

# ["butcher bird” by wallace stegner essay sample](https://assignbuster.com/butcher-bird-by-wallace-stegner-essay-sample/)

## “ Butcher Bird” by Wallace Stegner Essay Sample

People often have a desire or need for power and control, the way people go about to achieve this determines if they are successful. In the short story “ Butcher Bird” written by Wallace Stegner, Mr. Garfield won the respect of his peers by engaging in the conversation and acting polite and courteous to his wife and guests. On the other hand Harry lost his power and control by being negative, stubborn and cruel. Not only did Harry lose the respect of his peers he also lost respect from his son. Individuals gain power and control through the respect and admiration of their peers.

Husbands often believe they have to have total control over their wives and children to feel comfortable with themselves. This is common with the manner Harry treats his family. Harry dictates the atmosphere of his house and the way his family acts depending on how he feels. If it is “ rain(ing) everything would be fine, (Harry) would hum under his breath getting breakfast, maybe let (Sonny) drive the stoneboat or ride the mare down to the Larsen’s for mail”. Although “ if it was hot wind (Sonny and Harry’s wife) (would) have to walk soft and speak softer and it would (not) be any fun”. Not only does Harry control his family in his own house but he brings this attitude into the homes of others. When Sonny is inspecting the gramophone in the Garfield’s house by “ wiggling the big horn to see if it was loose or screwed in” Harry recognized that Sonny was enjoying himself so he “ warned (him) sharply to keep his hands off”. This act of control illustrates the amount of insecurity that Harry possesses which paints a clear picture of why he has this immense need for control and power.

People who treat others with respect gain their interest and in-turn have a vast influence over their opinion and judgment. This is exemplified of how Mr. Garfield conducts himself in the presence of others. Mr. Garfield is a kind, sensitive and respectful person. He has a calm and soothing voice allowing the people he talks with to open up, “(lose) (their) shyness and (feel) no embarrassment at all”. Being the sensitive man that he is, he automatically becomes the branch of Harry’s wife that is lacking from Harry. Mr. Garfield brings up several beliefs that he feels strongly for such as his “ hate (for) killing things” and his love for music.

Not until he reaches the topic of trees does he have the full attention of Harry’s wife. He explains how “ trees are the breath of life to him” and if “(they) would (not) grow then he should (not) stick it (in the prairies)”. Harry’s wife “ would give anything for (trees) in her (yard) and after listening to how highly Mr. Garfield thought of trees she asked Harry if he “ could take (her) over to the Old-Man-On-His-Back to get some willow strips”. Because Mr. Garfield gave Harry’s wife his full attention and respected what she had to say he indirectly had an influence over her opinion and desire for trees. This indirect influence over her opinion ultimately lead to a certain amount of control and power for Mr. Garfield over Harry’s wife.

As a wife experiences a way of life that she enjoys and is different then her present it becomes extremely difficult to adjust back to her normal way of life. Consequently a negative attitude and a loss of respect to her husband will accompany her as she makes this adjustment. Harry’s wife admired Mr. Garfield and enjoyed being in his company. She “ thought that he was very nice” and realized he was a sensitive man by his love for trees and nature. Harry despised Mr. Garfield and had completely opposite thoughts from his wife. He believed Mr. Garfield was a “ sanctimonious old mudhen, braying about his luv-ly luv-ly trees” while his wife thought “ they (were) only trying to make a home”. During the ride home from the Garfield’s, Harry “ was in heavy amazement” when he realized his wife actually liked them. He cruelly mocks Mr. Garfield to his wife about how optimistic he is towards growing trees on the prairies and how he is polite to his wife. Harry believes that if he talks of Mr. Garfield as a wimp and a dreamer his wife will follow him and agree thus regaining the control he had before they met the Garfields.

Harry’s wife ignores his desperate attempt to regain control and taunts him by asking him “ to be more like Mr. Garfield (because) he (is) such a nice man”. This makes Harry fume with anger and in a pure desperation of control he grabs Sonny’s “. 22 gun” that was given to him by Mr. Garfield along with a “ promise never to shoot anything but the bloodthirsty – animals the cruel ones like Hawks and weasels and he shoots a “ white breasted sparrow”. He shoots this harmless bird so he could feel like he had control over Mr. Garfield and his rules. Sonny ran and picked up the bird and asked “ Ma what will I do with it?”. By Sonny asking his mother what to do Harry lost respect from his son. After Harry’s wife met the Garfields she realized that she does not have to be controlled by her husband and she has the right to be treated with respect.

Control and power is a direct relationship with the respect and admiration of a person’s peers. This method was used by Mr. Garfield and it turned out to be more successful then that of Harry’s method of being stubborn and cruel.