What is the role of friendship on the characters in “Of Mice and Men”?

Friendship has a very large role in the John Steinbeck novel, “Of Mice and Men.” We can see this in many instances, but most prominently in the relationship between Candy and his dog, Lennie and Crooks, and Curley’s wife.

First, we can see the theme of friendship in the novel very strongly in Candy’s relationship to his dog. Candy’s dog is very old, very sick, and the other people at the ranch complain that he smells. He doesn’t even have any teeth. Carlson eventually bullies Candy into allowing the dog to be shot. As the dog is taken out and shot, Candy can’t even bear to stand up. Steinbeck says, “Candy lay still, staring at the ceiling. Slim gazed at him for a moment and then looked down at his hands…” (Steinbeck, pg. 49). Steinbeck is suggesting here that Candy is so depressed over his dog’s death that he can’t even function around the other people. This dog was not a tool, and this is what the other people couldn’t understand. It was Candy’s friend. Slim could have stopped Carlson by saying anything, and he chose not to. After Candy’s dog died, Steinbeck shows us through Slim not being able to look at Candy that Slim realizes how badly he messed up. Candy’s only friend in the world is dead. For this reason, we can see that Candy’s relationship to his dog is a big part of Steinbeck’s theme of friendship.

Second, we can see the theme of friendship in “Of Mice and Men” with Crooks.

Finally, the theme of friendship is shown most powerfully in George and Lennie’s friendship.

John Steinbeck’s “Of Mice and Men” shows a powerful theme of the meaning of friendship. Each character shows us friendship and the difficulty of loneliness, but we see it most in Candy’s loss of his dog, Crooks’ desire to join Lennie and George’s ranch, and George and Lennie’s dream of land ownership. Therefore, the theme of friendship is very significant in “Of Mice and Men.”

Candy and his dog – pg 61

Curley’s wife – 77, 88

George and Lennie – 13, 63-64, 104-106

Crooks – pg. 72, 76

Slim – 35, 41, 48, 107