

## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the general ideas underlying the writing of this research, encompassing eight key components: Background of Study, Identification of Problem, Scope of Problem, Research Question, Objective of Study, Significance of Study, Previous Studies, Theoretical Background, and Sequence of Chapter.

### 1.1 Background of Study

The capitalist economy is a system where resources, production, and trade are owned and controlled by private individuals and businesses. Capitalism legitimizes the pursuit of economic growth through reinvestment of surplus, with private ownership of capital (Izak et al., 2015). The capitalist economy has one goal, which is to produce and sell commodities for profit; in this framework, the producer appropriates the surplus value produced through the workers' labor in exchange for the workers' wages (Goldshlak, 2016). Businesses compete with each other to produce better products and services, driving innovation and efficiency; unfortunately, these improvements often concern cost reductions. This plays out through lowering wages and creating inconsistent jobs for the people who produce goods and provide services. Ultimately, the capitalist economy will benefit some more than others, and as such, the capitalist economy produces economic inequity and constrains economic mobility.

One of the prominent influences of the capitalist economic system in America is the emergence of the American Dream. The American Dream is the belief that every human can achieve success, wealth, and social status mobility using hard work, determination, and perseverance regardless of their background or social class. This concept has already shaped American identity from the Pilgrims to the present, with religious freedom, political freedom, upward mobility, home ownership, and equality as focal points of the dream (Cullen, 2003). The concept is related to the Declaration of Independence (1776), which states that all men are created equal and are authorized to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. In the 19th Century, Americans pursued expansion to the West for economic and personal freedom, influencing land ownership, self-reliance, and manifest destiny as a belief. In the 20th Century, in post-World War II, the belief shifted to homeownership, stable jobs, education, and prosperity. Today, the American Dream is more complex, with a basis on personal fulfillment, inclusivity, social justice, and engages such as inequality and environmental issues (Sadiqzade,



an Dream faced huge opposition for many Americans during the  
n Era, challenging its simple equation of achieving monetary

success through hard work (Hauhart, 2016). It was America's worst economic crisis by several measures, but the catalyst was the Great Crash, a financial calamity resulting from the stock market crash of October 1929 (Bierman, 2013). The Great Depression led to unyielding deflation, and monetary contraction, resulting in every industry's employment, hours, and earnings being affected (Bernanke, 2000). The crises that contributed to the acute economic downturn, like monetary and financial instability, an agricultural crisis, and labor conflict, posed an immediate challenge to the United States, with consequential global instability exacerbating economic and social deprivation in Europe and elsewhere on the planet (Albers, 2018). While many efforts were made to recover from the Great Depression, what followed was years of economic malaise and acute adjustment that changed financial policy and labor law.

Many mid-twentieth-century mainstream American creative writers held the same belief that the American Dream was available if one was willing to work hard, but John Steinbeck challenges this notion by demonstrating that assuming the Dream is attainable for all can be an illusion and a trap (Agboh, 2022). Steinbeck has been very vocal with this topic, and it is shown in his numerous works including *Of Mice and Men* (1937), *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), and *The Pearl* (1947). Set back to The Great Depression Era, these literary works show realistic portraits of economic hardship and its implications during that time. Steinbeck's novel situates unemployment as a result of capitalist accumulation and diminishing demand for labor as an entailment of capital's accelerated investment in machinery during the Great Depression (Nez, 2022). Steinbeck condemns both the upper social class' disastrous policies and attitudes toward the working class and the American government's siding with the rich during the Great Depression (Kombieni et al., 2020).

John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* is set during the great depression, grounded in the harsh realities of the time, especially for workers embarking on a long journey from place to place to find short-term jobs. In *Of Mice and Men*, George and Lenny reflect on the innumerable migrant workers who travel to work physically on the farm for low wages. The precariousness of his lifestyle speaks to the broad struggles of working-class Americans toward job insecurity, poor spaces, and social isolation. The tragic conclusion of the novel affirms the notion that economic distress and social injustices can break even the most determined individuals. The novella acts like a pure illustrative piece of the capitalists' exploitation, shows the proletariat struggles within economic makes true to form how wealth inequality crushes dreams.



issue in the novella, economic inequality and the fall of the  
is still relevant today. The wealth gap between the rich and  
to rise; as Keeley (2015) stated, income inequality in OECD  
increased to 92 times the income of the poorest 10%, with the 1%  
larger share than the rest. This implies that class mobility is

decreasing, proving that the American Dream is even less attainable today. The myth of working hard will lead to success continues to fail millions in poverty, in line with Rank et al. (2015), who said hard work is necessary but not sufficient for avoiding poverty, and low-wage work plays a significant role in preventing success.

In addition, millions of people in today's world struggle to find a proper job, just like the characters in the novel. In Indonesia, the nation is grappling with a situation where the demand for employment surpasses the available job openings, leading to increased concerns about job scarcity (Muhyiddin, 2023). The majority of low-paid workers often have multiple jobs because of low wages, limited hours, and precarious employment (Smith & McBride, 2020). Even with that effort, they still may not have a decent life, much like George and Lennie. Ultimately, the novel's portrayal of economic despair remains relevant as millions face financial instability.

Most importantly, this study relates to recent literary perspectives that emphasize the social purpose of literature. Literary works should not be regarded just as product of imagination, but, rather as cultural texts that speak to real social conditions and represent both social problems and the possibility of solutions presented by the author, while also acting as historical and sociological windows onto systemic injustices such as racism and economic exploitation (Irmawati et al., 2020; Abbas, 2020). Arafah et al. (2021) stated that literature is not only a social product, but a "*reflection of the life at one period*", whereas fiction operates as a critique or satire of the social context at the time of writing. Literature has educational and ethical power, by reconstructing lived experience, submitting counter-narratives to dominant ethical failures, and providing critical lenses into human behavior and systemic oppression; despite those narratives being imagined, it is grounded in social conditions (Arafah, 2023). Reading Steinbeck's novella from this marginally broad frame also means reading the American Dream as a false hope that has been constructed, sculpted, and manipulated by capitalist ideology and the process of exploitation. This study will use the structural constraints that characters in Steinbeck's novella experience as a strategy to illustrate, how Steinbeck interprets capitalism in *Of Mice and Men* not as a neutral economic system, but as a dream-destroying mechanism based on social norms of inequality and control.



Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* is a captivating literary work to research since the story of American Society's condition during the Great Depression of the novel are still relevant today, as wealth inequality w, wages are unstable, and economic insecurity continues to working class. Like the ranch workers in the novel, modern ect to indefinite permanence, their jobs are precarious, and they profit with little regard for human dignity. Steinbeck successfully capitalist system absorbs labor and applies rigid class formats.

