

# The bush undertaker essay sample



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## Summary

This story is about an undertaker who lives in the Australian bush with his dog, Five Bob. He was interested in collecting bones from graves and goes to black fellow's graves and digs the mounds.

The story starts with the old man calling Five Bob on a broiling Christmas day, to shepherd the sheep while he was preparing something to eat. He treats his dog with affection and talks to him like an old friend. The dog seemed to be used to his master's actions and seemed to understand what the old man was saying.

After his sheep were yarded, the old man went to the ridge followed by his dog, Five Bob. He went to the graves of black fellows which he was curious of. He dug a set of one and amused himself by trying to put together the bones. Still, he could not determine if those bones belonged to a male or female. He then proceeded to put them in his bag and decided to take them home.

Nearing the mouth of the ridge, he was startled by a goanna or a lizard. He then saw a dead man who he thought was a dead carcass of a sheep. Upon closer examination, he saw that this is a black man who seemed to be mummified by the intense summer heat. He was further shocked when he realized the dead man is his friend, Brummy.

His sorrow and shock were apparent at first when he said that he tried to tell Brummy before that sooner, drinking will be his downfall. When he saw that the bottle of rum remained to be nearly full, he was happy though and got

cheered by the thought of having the bottle to himself for Christmas. He then decided to take care of Brummy by bringing him home, prepping him up and then burying him in a grave that he will dig.

As an indication of a man who is used to living in the Australian bush, he devised a way of carrying Brummy through a bark. Along the way, he took mouthfuls of rum and he saw again a goanna or a lizard and wondered why they seem to be surfacing.

Upon reaching his house, he then propped up Brummy outside his hut and perhaps tired with the heavy weight, he decided to take a snooze. The angle of the dead body was not level and this hit the old man when his back was turned. This sobered him and he lodged Brummy carefully outside his hut. He did not notice that the Brummy's face was exposed. When he woke up, he decided to drink the remaining rum but then he heard a strange noise. He felt icy fear even though he lived alone and was used to it. He investigated outside with his gun but found that there's no one out there. He calmed himself, took a light supper and went to sleep. He was disturbed several times by the noise outside his hut that he decided to observe outside. When he heard again the noise, he shot the source of it and was angered that it was the goannas or the lizard who had been taking a bite out of Brummy for their dinner. He decided to bury Brummy the next afternoon since the police station was too far and he does not want to leave his sheep.

The next day, he dug the grave and buried Brummy. He thought that Brummy deserved to have a respectful funeral and he tried his best. In the course of his search for the right words, he became engulfed in his sadness

too, perhaps with his own memory. Bob Five was alerted and he watched his master carefully. After saying a few solemn words, he rested a while. Then he walked towards his hut as the sun set in the grand Australian bush which he considered home.

Characters:

Old man – the protagonist on this story. He was living an isolated life in the Australian bush. His isolation was further emphasized by his monologues and soliloquy. He was described as eccentric and weird and this was seen several times in the story like when he dug the grave and got the bones as well as when he felt joy in discovering a rum near his dead friend. However, the old man displayed emotions like sadness during the end which showed that he was sorrowful too of the death of his friend. He remembered his own losses which perhaps led to this isolation. He tried to comfort Brummy by saying none matter now and the dead does not remember, unlike him who remembers.

Bob Five – the four-legged mate of the old man. In this story, this dog was described as in sync with his master. He was attentive as well as alert. However the goannas scared him and he shrunk away from the reptile.

Brummy – the dead man in this story found by the old man. He was displayed here as alcoholic. His body seemed to have been mummified and thus he seemed interesting to the goanna.

The goanna is another character in this story. It followed the old man to his hut and skulked in the darkness of the night, creating noise which the old

man feared at first. It was shot at the end due to his nibbling of Brummy and treating him as dinner.

