

The bass, the river, and sheila mant

[Linguistics](#), [English](#)



In W. D. Wetherell's "The Bass, The River and Sheila Mant," the bass symbolizes the values that the narrator holds dear to his heart. The elements of the story, its setting, characters and conflict all coincide to make a straight-forward conclusion on one's struggle between two things he values. Wetherell's short story does not focus on the bass as just a fish that the narrator wants to catch. It stands for the conflicting values that he had to face through an experience he would never forget. The main theme of Wetherell's short story is self-realization. He has successfully brought together all the elements of the story to reach the conclusion of the story, a lesson that his readers would find important as one journey through life. Wetherell's symbolisms are very simple and uncomplicated and his readers won't find it difficult to understand the mark he wanted to leave them. Ultimately, the bass, though a flat character, is central to the conflict of the story. The importance of the bass is apparent when he says, "...it seemed I would be torn apart by longings..." This signifies that the bass stands for the narrator's values in life, his longing for accomplishment and capture something important for him. Fishing is an important part of the narrator's life. Wetherell makes sure that the readers know this as the narrator prepares for his date with Sheila Mant. The first thing that links the narrator to the importance of fishing in his life is offering Sheila Mant a canoe ride instead of a car ride to go Dixford, where a band will be playing. As he is preparing his canoe, he is seen polishing it, and, "automatically, without thinking about it..." he stuck a fishing rod in the stern. This implies that fishing has always been part of his river trips, and as narrated, he "never went anywhere that summer without a fishing rod." The narrator even takes

the time to tell the readers what he is doing when not trying to impress Sheila. And that is all about fishing. Wetherell ensures that the readers truly feel that fishing is significant to his main character. This indicates that the bass is not just some fish that the narrator wants to catch. The description of how big it could have been indicates how big its importance is. This signifies that all of us have values that we want to protect and the accomplishments we're working on to get.

The conflict of the story does not begin when the bass gets caught in the narrator's line. The conflict begins when Sheila Mant hears splashing sounds made by the bass and comments that "fishing's dumb...(and) boring..." When Sheila voices this out, the narrator is beginning to feel the pressure between protecting what is important for him and his fascination with Sheila Mant. He wants to impress Sheila and definitely fishing would make a dent on his longing to attract her. Thus, the battle begins between the narrator and himself. These conflicting desires escalate as the bass gets caught in his line. As the bass gets caught, he thought of four things, three of which are all about the bass and one is about Sheila Mant. Wetherell, as a master of conflict, creates a scenario by which the readers can feel the narrators tension in making his decision, battling between the choice of the bass or Sheila Mant. The author focuses most of the story on the conflict and the movements of the bass, more in detail than that of Sheila Mant implying that the bass has more importance for the narrator than Sheila Mant. This importance is revealed more during the denouement, where the narrator regrets cutting the line and pretending to be a different person just to please someone he wants to attract. This comes back to the lesson of the story that

we should not change ourselves just to appeal to other people. This shows how grounded the story is to the theme of self-realization and self-acceptance.