By using the structuralism approach to analyze the portrayal of capitalism and abandoned dreams during the Great Depression era, research may hopefully be able to raise the overall awareness of the lower class society, especially towards worker issues.

## 1.2 Identification of Problem

After reading John Steinbeck's novella *Of Mice and Men*, the researcher identifies several topics for analysis and discussion.

- 1) The isolation and loneliness
- 2) Symbolism of the animal
- 3) The connection between nature and literature
- 4) Disability studies towards Lennie and Candy
- 5) The role of the capitalist economic system

## 1.3 Scope of Problem

This study will examine the role of capitalism in creating desired dreams and those ultimately forsaken in Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*. The researcher has opted to approach this analysis through structuralism to consider how the novella's underlying structures, as supported by the language, symbols, character relations, and narrative patterns, organize the meanings of the literary work with its socio-economic system. By applying structuralism to *Of Mice and Men*, we can analyze how Steinbeck establishes the American dream as a delusion using character functions and narrative struggles to uncover the underlying and repetitive nature of patterns of economic oppression in capitalist society. By identifying these patterns, we can determine how literature simultaneously validates and refutes specific socio-economic structures.

## 1.4 Research Questions

Based on the background study, identification of the problem, and scope of the problem, the researcher has formulated the following research questions:

- 1) How does capitalism motivate the characters' dreams in *Of Mice and Men*?
- 2) How does capitalist reality destroy the characters' dreams in *Of Mice and Men*?



study

study objectives derived from the research questions outlined

analyze the way capitalism motivates the characters' dreams in *Of Mice and Men*

- 2) To analyze the way capitalist reality destroys characters' dreams in *Of Mice and Men*

## 1.6 Significance of Study

The study on the role of capitalism in Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* holds significant theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, it contributes to broadening the landscape of literary studies by delving into a crucial element of economic and social troubles inside literature. By examining the role of capitalism on the emergence of desired and eventually abandoned dreams as depicted inside the novel, this research serves as a valuable reference for future research exploring a new point of view toward the American Dream. Practically, the findings of this can provide precious insights for policymakers, guiding the formulation of extra effective political regulations aimed toward addressing real-world problems of economic and social turmoil, especially in labor issues. Furthermore, with the aid of shedding mild on the problem of the fall of the dream in the context of literature, this study has the potential to elevate consciousness amongst the overall public, encouraging individuals to be greater cognizant of societal challenges associated with human freedom and the right to a decent life and fostering discussions geared toward finding solutions.

## 1.7 Previous Studies

This section aims to underscore the novelty of this study by highlighting both similarities and differences between past studies and the current study. Moreover, these studies will serve as valuable references or supplementary data to guide the researcher throughout this research.

Suganya et al. (2020) in *The Impossibility of the American Dream in John Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men* applied a structuralist approach to examine how the novella depicts the failure of the American Dream, particularly for marginalized people during the Great Depression. The novel is analyzed as a work of literature concerned with social injustice, isolation, and the myth of economic self-sufficiency. The research sought to examine the failure of the American Dream as presented through the characters and their symbols in *Of Mice and Men* and to elaborate on how race, disability, poverty, and social class render that dream unattainable. The article concludes that the novella would be considered an allegory, universal and timeless, illustrating how dreams provide in suffering and are rarely achieved, particularly for the e to the fragility of hope, the weight of social impediment, and the human condition.



in *The Attainability of the American Dream in John Steinbeck's n and The Grapes of Wrath*, used a comparative close reading method, and examines the attainability of the American Dream

in John Steinbeck's novels *Of Mice and Men* and *The Grapes of Wrath*. The argument is made that prejudiced migrant workers who are not privileged, particularly those in vulnerable positions like Lennie Small and Rose of Sharon Joad do not attain the American dream, but it's also a testing ground for a critique of the idea of individualism and the potential for cooperation and interdependence through the phalanx theory as one way to collectively diminish individual struggle. The study concludes by arguing that Steinbeck reveals the exclusion of migrant laborers and dependents from the promises of the American Dream, that he exposes the myth of meritocracy with characters like Lennie and Rose of Sharon, and that the representation of the phalanx theory shows a more realistic way of becoming successful for the disenfranchised and alienated communities through collective action and solidarity.

Vasanthakumari & Poornima (2021) in *An Analysis of Ecohumanism in John Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men* applied an eco-humanist framework to analyze the novella. Ecohumanism considers the connection between nature and humanity in literature and recognizes the cornerstones of humanitarianism, equality and that all living creatures are equal. The paper explains Steinbeck's representation of the human-nature relationship, particularly compassion and interdependence, without a hierarchical structure. The characters within Steinbeck's novel demonstrate Steinbeck's ecohumanism by their compassion for others and the recognition of humanity's relationship and responsibility to the natural world. This paper hopes to inform the reader about Steinbeck's ecohumanism as demonstrated in *Of Mice and Men*, and to consider Steinbeck's novella relationship with contemporary social and environmental discourse.

Adhikari et al. (2022) in *Geographical Alienation of Migrant Ranch Workers in John Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men* uses a thematic lens to evaluate the theme of alienation in the novella in relationship to geography, particularly through the activities of migrant ranch workers in America during the Great Depression time period. This study reveals and explains how the lives of George and Lennie are impacted by geographical factors, and further, the study discusses disconnection and isolation, as well as alienation. This study looks closely at the geographical references in the novella as well as the characters' relationships with nature to provide evidence of the social, economic, and psychological implications of alienation during the context of depression-era America. In addition to the geographical aspects of alienation, the paper uses the Marxist



discourse of alienation to describe the implications for working-class family well as the division of labor and social stratification that brings of inferiority and isolation. Finally, the study did include a literature review and content analysis to provide a broader of the historical, cultural and thematic aspects, as well as to implications that provide insight into the human condition and with previous and contemporary.

Agboh (2022), in *Demythologizing the American Dream in John Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men* used New Historicism and Psychoanalytical Criticism to demonstrate how some white people in the twentieth century sought out their own American Dream and failed, but also provided evidence regarding the psychological complexity and unpredictability of their dreams. The study concludes that the American Dream in the novella is described as an 'illusion' and a trap that is sustained by social myths. The study concluded that race, class, disability and gender all serve as obstacles to their American Dream, revealing that systemic social and economic factors rather than individuals, especially their ability or capacity or even race typify what happens to individuals.

