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Of Mice and Men Essay

Wrong From Right

Decisions are never easy to make; especially when you have to choose whether you should kill your best friend or not. In *Of Mice and Men*, George had to make a difficult decision—kill his best friend or keep running. In the end, George chose to kill Lennie. George's decision to kill Lennie wasn't wrong; he killed his friend because he had a purpose. George killed him because he was freeing Lennie from himself, protecting him from the cruelty of the other men that were trying to kill him, and because George knew that if they were to run away again, Lennie was bound to harm someone else.

For starters, Lennie was always causing trouble wherever he and George went. Lennie's strength proved useful, but it was also very harmful at the same time. When Lennie accidentally broke Curley's wife's neck, he fled to the spot where George told him to go if he ever got into trouble (Steinbeck 91). When George found out what Lennie had done, he made up his mind on what he would do. George went to the bunk house and took Carlson's gun, then went to the place where Lennie was hiding (Steinbeck 95). George freed Lennie when he shot him in the back of his head. Lennie would no longer have to fear that George would abandon him, and George wouldn't have to worry about Lennie harming someone else.

Secondly, when Candy said, "I ought to of shot that dog myself, George. I shouldn't ought to of let no stranger shoot my dog" (Steinbeck 61). This helped George decide what to do with Lennie later on in the story. George didn't want Curley to torture Lennie when he found

him. It would be better if Lennie died in the hands of someone who actually cared for him and wanted him to die in the least painful way possible. George wasn't cruel because he told Candy, "I ain't gonna let 'em hurt Lennie" (Steinbeck 95). Rather than seeing Lennie suffer from Curley, George took matters into his own hands. When George raised the gun and his hand shook from hesitation of what he was about to do, he dropped his hand to the ground (Steinbeck 105). It was completely obvious that George didn't want to kill Lennie, but he had no choice. Why let his best friend suffer from what Curley was about to do to him when he could let Lennie go the less painful way?

Lastly, the fact that Lennie killed someone changed everything. George now knows of what Lennie is capable of. If they were to run away again, Lennie would just repeat what happened in the barn. Lennie doesn't fully comprehend what he had actually done. He knows he did something bad, but he doesn't know how terrible the situation actually is. Lennie ended someone's *life*. No matter how cruel or evil a person is, they do not deserve to die. Yet, in George's situation, he acted as morally as possible. He didn't want to end Lennie's life, but if he didn't, someone else eventually would.

With that in mind, George's choice to kill Lennie wasn't out of cruelty, but compassion. Although George was harsh on Lennie at times, it was for his own good. George could have abandoned Lennie such a long time ago but he didn't. He stuck with him through the very end. Lennie died in the hands of the person he cared the most about. By killing Lennie, George killed their dream all together. The place they always dreamt of getting died when George shot Lennie. George wanted a place to call his own as much as Lennie did. George knew he was giving up his dream along with his best friend when he pulled the trigger; it was the most selfless act George had ever done.

Steinbeck, John. *Of Mice and Men*. New York, New York: Penguin Group, 1937. Print.