson’s poem shed light on the use of hope in the novel?

1. Appearance vs. Reality: Discuss how different characters in Of Mice and Men hide their true selves/feelings for protection from potential harm.
2. Now that we have read the story, reflect on the meaning of the novel’s title, taken from the Robert Burns poem:

“To a Mouse, On Turning Her Up in Her Nest with the Plough (1785):”

*The best laid schemes o’ mice and men*

*Often go wrong*

*And leave us nought but grief and pain*

*For promised joy.*

How is this poem linked to the events in the novel? What inferences can you make about Steinbeck’s views based on his choice of title?

1. Loneliness is a dominant theme in the novel. Most of the characters are lonely and searching for someone who can serve as a companion or just as an audience. Discuss examples of character loneliness, the efforts of the characters is search of companionship, and their varying degrees of success.
2. Power. Think about different characters in *Of Mice and Men*, and the power that they have. What different kinds of power do different characters have? Where does it come from? What do they do with it? How does it help them, or hurt them?
3. Foreshadowing. Consider the many examples of foreshadowing in Of Mice and Men. What important actions and plot points are foreshadowed? How do these important events differ from the events that foreshadow them? How does foreshadowing help us understand the important turning points in the novella?
4. Discrimination: Look at the various examples of discrimination in Of Mice and Men. How does discrimination affect different characters? How do characters respond to discrimination, and how does it affect their lives, and the outcome of the story?
5. What do you think the author, John Steinbeck, is trying to say about human nature through his novel *Of Mice and Men*? (Think about the themes we see in this novel: friendship, belonging, trust, dreams, loneliness, weak vs. strong, discrimination, and loyalty vs. sacrifice.) Do you agree with what Steinbeck says about human nature?