Bouacida, et al. (2022) in *The Heterotopic Ranch: A Foucauldian Reading of John Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men* used theoretical traditions based on Michel Foucault's notion of heterotopia to study the novella. This article examines how the ranch in Steinbeck's novella can be seen as functioning as a heterotopic space that simultaneously reflects the despondency of American society during the Great Depression. An in-depth analysis of Foucault's six principles of heterotopia is conducted to describe how the ranch demonstrates features of normative deviation, temporal instability, and exclusivity. Furthermore, this article explores Steinbeck's skillful representation of space and its social implications and emphasizes that Steinbeck responds to the temporal moment while creating a dynamic, socially relevant, American landscape. The focus of this study is primarily on Foucault's heterotopias but leaves open the possibility of researching alternative spatial theories related to other texts of Steinbeck's and invites scholars to examine Steinbeck's entire oeuvre from multiple dimensions.

SUPIASTUTIK ET AL. (2023) in *Gender Stereotypes in Boyd Smith's The Story of Pocahontas and Captain John Smith: A Greimas' Actantial Model* uses Greimas' actantial model in semiotic structuralism to investigate gender issues in a 1906 children's novel. The purpose of the study is to seek oppositional binaries such as: male and female, subject and object, majority and minority, and hero and sentimentalist in order to understand how they perpetuate gender stereotypes. From the analysis, it was found that although Pocahontas is portrayed as a key character, she is cast into the sentimental, emotional, and dependent stereotype while male characters are placed into the strong, rational, and dominant stereotypes. The study suggested that children's literature as a whole is saturated with gender stereotypes, which molds the understanding of identity. This study affirms the Greimas model is useful in revealing these biases and structures of the narrative.



Harifi (2024) in *Unveiling Actantial Patterns in John Bunyan's Progress Through the Lens of Greimas's Theory* applies Greimas's actantial model to study Christian's spiritual journey from a descriptive approach. The study focuses on the different narrative agents—

characters and symbolic settings—who assist or obstruct the protagonist’s quest for salvation in order to provide deeper understanding for other allegorical narratives. The study transposes Christian’s experiences onto Greimas’s model and describes the dynamic roles in the shifting subject and object divisions. It also discusses the narrative’s reliance on binary pairs good and evil, faith and worldliness. The study’s findings reveal the existence of five interlinked narrative chains, all depicting the protagonist’s pursuit of the Celestial City, where each segment contains a particular set of oppositional challenges and aids depicting Greimas’s duality. The study concludes that the model is beneficial for breaking down complex allegorical narratives and provides deep thematic and narrative analysis of Bunyan's work.

Shah & Shakoor (2025) in *An Iconic and Actantial Analysis of James Joyce's Araby through Greimas' Actantial and Semiotic Model* focuses on structuralist narrative analysis with Greimas actantial and semiotic framework. The objective of the study aims to demonstrate the effectiveness of Greimas's model in outlining character motivations, helper and opposer roles, and the transformation of actants in terms of desire and power. Through the crossing of different actants, the study shows and proves the existence of narratives whether human or otherwise, wherein actors can simultaneously assume multiple roles: sender, receiver, subject, object, helper, antagonist. The findings suggest the use of Greimas's model provides a clearer analysis of the boy's journey, the symbolic significance of Mangan's sister, and the forces—be they aid or antagonist—that act upon him. It is this model, the structural and thematic layered complexity of narrative is revealed on literary narratives.

Youssef (2025) in *When Nature and Women Cry for Mercy: John Steinbeck's Of Mice and Men from an Ecofeminist Lens* addresses the oppression of women, ethnic minorities, animals, and nature through an ecofeminist lens and outlines the salient features of Steinbeck’s novella. It looks at how the two divides of patriarchal capitalism, for example: male and female, civilization and nature, and human and animal, nurture and domination systems of male superiority sustain dominance of oppression. The research aims to demonstrate how social and environmental neglect is exhibited through the relationship between the land and nature’s portrayal, and through the characters, which include: Lennie, Curley’s unnamed wife, and Crooks.” The results point out that women and nature are viewed and treated as passive objects, exploited, and denied autonomy as they’re overshadowed by the patriarchal structure of the ranch. The conclusion of the novella, while not overtly ecofeminist, does strongly posit themes which seeks to counter the exploitation of all life forms, human



Studies have been conducted on the subject of *Of Mice and Men*, regarding the American Dream and hopelessness of it amongst people, during the Great Depression, which examine the story from

a structuralist or thematic lens, to show how poverty, disability, gender and racial injustice limit personal agency, like in Suganya et al. (2020), and Kroes (2021). These studies are noted above for their thorough juxtaposition and study of the ways in which people failed in the American pursuit when it was built on systemic barriers. The current study is similar in dealing with the loss of the American Dream, social exclusion, and the sense of emotional safety that dreams provide in the context of a not very safe world. The fundamental assumption is that Steinbeck contends the notion of the American Dream is critically inadequate, and should not be considered solely as an economic endeavor, but as an ideological, pretend escape that has ideologically masked structural oppression. This study is distinct from the studies of more general approaches like many structuralist narratological studies. However, this study is different because I will be using Greimas's Actantial Model, which reveals how characters conceived their dreams as constituted by their motivations and their countervailing forces. This narratological system allows a form of understanding how capitalism functions, both as a motivating Sender and an obstructive Opponent, as a narrative structure within the normative meaning-making structure of the narrative.

In contrast, Adhikari et al. (2022) and Agboh (2022) relate *Of Mice and Men* to New Historicism and Marxist psychoanalysis, focusing on love, alienation, and racial concerns—more ideological issues. The studies offered to *understand Of Mice and Men* through dreams and aspirations and human consciousness in broader context where social identity, psychological moments, interpersonal relationships, and interactions became important. Moreover, Vasanthakumari and Poornima (2021) and Bouacida et al. (2022), along with Youssef (2025) apply ecohumanist, Foucault, and ecofeminist frameworks to the novella, concentrating on Steinbeck's critique of environmental and spatial marginalization, as well as patriarchal spatial control. These interpretations have drawn attention to the novella's preoccupation with the relationships and interactions of life as human and nonhuman, the sociopolitics of space, and the oppression of nature and marginalized bodies. The principal point of distinction between my methods of engagement and their methods of engagement is in purpose and scope. My study engagement aims to consider capitalism's narrative functioning as a systemic actant, rather than being read through characters or individual constructs around identities. My study will illustrate how the overarching capitalist structure simultaneously structures and motivates the dreams, while also wreaking havoc and ultimately nullifying their hopes. My research will advance previous critiques of the American Dream by providing an examination built from the perspective of structural capitalism does to condition the characters' hopes, and the dreams they are seeking to fulfill, just within and through the characters exist within—a capitalism clearly present in their dreams, concurrently fuelling their hopes.



