**‘Of Mice and Men’ Theme Model Essay-The American Dream**

**Question**

Choose a novel or short story or work of non-fiction which explores an important theme.

By referring to appropriate techniques, show how the author has explored this theme.

**Essay**

‘Of Mice and Men’ by John Steinbeck is a novella set in 1930s California, which focuses on the life of working farm hands struggling to get by during a time of great poverty. This novella deals with important issues in America at the time, including disillusionment with The American Dream, and the inability of achieving this goal. Steinbeck displays this theme through careful use of characterisation, key incident and symbolism.

Initially, the theme of the American dream is introduced in the novel through symbolism. At the beginning of the novel, Lennie and George discuss their dream of owning their own property, and working for themselves:

“’OK, some day-we’re gonna get the jack together and we’re going to have a little house an’ a couple of acres and a cow and some pigs and…’

‘An live off the fatta the lan’,” Lennie shouted.”

Here, Steinbeck emphasises this theme through his use of symbolism. The house and land symbolise freedom and self-sufficiency for the men: the epitome of the American Dream. This symbol is a representation of the hope that motivates both of the characters to endure the struggles they face, and illustrates the unshakeable belief they have in the concept of the American Dream: if you work hard and are dedicated and focused, you can achieve anything.

Ultimately, The American Dream is seen as an unobtainable goal within Steinbeck’s novel, reflecting the difficulties of this time period and great despair felt by the working man. Through Steinbeck’s skilful use of characterisation, symbolism and key incident, this theme makes a powerful impact on the reader, allowing them to share the disillusionment felt by Lennie and George.