

"the rattler" essay



"The Rattler" is a short story about a man who comes across a rattlesnake while walking through the desert. The man is forced to decide whether he should kill the creature or leave it alone. After thinking carefully and considering the people and animals that could be hurt by the snake, he chooses to kill it.

This story focuses on the moral dilemma of the man, in which the distinction between right and wrong is not clear. This story causes the reader to pick a side and determine what is right and wrong in this situation. In the short passage "The Rattler," language and details about the narrator and the snake invite the reader to feel sympathy for both the man and the snake. The reader sympathizes with the man, who feels obliged to kill the snake, as a result of the language and details pertaining to him in the story. The man is taking a peaceful walk in the evening when the presence of a snake in his path takes him by surprise.

The narrator states that he gets no enjoyment from "the sport in taking life." Here, the speaker informs the reader that he does not normally kill animals, showing that he is sensitive enough to respect animals and their rights. He clearly states that he has never killed an animal unless he was compelled to kill, proving that his decision to kill the snake is based on valid reasons. The narrator then begins to question his first instinct. After thinking carefully about the people and animals nearby who could be harmed by the snake, the man realizes that it is his "duty...to kill the snake."

In other words, the man understands that there are more important things to be concerned about than the well-being of the snake. The rattlesnake poses

a threat to the man's community. There is a good chance that the poisonous snake will, at some point, harm one of the lightly shod ranchers, and the man is not willing to risk the safety of his loved ones merely for the preservation of the snake's existence. Valiantly, the man decides to risk his life by trying to kill the snake in order to protect the others on the ranch, a decision any other considerate human being in his position would make.

After killing the snake, the man clearly asserts that he did not choose to "cut the rattles off for a trophy" but instead dropped the snake in a bush. During the time period in which the story took place, it must have been commonplace for one to cut the rattles off a rattlesnake after killing it in order to brag about the accomplishment. However, the man chooses not to cut the rattles off, proving that he is not boastful. The man, through his thoughts and actions, proves to be respectful, thoughtful, selfless, and humble, thus inviting the reader to feel sympathy for him.