

# Foreshadowing and irony in "sweat" by zora neale hurston assignment

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The short story "Sweat," by Zora Neale Hurston, seems to exemplify the epitome of a bad marriage. Hurston uses foreshadowing and irony to demonstrate the disintegrated relationship between the abusive husband and the diligent wife. Throughout the story, it becomes obvious that the husband does not oblige by the motto, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Hurston's use of irony and foreshadowing helps reveal the fact that "the good will prevail" and Sykes will finally get what he deserves. From the very beginning, the reader notices the psychological and verbal abuse that Sykes puts on Delia.

It was a Sunday and Delia decided to get ahead on her work for the week by separating piles of clothes by color. Fear then came upon her when "... something long, round, limp, and black fell upon her shoulder and slithered to the floor beside her" (355). Sykes' bull whip, mistaken for a snake, invokes "great terror" (355) and extreme fear in Delia, foreshadowing an event that is to come in the future. It also demonstrates the distant relationship between Sykes and Delia. With full knowledge of Delia's fear of snakes, Sykes continues to haunt her with them throughout the story.

While Delia falls to the oppression of her husband, Sykes almost commits these acts as torture. Because of Hurston's strong use of irony, it is evident that one day Delia will prevail and a clue to Sykes' fate is provided: that one day he will be haunted by a snake as well. Delia is obviously the breadwinner of the family and works hard to support both herself and Sykes.

Unfortunately, Sykes takes this for granted by taking advantage of the free housing while saving his rarely earned money to spend on other women.

Fully aware of this, Delia mentions that "...whatever goes over the Devil's back is got to come under his belly. Sometime or ruther, Syke, like everybody else, is gointer reap his sowing" (357). The use of irony here demonstrated that " what goes around, comes around" and once again alludes to Sykes' fate. Many more indications throughout the story seem to allude to Sykes' death. The other men in the town seem to disrespect Sykes and even suggest that he should die. While Delia started to deliver the clean laundry in town one ay, the men talked about how Delia is too good for Sykes and that she deserves better, They also despise Sykes for running around with an ugly and fat woman, ultimately cheating on his hardworking wife. Finally, one man says, " Syke Jones ain't wuth de shot an' powder hit would tek tuh kill 'em. Not to huh he ain't" (357) while another man adds, "... an' we oughter kill ' im" (358). It seems like Hurston portrays this hostility to reiterate to the reader that Sykes will fall victim to a well deserved death. Perhaps the most important event in the story occurs when Sykes brings home a huge six-foot living snake.

Fear once again overcomes Delia and she pleads, " Syke! Syke, mah Gawd! You take dat rattlesnake ' way from heah! You gottuh. Oh, Jesus, have mussy" (360). Sykes, on the other hand, stands in amusement almost as if he loves to see Delia psychologically abused. His cockiness unravels as he acts like he is invincible and like anyone and anything should and will comply with him. In regards to the enormous snake, Sykes boasts, "...He wouldn't bite me cause Ah knows how tuh handel ' im" (360). He makes sure to instill fear into Delia by telling her to be careful because the snake would have no problem coming after her.

Hurston also has Sykes portray his own death. In this same scene, Sykes' reply to Delia's request of getting rid of the snake is, " Ah ain't got to do nuthin' uh de kin' ??? fact is Ah ain't got tuh do nothin' but die" (360). This statement only means that Sykes will not listen to Delia at anytime and enjoys torturing her in any way possible. He admits that he would rather die than give Delia the pleasure of control at any moment. This scenario is perhaps the most ironic because it is this same snake that takes Sykes' life once and for all.