

Tobias is based on
wealth; therefore, he
is



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Tobias Wolff's "The Rich Brother" is a story of two brothers, Donald and Pete. These brothers have very contrasting lifestyles; Pete is a successful businessman with a wife and kids.

Donald, on the other hand, is an outcast. He's unemployed and irresponsible. He lives his life as a vagabond. Despite these facts, the successful brother, Pete, still lacks the self-esteem he desperately craves. Therefore he tries to make his brother, Donald, feel foolish with every chance he gets. Pete talks to Donald in a very condescending and patronizing manner. For example, when Donald spills a soda in Pete's car, Pete responds sarcastically, "Great, just great" (293).

He then later yells at Donald for not getting gas. He says to Donald, "Why don't you use your head? What if we run out?" (302). Shortly after the pop-spilling incident takes place, Pete begins to pester Donald about explaining how he got kicked out of the religious community. Donald says to Pete, "You have this compulsion to make me look foolish" (295). Pete replies that Donald makes himself look foolish. Pete believes his ethics and morals are superior to Donald's. Pete believes that a person should be responsible and that success is based on wealth; Therefore, he is very frugal with his money and believes it is irresponsible to just give it away. So when Donald gives a hundred dollars to a stranger (Mick Webster), Pete sharply says "Why did you give it the money to him? A hundred dollars.

Gone. Just like that. I worked for that money, Donald" (303). Pete enjoys taking care of Donald (financially). This gives him a feeling of control and power.

It gives him the self-esteem that he desires. He tries to make Donald feel guilty for borrowing money from him. He tells Donald, " You won't pay me back. You can't. You don't know how" (304). With condescending comments such as these, Pete lowers Donald's worth in order to raise his own worth.

As the story progresses, Donald begins to understand why Pete acts harshly towards him. He says, " I know why you do it. It's because you have no purpose in life. You're afraid to relate to people who do, so you make fun of them" (295). Pete then tells Donald that he had a dream with him in it. He says, " There was something wrong with me, and you were helping out. Taking care of me." (297).

This dream symbolizes Pete's emotional dependency on Donald in real life. Because of Pete's own insecurities, he latches on to Donald and exposes Donald's faults to selfishly improve his own self-esteem. He makes disdainful comments whenever he's given the chance. He tries to make his brother feel inferior in every way possible (financially, ethically, morally).

Pete is a good example of a person who has every material position but still isn't satisfied with their life. Whereas his brother, Donald, has no material possessions but seems content with the life he's living.