

# "tell them not to kill me" by juan rulfo essay sample

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



## **“ Tell Them Not to Kill Me” by Juan Rulfo Essay Sample**

Juan Rulfo's " Tell Them Not to Kill Me" may just look like an ordinary novel about an old man's plea or request for salvation of his life; however, by closely looking at the use of language (style, dialogue, register, etc.) and the novel's structure, images and symbols, it can be observed or deduced that there are correlations between the main theme of the work or to the autobiography of the author's father and how the author sees life. Juan Nepomuceno Carlos Perez Vizcaino Rulfo, commonly known as Juan Rulfo is one of the authors whose works are greatly affected or influenced by his personal life and experiences. The theme in Juan Rulfo's " Tell Them Not to Kill Me" is about his personal view or experiences about life, more specifically about the death of his father.

Juan Rulfo is a member of a family of landowners, and was born in Sayula, a small province in Jalisco. He spent most of his childhood life living in an atmosphere of political unrest, erosion and war. Such living atmosphere or environment shaped his writing style, and later on influenced or served as the foundation of most of his fiction. Juan Rulfo's family greatly suffered from financial problems due to the wars and destructions in the year 1910, especially in 1920. These were the times when the Mexican Revolution and Cristero Rebellion aggravated the widespread destruction, increasing turmoil and melancholy over the land. Unfortunately for Juan Rulfo, during these troubled times, he had lost some of his loved ones. Juan Rulfo's two uncles, including his beloved father, were murdered. In addition to this, his mother died in the year 1927 because of a heart attack. These incidents also shaped

Juan Rulfo's works and style, as seen in his stories "El llano en llamas" and "La noche que lo dejaron". More specifically, his father's murder greatly influenced and molded Juan Rulfo's "Tell Them Not to Kill Me".

From the very beginning of the novel, the readers would already see the emphasis given by the author's structure or plot to the main theme of the story. "Tell them not to kill me, Justino! Tell them please for God's sake" (p. 83). Here, the story starts with the old man's plea, creating an atmosphere of pity and sympathy over the old man. In addition to this, it can be a foreshadowing of the old man's probable death in the later parts or in the end of the story. In addition to this, the old man's son's reply, Justino, also shows a foreshadowing of what his contributions may be in the salvation of his father. "I can't. There's a sergeant there who doesn't want to hear anything about you" (p. 83). From these statements, the readers would somehow see that the son wouldn't be able to do about his father's death, and it seems as if the death of the old man is inevitable or his salvation cannot be mediated by anybody. Just like the death of the author's father, Juan Rulfo was not able to do something about it. The culprit or the murderer was not found and tried. No justice seemed to have been placed on the murderer and no justice was obtained by the author or his father. Somehow, the novel or the story also shows the dreams of the author and how he wished he could catch the man who killed his father, even if it had already happened a long time ago; even if the murderer is already an old man.

The development of the structure of the story or the plot also gives emphasis about the death that seems to be nearing the old man and his will to live. "

Now that he knew they were really going to kill him, all he could feel was his great desire to stay alive, like a recently resuscitated man" (p. 84). The old man even uses his current status as a basis to defend his life, "...tell him how old I am- How little I'm worth", and uses the moral or spiritual part of a man to be saved from certain death " Tell him to do it for the blessed salvation of his soul" (p. 84). However, certain themes or symbolism show that the consequences of an individual's actions are inevitable. As the plot introduces the history of the old man as it reaches its climax, the author is able to illustrate how death is inevitable; inevitable death is illustrated in a recurring fashion from one part to the other. " Who would've thought that old business that happened so long ago and that was buried the way he thought it was would turn up? That business when he had to kill Don Lupe" (p. 84).

" So it happened a long time ago and ought to be forgotten by now, but I guess it's not" (p. 85). " And not they've come for him when he no longer expected anyone, confident that people had forgotten all about it" (p. 86). Somehow, the author wants to emphasize that his father's death cannot be avoided and it cannot be undone; just like the consequences of the old man's actions or the sentence that he should be receiving. Some symbols somehow support this and gives emphasize to it. "... During the day the hole was stopped up and at night it was opened again" (p. 85). The hole represents the problem or the miseries of the old man; empty, dark, and could instantly swallow life in it. Day represents the life of the old man, or the act of killing Don Lupe during his youth, whereas the night symbolizes his

life at old age where the penalty or costs of his actions become evident again.

