It’s a common misconception that the Great Depression affected only male workers, **but how did the Great Depression effect and influence a woman?** Both *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee and *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck show great evidence of how a women’s life was impacted by the economic crises. These stories are set in the 1930s, the time of the great depression, long before women could vote and be seen as anywhere equal to men. Both sources have a female character that represent what a women’s life was like in the 1930s, Mayella Ewell from *To Kill a Mockingbird* and Curley’s Wifefrom *Of Mice and Men.* **Throughout these stories, these characters show firsthand how the depression influenced women. Mayella Ewell and Curley’s wife are lonely and use their sexuality to gain attention, they have no opportunities due to the economical context and the depression, and they are isolated from the outside world. There are very little differences between them, which demonstrates how women were similarly impacted at this time. Ultimately, these sources express the underlying effects on a women’s insecurities and personality.**

In *To Kill a Mockingbird,* Mayella’s story is set in Maycomb, Alabama. She lives with her father and her siblings, her mother died when she younger and she raises the children without any help. “I began to see the pattern of Atticus’s questions… Atticus was quietly building up before the jury a picture of the Ewells’ home life… Their relief check was far from enough to feed the family, and there was strong suspicion that Papa drank it up anyway.” (Harper Lee, 244) As a lower-class woman who doesn’t fit her gender stereotypes of being dainty and delicate, she has little opportunities. She cannot work, she must deal with her father’s drinking, and maintaining the household, and she has no companions. She did not even recognize politeness when Atticus calls her “ma’am”, she confuses it with sass. “‘Long’s he [Atticus] keeps on callin’ me ma’am an sayin’ Miss Mayella. I don’t hafta take his sass, I ain’t called upon to take it.” (Lee, 243). By being alone and isolated in the house all day, she senses a need to dig for the attention she wants.

Similarly, in *Of Mice and Men,* Curley’s wife experiences the same feelings of isolation. Though, she is not as poor as Mayella, she too, must combat staying in one place for her entire life. She lives with her husband, Curley, on his ranch, getting to know the workers that come and go. “‘Funny thing,’ she said, ‘If I catch any one man, and he’s alone, I get along fine with him.’” (John Steinbeck, 77). She has no children to take care of, she too has no opportunities, and she is the only female character in the novella. Unlike Mayella, she fits the stereotypes of a woman of her time. She is described to have full lips, wide spread eyes, and is heavily made up. Ironically, she is viewed as unimportant, to the point that she doesn’t even get a real name. These reasons are what lead to her feelings of disconnection from the rest of society.

By comparing Mayella and Curley, strong similarities appear. The most prominent one being their loneliness. How do they combat this? They both use their sexuality to obtain the attention that they do not receive. Mayella is driven to the point where she asks Tom Robinson, a negro worker, to do daily jobs for her, each getting more elaborate to get him to stay with her. Eventually, she reaches out and hugs him, and tries to give him a kiss. “‘Yes, suh, I felt right sorry for her, [Tom Robinson speaking about Mayella] she seemed to try more’n the rest of ‘em-.’” (Lee, 264) Even Tom Robinson recognizes her loneliness and feels sorry for her, something a negro man cannot do to a white woman. On the other hand, Curley’s wife does the same thing. She tries to cure her isolation, by going around the ranch and flirting with the workers. “‘Nobody can’t blame a person for lookin’, She said.” (Steinbeck, Page 31.) This of course, angers her husband, but she is not fulfilled and desperately seeks a cure through the other men.

In conclusion, both novels, *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee and *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck use female characters to portray the real effects of the economic crises. **The feeling of being alone is so prominent and painful, that these women have to overcome them by using their gender and appearance. One cannot help to feel sorry for these two characters, especially when seeing the reasons behind their misdeeds and their acts of desperation. A lot of novels don’t focus on the diverse range of victims of the Great Depression, especially those who unfortunately have deep-rooted insecurities like these characters do.** Why don’t authors put more of an emphasis on the other sufferers of the 1930s? Gender roles and stereotypes have indeed gotten easier to deal with, and women have a lot of the same professions and opportunities now, however back in the settings of these stories, we often overlook just how difficult it was.