**Extract: p125 ' "Well, I ain't told this..." ' to p128 '...Lennie had broken her neck.'**

**1.What do we learn about Curley's wife in this extract? (10 marks)**

Curley’s wife sees her past as being a series of missed acting opportunities, whether it was with the guy ‘in pitchers’ or ‘one of the actors’ working in a travelling show. We learn that she blames this largely on the actions of her ‘old lady’. Now, she feels trapped in a marriage with a man who ‘ain’t a nice fella.’

Furthermore, she likes luxuries such as ‘nice clothes’ and ‘big hotels’, as well as the ‘feel’ of ‘silk and velvet’. This is linked to the high opinion she has of herself. Steinbeck describes her making ‘grand gestures’ as if her life is worth something more, and that she ‘ain’t used to living like this.’

Steinbeck also emphasises her frustration. She is frustrated with her marriage (‘I don’t *like* Curley’) and her isolation from the others on the ranch, complaining that ‘none of them cares’. This is part of the reason why she warms to Lennie, as well as sharing some of his child-like traits such as liking to ‘pet soft things.’

Finally, Curley’s wife is quick to anger. Her constant questions at the beginning of the extract, and some impatience with Lennie – ‘Don’t you think of nothing but rabbits?’ can be seen throughout the extract. Her sudden reaction to Lennie’s behaviour partly leads to the final tragedy of both the extract and the book as a whole.

**2. How does the writer make this extract disturbing and exciting for the reader? (10 marks)**

Steinbeck structures the sequence of events carefully. As Curley’s wife’s backstory unfolds, the reader is caught off-guard by the moment of revelation, and by Lennie continuing to dream about the ‘little place’ and his ‘rabbits’. Because he is so occupied with this, Curley’s wife is forced to break from her own thoughts; and the subsequent discussion about ‘soft things’ leads into a very quick succession of tragic and shocking events.

In addition, Steinbeck’s subtle use of imagery warns us of things to come. The reference to how ‘the sun went down’ has an ominous feel of growing darkness. This really takes hold with the contrast between Lennie’s repetition of ‘that’s nice’ against Curley’s wife’s ‘Don’t you mess it up.’ The two are plainly reacting in very different ways to what is happening, forcing the reader to share Curley’s wife’s panic.

At this point, Steinbeck also begins to use more violent verbs to describe Curley’s wife’s resistance, and Lennie’s reaction to this. Words like ‘jerked’, ‘closed’ and ’screamed’ fill the extract with panic and drama, as well as more physical verbs such as ‘struggled’ and ‘writhed’ which create a sense of entrapment for the reader.

Furthermore, Steinbeck uses a strengthening of commands in Lennie to suggest a growing physical strength and temper; from the softened begging of ‘Oh! Please don’t do none of that…’ to ‘Don’t you go yellin’ Again, this increases the drama and sense of terror for the reader.

The final simile of the dead Curley’s wife’s body ‘flopping like a fish’ echoes the lesser fate of her husband in Chapter 3, and has a chilling impact upon the reader at this crucial moment for that reason.