

# [War, civil war, comes to suffer from](https://assignbuster.com/war-civil-war-comes-to-suffer-from/)

War, a controversial dilemma, canoften resolve itself through an orderly fashion, rather than an atrociousdisaster. In “ The Sniper,” written by Liam O’Flaherty, a Republican soldier whofights for his life against the so-called “ Free Staters” in the Irish civilwar, comes to suffer from drastic emotional trauma when someone he lovesbecomes fatally wounded. In Liam O’Flaherty’s story, “ The Sniper” uses irony todemonstrate how war reduces human beings to mere objects.            Unexpected occurrences happen whendramatic irony comes into effect. The irony demonstrates itself when the sniperdiscovers that the soldier he has most recently shot reveals as his brother, who now rests lifeless on the street. Rena Korb clarifies in her commentary onthe story “ only when the other man ceases to be a threat does the sniperacknowledge his status as another human instead of merely an enemy soldier” (Korb227). She implies that war transforms people’s mental train of thought.

O’Flaherty emphasizes this idea by giving no context into the characters of thestory. He gives the characters in the story no names or faces. Korb’scommentary states “ if not for this problem, these men could have beencolleagues or friends—even brothers” (Korb 227).

She discusses about howbecause of war, men become desensitized to violence, and never think of theconsequences of their actions. The diversity of the Irish civil war causes thecountry to split into two, and unfortunately the sniper and his brother engageon opposing sides. This creates the chance of the brothers going to war witheach other on the battlefield. The sniper assesses everything but himself as theenemy, so when he shoots what he thought stood the enemy, he thinks nothing ofit. But when he proceeds to look at his victim, he faces a lifetime of agony,” the sniper turned over the dead body and looked into his brother’s face” (O’Flaherty1). “ The Sniper” uses irony to expose how war has the ability to reduce humanbeings to mere objects, and how it expresses the pain, sorrow, and agony onesuffers caused by war.             Another instance of situational irony occurswhen the sniper lights his cigarette, only to become the target of an enemysniper across the way. By providing very little information about the sniper, the story concentrates primarily on his actions.

The sniper, filled withexcitement, does not bother to eat before he climbs onto the roof to keep watchfor Free Staters. He then kills an armored car, and an informant. It is notuntil the Republican sniper lights a cigarette that he becomes aware of anothersniper nearby. As feared, once he lights the match, “ a bullet flattened itself againstthe parapet of the roof” (O’Flaherty 1). As if on command, the enemy snipershoots at any sign of movement, alike to a machine. He did not even think twicebefore pulling the trigger of the gun, which supports the fact that war reduceshuman beings to mere objects.

It resides within human nature to have compassionand feelings for one another, but war can change that. Rena Korb states in hercommentary “ this lapse into human feeling is momentary, however” (Korb 227). Shestates that when the sniper kills a person from the opposing side, he realizeswhat he has done; only to shrug it off his shoulders, and move onto the nexttarget.

He has become desensitized to death and violence; the sniper can nolonger distinguish what exists and what does not. Because of war, he viewsother people as objects, and once they die, he shows no human response to thedeath that he has caused.            O’Flaherty’s used irony demonstratesthe murder of the informant for the enemies, also named the “ Free Staters.” Duringthe Irish Civil War, everyone must take a side to support their belief. Korbfurther explains this in her commentary, stating “ the Irish civil war alsoemerges as a battle between individuals.

All citizens must take sides” (Korb 227). O’Flaherty’s story explains that everyone must take a side, even the elders. Thisprovides an advantage for both sides; for no one expects an elderly person totake an active role in the civil war like this. But her cover makes sense, since no one suspects her of trading information with the enemy, and many willeasily and quickly dismiss her.

However, the sniper manages to gun her down, which was something he has not expected as well. Throughout the story, thesniper gives less emotion, and gets keener on the war. Korb’s commentary states” no doubts about his actions or about the war itself distract him, not evenwhen he kills the raggedy old woman who dies like a dog in the gutter” (Korb 227). This shows how the sniper displays no compassion or emotion when taking anotherlife. War programs people to show no emotion when taking the life of another, destroying their humanity. The only moment in the story where the sniperreveals his emotions occurs when he “ gibbers to himself, cursing the war, cursing himself, cursing everybody” (O’Flaherty 1). This event brings up theemotions that he buries deep down from war. O’Flaherty uses this line of thestory to communicate the disunity and cold-heartedness caused by the Irishcivil war.

Finally, “ The Sniper” reveals the absurdity and futility of fightingagainst individual human beings.            The theme of “ The Sniper” illustratesa sequence of ironic events to communicate a message that war is pointless andobjectifies people. This revelation is one of which some level of change in thesniper becomes evident. He realizes this development when he finds the target revealsto be his brother. War strips people of their humanity, and transforms theminto mere objects.

It becomes the change that results from the death of hisbrother, that the sniper learns a truer meaning to the purpose and function ofwar.