Introducing *Of Mice and Men*

(Character Analysis/Mental Health Investigation)

**Anticipatory Set:**

Journal: Respond to the following prompt in 125 words or more.

Do you think that people with mental disabilities can function as “normal” members of society? What has to take place in order for people with mental disabilities to be a part of everyday life? Do you think our society does enough for people with this type of disability? Why or why not?

Students have 7 or 8 minutes to write, 1 minute to share with a partner, and 5 minutes for a quick class discussion.

**Goals:**

Introduce main characters and themes in *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck
Increase engagement with the text through initial buy-in.
Encourage students to start thinking about how to improve mental health facilities in our community.

**Objectives:**

Students will be able to identify main characters in *Of Mice and Men* and explain at least two characteristics of each.
Students will be able to identify symptoms of Lennie’s mental disability and how it affects his community.
Students will be able to begin investigating mental disabilities in Contra Costa County and how it affects their community.

**Instruction:**

Students sit in a circle (this will be the “fishbowl”). Teacher instructs students to take out a sheet of paper for notes and title it: “*Of Mice and Men* Character Analysis”. Teacher asks for 7 volunteers who will be in the middle of the circle. Each student receives a card with a name and a picture on it. Teacher explains to the students that they will be representing characters from the novella *Of Mice and Men* and that he/she will be “telling their fortunes”. Teacher tells students to take notes on what they hear about each character, but most importantly what advice the “fortune teller” (teacher) gives to each character. Teacher then proceeds to play the role of “fortune teller” and gives vague descriptions of each of the following 7 characters and explains the connection to the picture on the card (see attachment):

George - Advice: “Stay away from guns!”
Lennie - Advice: “Stay out of the barn!”
Candy - Advice: “Hold onto your money.”
Slim - Advice: “Keep track of your puppies.”
Curley - Advice: “Keep an eye on your wife.”
Curley’s Wife - **Advice:** “Stay out of the barn!”
Crooks - **Advice:** “Lock your door.”

Once each character has had their “fortune” told. Have students who volunteered share out what they learned about each other. After a few minutes, call on random non-volunteers from outside the fishbowl to explain what they learned about each of the characters. Guide student discussion toward the theme of loneliness found in the novel.

**Guided Practice:**
Teacher then guides a discussion using the ideas presented in Journal writing about the character with a mental disability (Lennie).
- Which character do you think has a mental disability?
- How do you think this disability affects his friend George?
- How does it affect the people around him?
- What are some ways you think he could be supported so he could have a “normal” life on the ranch?
- Have you met or do you know anyone like Lennie? How did they function in normal society?
- What supports are in place for people like this? What supports SHOULD be in place for people like this?

**Independent Practice (see handout):**
- Look up the 5 most common mental disabilities in Contra Costa County. (make a list)
- Identify what symptoms are most common. (make a list)
- Identify and explain what disability you think Lennie has and how you would help him. (write a paragraph)

**Closure:**
Exit Ticket - Identify all 7 main characters in *Of Mice and Men.*
Explain how the theme of loneliness manifests itself in at least 3 of the characters.
Explain how Lennie’s disability affects his community.
Pictures for Character Cards:

George

Lennie

Candy
Slim

Curley
Curley’s Wife
Crooks
Now that you have gotten to know some of the characters from *Of Mice and Men*, it’s obvious that Lennie has a mental disability. What kind of mental disability does he have? How could you help him? How common is his disability in our community? For your homework assignment, you will be investigating these questions.

**Part I:** Look up the 5 most common mental disabilities in Contra Costa County.

1. ____________________________________________________________
2. ____________________________________________________________
3. ____________________________________________________________
4. ____________________________________________________________
5. ____________________________________________________________

**Part II:** Identify the 5 most common symptoms.

1. ____________________________________________________________
2. ____________________________________________________________
3. ____________________________________________________________
4. ____________________________________________________________
5. ____________________________________________________________

**Part III:** Identify and explain what disability you think Lennie has and how you would help him. (write a paragraph)

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