

# [Dancing bear essay](https://assignbuster.com/dancing-bear-essay/)

Thestory culminates in Dieter’s death due to a stroke. A second significant statement made by Vanderhaeghe (173) thatidentifies the nature of this elderly man is attributed to his housekeeper, Mrs. He is at the mercy of a woman who can decidewhen or even if he will be allowed to eat bacon or to smoke a cigarette. While there is certainly some indication in the story that Dieter needs tobe monitored, Mrs. Hax clearly enjoys her responsibilities and takespleasure in thwarting the old man’s desires.

Noting; except the bear was beaten and battered, humiliated, even spat upon”(Vanderhaeghe, 181). He is suggesting that a wild animal feelsor behaves in much the same way that a human does. They are no longer masters of their own fate or destiny. What went on in the oldbastard’s head if anything? Hismouth had opened as if he were about to speak. He has notsucceeded in being embraced by the bear but is embraced by the very womanwho torments him. What is significant about this quotation is that it links the longforgotten dancing bear to Dieter himself.

Hax, “ It was going to be one of those days. Lear is treated similarly by the daughters he gave the power tocontrol his kingdom. Again, in King Lear, the king is reduced to poverty by his daughtersand is humiliated by them, Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire are my daughters: I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness; I never gave you kingdom, called you children, you owe me no subscription…. Nevertheless, he knows himselfto be worthy of respect, which he does not receive from Mrs. Hax.

Similarly, in Shakespeare’s (855) King Lear, his daughter, Goneril, says, “ come, sir, I would have you make use of that good wisdom, whereof Iknow you are fraught; and put away these dispositions, that of latetransform you from what you rightly are. ” Just as Dieter Bethge, theelderly man in “ The Dancing Bear” is subject to the domination of a womanwho finds him to be peculiar and difficult, so does Lear find that he hasplaced himself in the hands of ungrateful daughters, who having receivedcontrol of his kingdom are no longer interested in allowing him to act astheir father or superior.

In Shakespeare’s (896) play, Lear’s good daughter Cordelia comes torescue her father from the fate imposed on him by her ungrateful sisters. From her, Lear learns the truth, that “ her voice was ever soft, gentle, andlow, an excellent thing in a woman” (Shakespeare, 896). It is a sadsituation and one in which the petty tyranny of a housekeeper makes an oldand ill man miserable. Dieter has lost the ability to take care of himself and is impotentin the face of the mean and petty behavior of Mrs. Hax.

Once more, the reader is remindedthat there are some very strong similarities in the situation of these twomen. Dieter is just an old man whose life is coming to an endand who is no longer sufficiently valued by his only child. Hax, I think it best if my fatherphones only on important matters, at your discretion” (Vanderhaeghe, 178). Neither is particularly loved or valued by hisoffspring, although in the case of Lear the reader recognizes that there isone daughter, Cordelia, who does genuinely care for and respect her father.

Inthis essay, a number of quotations from the short story will be analyzedand linked to the central theme of the story, which focuses on theimpotence of the older man whose body no longer serves him and who is verymuch at the mercy of others, including an uninvolved son and a housekeeperwho treats him with unrelieved contempt. A bear who had lived in shame andimpotence. ” By attributing human characteristics or reactions such asshame and impotence to an animal, the author is engaged inanthropomorphizing attribution.

Hax, who was told by his son, “ Mrs. He is adifficult old man as was Lear but he is still worthy of respect and doesnot deserve the cruel treatment that Mrs. Hax regularly hands out to him ona regular basis. What made him so peculiar, so difficult attimes like these? ” This is a symbolic statement because it demonstratesthat the woman selected to care for this man is not interested in his well-being and regards him as difficult at best. Ed. Similarly, Shakespeare’s (865) Lear is informed that his daughters nolonger have any respect for him and that he will no longer be allowed to doas he pleases, “ Your son and daughter found this trespass worth the shamewhich here it suffers.”

Just as Dieter has a son who no longer wishes tospeak to his father except on very rare occasions, so does Lear havedaughters who find there is no room for this once powerful king in thecastles that he has given to them. 845-897. Vanderhaeghe, Guy. “ The Dancing Bear. ” Man Descending. In this, he is like WilliamShakespeare’s King Lear who is described as, the best and soundest of his time hath been but rash; then we must look to receive from his age, not alone the imperfections of long engraffed condition, but therewithal the unruly waywardness that infirm and choleric years bring with them (Shakespeare, 85 ).

