Directions: Annotate the opening passage from *Of Mice and Men*. Pay particular attention to patterns that you notice and what you Steinbeck might be trying to convey through those patterns.

A few miles south of Soledad, the Salinas River drops in close to the hillside bank and runs deep and green. The water is warm too, for it has slipped twinkling over the yellow sands in the sunlight before reaching the narrow pool. On one side of the river the golden foothill slopes curve up to the strong and rocky Gabilan Mountains, but on the valley side the water is lined with trees- willows fresh and green with every spring, carrying in their lower leaf junctures the debris of the winter's flooding; and sycamores with mottled, white, recumbent limbs and branches that arch over the pool. On the sandy bank under the trees the leaves lie deep and so crisp that a lizard makes a great skittering if he runs among them. Rabbits come out of the brush to sit on the sand in the evening, and the damp flats are covered with the night tracks of 'coons, and with the spread pads of dogs from the ranches, and with the split-wedge tracks of deer that come to drink in the dark.

There is a path through the willows and among the sycamores, a path beaten hard by boys coming down from the ranches to swim in the deep pool, and beaten hard by tramps who come wearily down from the highway in the evening to jungle-up near water. In front of the low horizontal limb of a giant sycamore there is an ash pile made by many fires; the limb is worn smooth by men who have sat on it.

1. Steinbeck makes a lot of references to the names of animals, plants, colors, and shapes in the first paragraph. What impression does this make on the reader?
2. The description of the countryside of Salinas valley at the beginning of the story is poetic and makes California sound a little bit like the garden of Eden. Why do you think Steinbeck wanted to create this impression to start the novella?
3. In contrast to the first paragraph, the phrase “beaten hard” is used in the second paragraph to describe the effect that people have on the landscape. What do you think Steinbeck might be trying to suggest by emphasizing this phrase?
4. The paragraph ends by telling us that the branch has been “worn smooth” by the men who have passed through. What can we infer from this image?