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## Depiction Of Mental Retardation In "Of Mice And Men" Movie

Of Mice and Men is a movie, but also a book was written, about two men who are field workers during the Great Depression. George Milton and Lennie Small are two men who are work partners, but George takes care of Lennie because he is mentally disabled. At the beginning of the movie, George and Lennie are being chased by a large group of men. Later on, viewers find out that Lennie liked the fabric on a woman's dress but would not stop stroking her. She became frightened and took off screaming. This put Lennie and George out of a job and in danger. After they got away, they traveled to work in another part of the state. Throughout the movie, Lennie shows viewers some actions that are very child-like. By the end of their time at the ranch, Lennie made a few mistakes that put George in a terrible position to have to murder Lennie, so he does no more harm.

In the movie, Lennie Small is clearly mentally disabled. Lennie struggles with simple concepts, and George mentions several times in the movie that Lennie cannot think for himself. Lennie's mind is extremely child-like. He makes silly decisions that no adult of sound mind would make. Lennie is also fascinated with soft items to touch. In the movie, Lennie shows interest in mice, dogs, velvet, and hair. Lennie keeps a dead mouse in his pocket in the beginning of the movie, and George noticed it. When he asked about it, Lennie said "I was just petting it with the fingers while we were walking along" (Steinbeck).

This shows Lennie's lack of language skills and immature-like mind. This again factors into a mental disability. Once Lennie has possession of these items, he does not release them. Lennie has a past of killing animals because he pets them too hard causing him to break their bones. His actions label him as being mentally retarded. Being mentally retarded, Lennie needs all the guidance and assistance he can get. Lennie is not intelligent and cannot make decisions for himself, but he is physically able, follows directions, and does what he is told. For these reasons, Lennie relies on George's guidance to make it through each day.

According to a video titled "Mental Retardation" on the subject, "mental retardation is lower than average intellectual functioning and it's a lifelong condition." Because Lennie is so high functioning, he would classify as having mental retardation. Mental retardation affects the way a person's mind works. A childish demeanor is seen in many people with mental disorder. In Lennie's case this is true. He acts like a small child and thinks like one too. Another source says, "The 'condition' is highly contextual and is relative to the environment. The confusion apparent over the relativity or contextual nature of MMR (mild mental retardation) is not found for other levels of mental retardation.

Further, this confusion is reflected in the extreme variability in prevalence rates for MMR, whereas highly stable prevalence rates are reported for cases of mental retardation with IQs below 50." I would categorize Lennie under mild mental retardation due to his ability to process simple thoughts and formulate them into words. It is not intelligent or senseful when he speaks, however people can understand what he means by it. Typically, when a person lacks in one area, they excel in another. Although Lennie is classified as having mild mental retardation, he can put enough words together to make a point, but he mainly excels in physical strength. This

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brute strength that Lennie possesses eventually leads to his downfall after it causes him to kill multiple animals and a worker's wife.

Fortunately, there are many ways for educators to help students who might have mild mental retardation. After reading several articles on MMR, I came across a study comparing MMR and LD (learning disabilities). During the study, observers watched students as they identified and compared labeled items on flashcards. According to the study, "Results indicated that normally achieving students and students with LD statistically significantly outperformed students with MMR on all four measures; normally achieving students did better than students with LD on 2 of the 4 measures (i.e., number of exemplars and number of differences), whereas the two groups performed comparably on the remaining two (i.e., category labels and number of similarities)" (Caffrey).

Knowing that students with mental retardation struggle more than students with learning disabilities, teachers can really begin to dive in. Teachers will begin by making certain accommodations for their students on assessments. For example, a teacher made an assessment that "included the use of photos to demonstrate the procedure required; the use of plain language; one concept per sentence; short, clear, and concise sentences; and the provision of explanatory information prior to the day of the health assessment to ensure adequate time was given to the participant to review and consider their attendance"(Burke). All around, teachers can help students improve by offering accommodations on assignments and assessments. In more extreme cases providing a teacher's aid would be helpful.

The quality of life for students with mental retardation varies. These people rely on people to take care of them on a different level than other kids. They require assistance with simple day-to-day tasks that the majority of us do not think about. So, I believe that people with mental retardation could lead very fulfilling lives, but they need the support system to do so. Without this support system, they will not get the basic necessities that they need due to their inability to be independent.

Aside from their support system, I feel that the potential for a quality life in these people is maximized by their simplistic minds. They have a basic understanding of entertainment, lack of worry, and joyfulness, that people usually only feel like a kid. Then people grow up and see the world for what it truly is, and they have to push away the negatives. People with mental retardation do not experience that. They remain in the joyful childhood mindset. To an outsider, it may seem sad to see these people never grow up. But in retrospect, they are living a joy that we all are chasing.