

How tobias wolff
embodies the alpha-
male persona in
'hunters in the snow'



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Frank in Tobias Wolff's short story "Hunters in the Snow" embodies the persona of an alpha-male who builds strength as his dialogue and actions become progressively overbearing and as the plot advances.

Frank's parade of abuses allows him to assert his authority over the group. For example, when they arrive at the hunting field, and Tub starts complaining, Frank snaps, "Stop bitching, Tub. Get centered" (188). Playing the father role in the group, Frank punishes Tub when he steps out of line and makes his dominance apparent. In the eyes of Kenny, who is merely a follower, Frank is an exemplary bully whom Kenny tries to imitate, when he repeats "Centered" to Tub in a mocking manner (188). Moreover, Frank temporarily uses Kenny to weaken Tub as they target his weight problem, by saying, "you haven't seen your own balls in ten years" (189). Playing to the immature personality of Kenny, who "doubles over laughing" after hearing the comment, Frank begins to realize that insults are more effective in his quest to become the significant leader. Furthermore, after Tub slips and drops Kenny after he is shot, Frank yells, "You fat moron...You aren't good for didly" (195). Now subjecting himself only to insults, Frank is no longer competing with the dominance of Kenny and uses that to lower the status of Tub. The use of harsh words such as "fat" portrays the measures Frank will take to become the leader.

The initial vocal abuses progress into manipulative actions as Frank begins to gain more power. For example, after they stop to drink coffee, Frank confides in Tub, saying "Just between us...I think I'm going to be leaving Nancy" (197). The bond created upon the sharing of this secret is a calculated device used by Frank to ensure Tub gains his trust. This formation of trust is used by

Frank to confirm his role as a leader, who now has complete control of the fate of Kenny. The addition of physical touch in the scene, such as Frank “laid his hand on Tub’s arm” or “he squeezed Tub’s wrist” creates even more of the connection Frank is looking for to gain Tub’s trust. Since Tub trusts Frank, he will not object to the decisions he makes, even if they are irrational and fatal. Furthermore, Frank uses that built trust to attack Tub and further weaken his position in the situation. For instance, after Tub admits to his overeating disorder, Frank tells the waitress. “ ‘ Bring four order of pancakes, plenty of butter and syrup’ ” (200). Rather than support his friend in fixing the problem, Frank begins to “reward” Tub for accepting him as a leader and as a positive reward, Frank feeds Tub’s insecurities. After the order of pancakes for Tub arrives, Frank “leaned forward on his elbows and rested his chin in one hand” (200). His actions, which mirror those of an admirer or spectator, and admittances that the act of Tub eating pancakes messily is “beautiful” convey his sheer enjoyment of the power he has gained and his self-satisfaction (200).

Kenny and Tub play a role as foils of Frank, as their immature and insecure personalities are overpowered by Frank’s display of domination. His intimidating words, and conniving actions mold the plot into Frank’s intentions and become increasingly severe as the situation deliberately becomes under his control. Although Frank maybe be initially dismissed as the responsible, caring figure towards Kenny and Tub, he is actually a manipulative friend who preys on his friend’s weaknesses in order to get what he wants.