

Consider the lobster

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Have you ever thought about how the food you're about to eat was prepared? I know I rarely do, and many of us never pay any mind to what exactly is on our plate. David Foster Wallace's essay will almost definitely make you ask yourself a few questions regarding meat consumption. His piece talks about the controversy behind killing lobsters and questions people's general views on that matter, making his audience think about morality.

After reading "Consider the Lobster" I couldn't help but think how ridiculous it is to state that lobsters don't feel pain, and even more ridiculous to use such statement in order to make people think that they're not actually hurting the lobsters. It's said that lobsters' brains don't let them feel pain, and that's what makes the killing of them okay for a lot of people (308). I believe that every creature is capable of experiencing at least some sort of physical discomfort. I don't know about insects, but all animals seem to feel pain just as we, humans, do.

To me, the best proof that lobsters do actually feel pain is the author's argument that they behave "very much as you or I would behave if we were plunged into boiling water" (310, Wallace). People notice the lobster's panicky reaction to being thrown into the extremely hot kettle and often times decide to leave the room. I think that by doing so, they acknowledge that the animal is suffering and decide to wait it out so that it feels less like they're a part of the process. I don't think I would ever be able to kill a lobster.

I've always been very sensitive to animals being subjected to pain; I even have problems with trying to go fishing whenever my uncle asks me to. I can't look at the fish suffocating and jumping all over the place. Therefore,

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I'm completely convinced that I would never take a part in the infliction of pain on animals. Not directly at least. But when I think about it, I do take some part in it, by consuming meat. Does the fact that I don't personally kill my own chickens or turkeys really make me a better person than the people who prepare their own lobster?

Just because I don't do it myself shouldn't suggest I'm less guilty. I would, of course, never slaughter any animal, but I buy the meat anyway, even though I know exactly how it's done and what kind of psychological and physical torture those animals go through. And honestly, I have given it much thought, but I do not have anything to say in my defense. I've watched many documentaries revealing the horrible ways in which animals are slaughtered. And sure enough, after watching that, I didn't eat meat for a few weeks.

But once the videos started slowly fading away in my memory and weren't as vivid, I got right back into the meat eating habit. The shock I experienced after first seeing the documentary has slowly passed and allowed me to push it to the back of my mind. There are a lot of times when I'm about to take a bite of meat and those horrid images go through my mind. Once that happens I just simply push them out and force myself to think about something else.

I feel like that's a bit hypocritical of me, since I think of myself as a person who would never harm an animal, but in reality, I choose to ignore that I am, in fact, harming them in some way. However, I'm almost certain that if I were to watch those videos every day or face the actual process and watch it with my own eyes, I'd have a rather hard time getting rid of the shock and would

become vegetarian right away. It's the fact that I'm not constantly reminded of it, that makes me not think about it as much.

The author discusses various ways in which lobsters are killed. Some of them are simply horrifying. He mentions that some cooks “ put the lobster in cold saltwater and then very slowly bring it up to full boil”(311). How could that possibly be a more humane way to prepare a lobster? To me, it seems like such process only makes the animal's suffering worse and as the author says: “ lobsters boiled incrementally often display a whole bonus set of gruesome, convulsionlike reactions thats you don't see in regular boiling”(311).

Wallace also talks about cooks who poke wholes in the lobsters and then microwave them alive or tear off the claws and tail. It makes me wonder: are those cooks cruel people? Or just people who have to do their jobs? If they're just doing their jobs however, how could they not want to try and do it as least painfully as possible? It's very hard for me to understand how could someone be capable of microwaving an animal alive. And it's dreadful to me. Something really admirable about this essay is how much information was included in it.

The reading is composed of everything you might ever want to know about lobsters; where they came from, how long they've been around, how they're prepared and consumed and the controversy behind it. Wallace has evidently spent an enormous amount of time working on this piece. One fact that I found very interesting was that “ up until sometime in the 1800s, lobster was literally low-class food, eaten only by the poor and institutionalized”(302). It's amazing to think how with time,

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the culture evolves and adapts completely new norms. Feeding lobsters to inmates used to be against the law and nowadays it's simply considered a delicacy.

It only makes me wonder what will people see it as in another hundred years, and how much will our perception have changed. Reading David Foster Wallace's essay on the Maine Lobster Festival was surprisingly grasping to me. His sudden change of subject, from describing how the festival is prepared and celebrated, to discussing the ethics of killing and consuming our food made his writing very interesting and captivating. His writing was very effective and caused me to consider my choices, which I probably wouldn't have done otherwise.