The previous research employing Greimas's actantial model, like Supiastutik et al. (2023), Gholami & Sharifi (2024), and Shah & Shakoor (2025), was focus on gendered binaries in Boyd Smith's *The Story of Pocahontas* and Captain John Smith, religious themes in John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, or self-awakening in James Joyce's *Araby*. This research using Greimas's actantial model to shifts the focus to the sociopolitical critique of capitalism and the American Dream on Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*. Instead of forming symbolic oppositions, this study attempts to demonstrate how capitalism operates within the narrative as both a motivating Sender and a destructive Opponent countering the characters' quest for freedom and land. Unlike the above works that focus on moral or ideological dichotomies within a self-contained narrative, this research uses Greimas's model to demonstrate the socio-economic manipulation that the characters are conditioned to pursue. In that, this study shifts the focus of Greimas's structuralism from mere theoretical mapping to a critical socio-economic commentary, thus, adding to the fields of narratology and Steinbeck scholarship.

The preceding instances of engagement have created an opportunity for me to contribute in a manner that can directly assess the influence that the capitalist economic system has on the rise and fall of dreams in *Of Mice and Men*. Although previous work has dealt with the boundaries of the American Dream, or critiqued capitalism, very few of the studies have connected it specifically in a systematic manner and related it to the narrative structure of capitalism, as will be done through the Actantial Model. The researcher aim to offer a fresh perspective through this narrative form; a capitalistic narration that, at the same time generates hope, material and systemic processes, normatively, are restricting them. The researcher, quite firmly, believe that this research will offer a better examination; Steinbeck's critique of America during the Great Depression of the 1930s through the lens of a narrative future/forms of capital accumulation based on ideals of self-reliance and ownership of land and independence in a communal and collective sense, ideologically, were indeed collectable goals of individuals. The characters are rendered, all of which are possible, unfathomable by existential dispossession, exploitation, economic wealth, commodified labor, and return of wealth, capital, and control. From this perspective, the study will reveal despair and disappointment among Steinbeck's characters, but will also assert a broader existential assertion to the human condition amidst social chaos and economic and social stasis.



### Background

explores the theoretical foundations relevant to the analysis of *Of Mice and Men*. It focuses on the role of the capitalist economic impact on the emergence of desired and eventually abandoned

dreams. This analysis will draw on structuralism in understanding the text as an object.

### 1.8.1 Structuralism Approach

The structuralism approach, a dominant framework in literary studies in the 20th century, thinks literary works should be analyzed internally, using any data found within themselves. This approach thinks that literary works are not a reflection of the world but a structured system that can be understood through their internal relationship (Culler, 2002). Structuralism is concerned with analyzing the process of meaning production within the system, moving away from subjective interpretations to investigate the objective relations among signs to meanings within a literary text (Grossberg, 2024). The approach is more interested in the system than it is in individual elements, compelling critics to search beyond surface levels for deep structures (Scherr, 1987). This methodical framework views cultural products, for example literary works, as systems where every component is interdependent and identified by how it fits into the whole. In summarizing structuralism, Hébert (2022) states that "*relations are more fundamental than terms*", with meaning arising out of oppositions and differences rather than content. Moreover, structuralism tends to holism, when one part changes the whole is also changed, revealing the interconnectedness and internal logic that forms cultural texts.

The origin of structuralism as a theoretical approach to literary analysis lay in the work of Ferdinand de Saussure. His theory of the sign said that the relationship between the signifier (the word or symbol) and the signified (the concept it represents) was the core of the emergence of structuralism. In *Course of General Linguistics* (1916), Saussure argued that language is a system of relationships and structures rather than a simple representation of reality, and it has profoundly influenced literary theory. Literary critics, especially in the 1950s and 1960s, brought this structuralist concept into literary texts themselves, viewing them neither as isolated sets of meanings but as segments of a larger system of related signs (Culler, 2002).



After Saussure, Roland Barthes and Claude Lévi-Strauss applied sm to build it into a methodological framework for literary and analysis. Barthes contended that narratives could be cted to identify their structure of meaning, because meaning non across texts, suggesting that literature functions as an system of codes and signs interacting at the level of meaning. sted reading as an active, meaning producing, exercise, as texts

were always open to unlimited interpretations depending upon the contexts of culture, and response to the text by oh so completely subjective readers. As Barthes famously noted, "*Structural man takes the real, decomposes it, then recomposes it*" (Fry, 2012), which evoked his notion that through understanding relationships between the elements of narrative, there were modalities to understand literature. Lévi-Strauss also developed this structuralist approach by analysing myths as cultural narratives which mediated collective human experiences and social structures within unique particulars. By investigating binary oppositions as fundamental logic as opposed to myth, he suggested that investigating oppositional pairs was the way to unpack the underlying rules of human thought. Lévi-Strauss apparently stresses this when he noted, "*Myth is language and is a mode of communication, a symbolic system*" (Fry, 2012), suggesting that myths, like language, function as structured systems to disclose meaning and deeper truths of the human condition and cultural frameworks. Together Barthes and Lévi-Strauss told us that the stories we enjoy in literature and myths are not only artistic or folkloric but systems of meaning that tell us something about, and also participate in , the social and ideological structures of our human lives.

In addition, Algirdas Julien Greimas expanded structuralism in the realm of narratology with his Actantial Model in 1966. His method argues that all narratives can be broken down into six key actants: Subject, Object, Helper, Opponent, Sender, and Receiver (Herman & Vervaeck, 2019). According to Greimas, all narratives rely on these roles as the basic structural component. Therefore, analyzing these actants helps reveal how meaning is generated in the story. Greimas believes that literary analysis can be transformed into a search for the structures that govern human storytelling by identifying these universal patterns.

Moreover, structuralism also emphasizes the search for universal codes that structure human understanding. This idea is a belief that similar structural patterns are being used in organizing their stories in all cultures, regardless of time and place. This idea is mainly influenced by the works of Barthes and Greimas, who said that narrative structures and cultural meanings are governed by universal codes that transcend specific cultural contexts. Based on Barthes (1957), these codes help myths and shape ideologies that are the foundation of all forms of culture. In universal narrative structures, Greimas's model (1966) also reflects this belief by focusing on the roles of actants that appear across all stories and are essential to meaning-



## 1.8.2 Greimas's Actantial Model

A. J. Greimas's Actantial Model offers a significant contribution to structuralist narratology because Rosenblatt is attempting to demonstrate the structure beneath narrative content. Greimas's actantial framework distinguishes narratives based on six actantial roles; Subject, Object, Sender, Receiver, Helper, and Opponent instead of placing emphasis on surface level events. The actantial roles are each abstract relational positions, which can be filled by human characters, ideas, institutions, or even emotions. Herman & Vervaeck (2019) note that this structural scheme is "*simple and generalizable*," and can be overlaid on "*almost any kind of story*". The generalizable nature of the actantial model is important, as it shows how ideological systems are embedded in narrative motion, in which every narrative becomes a value-laden quastic movement, and every quest, obstruction, and transmission are navigated within the progressive trajectory. In this way, Greimas's framework placed narrative theory within semiotic systems and allowed scholars to reconceptualize literature as culturally encoded regularities of action, not merely as emanations of personality and intention.

