

Of Mice and Men Idioms

Chapter One - Idioms

blow their stake: Lose and/or spend all their money

blowin' in our jack: losing, spending, or gambling away all our money

bustin' a gut: Your **gut** is your stomach area. To **bust a gut** is to engage in very hard physical labor -- so hard that you ache all over -- even in your **gut**.

jungle-up: During the Great Depression, many wanderers (hoboes and **tramps**) would settle for the night in groups. These areas would be known as hobo jungles. To **jungle-up** is to camp out for the evening in the company of other like companions of the road.

live off the fatted lan': Live off the fat of the land. The **fat of the land** is an expression that refers to having the best of everything. In the case of Lennie and George and their dream for a place of their own, it also means that they believe they will be able to survive and prosper by simply relying on what they can grow and raise -- that the land is so "fat" they will need nothing else to be happy.

Chapter Two - Idioms

bum steer: **bum**, in this instance, means false or erroneous. A **bum steer** is false information or directions.

canned: fired

clear out: leave for good

done quite a bit in the ring: The **ring** here refers to a boxing ring. Candy is making a reference to the fact that Curley has done some boxing.

Drink hearty: in other words, "Drink up, drink well, have a good time!"

flapper: mouth

game: courageous

get the can: get fired

got the eye: Candy is referring to the fact that, instead of being faithful to her husband, Curley's wife tends to look around at other men.

in heat: For a female animal (in this case, a dog), to be **in heat** (also known as estrus) is to be in a state of sexual excitement when she will accept mating from a male.

jail bait: a girl below the legal age of consent for sex; an underage girl who tempts a man to sexual intimacy which is punishable by imprisonment

licked: beat; loses the fight

old lady: mother, or, in this case, Lennie's Aunt Clara.

old man: in this case, father

pants is full of ants: To have "ants in one's pants" is to be nervous and restless.

pants rabbits: any type of parasites, such as **lice**; especially those that might affect the genital area

picking scraps: A **scrap** is a fight or argument. To **pick a scrap** is to provoke fights or quarrels.

plug himself up for a fighter: to "plug oneself up" is to advertise or display oneself; to boast.

George is referring to the fact that Curley may want to prove what a good fighter he is by going after Lennie.

poison: A woman who is **poison** is one who can only mean trouble, especially to a man.

poke: A **poke** is a wallet or purse. **Poke** also refers to money; especially all the money one has.

pokin' your big ears into our business: eavesdropping; listening in, uninvited, on a private conversation

poop: energy; desire

rassel: lift, carry, and handle; especially something heavy and awkward

rattrap: a **rattrap** is a hopeless situation; one that no good can come from. George is warning Lennie to stay away from Curley's wife because getting involved with her would only result in a bad situation.

shove off: leave; **shove out of here:** get out of here

slang her pups: gave birth to her pups

sore as hell: extremely angry

take the rap: take the blame; be the one who gets into trouble

tangles: fights; argues

two bits: a quarter; twenty-five cents

what stake you got in this guy: In this case, a **stake** is an interest (financial, personal, etc.) in a person or thing. The boss is asking George what interest he has in Lennie.

what the hell's he got on his shoulder: This refers to the expression "to have a chip on one's shoulder," which is used to describe someone who is bad tempered, easily angered, or always ready for a fight. George is wondering why Curley seems so bad tempered.

Chapter Three Idioms

crack: A **crack** refers to an attempt or a try. In this instance, a **crack** means one session of sexual intercourse with a prostitute.

cut off his wind: **wind**, in this case, refers to breath or the ability to breathe. When someone is hit in the stomach and has his **wind cut off**, that person may have trouble breathing for a time.

flat bust: completely broke; without any money

flop: sexual intercourse with a prostitute

goo-goos: silly young men; idiots; perhaps those who are a little lovestruck

hoosegow: jail

looloo: a sexy woman

make it stick: To **make something stick** is to be successful. Curley was not successful in his attempt to scare or intimidate Slim.

old lady: in this case, wife

on the county: on welfare; on public relief

people: family

punk: an insignificant person; someone of no importance

rabbits in: jumps in

roll up a stake: save up some money

scram: leave, usually in a hurry

set on the trigger: Someone **set on the trigger** is on the verge of causing (just about to cause) trouble.

set you back: cost

shot: one drink (an ounce) of liquor

throw a litter: give birth. A **litter** is the young of an animal that were born at the same time.

throw a scare: scare, intimidate

welter: a welterweight; a boxer who weighs 136 to 147 pounds

wing-ding: a terrific person; someone to be admired

yella-jackets in his drawers: **Yellow-jackets** are a form of wasps

Drawers, in this case, are underwear. Whit's description of Curley is a lot like saying that he has **ants in his pants**; that is, that he is restless and nervous.

yella: yellow; a coward

Chapter Four Idioms

balony: nonsense

booby hatch: insane asylum; a place designed to house people who are mentally unstable

corn: whiskey made from corn

cover 'im up: protect him; make excuses for him; cover up for him

doped out: figured out

put me in pitchers: put me in pictures; gotten me a job as an actress in the movies (motion pictures)

right cross: in boxing, a punch delivered by the boxer's right fist

screwy: crazy

sellin' me: trying to make me believe

set: sit; sit down

strung up on a tree: hanged, **lynched**

take you out in a box: in this case, the **box** is a coffin. Crooks is telling Candy that the old man will remain where he is until he dies.

took a powder: left

went with shows: been an entertainer on the stage.

Chapter Five Idioms

we'd never do her: "her," in this case, refers to their plan to own a farm. George is saying that he thinks they all knew they would never really accomplish their dream of living on their own place

