**Year 8 Term 6 Lesson 1: Of Mice and Men**

**Do Now:**

1. What technique is used in this sentence?

*The man smiled slyly like a fox.*

1. What is an adverb?
2. What does a semi colon look like, and what does it do?

This term we will be focusing on the novella (short novel) *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck.

This novella was written in 1930s America. For you to understand the novella, you need to know a bit about the context (what it was like at the time the story was written), so you need to know a bit about 1930s America, and what it was like for the people who lived there.

**1930s America: Please read then answer the questions below**

The novel is set during the Great Depression, a period of great poverty and unemployment across the USA following the Wall Street Crash in 1929.

John Steinbeck was born in Salinas, California in 1902. Although his family was not poor, when he was a teenager he spent time working on ranches near his home and this had a big impact on his writing. His experience of working with farm labourers and his interest in their lives is clearly evident in *Of Mice and Men*.

The Great Depression took place following the Wall Street Crash in October 1929 and affected the world’s economy. Wall Street is a street in New York City, where many financial firms are based. The Wall Street Crash happened as a result of these factors:

* many normal Americans had started investing in the stock exchange and borrowing money to do so
* stock prices rose unsustainably
* in October 1929, investors began to sell their shares in bulk, with 12.9 million shares sold on Black Thursday (24th October 1929) and 16 million shares sold on Black Tuesday (29th October 1929)

There were other circumstances that contributed to the Great Depression in the USA as well:

* too many goods were being made and not enough were being bought
* food prices were dropping, affecting farmers’ incomes
* there were too many small banks, which did not have the funds to manage when masses of customers withdrew savings in the autumn of 1929.

The Great Depression lasted for ten years worldwide, and for the USA it did not fully end until 1941 when the country became involved in World War Two. The depression got increasingly worse between 1929 and 1932. At the peak of the Great Depression, it is thought that between 13 million and 15 million people in the USA were unemployed. Many people across America suffered from poverty, hunger and disease as a result of the depression. Benefits did not exist in America at this time, so people who lost their jobs could also lose their homes and found it very difficult to buy food. People lived in tin huts as they had lost their homes, and men travelled for miles looking for any farm work or labouring jobs they could find. They were known as ‘migrant workers’.

1930s America was also a time of great prejudice. People were extremely racist, and black people were regularly victimized and attacked. They would also find it much harder to get jobs. Disabled people were also prejudiced against, and were treated unkindly and unfairly.

1. Why did John Steinbeck write about farm workers?
2. Name one reason why the Wall Street Crash happened.
3. Apart from the Wall Street Crash, give one reason why the Great Depression happened.
4. Name two ways people suffered during the Great Depression.
5. Why couldn’t people buy food if they lost their jobs?
6. How many people were unemployed at the peak of the Great Depression?
7. Where did people who had lost their homes live?
8. What were migrant workers?
9. Name one group of people who faced prejudice in 1930s America.
10. How long did the Great Depression last?

**Plenary**

Write down the 5 most important things you think you need to remember about life in 1930s America before we begin to learn about the novella *Of Mice and Men.*