

Toenails

Literature



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Toenails s Why does he go to the library every Wednesday? What group does he want be a part of when he retires? Do you think the narrator means it? He goes to the library every Wednesday to take a break from his medical practice because he believes that doctors must take out time for them and indulge in activities that please them. When he retires, he wants to be a part of elderly people that gather in the public library “ to read or sleep beneath the world’s newspapers...” (Selzer, p. 65) I think the narrator actually means it because the way he studies them closely shows that he likes to be with them.

2. The narrator explains the problem in the first two pages. What advice does he give to " the young doctor"?

The narrator advises “ the young doctor” to take leave from his medical duties at least once a week because there “ is a danger in becoming too absorbed in Anatomy.” (p. 64) He believes that if doctors do not take a break from their routine medical practice then either they would get bored within a year; or they would fall ill themselves.

3. The narrator notices Neckerchief wincing as he walks. What is his problem?

What does the narrator decide to do? What does this reveal of the narrator?

The narrator notices the pain on the face of Neckerchief and asks him about the cause of the pain. Neckerchief tells him that his overgrown toenails are making it impossible for him to walk. The narrator decides quickly to go back to his office and get the toenail cutters. This reveals the compassionate aspect of the narrator’s personality. It also shows that although he vows to be on a break from his medical practice on Wednesdays, he still attends to a person in need of medical help.

4. " What are you doing here?" said my nurse. " Its Wednesday afternoon. People are just supposed to die on Wednesday afternoon."

" I need my toenail cutters. Ill bring them back tomorrow."

" The last time you took something out of here I didnt see it for six months."

From this little glimpse, what can we assume about their relationship?

From this little glimpse, it seems that the narrator and the nurse do not have a formal professional relationship. There is humor and irony in the tone of the nurse, which shows that they share a candid and informal relationship.

5. What is the climax? How does he solve the problem?

The climax of the story is the narrator's discovery of the underlying cause of pain to Neckerchief. It is at this point of the story where the readers wonder what step the narrator will take. Whether he would ignore it and do nothing about Neckerchief's pain, or being a doctor he would take some sort of action. Despite being a Wednesday, the narrator responds to a person in need of medical help and decides to cut his toenails.

6. So what is the theme?

The theme of the story is that a doctor who regularly takes a break from his medical duties every Wednesday ends up helping elderly persons because it simply gives him a good feeling.

7. Does the theme represent a truth in life?

Yes. The theme represents a truth in life because there are people in this world like the narrator of this short story that believe in helping others for their personal satisfaction. The narrator voluntarily helped the elderly persons because he felt empathic and compassionate towards them. This story represents an individual with high moral values who renders his services to elderly people even on a day when he takes a break from his

usual medical practice.

References

Selzer, R. (1982). *Letters to a young doctor*. New York: Simon & Schuster.