

Character analysis of sykes

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"Sweat" still brings to mind the Garden of Eden. Maybe it is the title, "Sweat," that brings to mind Genesis 3: 19, "By the sweat of thy brow shall thou eat..." Or it might be the snake that makes it reflect the Biblical Fall. It is not a mirror image of course. Delia is not Eve, and Sykes is not Adam. In fact, Sykes seems more like the serpent. Sykes is a callous, brutal, vain, and worthless man. Sykes is an insensitive man who does not care about Delia's feelings.

For example, Sykes knows that snakes terrify Delia and yet he takes great pleasure in using this fear against her. He throws his bull whip at her knowing that she will think it is a snake. When she confronts him saying that he knew that it would scare her he says, "Course Ah know it! That's how come Ah done it. If you such a big fool data you got to have a fit over a earth worm or string, Ah don't Kerr how bad Ah seeker you." (353) Sykes is so callous towards his wife and her fear of snakes that he catches a rattlesnake and brings it home in a box as a "gift."

When she demands that he take the snake away, he tells her, "A whole like Ah Kerr 'bout how you feels Inside uh out. Data snake Alan going' no damn heehaw till Ah gist ready UHF 'Im HTH go' (358). He even puts the rattler in her clothes hamper while she is at church on Sunday, knowing that when she gets home from church she will sort out her clothes as she does every Sunday night. Sykes is not a man; he is a brutal bully who is shocked by anyone standing up to him. When Delia stands up to him after meekly taking his abuse for fifteen years, he does not know how to take it.

It cowed him and he did not strike her as he usually did" (354). Sykes was stunned by Della standing up to him, and as the bully he was, he backed down and left. During the time period covered by the story, Sykes never actually hits Della. He just threatens to. Hurst tells the reader that Sykes has beaten Della for fifteen years, and the men sitting on the front porch of Joe Slacker's store also comment on how Delia used to be pretty before she married Sykes. Elijah Mostly even tells the other men, " He done beat huh 'enough HTH kill three women, let 'lone change they kooks" (355).

At this point, the men's talk turns from Delia to Sykes, and they talk about his arrogance. From this discussion, the reader learns that Sykes is vain. " He illus. wax uh overbearing' analog, but since data white 'Oman from up North done attached 'IM how to run a automobile, he done got too biggest to live? an' we ought kill 'IM," Old Man Anderson advises (355). In addition to the conversation between the men, the reader can also tell that Sykes thinks that he is superior from the way that he speaks to the other men.

After Sykes catches the rattlesnake and brings it home, the people from the village begin asking him questions like how he did he catch it. " Ma'am a snake charmer an knows how TU handle 'me. " Sykes tells Thomas (357). When Walt suggests that he should kill the rattlesnake, Sykes tells him, " New, Walt, VII Jess' don't understand dose diamond' basks lake ad' (357). While Sykes may think that he is better than the other men, they think that he is worthless. When the men on the porch of Joe Clacks store see Delia delivering the laundry that she has washed, Joe

Lindsey comments on how dependable Delia is and how hard she works. Moss agrees saying, " She better if she wanted eat. Sykes Jones ant with De shot an' powder law about him. He ant fit HTH carry guts HTH a bear" (355). Joe Clark agrees that Sykes is worthless, but he tells the men, " Taint no law on earth data kin make a man be decent if it ant in 'IM" (355). It is Sykes callousness, brutality, and vanity that make him worthless. His insensitivity to Delia whose blood, sweat, and tears have fed and provided for him that makes him worse than useless to her.

The brutal beatings he eave her have destroyed her beauty, and his constant affairs have made their marriage meaningless. His pride in being a snake charmer backfires on him in the end, when the snake he placed in Deli's laundry basket bites and kills him. Sykes is callous, brutal, vain and worthless and destroys any chance that he might have had in making the home he shared with Delia anything like the Garden of Eden. He has been the cause of his own fall by catching a rattlesnake and bringing it home. While Delia is not Eve, and Sykes is not Adam, their story does seem to parallel the Biblical Fall.