

Rhinoceros beetle essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

It was a public holiday on the day that he was born. His mother took this as a good omen. She failed to notice the reason for the holiday. The day he began school he took with him his pet: a rhinoceros beetle. Over an extended period he had a series of beetles which accompanied him. Each day his little wooden box went with him and each day a rhinoceros beetle was inside the box. His teachers thought him somewhat odd because he knew so much about some things, and so little about others. But the little girls knew otherwise. The teachers always called on him during Nature Study to explain the life cycle of butterflies, grasshoppers, liver flukes or beetles. He would get carried away by his task and enter every detail—his eyes burning ferociously. The town he lived near was home to two milk bars, two hotels and on the other side of the street were the railway station and a sugar-cane mill. It was one of those towns that have a river for three months of the year and a bridge built to sustain the big floods every fifteen years. The boy lived beyond the town's borders and grew up without companionship, aside from the ubiquitous rhinoceros beetles and a range of other insects, reptiles, stuffed birds and a cat that refused to be held in his arms. The garden being more than large enough to swing a cat, he had done precisely that.

In the spring he added to his large collection of eggs; raiding nests and blowing out the yolks; or he netted butterflies, pinning them stretched out, covering the boxes later with a non-reflective glass. In the wet, when the grasshopper plagues descended, he would spend hours removing their legs, attempting to outdo his previous day's record. In the years when grasshoppers were relatively few, he found other creatures to entertain him or made do with his rhinoceros beetles. In the dry of the winter he would

ambush frogs and those little lizards that dispense with their tails when grabbed. Each season provided him with new ways of frightening the little girls who sat in front of him or behind him in the school by the river. When he was fifteen his biology teacher showed him how to keep the heart of a frog beating, exposed for all the world to see. Encouraged by his enthusiasm, the teacher suggested he stay on after school and learn the technique. By the time he went home he had learnt how to split the thoracic cavity and pin the limbs without spilling any blood.

At seventeen he left, complaining that the town was too small for him. From time to time he returned accompanied by various young women who invariably left him following the holiday. The townspeople lost track of him, though occasionally his promising career would be mentioned in passing. All they knew about him now was their recollection of a taciturn and perfectionist child. At least, that is all they talked of openly. Those little girls who had fought not to sit next to him in the classroom held their secrets. They remembered the jabs, the sharp pain from beside or behind. They recalled the grasshopper legs in the back of their summer dresses. They remembered too, the terrible threats he made, the tales he told of poison gathered from his rhinoceros beetles, or the fangs of newly-dead snakes. They no longer knew what to believe, since they could trust only his ability to use those things against them. No amount of insistence from the teachers would convince the little girls that rhinoceros beetles were harmless, that they are clumsy and short-sighted. The women held their secrets because when they mentioned it to their husbands or brothers they were laughed at.

The husbands and brothers told them it was mere bluff. Instead of sympathy, the husbands and brothers now had a secret weapon. Some of the women found the tails of mice or lizards between their sheets; others found grasshopper legs in their drawers of underwear. The women learnt to hold their tongues for fear of generating ideas. So what happened? The expected and the unexpected. Instead of a glorious career, he joined a government department as a clerk. Later his colleagues said of him that his only outstanding feature was that he kept to himself. None knew that he had grown up in the country, nor did any of them know the names of his friends. Some reported that they had seen him in the pub after work with various women whose names they could not remember—was it Anne, Jane, Margaret, Felicity, Carole? No one could remember.

He resigned without proper notice one Friday and never returned to his desk. They did not know that by the time the new week had started his plane was landing in a country half a day's flight away. He knew his skills would be rewarded there. And so they were. By the time he returned, eight years later, he had enough money to buy a large and imposing property on a secluded block overlooking the sea. It wasn't until the trial that anyone knew anything more about him. It was in all the papers; in particular, it was in the newspaper of his home town. The papers were liberal in their detail— to the point of obscenity. Suffice it here to say that in his imposing property he had treated women as he had always treated every living thing. The men of his home town said, But how could it happen? How could he change into a monster like this? But the women, who had been little girls, knew that he not changed.

Complete the following chart based on your reading of “ Rhinoceros Beetle.”

The men in the story “ know” that men and/or women are... Men are usually frightened of insects; are worldly and knowledgeable; have groundless fears; are not distracted by trivialities; are prone to overdramatize situations; frequently become overemotional; are not frightened of insects; are not easily taken in; frequently exaggerate things; are easily fooled; take others as they find them; enjoy gossiping; become easily upset over trivialities; do not know about scientific subjects; are matter of fact about most things; are emotionally stable; often get “ carried away”; have a wide general knowledge; like being teased; are calm and rational; enjoy a good joke; enjoy complaining; take irrational dislikes to people; are ignorant about the world; prefer to act rather than talk; are down to earth. Women