In recalling the dancing bear, Dieter expects that he will learn somefundamental truth. New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1985. Dieter is not so fortunate. He is unable tocontrol even the simplest aspect of his life such as being able to decidewhat he wants for breakfast. Like Dieter, Learexperiences a stroke or heart attack and dies, having learned all too latethat his own behavior is responsible for the death of his daughters. There is a similarity between the fate of Dieterand Shakespeare’s Lear. 171-186. Dieter has been placed in the hands ofMrs.

Literary Analysis: “ The Dancing Bear” Guy Vanderhaeghe (171) describes in “ The Dancing Bear” an old man who” lay sleeping on the taut red rubber sheet as if he were some specimenmounted and pinned there to dry. ” With this introduction, the theme of thestory is established via figurative language which likens the elderly manto some insect that has been captured, killed, and mounted for display. Works CitedShakespeare, William. This recollectionforeshadows an event – the falling of Dieter after his stroke into the openand waiting arms of Mrs. Hax. He says, “ And when the music stopped, the bear hadopened his arms very wide in a gesture of friendship and welcome.

In terms of the theme of thestory, this reflects the isolation of the elderly man and his acknowledgedloss of control over some of his behavior. The two old men are therefore in much the same position with respectto their children. However, if Lear’s tragedy is written on a grandand epic scale, Dieter’s tragedy is far more intimate, ordinary, andunderstandable.

Dieter isabused when he asserts the right to eat corn flakes rather than porridgeand is made to feel that he is a dirty old man who has no authority in hisown home. He is truly abandoned by his son and left atthe mercy of a woman whom he knows to be careless with “ his plates, hisfeelings” (Vanderhaeghe, 179). The shame he felt at watching “ such an indignity, such completeindifference to the rightful pride of the bear” is like the shame he feelsin observing his own condition and his subjection to the whims and pettymeanness of a woman who is paid to care for him (Vanderhaeghe, 181).

Dieter has not learned the special truththat the bear may have been able to confide only in him. Briefly, Vanderhaeghe’s story moves from the beginning of what seemsto be a fairly typical day in the life of Dieter Bethge, who is locked in abattle of wills with his petty and cruel housekeeper/caretaker, Mrs. Hax. Dieter is frail physically and given to moments in which his mentalfunctions are erratic or even disordered. “ King Lear. ” Shakespeare. Running throughout “ The Dancing Bear” is Dieter’s memory of a trainedbear that danced to the music of a violin in a market in Romania when Dieter was a child.

A third significant quotation from “ The Dancing Bear” (175) describesthe bear that the younger Dieter saw his father skin, “ There had beenanother bear; he was sure of it. Hardin Craig. Thedancing bear can only dance when the violin is playing and is abused by hiskeeper when he chooses to dance alone for his own pleasure. In aparticularly telling statement, Dieter states that “ his mind’s eye had seenthe bear suddenly strike, revenge himself.

Vanderhaeghe’s short story catalogs the death of an old man who hasbeen all but abandoned by his only son and for whom life is by and large adaily struggle for some type of self-respect or dignity. Here I stand, your slave, a poor, infirm, weak, and despised old man (Shakespeare, 87 ). The bear, Dieter, and Lear are like one another in their dependence onothers. And that was exactly whatDieter had expected all along” (Vanderhaeghe, 185). Both of these older male characters have lostcontrol over the external realities of their lives and are thereforevulnerable to the dictates of others who may not have their best interestsat heart.

Perhaps moresignificantly, this describes the feelings of the elderly man who himself,” lives in shame and impotence” because of the frailty of his body and mind(Vanderhaeghe, 175). Lear’s royal prerogatives are also treatedcarelessly by the very daughters whose flattery gained them adisproportionate share of his kingdom. On those occasions when Dieterattempts to rebel against Mrs. Hax’s harsh treatment, he is alsopsychologically beaten, battered, and humiliated in the same the way as wasthe bear. Chicago: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1952.

Thematically, the language of the two quotationslinks each of these actors. Inthis he is different from Dieter, whose death does not look like it willaffect his son and it will affect Mrs. Hax only to the degree that she willneed to find another job. As thestory progresses, a triggered memory of a trained dancing bear from hischildhood leads Dieter to rebel against Mrs. Hax and his situation. Dieter identifies with the bear whose only wrongdoingwas that he enjoyed dancing without the music provided by his keeper. Yet nothing happened.