Symbols and ironies of the past and the present show correlations that emphasize the theme of the story. "...His stock that before had lived just smelling the grass without being able to taste it" (p. 85). On this dialogue, the author illustrates how the old man tried to cherish the life that he had borrowed by running away. It somehow show how the old man kept his hope of being saved from the crime that he did. On the contrary, he is actually not saved from it and that he was only keeping a false hope until the present. He was trying to cherish his life that he thought would last till the day he would die naturally. That was he thought. In reality, he was just merely extending his time or his life; simply smelling it but not actually tasting it. In the present, this realization becomes more imminent. " Sixty years of living on it, of holding it tight in his hands, of tasting it like one tastes the flavor of meat" (p. 87). Again, the old man was trying to hold on to dear life. He tried his best in order to be free from prosecution and from the penalty of his crime.

Yet again, he realizes that his efforts were in awe. " For a long time he'd been crumbling it with his eyes, savoring each pieces as if it were the last one, almost knowing it would be the last" (p. 87). Yet again, the old man's death as a consequence of killing somebody continuous to hold strong, with every beat of the second counting, becomes closer and closer. " He'd seen them for the first time at nightfall, that dusky hour when everything seems scorched" (p. 88). From this dialogue or statement, the readers would see how the night becomes a symbol or a correlation of the past to the present.

Somehow, it seems as if the author laid these symbols to the readers to see how an individual's present life is affected by his past life. Just like how the author's writing style or present life is being affected by his experiences of the past. On a different perspective, readers could see that somehow, the author is still unable to overcome the death of his father and that he is still being haunted by his past; just like how the old man was being haunted by his crime. "As time goes by you seem... try to forget it... what you can't forget is finding out that the one who did it is still alive" (p. 90). Also, just like colonel, the author indeed unable to forget his father's death.

Comparing the reason for the death of the old man and the death of the author's father, a certain irony can be observed. "You'll have to pay for it, if you kill them" (p. 85). The concept of "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" shows that the reason of the old man's death is reasonable. Moreover, it can be said that he is bound to die or to pay for his actions and cannot simply run away from it. However, the death of the author's father is different. The author's father was murdered, exactly opposite to the old man's case. If a correlation is deduced from these two deaths, it can be said that the old man killed the author's father. In addition to this, it can be a message where the author seems to wish that his father's killer would be killed too.

The capture of the old man becomes the author's way of looking at life and how justice could be served to those who really needed it. It is as if he was trying to appeal to the audience or the readers that his father's death, just like the death of colonel's father should be given justice even if it already

happened a long time ago. In addition to this, the story illustrates how the old man was interrogated by the colonel or by the sergeant. His past life, settlement and actions were asked. With every question, they were able to obtain confessions from the old man who was trying to buy his life through repentance and through forgiveness of his sin. " I've already paid, colonel... let the Lord pardon me... don't kill me" (p. 90). The old man continued to persuade the colonel's moral judgment to forgive him because he had already suffered too long. This emphasizes the author's view regarding the confession of his father's murderer. Just like the colonel, the author wanted to make sure that he had the right culprit and is able to obtain justice from the right man responsible for his father's death.

In the last part of the story, justice was served and the old man was shot to death, something that the author was trying to obtain as payment for his father's death. " Finally, now, he'd been quieted" (p. 90). The author's hope about his own life and his experiences can also be seen as symbolized in the last part of the novel. The author wanted to obtain justice so that finally, he could live in peace and be free from the hands of the past. Colonel wanted the old man to pay for his crime and die. On the other hand, the author wanted the pain of the past to die. " Your daughter-in-law and grandchildren will miss you" (p. 91). Somehow, the author expresses his feelings towards his father in the last part of the novel. In the beginning, the author's experiences introduced and shaped the story while in the end, the author's hopes and dreams gave it life.

## References

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