

- (b) How does John Steinbeck use the character of Candy to highlight some aspects of American society in the 1930s? [20]

The last stage of the life cycle is represented by Candy, who is at the end of his life, all men seem to know their fate and see it in Candy. This is why he's rejected, he's living proof that they too will grow old and have no use and therefore lose any dignity they ever had. During the Great Depression, many could not afford a pension and because of this could not retire with dignity. All men on the ranch are aware that this is their fate, they become hardened by loneliness from moving from ranch to ranch unable to form human bonds, and then they are weakened by the prospect of death and by the desolation of poor living conditions and gruelling work that cripple them as they grow old.

Their rejection is demonstrated by the killing of Candy's dog. Candy looks to his dog as a companion, he says that he'd had it "ever since he was a pup". This dog has been the only permanent procure in Candy's life, for during the Great Depression men could not afford many things that would've lasted long such as ornaments nor souvenirs, and often moved from ranch to ranch, nothing was permanent not secure, the Wall St crash in 1929 showed that things can change instantly from a booming industry in the 1920s to poverty in the 30s. Candy would've lived through the 20s and would've remembered its wealth and fortune perhaps better than the younger characters such as Whit, and his dog too, for they are both elderly, the dog to him is a relic from his past, and with the shooting of the dog, Steinbeck shows that his past has been rejected, he has no future for death is not far away from him being old and disabled, and now he has no past. The ranchers have rejected this man through his dog, they cannot kill him, so they kill his dog signifying that they are rid of him. He is now aware that he will be put on the "county", and left to fend for himself, a situation that he would not survive in his frail state, because of this we understand that the physical death of his dog, is the metaphorical death for him, it seems that there is no hope in Candy ever having dignity at the end of his life after this. According to Carlson The dog "don't have no fun", this applies to Candy too. And he sees the true resentment and lack of pity shown by his fellow ranchers.

But soon after the death of his dog he comes across the idea of the dream that George and Lennie share. The fact that he could bring purpose to them, that he would be giving his "350 bucks" of his compensation money to fund the purpose of their farm, gives him dignity and respect from George and Lennie. From this point on, they acknowledge him, they see him as a friend, he taunts Curley's wife in Chapter 4 telling her that he has "fren's" displaying his new found confidence from the fact that there is life after the death of his dog and the supposed death of him. Before this, his only source of purpose was a guide in chapter 2, he was a gossip and called Curley "scrappy" and his wife a "tart", showing bitterness and resentment to his employers. But in chapter 4, he has the confidence to say to the face of Curley's wife that she has "foozy ideas" and stating that he would not have to get a "lousy two bit job" if he were to be canned. In chapter 4, Candy is described as the "Master of the situation" asserting his new found confidence with his new found purpose.

In my opinion, Candy, is not a weak character, but a weakened character who's fallen from grace. He seems to have lost his right hand in a farming accident, and from this would've began his life as a worthless cripple. This is mimicked by the event when Curley's hand is "bust" rendering him maluable and a ridicule. Candy's dog was also the "best sheep dog" he'd ever seen. All of this suggests that Candy was once an excellent worker, but now rejected because of his useless state, in the fickle society of the 1930s, as in the great Depression employers could not afford to be kind to their employers and would have to dispose of them if too old or injured to work. The dream momentarily gave him back his strength, but as the dream becomes impossible once more, he "covered his face in his arm" signifying the end of his life. Candy tells George "I shouldn't ought to of let no stranger shoot my dog" for he understands that death comes for all and deep down always knew that his death as nothing but a rancher would be inevitable he tells George this as if he knew that some day Lennie too would have to die, and that he would not be able to survive without George, just like Candy's dog, even if it was his "greatest fear", Candy was always aware of his fate, as are all other characters in the story, who know they are trapped in a cycle.

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Candy.