

Of Mice and Men: Moral Ambiguity—Analytical Essay

Morals (n)—Our morals determine what we believe to be right or wrong. These morals are informed by our past experiences with our parents, religion, social interactions, etc.

Ambiguity (n)—A lack of clarity; no one way of understanding; a thing that is open to interpretation

Moral Ambiguity (n)—The concept that a given situation is difficult to assign moral judgments such as an absolute right or an absolute wrong. Such a situation is open for interpretation and relative to a single person’s moral beliefs and understandings.

George’s murder of Lenny is one such instance.

Objectives:	Apply and adapt the Schaeffer method to a study of theme. Use deep thinking and reasoning skills to compose an essay of analysis and argumentation. Write a formal essay in which you argue one side of an issue.
The assignment:	Did George make the right moral decision in killing Lenny? After reading <i>Of Mice and Men</i> , write an argumentative essay that addresses George’s motives and support your position with evidence from the text and the articles we have read. Be sure to acknowledge competing views through a concession paragraph. Give examples from past or current events or issues to illustrate and clarify your position.
Structure:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your introductory paragraph will need an arguable thesis statement in which you take a definite side to the issue. This will be the last sentence in this paragraph. It is a perfectly legitimate rhetorical technique to discredit an opposing point of view by addressing the point of view and then dismantling it. However, an attempt to present both sides equally is not the point of the assignment. • As you make your argument, you will want to use the paragraph structure that we have been using, the Schaeffer method. However, it is not necessary that every paragraph have strictly three pieces of evidence and two commentary sentences. You will probably find you might need more commentary in places to really discuss your argument. If you have fewer than five or six quotes for your entire paper, your argument will seem unfounded and ill-proved. • When you use a quote from the book, you MUST cite the page number. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Your citation will come at the end of the quote or the sentence in which you have a quote. ○ Example: Staying as far away from the truth as possible, Jeeves continued lying, “No I haven’t seen her all night. In fact, I haven’t seen her all month.” (Smith 10) • Use examples from other sources as well. Other works with similar ethical dilemmas usually serve to enlighten such an argument. We used a portion of the bible in which God spoke to Cain. Use credible and relevant anecdotes or sources, though. A quote from Family Guy will probably be a mark against your argument and your final grade. • Your conclusive paragraph should not merely sum up what you have just written. You should end with your final assessment. That means saving some judgments until the end of the paper.

Assignments

Rough draft	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You will need a rough that at least two other people will review.• Review past writing you have done to get a sense of the composition issues—grammar, organization, elaboration, spelling, etc.—you need to address.• It must bear the signatures of these two people at the bottom of the front page.• It should have comments and revision marks. If it is a clean draft, my assumption will be that you failed to produce a rough draft, and you will receive no credit for this portion. <p>Rough draft due by Due on Monday, September 17 for in-class peer editing and revision (If you do not have your rough draft for in-class revising and editing on this day, you will only get half credit when it is turned in.)</p>
Final draft	<p>Due on Tuesday, September 18/Monday, September 19</p> <p>Specifics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Length: Two-three pages (640-920 words)• Typed• Times New Roman• One-inch margins• Line spacing—double spaced• A header with your name, class period, and the page number• A centered title at the top of the first page that reads “<i>Of Mice and Men</i>: Resolving George’s Moral Dilemma”
Socratic Seminar	You will be participating in a Socratic Seminar about the novel on Thursday, September 20/ Friday, September 21.

Essay Rubric

9 (98)	Near perfect: Eloquent and keenly perceptive; All aspects of the paper are working toward not only fulfilling the assignment but revealing depth that is not readily evident in the topic of study; grammar is without consistent error	These upper-half essays show the writer understands both the prompt and the text
8 (93)	Keenly perceptive; All aspects of the paper are working toward not only fulfilling the assignment but revealing depth that is not readily evident in the topic of study; grammar is without consistent error	
7 (88)	Very good insight; All aspects of the paper are working toward not only fulfilling the assignment but revealing some depth that is not readily evident in the topic of study; few errors in grammar	
6 (83)	Several good insights; most aspects of the paper are working toward not only fulfilling the assignment but revealing some depth that is not readily evident in the topic of study; few errors in grammar	
5 (78)	Ambiguous evidence of comprehension of the text or task; some aspects of the paper are working toward fulfilling the task but a lack of understanding seems evident; consistent errors in certain areas of grammar	
4 (73)	Shows serious deficits or misinterpretations; aspects of the paper are working toward fulfilling the task but there exists some factual inaccuracies or misunderstandings of essential elements of the story; consistent errors in several areas of grammar	Lower-half papers show the writer does not understand the prompt or the text or probably both.
3 (68)	Major thinking problems, gross inaccuracies; some attempt at addressing the prompt but there exists factual inaccuracies or misunderstandings of essential elements of the story; consistent errors in most areas of grammar	
2 (63)	Unacceptably brief, serious misunderstanding, poorly written; some attempt at addressing the prompt but there exists complete factual inaccuracies or misunderstandings of essential elements of the story; consistent careless errors in grammar	
1 (58)	Especially inexact, brief, vacuous, and/or mechanically unsound; little attempt at addressing the prompt and there exists complete factual inaccuracies or misunderstandings of essential elements of the story; consistent careless errors in grammar	
0 (53)	No more than a reference to the task; no attempt at addressing the prompt and there exists complete factual inaccuracies or misunderstandings of essential elements of the story; consistent careless errors in grammar	
—	Completely off topic	