Of *Mice and Men* is Steinbeck’s last novel to be directly influenced by Arthurian legend.

Although some critics have not noted to what extent *Mice and Men* is an Arturian legend because the fundamental parallels—the knightly loyalty, the pursuit of the vision, the creation of a bond, and its destruction by an at least potentially adulterous relationship—are there.

The one obvious Arthurian hangover is George, who is not only remarkable loyal to his charge—the feebleminded Lennie—but also remarkably pure.

Lennie not only warns George against the blandishments of Curley’s wife, but is himself obviously impervious to her charms.

While the other ranch hands are excited by her presence, Lennie says only, “Jesus, what a tramp!”

When invited to join the boys in a Saturday night trip to a neighboring town’s nice whorehouse, Lennie says that he “might go in an’ set and have a shot,” but “ain’t *puttin*’ out no two and a half.”

Lennie does not go by excusing himself on the ground that he is saving money to buy a farm.

When he is told that Curley boasts of having his glove full of Vaseline in order to keep his hand soft for his wife, George says, “That’s a dirty thing to tell around.”

Here is the description of Curley’s wife’s death: “..... the meanness and the plannings and the discontent and the ache for attention were all gone from her face. She was pretty and simple, and her face was sweet and young.”

By and large, George and Lennie shows no sympathy towards the death of Curley’s wife.
The reader does not need to justify a search for an allegory in Of Mice and Men for the author has spoken of the book as symbolic and microcosmic.

Unquestionably the novel concerns a knight of low estate and a protege who lacks the mental capacity to be conscious enough to know his own strength or to protect himself from temptation.

At first glance, the story has an indifferent nature that makes men physically strong but mentally deficient; dreaming is man’s only defense a world he never made.

George could, of course, have killed Lennie simply to protect the giant brute from the mob, but since Lennie doesn’t know what is going on anyway, it is easy to oversentimentalize George’s motives.

In a way, it is correct to state that actually George has reason of his own for pulling the trigger.

What George is actually trying to kill is not Lennie, who is only a shell and a doomed one at that, but something in himself.

Lennie’s need for George is obvious, but George’s need for Lennie, though more obvious, is scarce.

In his most candid appraisal of himself, Lennie says, “I ain’t so bright neither, or I wouldn’t be buckin’ barley for my fifty and found. If I was even a little bit smart, I’d have my own little place.”

Lennie not only protects but directs George.

Lennie, of course, directs George partly to protect him from committing acts he could not mentally be responsible for, but Lennie is not a wholly altruistic shepherd.
One of the aspects of relationship becomes apparent when Lennie tells Slim that George, “Can’t think of nothing to do himself, but he can take orders.” Since Lennie gives the orders, George gives him a sense of power.

The dream not only gives a direction to their lives, but also makes them feel different from other people.

It is considerably important that Lennie lies to the posse after the shooting.

If the experience had not matured him, George had here his opportunity for a grand gesture. He could either destroy himself along with Lennie and the dream forces, his enemies to destroy him.

George, who by Romantic standards has little left to live for, chooses to go on living and to say that he had to shoot Lennie in self-defense.

Despite the grim events it chronicles Of Mice and Men is not a tragedy, but a comedy—which if it were Shakespearean, we would call a “dark comedy” about the triumph of the indomitable will to survive.
PART THREE. Put a check mark (√) in front of the item (a, b, c, or d) which best fits the numbered word or phrase according to the story.

1. On one side of the river the golden foothill slopes curve up to the strong and rocky Gabilan mountains, but on the valley side the water is lined with trees willows fresh and green with every spring, carrying in their lower leaf junctures the debris of the winter’s flooding.
   a) broken, scattered remains
   b) absolutely filthy papers
   c) mossy rock
   d) barks of the trees

2. On the sandy bank under the trees the leaves lie deep and so crisp that a lizard makes a great skittering if he runs along them.
   a) easily tempted
   b) easily brittle
   c) hard to break
   d) beautiful

3. A stilted heron laboured up into the air and pounded down river.
   a) humble
   b) hungry
   c) pompous
   d) tamed

4. For a moment the place was lifeless, and then two men emerged from the path and came into the opening the green pool.
   a) escaped
   b) dashed
   c) hurried
   d) rose or appeared

