Book: Of Mice and Men

Reviewed by: Marisa Masatsugu

Level of Difficulty: Difficult

My thoughts about the book and its suitability for my group:

As this is a fairly short book, I thought it would be a relatively easy book for my higher level students to undertake. I was mistaken! The dialect, vocabulary, jargon and cultural references (regional and time period) all took a lot of explaining. I kept on having to say, "This word is not used much any longer" or "This word in correct English is...". My main reason for choosing this book was to introduce them to John Steinbeck as a California writer and to read a book dealing with California history. So, in this sense, it was a good book to teach as I was able to bring California history into the lessons.

Students' reactions to the book:
Despite having to struggle through the dialect and jargon, the students enjoyed the themes of the book and the ensuing discussions. They very much enjoyed discussing and arguing about the "good" and "bad" qualities of the characters, and predicting what would happen at the end. Of course the ending of the story engaged them in a good discussion of right vs. wrong. Some of the students then wanted to read Grapes of Wrath, but having struggled through the dialect of this book, I didn't have the energy or desire to do that longer, more complex book.

Tips for other tutors who may want to use this book:
Don't be fooled by the short length of this book! I think it is for upper level students who can handle the language.