

”how to build a slaughterhouse” by richard selzer essay sample

[Countries](#), [Germany](#)



The short story "How to Build a Slaughterhouse" by Richard Selzer, can be looked at as a metaphor for the Nazi interment camps. The author portrays the slaughterhouse as a very uniform killing factory, much like the interment camps in Nazi Germany. The workers are so numb to the killing of the cows, that they act like killing an animal isn't a big deal. This is called phisic doubling.

The slaughtering of the cows is a very organized process with each man having his own job. The most important job of all the workers is the man who actually kills the cow. "The throat slitter is ready, it is clear that he is the star"(118). Selzer describes the throat slitter as a man with blonde hair and blue eyes, which is a connection to the Nazis and the perfect Arian race. The slitter has become numb to killing the cows to the point where he doesn't even hesitate to kill the cows. Like the German soldiers who called the Jews units, the workers never call the animals cows. The reason for this is that the brain makes it easier to kill something if you refer to them as something less than human. When the brain does this it is called phisic doubling.

When the narrator of the short story describes his ideal slaughterhouse, it is much different to a normal one. He would make his with natural stone, arches, an open roof, and a wide pasture for the cows to eat. He thinks that this would be a better way to kill the animals because it gives them a better living condition. This is just his brains way of phisic doubling. No matter how the slaughterhouse is built, the cow still ends up dead. So does it even matter how well they are treated before they die?

Through this short essay Selzer is trying to show how easy it was for the Nazi soldiers to kill the Jews. When they stop thinking that the Jews, or in this case cows are less than human, it makes them easier to kill. And when it makes them easy to kill, the workers don't feel so bad about killing hundreds of "units" every day, and also makes the workers feel less guilty about killing.