5. Both were dressed in denim trousers and in denim coats with brass buttons.
   a) coarse. twilted cotton cloth
   b) sharkskin
c) chamoir

d) woolen

6. His huge companion dropped his blankets and flung himself down and drank from the surface of the green pool; drank with long gulps, snorting into the water like a horse.
   a) embracing
   b) holding
   c) forcing breath suddenly
   d) cont rolling

7. Lennie dabbled his big paw in the water and wiggled his fingers so the water arose in little splashes.
   a) threw
   b) moved
   c) scratched
   d) cleaned

8. The little man jorked down the brim of his hat and scowled over at Lennie.
   a) smiled
   b) shouted
   c) frowned
   d) laughed

9. 'Jesus Christ,' George said resignedly. 'Well -- look, we're gonna work on a ranch like the one we come from up north.'
   a) slowly
   b) carefully
   c) smoothly
   d) submissively

10. Lennie droned to himself softly: 'I ain't gonna say nothin'.
    a) uttered in a dull, monotonous tone
    b) uttered with anger
    c) gossipped
    d) whispered in a melodious tone
   a) naively
   b) clearly
   c) victoriously
   d) in a dull voice

12. Lennie lumbered to his feet and disappeared in the brush.
   a) crawled quickly
   b) scurried fast
   c) lay down softly
   d) moved clumsily

   a) contortion
   b) twisting
   c) movement
   d) gesture

14. Lennie hesitated, backed away, looked wildly at the brush line as though he contemplated running for his freedom.
   a) considered
   b) appreciated
   c) accumulated
   d) preferred

15. ‘You gonna give me that mouse or do I have to sock you?’
   a) leave alone
   b) hit
   c) banish
   d) kill

16. He heard Lennie’s whimpering cry and wheeled about.
   a) charming
   b) loud
   c) trembling
   d) low, whinning and broken
17. A big guy like you Lennie’s lip quivered and tears started in his eyes.
   a) trembled
   b) shook
   c) moved up and down
   d) got wet

18. George still stared morosely at the fire. ‘When I think of the swell time I could have have without you, I go nuts.
   a) bad
   b) excellent
   c) whole
   d) dull

19. Lennie choked with pride. ‘I can remember,’ he said.
   a) murmured
   b) mumbled
   c) stopped the breathing
   d) moaned

20. The curling branches disappeared and only a faint glimmer showed where the tree-trunks were.
   a) vividness
   b) echo
   c) realization
   d) weak, uncertain light

21. Against the walls were eight bunks, five of them made up with blankets and the other three showing their burlap ticking.
   a) coarse cloth
   b) velvet
   c) khaki
   d) nylon

22. Those Western magazines ranch-men love to read and scoff at and secretly believe.
   a) look upon
   b) mock
   c) admire
   d) deem
23. In the middle of the room stood a big square table littered with playing-cards, and around it were grouped boxes for the players to sit on.
   a) adorned
   b) picturesque
   c) scattered
   d) full of

24. The boss squinted his eyes. 'Well. I had to send out the grain teams short two buckers.'
   a) looked down
   b) examined
   c) opened
   d) looked sideways

25. 'Damn right he don't.' said George. slightly mollified, 'not if he wants to stay workin' long.'
   a) made his feeling calm
   b) rerror
   c) frightened
   d) scared

26. He stiffened and went into a slight crouch
   a) jump
   b) spring
   c) lowering his body
   d) cough

27. Lennie squirmed under the look and shifted his feet nervously.
   a) rolled his body
   b) stooped
   c) raised his eyes
   d) wriggled

28. He'd slough me. He just don't give a damn. Won't ever get canned 'cause his old man's the boss.'
a) get rid of
b) laugh at
c) punish
d) mock

29. I gotta be settin' out the washbasins for the guys. The teams'll be in before long. You guys gonna buck barley?
   a) later
   b) soon
   c) at once
   d) on another occasion

30. George stared at his solitaire lay, and then he flounced the cards together and turned around to Lennie.
   a) threw
   b) collected
   c) moved with a quick motion
   d) dived

31. George got up and went over to Lennie’s buck and sat down on it.
   a) luggage
   b) parcel
   c) box
   d) bed

32. Lennie raised up on his elbow. His face contorted with thought. Then his eyes moved sadly to George’s face.
   a) twisted out of the usual appearance
   b) smiled broadly
   c) dived into insomnia
   d) finished off

33. Lennie’s eyes moved down over her body, and although she did not seem to be looking at Lennie, she bridled a little.
   a) shook
   b) turned around
   c) threw back her head
   d) nodded
34. ‘You let Curley take the rape. He let himself in for it. Glove fulla Vaseline, ’ George said disgustedly.
   a) quickly  
   b) faintly  
   c) loudly  
   d) repulsively

