

# Bullet in the brain

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



English 102 Professor February 23, 2013 Bullet in the Brain The short story “Bullet in the Brain” is a story about a character with a very distinct persona. The main character, Anders, is one who is established as being an odd character from the very beginning. The setting takes place in a bank that is soon to be bombarded by robbers wearing ski masks. Being a book critic, Anders lets his profession override his critical thinking skills during the robbery. This puts the bank robber’s patience to test, ultimately leading to Anders’ death at the end of the story.

In the opening paragraph of the story, the author begins by explaining Anders’ character as “a book critic known for the weary, elegant savagery with which he dispatched almost everything he reviewed” (542). The author begins by telling us this so we can get a grasp on what kind of personality traits the character has. This is a guarantee that everything coming out of Anders’ mouth will be something critical, which helps put us in the mindset for what is to come.

Examining Anders’ critical personality traits, the way he interacts with others, and even his dying thoughts, we can begin to understand why his profession of being a book critic has put such a burden upon his life, ultimately placing him on the receiving end of a bullet in the brain. Taking a look at some of Anders’ mannerisms, we can see how he takes his occupation of being a book critic and lets it overtake his daily living. Take, for instance, the scene when one of the tellers puts her “POSITION CLOSED” sign in her window. Anders sarcastically says to the ladies in line “Tragic, really.

If they're not chopping off the wrong leg, or bombing your ancestral village, they're closing their positions" (542). This looks as if it was torn from a scene right out of a movie or a book, because what does closing your bank station a few minutes early have to do with such dramatic instances as Anders mentions above? If I were one of the two ladies standing in front of him in line, I would think that he is a bit on the crazy side. It's not every day that you run into someone with as much satire in their word use, and Anders was overdramatizing the situation entirely.

As soon as the two robbers enter the bank wearing business suits and ski masks, threatening the customers and tellers inside the bank, Anders reacts as if he is watching a movie or a play by blatantly stating " Great skit, eh? The stern, brass-knuckledpoetryof the dangerous classes" (542). It's almost as if he is sitting there watching this whole scene happen from the critic's VIP seat because who, in their right mind, would openly say something this taunting in the face of death? These two robbers have the power to take Anders' life at the pull of a trigger and he is laughing in their faces.

His word use in the above quote also makes me question his sanity. Who talks like that in everyday conversation? Anders has been caught up in playing the role of a critic for so long that he doesn't realize that life, in fact, isn't a well-played-out movie. One minute, he is exaggerating the severity of the situation when the teller closes her station, and the next minute he is laughing in the face of the robber when he has a gun held at his throat. This in itself shows that Anders' doesn't fully understand the severity of the situation.

He may have actually believed that it was all just an act judging by the way he reacted. Anders then found humor in the scene painted on the bank's ceiling, but it isn't until the robber says " Fuck with me again, you're history. Capiche? " (543) that Anders lost it. He thinks that the use of the word ' capiche' was the funniest thing he has heard all day, and at that precise moment he got shot in the head. It is during the last half of the story, after Anders gets shot in the head, that his character development is better understood.

As the bullet passes through his brain, his life flashes before his eyes. Instead of remembering all of the good parts of his life, such as his family and his first love, he recalls the one thing in life that shaped him into the person that he is today. He remembers being out on a baseball field as kids and hearing Coyle's cousin speak the life changing words " Short's the best position they is" (545). Anders was so entranced by these six words that it caused a new fascination that he never yet knew until this point. These words were the only things he remembered as he was put to death.

Why is this? It is because that particular day while standing in the baseball field, Anders discovered his fascination with criticism. This is the turning point in Anders' life because if it weren't for Coyle's cousin using such captivating word use that sparked much admiration and awe in Anders' brain, maybe he wouldn't have become a book critic. If he didn't become a book critic, then his life wouldn't have been so dramatically overtaken by his job, making him go crazy and smart off to the armed robbers, getting himself shot in the head.

Anders' love for criticism was so deep, that he let it control every aspect of his life beginning at a young age. What may have started as an innocent passion for something, turned into a dangerous obsession. It was the bank robber who pulled the trigger, but it was Anders' lack of self-control that caused the robber to lose patience and take his life. Examining Anders' critical personality and how it was developed, the way he interacted with others in public, and the last thoughts he had as he was shot in the head, we understand what exactly caused him to receive a bullet in the brain.