

# [Saturday before they cooked and ate it…”](https://assignbuster.com/saturday-before-they-cooked-and-ate-it/)

SaturdayAfternoon by Erskine Caldwell is a short story that conveys just how regularracism and violence had become in a small southern town during the early 20thcentury.

In the short story, the author, Eskrine Caldwell, incorporates indirectcharacterization, and a passive tone. These elements fused together to allowthe reader to experience just how ordinary violence was at this time. Thecharacters that Caldwell creates for the story are pertinent to the story’ssetting and time. Readers can obtain a more in-depth assimilation of eachcharacter reflective upon their actions and mannerisms. Throughout the piece, TomDenny’s inner characterization is built through his attitudes, motives, andactions. In Tom’s everyday life, he comes across as rather careless.

As thetown’s butcher, he sleeps on the meat and produce he sells to his neighbors. “ The tobacco juice splattered on the floormidway between the meat block and cigar box. What little of it dripped on thepiece of rump steak did not matter: most people cleaned their meat before theycooked and ate it.

..” Like other civilians, Tom was a white male in the workingclass, whom despite his exhaustion, wanted to please everybody. Caldwell does afine job of painting a normal day in the life of Tom Denny. “ All the townpeople who had wanted some of Tom’s meat for Saturday dinner had already gotwhat they needed, and it was too early in the day to buy Sunday meat.” Thereaders can see Tom’s daily routine and understand the role he played in hiscommunity and the relationships it has built. Another flat character thereaders are introduced to is Will Maxie. Will Maxie, much like Tom, was acivilian in the town whom many knew to be successful.

Caldwell lays down aseries of characteristics that are connected to both Tom and Will. Will was thebest at his profession, and many could have benefited from his skill, but theygrew envious and decided to hate him instead. “…Will was a pretty smartNegro…. But nobody liked Will…He made more money than Tom and Jim made in thebutcher shop selling people meat.” This quiet Saturday afternoon Caldwellillustrates for his readers abruptly converts into an uprising hate crime. Thereader is snapped into the action just as “…Jim ran in the back door andgrabbed Tom by the shoulders.” Asthe audience is walked through the day in the life of Tom Denny, there is arelationship established between them. Caldwell creates a routine employingrepetition and emphasizing the certain minute actions such as Tom swatting afly out of his face.

These subtle actions, which typically can be overlooked, portray how ordinary the day was. This particular Saturday afternoon beginsquite monotonous, and the lack of events almost extracts a feeling of empathy. As soon as the readers are comfortable with Tom, Caldwell begins anotherjourney that scars the mental image they have developed of him. It is anincredible feature how Caldwell can instantly flip the mind of his readers justas quickly as Tom’s day turned around. Forthe readers, the mob of blood-thirsty white men is appalling.

Jealous white menare out to make an event of publicly assassinating a man, and the readers canonly anticipate the role their character, Tom, will play in it. It is best thatthe story is told from a third party, because of everyone’s role, no matter howbig or small, seems to be important to the cause. The young boy going aroundselling Coke’s for his father, only highlights how normal these events were.

“ There is nothing better to drink on a hot day if the dopes are nice and cool.” A man felt that it was safe enough to have his child out selling items to alarge group of angry men killing an innocent man on a Saturday afternoon. Caldwell takes advantage of this role and inserts his own beliefs of learnedracism and hate through the minor role of a young boy. The violence takingplace in this town was just that normal. Caldwelldoes a great job of fulfilling a wholesome setting and mood throughout thestory by simply describing each characters’ actions and the fitting the minoractions into the current lynching. The story ends by coming back full circle, and the readers and the characters end right back where they would be on anyother day as if nothing important is happening, such as a man being beaten andhung. “ Everything’s slick as a whistle…except my old woman’s got the chills andfever pretty bad again.” All of which features that Caldwell uses an instrumentthat depicts just how nonchalant violence was during this period.