

What is an Allegory?

Before teaching this lesson, you'll need to explain what an allegory is and how it applies to the novel. Here are the basics:

- allegory – a narrative in which characters and action represent concepts different from the literal meaning of the story.
- If ***Of Mice and Men*** is an allegory, each character should represent something different, in this case, a common person in society.
- symbol – something that on the surface is its literal self but which also has another meaning or even several meanings.
- Each of the characters in ***Of Mice and Men*** symbolizes a group in society.

Of Mice and Men Literary Merit

Use pictures to teach students about symbols and what an allegory is.

1. Discuss and copy the above information.
2. Choose one picture for each character. Either draw pictures on the board or provide a handout with pictures on it. Here are some examples

- Wheelchair – Lennie, because he symbolizes how those with handicaps are often victimized by society.
- Bottle of Alcohol – George, because he symbolizes the working man's need to escape from reality through vice. His reckless spending on alcohol and prostitutes prevent him from ever raising enough money to finance his dreams of owning his own farm.
- Boxing Gloves – Curley, because he is a bully and symbolizes those in society who use their status (he's the boss's son) to hurt others.
- Segregation Sign – Crooks, because he symbolizes those forced to be outsiders based on race.
- Canes – Candy, because he symbolizes elderly abuse and discrimination. He also symbolizes those who finish their lives in poverty and misery.
- Cash Register – The boss, he doesn't have to do much to make money. He symbolizes business owners who generate passive income.
- Lipstick – Curley's wife, because she is superficial. She symbolizes the objectification of women and broken dreams.
- Lunch Pail – Carlson, because he works. He symbolizes blue collar workers who think little. They show up, do their job, and give little thought to the future.

3. Instruct students to label each picture (use the above as an answer key) with the character's name and a brief description of what he or she symbolizes and why.