

## Of Mice and Men Writing Prompt 2—Character Sketch

*Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck: from chapter 2

"A tall man stood in the doorway. He held a crushed Stetson hat under his arm while he combed his long, black, damp hair straight back. Like the others he wore blue jeans and a short denim jacket. When he had finished combing his hair he moved into the room, and he moved with a majesty achieved only by royalty and master craftsmen. He was a jerkline skinner, the prince of the ranch, capable of driving ten, sixteen, even twenty mules with a single line to the leaders. He was capable of killing a fly on the wheeler's butt with a bull whip without touching the mule. There was a gravity in his manner and a quiet so profound that all talk stopped when he spoke. His authority was so great that his word was taken on any subject, be it politics or love. This was Slim, the jerkline skinner. His hatchet face was ageless. He might have been thirty-five or fifty. His ear heard more than was said to him, and his slow speech had overtones not of thought, but of understanding beyond thought. His hands, large and lean, were as delicate in their action as those of a temple dancer."

### Examining Steinbeck's Style:

**Instructions:** Good writing starts with examining a model of good writing. Before you write a descriptive paragraph (your character sketch), you will be analyzing Steinbeck's writing to understand how he fosters characterization.

1. Underline words/phrases that modify other words. (Example: tall man. Tall describes [or modifies] the man and tells the reader what kind of a man he is). Explain what affect these words/phrases have on the description.
2. Circle words or phrases that are abstracts or comparisons (figurative language such as similes and metaphors). Explain what affect these words/phrases have on the description.
3. Highlight the verbs in the passage. Select a few of the verbs which you feel are vivid and help to create imagery. Explain what affect these words/phrases have on the description.

### Writing Response: Character Sketch

**Instructions:** Your task is to write a character sketch like the one listed above. You may use a real person as the subject of your sketch or you may create a character for the purposes of the assignment. You must meet the following requirements:

#### Description

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- o Use modifiers to aid in description (underline them)
- o Use sensory language to appeal to a variety of senses
- o Use at least one simile or metaphor (circle them)
- o Use vivid verbs (highlight them)

#### ✓ Style and Organization

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- o There is clear organization in the paragraph evident through transitions and a logical progression of thoughts
- o Correct sentence structure and grammar are utilized
- o Writing style is creative and unique
- o Sentence structure varies

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