

English Department
Freshman Summer Reading Study Guides

Welcome, Freshmen students, from the U of D Jesuit English department!

All UDJ high school students are required each summer to read two novels. This year, Freshmen are reading *Of Mice and Men* and *Lord of the Flies*. You have received the following questions to serve as a guide when reading Steinbeck's and Golding's novels. These guides are not meant to serve as summer homework nor are you required to take notes or write full responses to the questions provided. The questions are meant to help the reader(s) consider elements of the novel such as the themes, characters or conflicts. It is okay if one isn't sure if they understand each and every question. The freshmen English teachers simply ask that each reader think about possible responses to the following guiding questions.

Enjoy the summer,

Freshman English Teachers

Of Mice and Men, John Steinbeck

Of Mice and Men, like most of Steinbeck's work, drew heavily from his own life experiences. Set in his

hometown of Salinas Valley, California and reflecting the labor and class struggles of the 1930s, the story has been called a “parable of what it means to be human” because it reflects Steinbeck’s empathy for the common people. He understood their strengths, their connection to - and craving for – land and, above all else, their loneliness, and the need to connect to one another in friendship.

1. The main characters Lenny and George are companions.
 - a. How do they relate to each other?
 - b. Why do they stay together?
 - c. What words best describe each character?
 - d. What happens to their relationship?
 - e. What does their relationship say about companionship and isolation?
2. Lenny has George talk about “the dream.”
 - a. What is that dream?
 - b. Why is this dream important?
3. Each of the supporting characters have well defined traits – consider how to describe each of the following characters:
 - a. Candy
 - b. Slim
 - c. Curly
 - d. Curly's wife
 - e. Carlson
 - f. Crooks

4. There are two summer reading novels. Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* and Golding's *Lord of the Flies*.
 - a. Consider how they're similar and different. Which characters from each book are similar in how they act and react to others and their surroundings?

The Lord of the Flies, William Golding

The *Lord of the Flies* is a classic tale of a group of English school boys who are left stranded on an unpopulated island, and who must confront not only the defects of their society but the defects of their own natures. The following reading questions include boldfaced literary terms that will be introduced and utilized throughout your classroom discussions of the book. Enjoy!!

1. What is the **setting** of the story? How is it different from the place where the characters originally lived?
2. How do the boys organize themselves? Why do you think they elect Ralph as their leader?
3. What **external conflict** exists between Ralph and Jack? What do you think is the source of the conflict?
4. In what way is Jack's mask a symbol? What larger idea does it represent? How are Piggy's glasses a **symbol**? What idea do they represent?
5. How is the boys' behavior on the island similar to the adults' behavior in the outside world?
6. How, if at all, is it different?
7. What or who is the Lord of the Flies? What is the purpose or significance of the figure?
8. How has Ralph's position of leadership and authority changed since the beginning of the story?
9. How do the savages plan to catch Ralph? What is **ironic** about the outcome of their plan?
10. Analyze the themes of the novel. What messages or insights about life does Golding suggest regarding issues such as power, the need for social order, the fear of the unknown, the loss of identity, and the loss of innocence? What occurrences in the novel help suggest each of those themes?