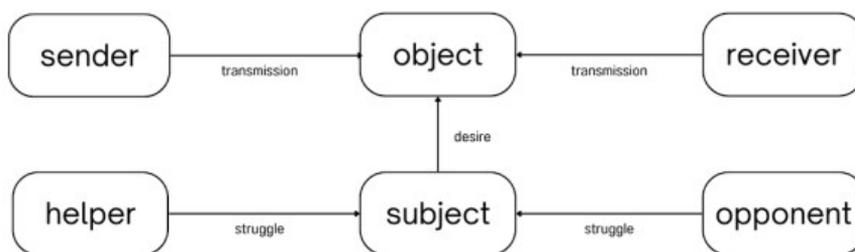


Figure 1.1 – Greimas's Actantial Model's Diagram

According to Greimas, we position characters not by psychological properties, but by their role in the acting position at every point in the plot's trajectory, narratively. As agents of a narrative, they may be characterized as "*functions in a structure*" (Culler, 2002) emphasizing not who the character is, but what position they maintain in the actantial network. This is an important distinction because a character can occupy a number of actantial roles, and characters may transition from role to role depending on the narrative context. For example, a character may simultaneously occupy the actantial roles of Subject and Helper, or they may transit from Helper to Opponent depending on the narrative context. By the mobilization of characters from units of identity mobilized by the dynamic to static acting functions of an actantial system enables robust narrative analysis. It explains how a narrative organizes human agency through varying systems of value, desire, and conflicts—a system that



may shift because of ideology, or simply due to genre convenience. This abstraction does not eliminate character but associates it with a greater structure of meaning.

The axis of desire between Subject and Object is central to Greimas' model. Subject is actant who wants, and Object is what is wanted. This can be a person, a condition, or symbolic attainment. Narrative motion hangs on the Subject's movement toward an Object. In other words, desire drives the narrative (Herman & Vervaeck, 2019). The axis of desire aligns well with classical quest narratives, but also modern ideologically charged desires such as autonomy under capitalism or justice under patriarchy. The Subject's movement toward the Object is almost never alone; it is influenced by other forces in the actantial schema, such as those that motivate or assist the quest (Senders), or those who block it (Opponents). In fact, it also encodes larger cultural narratives of aspiration, failure, and transformation, which makes it a valuable axis to map for literary analysis of texts that interrogate or reproduce dominant ideologies.

The axis of power, made up of Helper and Opponent, mirrors the axis of desire. Helper and Opponent represent the forces that assist or complicate the Subject's pursuit of the Object. Culler (2002) contends that such functions in narrative are not just part of the plot structure but reflect larger cultural codes and structures of thought. Rather than a full-range of possibilities, a helper might just be a supporter, an organization, or sources of inner strength, and an Opponent might just represent social forces, internal anxiety, or political enemies. These changing roles demonstrate the fluidity of the model, in which one person or concept can take on multiple roles depending on the actantial configuration. The point is that the model lets critics unravel the means by which literature offers representation of systems of control and resistance, showing how characters can navigate, embody, or resist ideological aspects.

An important but frequently underplayed axis in the Greimas model is the relationship between Sender and Receiver. The Sender is the actant that pushes the Subject to pursue the quest which usually means the individual will receive some value from the Object or modify their desires; Receiver is the actant that would receive value if the Object is gained. Culler (2002) says this configuration serves to make narrative syntax *isomologous to the plot*", since it presents a way in which readers find and orientate narrative expectations. Herman & Vervaeck (2019) indicate that this relational configuration is more broadly important in organizing narrative logic and that Senders can be abstract or external forces such as fate, ideology, or law, that act as Senders. In many



narratives that seek ideological clarity, especially those in Canada and the United States associated with capitalism, the Sender could be the representation of the cultural myth of the American Dream, while the Receiver could be the social class or individual who theoretically gains by manifesting the quest. The actantial axes thus provide for readings beyond the level of individual agency, conceiving of the model as operating within complex systems of belief, and institutional expectations.

Greimas's model is more than a static depiction of the characters and their relations, and allows for the dynamic transformation of narratives in sometimes fluid roles, where characters often move from one actantial role to another through time (Herman & Vervaeck, 2019). This movement is especially useful for examining ideological shifts, as characters who start as Subjects may relinquish the desires, or modify these desires because of the participation in the, sometimes critical, juncture of failure, doubt, or disillusionment. The model thus provides the tools to study not only the structures of narrative but characterization and thematic complexity. The actantial elements provide space for consideration of narrative irony and contradictions, where a character acting as Subject for their own success story may in fact be the Receiver of someone else's ideological agenda. Such reversals are not just creatively satisfying, but are also revealing ideologically.

Culler (2002) claims the actantial description begins a structuralist model of reading, as it situates narrative function with grammatical syntax, and implies the challenge of analyzing narrative within the paradigm of anything other than independence of expression. This semiotic approach sees narrative as a system of signs rather than a containment of meaning. The Subject's desire, the Helper's intervention, and the Opponent's opposition, are all signs in a linguistic contingent economy, which each contributes to the ways that the narrative encodes, circulates, and contests cultural values. In this sense, Greimas's framework offers scholars the opportunity to map how literature performs like a grammar of ideology—every role, every movement and transformation reflects not just storytelling technique, but the engine of cultural belief.

Despite its apparent simplicity, Greimas's model allows for deep and interpretive play. Herman & Vervaeck (2019) note that one could leave open several, or even contradictory, actantial positions, depending on perspective. A character could both be Subject and Opponent, or an Object could be represented as attainable only in part, or even as illusory. The opening of Greimas's model makes it particularly relevant for politically or socially critical literature, where embodied forms of inequality co-occur within the roles of the



characters. By demonstrating that the roles of actants are not by default true or fair representations, the model underscores how ideology limits or enables action—often along the lines of race, gender, or class.

Greimas's Actantial Model is useful not only for clarifying the structural aspects of narratives but also in exposing the ideological forces that co-occur within the narrative and its characters. It shows that the roles, intentions, and conflicts of characters are not arbitrary, but rather show structured positions that are again constructed by larger social systems. The model's abstract nature can be readily applied across various literary forms and ideological frameworks, and serve as a useful tool for critical studies. By focusing on how narratives reflect patterns of thought and social organization, the Actantial model has enough flexibility for critics to sort out the ways that literature endorses or subverts dominant cultural values. Ultimately Greimas provides a structure through which meaning, desire, and power in narratives, can be understood.