35. Lennie, who had been following the conversation back and forth with his eyes, smiled complacently at the compliment.
   a) impolitely  
   b) with love  
   c) silently  
   d) with satisfaction

36. He chuckled softly at his joke. ‘Ain’t small at all.’ he repeated
   a) laughed with a closed mouth  
   b) laughed broadly  
   c) smiled happily  
   d) murmured softly

37. Carlson stepped back to let Slim precede him, and then the two of them went out the door.
   a) follow  
   b) take after  
   c) resemble  
   d) come before

38. George said: ‘Ya know, Lennie, I’m scared I’m gonna tangle with that bastard myself.
   a) murder  
   b) whip  
   c) curse  
   d) to come to blows with

39. ‘He ain’t no cuckoo,’ said George. ‘He’s dumb as hell, but he ain’t crazy.’
40. He wanted to talk, Slim neither encouraged nor discouraged him. He just sat back quiet and repulsive.
   a) quick and ready to receive support
   b) slow to understand what is going on
   c) without intention
   d) rude

41. Clean forgot I told him to jump in. Well, I ain't done nothing like that no more.
   a) forgot faintly
   b) forgot quickly
   c) completely forgot
   d) remembered well

42. They don't have no fun. After a long time they get mean. They get wantin' to fight all the time.
   a) adventurous
   b) systematic
   c) cruel
   d) kind at heart

43. The guys in Weed start a party out to lynch Lennie. So we sit in an irrigation ditch under water all the rest of that day.
   a) put to death without a lawful trial
   b) punish
   c) involve
   d) retreat

44. He reached down and picked the tiny puppy from where Lennie had been concealing it against his stomach.
   a) tying
   b) hiding
   c) interesting
   d) moving
45. Lennie fairly scuttled out of the room.
   a) trotted
   b) dawdled
   c) staggered
   d) hurried

46. If you want me to, I'll put the old devil out of his misery right now and get it over with.
   a) dissatisfaction
   b) great suffering
   c) great devotion
   d) serious sickness

47. Whit said sarcastically: 'He spends half his time lookin' for her, and the rest of the time she's lookin' for him.
   a) with delight
   b) happily
   c) hurriedly
   d) with bitter remarks

48. He subsided, grumbling to himself, threatening the future cats which might dare to disturb the future rabbits.'
   a) talking
   b) murmuring
   c) speaking
   d) complaining in a bad-tempered way

49. Then Curley's rage exploded. 'Come on, ya big bastard. Get up on your feet. No big son-of-a- bitch is gonna laugh at me.
   a) deep bitterness
   b) furious anger
   c) sincere devotion
   d) victory

50. Being a stable buck and a cripple, he was more permanent than the other men, and he had accumulated more possessions than he could carry on his back.
a) increased
b) decreased
c) reduced
d) continued
PART FOUR. Answer the following questions in good English.

1. Why did both George and Lennie run away from Weed? Explain fully.

2. Describe one of the following characters in detail.
   George   Lennie
   Brooks   Candy
   Slim     Curley
3. What is the real relationship between George and Lennie? Explain fully.

4. From your own point of view, do you think George and Lennie are necessary and appropriate couple?

6. Which do you prefer to be, if necessary, George or Lennie? Use information in the book to support your answer.
7. Lennie has been viewed sometimes as an example of Steinbeck's preoccupation with subhuman type; actually Lennie is not a character in the story at all, but rather a device like a golden coin in *Moby Dick*. Do you agree on this point? Explain fully.

8. Some critics believe that there is a sordid echo of Fitzgerald and the "lost generation", for, like the Buchanans in *The Great Gatsby*, these are "careless people" who smash up things and "let other people clean up the mess." Are you in accord with these critics' belief? Explain fully.
9. In what way does Lennie resemble Candy's dog? Use information in this novel to support your answer.

10. Briefly describe the view that is expressed through the major incident involving Carlson: shooting of Candy's old dog.
11. Criticize the following idea: With Of Mice and Men, Steinbeck himself unmistakably join the class of craftman, for he not only shows compassion for the plight of the dreamer, but he accomplishes in the manner of a master craftman his intention to sort out and evaluate the categories of men.

12. Write a short paragraph about your impression on this novel. If necessary, quote certain lines to support our answer.