### Similes

1. *" a n' that their boggabri'll eat like tater-marrer" (incomprehensible)*
2. *the flesh sounded like leather (explanation: the flesh was so tough and dry like a leather)*
3. *it fell flat on its back like a board (explanation: the body fell flat heavily, straightly and like a piece of wooden board)*

### Metaphor

1. *dazzling glow of that broiling Christmas Day (sunny and hot Christmas Day)*
2. *" Clean into his liver!" ( The old man is instructing the dog to eat everything that he can.)*
3. *in about half an hour he bottomed on payable dirt. ( payable dirt means he got what he was looking for.)*
4. *dried to a mummy by the intense heat of the western summer (mummy means the body seemed preserved)*
5. *icy breath of fear at his heart. (this means that the old man was really scared.)*

### Language Use

The language used in this story was descriptive and figurative. The old man's attitude is emphasized by his way of saying words, in the Australian accent and with the tone of voice of someone who is used to himself.

## Setting

The setting was in the Australian Bush during Christmas Day. The story begins with a man living in a slab-and-bark hut and ends with the old man returning there while the sun sets.

## Theme

The theme of this story is about an old man living alone in the Australian bush, with only his dog in company. The author emphasized that continuous isolation from civilization by someone who is living in the bush will soon make him weird and eccentric.

The character of the old man was portrayed as bizarre because he has this bone collection hobby, he kept on talking to the dog and he was happy when he found the bottle of rum nearly full even if he found it beside his dead friend. His monologues are hard to understand easily since he seemed to be lost in his own thoughts always. The old man's loneliness was further emphasized because he liked to collect bones, perhaps as a connection to men who used to live. He was also cheerful that his Christmas Day is not boring at all even if he found a dead friend. However this way of coping with things might be his defense because his heart had been hardened by his lone existence.

Towards the end, the old man gave the readers a peep of the reason why he had perhaps chosen to live in isolation. His words to Brummy evoke a loneliness and loss that he tries to shrug off casually, but his dog picked up. He said that nothing now matters and the dead does not remember as a way

of comforting Brummy. He further implied that this is unfortunate for him because he still remembers. This section indicated that he suffered a great loss or perhaps experienced something so tragic to make him live alone in the bush even when it made him eccentric, weird and bizarre.

#### Four Questions

1. What are the effects to the old man of living alone in the Australian bush? Is this usual to those who reside for a long time in isolation?

The old man became weird, eccentric and bizarre. He became absorbed too in his monologues and soliloquy. He resorted to talking to his dog, to the lizard and to a dead man. I think this is common for someone who lives for a long time in isolation. They still feel the need to talk and so they talk to themselves, to their dogs and to whatever is within sight. They become self-absorbed.

2. Describe your reaction to the story. / How were you affected?

I think this story is reeking with loneliness and isolation. The old man is pitiful but somehow it makes the reader wonder what could have happened to the old man to choose this kind of living. Perhaps this is an easy life compared to his past. His bizarre attitude is also discomfoting, like being happy at finding rum beside the dead old friend,

His sympathy to his dead friend Brummy is apparent and touching too, but the touch of envy to his tone when he said that it's better for Brummy because the dead does not remember but he does since he is alive makes it apparent that he got some painful past that he does not want to remember.

This made me remember the grieving state of those whose loved ones had died.

3. What does the old man mean by saying to Brummy that the dead does not remember and nothing matters now?

The old man was probably trying to comfort Brummy of being in a lighter side of being now that he is dead. He is not anymore concerned with worldly things, thus the old man said that none matters now since he is already dead. The old man meant perhaps that Brummy is luckier because he does not have to deal with living with people around or being around a place where there are painful memories.

4. What possible reasons can a man have to choose isolation rather than live with people around him?

The reason could be anything not limited to death of a loved one, utter embarrassment, ruined reputation, massive debts, crime deeds, or a deluge of women after him. But I think the most apparent in this story is the painful past and hurt that the old man carries. He would rather be alone than perhaps be in a familiar place with haunting memories or be surrounded with people that makes him feel the loneliness more.

Reference:

The Bush Undertaker; Henry Lawson. 1892. Retrieved January 28, 2007 from [http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The\\_Bush\\_Undertaker](http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Bush_Undertaker)