

# Candidate Style Answers

OCR GCSE English Language

Unit A651 Extended Literary Text; Controlled Assessment Task

This Support Material booklet is designed to accompany the OCR GCSE English Language specification for teaching from September 2010.

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# Introduction

OCR has produced these candidate style answers to support teachers in interpreting the assessment criteria for the new GCSE specifications and to bridge the gap between new specification release and availability of exemplar candidate work.

This content has been produced by subject experts, with the input of Chairs of Examiners, to illustrate how the sample assessment questions might be answered and provide some commentary on what factors contribute to an overall grading. The candidate style answers are not written in a way that is intended to replicate student work but to demonstrate what a “good” or “excellent” response might include, supported by examiner commentary and conclusions.

**As these responses have not been through full moderation and do not replicate student work, they have not been graded and are instead, banded “middle” or “high” to give an indication of the level of each response.**

Please note that this resource is provided for advice and guidance only and does not in any way constitute an indication of grade boundaries or endorsed answers.

# Unit A651 Extended Literary Text

## Controlled Assessment Task

### Question

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**Explore why the relationship between George and Lennie seems so special in the novel.**

### Candidate A

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Companionship is a key element in John Steinbeck's 'Of Mice and Men'. It is George and Lennie who celebrate that special partnership in their everyday lives, making them unique because they have one another and it distinguishes them from the other central characters. It is Crook who tells us,

"A guy goes nuts if he ain't got nobody. Don't make no difference who the guy is, long's he's with you."

This character has experienced the loneliness of solitude and alienation, typical of many ranch hands during the period of Great Depression. However, Slim too remarks on their special relationship

"Ain't many guys travel around together..."

George and Lennie have become family, helping one another survive in a brutal and intimidating world of the ranch. They keep one another sane in spite of their tremendous differences in size and nature, as opposites appear to have attracted.

George and Lennie are the only characters who search for the American dream together. This symbiosis, here two migrant workers who help each other out for the betterment of both, is possible because they have very different strengths and weaknesses. George's first words to Lennie are,

"Lennie, don't drink too much or you'll get sick."

This reveals his role as guardian. In spite of his frequent frustration with Lennie, George always forgives him. He has promised to look after him.

"He's my ..... cousin. I told his old lady I'd take care of him."

Lennie is the burden that George is prepared to carry around with him for the duration of the novel. Even in the shooting of Lennie, George is prepared to 'do the deed' himself to save his friend from a more terrible death.

We see their special protective relationship develop very much into that of father and son. It is George, particularly, who contrasts the lack of care seen in others with their relationship, constantly reassuring Lennie that this is what makes them 'special'.

"With us it ain't like that. We got a future. We got somebody to talk to that gives a damn about us."

He repeats the story of their dream to the child-like Lennie as he would do to a simple son, constantly affirming their potential as a pair.

"We'll have a cow ... an' we'll have maybe a pig an' chickens."

By making concrete suggestions as to what they will have on their farm George soothes the confused Lennie. Interestingly, George is aware that he needs the strength and work ethic of Lennie to attain his dream, yet it is Lennie's inability to control that brute strength that causes so much trouble for the pair. This complex relationship reveals clear awareness of the needs of each other. Even Lennie understands the 'burden' he is to George, even suggesting at one point,

"Well, I could. I could go off, in the hills there. Some place I'd find a cave."

The simplicity of this statement underlines the simple minded nature of Lennie who would not have survived without George.

Tragically, the consequences of the killing of Curley's wife is not something George can protect Lennie from. Lennie, who is so used to George's reprimands, is surprised by his friend's silence at this point.

"Go on George. Ain't you gonna give me no more hell."

As Lennie looks to his guardian, George has realised that this special relationship must come to an end. To protect Lennie from suffering at the hands of those outside the relationship, he kills him, having talked him, tenderly, into a state of serenity.

"You ..... an' me. Ever'body gonna be nice to you. Ain't gonna be no more trouble.  
Nobody gonna hurt nobody nor steal from 'em."

Here is the world of Lennie's dreams. In the description of Lennie's final moments, Steinbeck captures George's over-riding concern for his friend.

"The hand shook violently, but his face set and his hand steadied. He pulled the trigger."

Steinbeck's simple description of the difficulty George has in killing his friend, reveals his love and concern for him, a final act that underlines the very special nature of their relationship.

## Commentary

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*The response is explicitly relevant, personal and clearly persuasive. The task is not one that lends itself particularly to the study of language, however the candidate does explore a range of interpretations in tackling this aspect of the writing as appropriate as well as commenting on the perspective of the writer. Precise quotations enhance the analysis of the writer's intentions. A good higher response.*

## Candidate B

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The relationship between George and Lennie is different from any other characters in 'Of Mice and Men' because they are prepared to help each other. They are not as lonely as the other ranch workers. Crooks tells us,

"A guy goes nuts if he ain't got nobody. Don't make no difference who the guy is, long's he's with you."

Crooks doesn't have anyone to help him and would like to be part of the George and Lennie 'dream'.

Slim also says how different they are.

"Ain't many guys travel round together."

George and Lennie have been together a long time. They are very different from one another but still manage to get along. They both keep their dreams for the future alive by talking about it as a real possibility. Their dream of surviving the Great Depression seems more real than the other characters. George tells Lennie,

"We'll have a cow ... An' we'll have maybe a pig an' chickens."

Lennie particularly likes George talking about rabbits.

George keeps Lennie safe by making sure he doesn't do stupid things.

"Lennie, don't drink too much or you'll get sick!"

This shows how he protects his simple friend.

George gets angry with Lennie at times but has promised to look after him.

"He's my ... cousin. I told his old lady I'd take care of him."

George is even prepared to shoot Lennie himself when he realises that there is no other option.

Their relationship is a bit like father and son. George states,

"We got a future. We got somebody to talk to that gives a damn about us."

George knows that he needs Lennie's strength to impress other ranch workers and help him make their dream of their own farm come true. Lennie's strength leads to problems that George has always had to sort out, but this time his 'petting' of Curley's wife, leading to her death, has made saving his friend impossible. Even Lennie knows he makes life difficult for George and offers to leave.

"Well, I could. I could go off, in the hills there. Some place I'd find a cave."

Lennie does not understand how bad the situation has become. He is surprised when his friend does not tell him off.

"Go on George. Ain't you gonna give me no more hell."

George wants Lennie to have a peaceful death and so instead of telling him off he creates a perfect world for Lennie to imagine.

"You ..... an' me. Ever'body gonna be nice to you. Ain't gonna be no more trouble. Nobody gonna hurt nobody nor steal from 'em."

We can see how much Lennie meant to George in the way he shoots him.

"The hand shook violently, but his face set and his hand steadied. He pulled the trigger."

George would never have allowed anyone else to do this. Although it seems cruel, it was really a kind act.

## Commentary

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*This is a personal and critical response, albeit at a quite straightforward level. The candidate understands and demonstrates how meaning is conveyed with a range of quotations used to justify views, although many points are rather undeveloped. A good middle response.*