### 1.8.3 Concept of Capitalist Economic System

As Kocka (2018) describes it, capitalism is characterized by decentralization, commodification, and relentless attempts at accumulation. Unlike feudalism or centrally planned economies, capitalism arises from multiple spontaneous, uncoordinated, and partially converging inducements, with sustained momentum from self-reproducing cycles of exchange and disruption. A significant part of capitalism's ideological allure is the assumption that if you work hard enough, you will achieve autonomy through land ownership and private property. Together with hard work, autonomy implies self-direction or self-reliance. The dream of upward mobility is not just economic in nature; it is an emotional necessity as a dreamed-about induction into actively escaping structural adversity. The belief that earned dignity from hard work transforms suffering into a narrative of working through fatigue with a moral reminder that there is a wait involved for the future. Thus, even under conditions of exploitation and poverty, the capitalist promise sustains individuals through the conviction that sacrifice will eventually yield freedom from dependency and non-ownership.



This vision, however, is more than a motivational myth; it is an ideological framework that positions the land-owning, self-employed as the moral and economic ideal. Capitalism commodifies labor and market coordination the organizing logic of social systems (Kocka 2018). As the organizing structure capitalism offers, intelligence and resources are assessed not on contribution to the uplift of the community, or willingness to be ethical, but rather based on whether the

individual made another dent in the accumulation of wealth and the ability to satisfy productivity autonomously. While the dream offers a secure existence of unfettered choices to some householders, too, ownership stands for the sacrament of moral value. Capitalism is not driven by individual will, but by systemic coercion, where people do not act freely but are shaped by the system's internal demands (Patnaik, 2008). It conditions towards participation in new oppression via a script that conspicuously defines obtainment by status, exchange, and use of hierarchy. The determinations regarded as choice are no more than the compulsions of capitalist structuring, turning values into possessions.

The dream of a better tomorrow might contain emotional appeal, yet at its very foundation, capitalism is characterized by volatility, exclusion, and scarcity. Capitalism's cyclical nature would suggest that prosperity cannot exist without being interrupted by crisis, such as the Great Depression, which laid bare the contradiction of private investments bearing tangible fruit and capitalism's continued failure to direct surplus into socially productive agents of distraction (Burkett, 1994). Samuelson (2012) notes, considering the role of institutional inertia—most specifically, that these events may have been explained away by its adherence to the gold standard—with its consistency, resulted in the collapse of the economy and exposed the fragility of the original premise and rationality that the system has set in place and established as normative. Argumentatively speaking, capitalism does not need to lift all boats; it can simply run the course of entrenching immobility, isolating and segregating us such that every day for migrant workers and working classes is an interminable series of work impacting their ability to aspire. Ironically and simultaneously alluring, the dream of home ownership was most widely circulated during an era of shrinking scarcity, but, even at that time, was a tenuous motivating image of symbolic liberty while oppressive barriers held firm to where the structural barriers of scarcity have become more absolute in the face of structural mobility. Inequality can be more strictly regulated than in other systems, yet as Patnaik (2012) insists, these inequalities are not the result of some accidents in transformation, but outcomes of capitalism's design to concentrate wealth, reward domination, and maintain the impoverishment of aspirational middle and lower classes.



Illusion is simply central to the way capitalism sustains itself. It movement and action through the promise of a return, of success at some time in the future, often defining suffering as process of self-actualization. The notion of someday not only work to endure negative experiences, it locks the individual into a race on their own success or failure, and ultimately personalizes

responsibility, particularly with women, as their economic and emotional labor becomes invisible. As Burkett (1994) suggests, mass poverty and unemployment during the Great Depression were framed not by their structural deficiencies but ultimately laid onto the inadequacies of individuals, that was failing to get by or to make it. While Nurcahyadi et al. (2025) observe, capitalist economies manufacture scarcity and stagnation for the working poor, all while maintaining the illusion of progress. In this sense, capitalism breeds emotional resilience, premised on the anticipation of hope, fantasy, and obligation, while discouraging all real material progress, directing gendered oppression, both through productive and emotional impoverishment.

It can be said that capitalism engages with emotional agency through fantasy, but this is a promise unfulfilled. The fantasy of reward allows the individual to invest meaning in lives that are otherwise dehumanizing, particularly for women whose labor is structurally devalued and subjectively commodified. Under the logic of capitalism, even those marginalized in society are accountable to their particular sense of effort as valuable, and potentially safe, establishing purpose or belonging, and linking dignity to obedience, effort, or ambition in the rewards of compliance and perseverance. Yet, the lived experience is nothing other than a labor economy predicated on transactional value, where one's measure is based on productivity and exchange. Kocka (2018) reminds us that capitalism's deep structure is indifferent to human need, which will always confer or usurp legitimacy of morality in social well-being outcomes, while amplifying competition, accumulation, and commodified products. In this way, emotional survival is a daily negotiation: as Arafah et al. (2023) suggest, gratitude is only a coping mechanism, not a justice, and imagination only a temporary salve, not liberation. Emotional suppression, rationalizing suffering, and internalized self-restriction become the tacit survival tools of those who are pacified by illusion rather than transformed by reality. Even concern for emotional resilience is used as surplus dissociation to ensure ongoing capitulation to capitalist taxonomies.

Although capitalism is lauded as a meritocratic practice, the logic of capitalism exacerbates inherited privilege and class stratification while silencing whole populations. Patnaik (2008) argues that people in do not operate with free will. They may act as individuals, but haped by the coercive demands of the system itself; even the is merely capital incarnate. Value is only defined relative to y and profit in capitalism, not by humanity; therefore, in , if you cannot be fully productive or profitable, you are seen as As Garland-Thomson (2017) notes, disability acts as a liability



to capitalism's time structure of productivity and progress, exposing capitalism's marginalization of those who do not fit its small frames of productivity and output. Instead of accommodating embodied difference, modern societies made a living space where people live in exclusion or erasure of the disabled, which culturally affirms social investment in erasure, rather than inclusion. This marginalization is not only an architectural space, it is an ideological space where disabled lives interrupt the neoliberal myth of total self-authoring and autonomy, and reject the notion that self-worth is based on economic independence and squeaky physical perfection (Garland-Thomson, 2017). Echoing Garland-Thomson's argument, Yudith et al. (2024) illustrate how mental health affected their work participation, but capitalist societies saw it as unproductivity that motivated stigmatization of vulnerability and silence in exchange for conditional inclusion. Under capitalism, even basic needs, like care, rest, and support, are subordinated to the cult of output, transforming difference into deficiency, achieving lived experience into economic deadweight. Consequently, capitalism disqualifies drones of whole populations from making full social contributions, not due to a lack of value but due to they resist commodification.

At the centre of capitalist ideology is a clear hierarchy founded on dominance, ownership, and inherited privilege to determine social value and class position. In capitalism, inherited wealth and nepotism are not only justified but are valorized, and with it, certain individuals enjoy a dream, not merely of survival, but of domination. Capitalism also equates success with vertical position, convincing people, mostly men, that their value is a function of outpacing those above them instead of breaking down at least some class barriers to create collective upward mobility. Capitalism also relies on a rigid class structure enriched by a small elite and typically devoid of enriching possibilities for the majority, normalizing their deprivation (Patnaik, 2012). The logic of capitalism abides by a zero-sum game, where in order for one person to progress, another must decline. As Suhadi et al. (2022) note, the hierarchy can transform ambition into tyranny, where power becomes domination, and ultimately, this highlights how individual striving could become oppressive control under capitalist logic. Similarly, Tang et al. (2025) emphasize that while capitalism permits some individuals to flourish, it simultaneously enables deprivation of many. Thus, it really illustrates how capitalist institutionalize disparity and structural marginalization when creating a society that privileges elite interests while neglecting the masses. Together, these works reinforce the idea that the inequality by capitalism is both narrative and real, and capitalism sustains these narratives, not incidentally, but intentionally.



The relationship of capitalism to race is equally intertwined, where class divisions were developed within a racialized framework. According to Melamed (2015), capitalism has never existed outside of racialization; in fact, racial capitalism is how we should understand it through historical form. In the context of capitalism, accumulation is based on dispossession—taking land, labor coexistence, and violence. Capitalism's structure necessitates the manufacturing of disposable populations, and the rationalization that racialized hierarchies produce helps navigate the need for disposable people by deeming communities of color less deserving or less competent. In capitalist hierarchies, as Mutainnah et al. (2022) found, Black people have historically occupied dehumanized positions as servant-class roles, where their economic marginalization serves explicitly as a barrier to dignity and opportunities. Arifuddin et al. (2024) further explain that racial formations imposed limits on the economic positions available to Black people to subordinate positions, favoring a system of racial classification and material deprivation that reproduced a relationship of dependency. Capitalism limits, confines, and restrains Black subjectivity, but control is not merely a product of economic confinement. Rather, the status quo is reinforced by symbolic violence and terror, as public humiliation through the threat of punishment and systemic exclusion reproduces order and continuity to both the status quo and capitalist relations of being. Additionally, as Fadillah et al. (2022) argued, power is enacted through engaging in laborers' subjugation and humiliation. This illustrates that class oppression exists not only economically but also is embodied through spatial control and humiliation. In this context, promises of ownership or autonomy become a racialized, tiered farce for some would-be owners as promises, contrasted with owners' rules for others, when promises are not carried through. Therefore, capitalism is situated where inequality and injustice are produced and naturalized by myths of race and class status, and where exclusion is a fundamental part of the privileged elite.

Gender is also structurally embedded in capitalist inequalities. Patriarchal dominance operates in both ideological and material realms. As Gimenez (2005) asserts, capitalism relies on women's agency and the devaluation of paid reproductive labor to reproduce labor. Capitalism lays claim to the economic contributions of women while systematically denying women access to economic stability as waged workers. Family structures uphold this marginalization through the legitimization of men as declarers and holders of economic power. Men make decisions on behalf of women, resulting in Women's history being erased (Arafah et al. 2024). Women are seen as objects and want them to meet the expectations of ideals created by men to constrain women's social and economic existence under the



control of men (Sunyoto et al. 2022; Asri et al. 2023). This privileged men by linking masculine authority with leadership while relegating women to property under men's paternalistic and tyrannical control, while underpaid, with minimal protection (Lestari et al. 2025; JUSDALYANA et al. 2024). This ideological framework is supported by normative cultural codes which condition women to be dependent upon men's wealth earned and that femininity is equated with economic reliance and the normalization of women as disposable products, for men to purchase and dispose of to meet their desires (Asriyanti et al. 2022; Afiah et al. 2022). Social structures reinforce male supremacy through conditioning women to see obedience, emotional labor, and self-sacrifice as valuable attributes. Language also serves as a form of patriarchal control that limits women's autonomy and assertiveness (Yudith et al. 2024; Arafah et al. 2024), collectively illustrates how capitalism and patriarchy institutionalize the oppression of women upon women to maintain the illusion of equality.

Capitalism fundamentally alters society's relationship with nature, in which it is not a companionable coexistence, but rather commodified capital to be consumed. In the work of West & Brockington (2012), capitalism commodifies nature through spatial, conceptual, and ideological separations that foster economic policies aimed at treating whole ecosystems as market systems rather than living systems. Park (2015) argues that capitalism utilizes an erroneous logic of economic worth, usually defined as monetary worth, with the assumption there are unrestricted limits to growth or progress. In their study, Manugeran et al. (2023) attest that unsustainable capitalist behaviours have created environmental disasters, and in a modern era, industrialization of property and land disregards biodiversity, human health, and environmental wellbeing for economic gain. Cultural systems supported under capitalism also disregard the same social and environmental disparities; Siwi et al. (2022) find the legacy of capitalist development reduces environmental degradation as an unregulated exploitation of natural resources, culminating in an ecological crisis. Yudith et al. (2023) describe animals is being view as property, whose consumption, sentient status, and intrinsic value can be disregarded altogether, revealing how capitalism spills into living things as objects of consumption. This objectification extends to all of nature, as Jaelani et al. (2024) emphasize, nature is commodified and

are taken for utility and trade, leading to overexploitation and imbalance. Moreover, Abbas et al. (2024) reference Aboriginal es as rejecting capitalist ideological views that support the ion of profit for the purposes of extraction from natural

Aboriginal philosophies promote reciprocity with the ent, leading to restraint and capacity in consumption of non-, non-renewable resources, as developed practices for living



sustainably, as critical alternatives to the logic of extraction that characterizes capitalism. Capitalism is not only responsible for the defeat of nature or environmental degradation, but it also undermines processes of ethical relationships with elements of the non-human world for groups of people, providing social legitimacy to the destruction of nature through profits.

Despite its promises of progress and freedom, capitalism structurally denies them. Democracy under capitalism is fundamentally limited. The system objectifies individuals as mere instruments of accumulation, while their political agency is hollowed out by the dominance of economic logic (Patnaik, 2008). True liberty, cannot exist under capitalist conditions. The only way to realize the ideals of equality and dignity is to move beyond a system where accumulation, not humanity, is the organizing principle. Until then, capitalism will continue to define worth through ownership and freedom through the lens of economic productivity alone.



## CHAPTER II RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter encompasses the methodological framework, detailing the approach for data collection, including data sources and required analytical tools, the analysis methodology, and the research procedure.

### 2.1 Methodological Design

This research adopts a qualitative literary analysis grounded in structuralism approach, with specific emphasis on A.J. Greimas's actantial model. The structuralist approach is particularly important for this research, because the researcher want to not only describe what happens in a literary text, but also to understand the underlying system within the text that creates meaning. Baharuddin & Arafah (2023) point out that literary analysis allows researchers to lift the literary discourse to socio-politics issues, humanity and poverty alleviation benefiting living a social life. This is exactly what this research hopes to accomplish, which is the discussion of socio-economic ideologies located in *Of Mice and Men* through a formalized structural analysis.

This study employs close reading in analysis and interpretation. The researcher extract and closely read text selected from the narrative, both dialogue and in the narrative pattern. The researcher read character arcs through Greimas's actantial model to examine how Steinbeck constructs dreams, the failures of dreams, and the failed forces behind dreams. This enable us to identify, subject-object relationships, sender and receiver's role, and helpers and opponents roles impacting characters desire fulfillment or collapse.

### 2.2 Method of Collecting Data

The data which this study were collected from library research, a method of review of literature. Library research is collecting data from trustworthy literature references. The literature references can be in the form of books, articles, and previous research, as long as it pertains to the study and research topics. The methods used to assist in data collection and preparation to use university library literature reviews include data note-taking and data management with a spreadsheet. The researcher is using Google sheets as a database to collect all sources and quotes, and this tool has much greater potential in terms of sorting and filtering and making it easy to organize the



#### Data

research, primary data refers to information obtained directly source, which in this study is the novella *Of Mice and Men* by initially published in 1937. The specific edition utilized for this

research was published by Penguin Books Ltd in the United States of America in 1993.

### 2.2.2 Instrument of Research

The researcher has created an observation guide that is the primary instrument of research, and an observation guide that systematically collects and analyzes qualitative data that was collected through observation. The following instruments was used to help collecting data:

- 1) Academic literature, including articles, books, and journals.
- 2) Laptop/computer.
- 3) Various online and offline software applications.

### 2.3 Method of Analysis

This study used a library research method to collect data, which consisted of sentences and paragraphs relevant to the research topic. The data was then analyzed using Greimas's actantial model under a structuralist approach, which was the chosen methodology for this study. The analysis focus on the rise and the downfall of dreams of the character's due to the capitalist economic system. Employing Greimas's actantial model in this research, the researcher can dissect how each character's dream operates within the story who desires what, and how the plot systematically frustrates those desires and to discuss the motifs and oppositions that unify these individual stories into Steinbeck's grim overall message.

The analysis utilizes Greimas's Actantial Model to lay out the ideological structure that undergirds the narrative, especially because it deals with the ideological realities around the figures of power in a story. Greimas's model is particularly revealing in showing how roles are allocated to actors in a play or a dramatization regardless of its complexity and how they represent social agents embedded in ideological systems (Schleifer, 1987). The Subject–Object axis reveals desire and its blockage, by showing which characters are looking for what, and narratively, how that search is constructed ideologically. The Helper–Opponent axis shows the social factors that either assist or retard the realization of the desire, what they represent are the structural pressures of solidarity, framework, violence or institutional force. In tandem, the Sender–Receiver axis allows for identification of the ideological origin and imagined reward of the journey: the Sender serves as the motivating forces—such as the American Dream or capitalist promise—that push the Subject to act, while



tity, oftentimes the same as the Subject, which stands to benefit d. As such, the two axes, Sender and Opponent, in conjunction to trace how capitalism gives characters their hopes while aracters fail, thereby illustrating the story's critique of social

In this research, the narrative analysis does not simply label Greimasian roles; rather, it treats literature as a site of socio-economic critique. The analysis will also cover a breakdown of how capitalist economic system play role as motivating sender actant and destroying opponent actant in the novella. This socio-economic critique is supported by literary critics such as Mutmainnah et al. (2022) propose that literary products are works of social production that reflect and relate to social, political and cultural issues. The literary critique posits that literature is not separate from those issues and lived conditions, but is a cultural response to the lived conditions of society in-formed by power. In addition, As Schleifer (1987) argued about structuralist criticism, it is a methodical and formal way to investigate how economic and ideological systems are encoded in narrative form, and how characters function in those paradigms.

## 2.4 Research Procedure

Below is the research procedure that encompasses the sequential actions undertaken by the researcher from initiation to conclusion throughout the study.

First, the researcher performed a close reading of Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, treating the novella as the central text. The close reading involved dissecting narrative characteristics such as plot development, characterization, dialogue, and setting to explore Steinbeck's portrayal of economic conditions and each character's aspiration. The researcher also identified repetitions, symbols, and emotional tone to recognize the patterns of hope, aspiration, and ultimately despair encapsulated in the characters' narratives.

Second, the research used A. J. Greimas's actantial model to draw on our textual analysis. In this layer, the researcher treated the capitalist organization of the Great Depression era as a structural force operating in the narrative that was both Sender and Opponent. This actantial mapping allowed us to measure the Subject-Object desire axis, Helper-Opponent struggle axis, and the Sender-Receiver motivation and benefit axis. The research was able to position the actions and fates of each character as structural thus revealing the theme of lost dreams embedded in the internal narrative grammar – not simply thematic complexity, but formal narrative logic.

Third, the research constructed a narrative account of how capitalism acted as a motivational actant that propelled each character's respective dreams. The researcher analyze how George and Lennie's dream of land ownership, Candy hope dream of power, Crooks's desired for inclusion, and Curley's gnition, signified the American Dream based on capitalist values and meritocracy that literally acted as the Sender pushing the i. This narrative construction uncovered an alluring conception d mobility produced by capitalism; a nature of the motivational desire.



Fourth, the research examined how the literal material realities of capitalism both foiled and ultimately extinguished characters dream. The researcher used the Opponent actant to elaborate how social structures (e.g. class hierarchy, racial inequities, patriarchy, labor exploitation) inhibited or outright denied the characters hopes. The researcher charted how the dreams of characters failed not because they were lazy, incompetent, or incapable of achieving what they intended, but rather, the systemic contradictions and inequalities found in the local economic structure were ultimately to blame. This step illustrated that capitalism not only engendered hopes, but it simultaneously imposed barriers for the marginalized to achieve those hopes.

Fifth, the research synthesized the two sections into a cohesive conclusion. This stage required us to articulate the ideological function of *Of Mice and Men* as a critique of capitalist modernity. The research concluded that Steinbeck's novella contains a mythic rendition of alienation and systemic disenchantment under U.S. capitalism. Through textual close reading and Greimas's combination of formal structuralist mapping, the researcher not only tracked the narrative of failure dreams, but revealed how those failures were encoded both formally and ideologically. Consequently, this research offers a model for utilizing narratology to expose the hidden logics of socio-economic critique and complexity embedded within literary texts.

