

SECOND PLACE WINNER

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Environmental Ruin

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English 101

William Faulkner's "Fox Hunt" gives the reader ideas about the environment and how mankind is treating it. One must read into the story to understand what messages Faulkner is expressing. Through the characters and their different personalities, opinions, and actions, I believe Faulkner tries to warn the reader that people will try to conquer nature any way they can. In the case of "Fox Hunt" it is the men in the short story who want to use force to capture and ruin nature in any form it is in. Faulkner shows through the actions of the characters how damaging man can be to the environment and how people are given the choice to be nature's destroyers or to have respect toward nature. Faulkner uses his characters to help the reader make the right choice to respect nature.

Harrison Blair, the man who wants to kill the fox, has turned the hunt into a gentleman's sport according to the groom. Blair glorifies the destruction of nature by making the hunt a game. "Shoot it or pizen it?" the groom said. "Don't you know that ain't no way to catch a fox?" (Faulkner 100). The groom continues saying, "It ain't no spo'tin," the groom said. "You ought to beer hanging around um long enough by now to know how gempmuns hunts" (Faulkner 100-101). Whoever kills the fox wins and is exalted above the other men. The groom describes to the other men how Blair wants to be the one to catch and kill the fox so he might win this game these men have declared on nature. However, the game includes more than the foxhunt. The men are out to beat nature in any form it is in.

Blair's wife represents nature in this story; Faulkner has given her traits that are also traits of nature. Faulkner first describes the wife's natural characteristics by saying she and the chestnut horse "passed like one beast" (Faulkner 101). Faulkner continues his comparison of the wife and nature by saying, "her unbobbed hair gleamed like the chestnut's flank, like soft fire" (Faulkner 101). Comparing her hair with a chestnut horse and fire signifies how much she represents nature. Later in the story

Faulkner uses the chauffeur to describe how Blair treats his wife similar to his dogs. The chauffeur told some men, "Tough on her, though. I'd hate for my daughter to belong to him. Not saying nothing against him, of course'" (Faulkner 103). Faulkner clearly tells the reader that Blair has control over his wife, who "belongs" to him. He believes himself to be above her just as she believes herself to be above and in control of the fox. This control is also shown through Blair's treatment toward a dog. The servant then tells the chauffeur, "I'd hate for my dog to belong to him'" (Faulkner 103). Apparently the servant saw Blair kill a dog with a walking stick. This evidence Faulkner gives the reader indicates that Blair demands control over nature through his wife, who is one with nature, and animals, who are part of nature.

Blair's servant uses Blair's wife and helps to bring about her ruin, which represents the ruin of nature. The servant has set up a devious plan to get Gawtreys and the wife to commit adultery. A story has started that Gawtreys is selling a horse which Blair wants, however, Gawtreys could not sell this horse because, ". . .Gawtreys never owned no horse no more than I do'" (Faulkner 106). One problem, however, interrupted their scheme; Blair's wife ". . .don't like him (Gawtreys). She wouldn't leave him in the house again after that day'" (Faulkner 107). The wife does not want to commit adultery, but in the end it appears she has been manipulated or possibly forced to. The reader knows what has occurred because "'She's got her hair down'" (Faulkner 108). Women were not often seen with their hair down in public as suggested by a man in the story who says, "You take a woman with long hair like she's got, long as she keeps her hair up, it's all right. But once you catch her with her hair down, it's just been too bad'" (Faulkner 107). This statement gives the reader reason to believe something happened between Gawtreys and the wife in the bushes. The wife, having been controlled by the servant and Gawtreys, will soon have to face her husband. She is seen in the end crying and "her hands busy in her bright, cloudy hair" (Faulkner 109). Even though the reader does not know if Blair knows what has happened, the wife's action of putting her [hair] up implies she wants to hide what happened in the bushes. Her crying suggests to the reader that she will have to face her husband as an impure wife. The reader can see the destruction these men have done to this woman. They have left her, who is one with nature, in ruins just as the fox has been left destroyed. Destroying her was their way of controlling and destroying nature.

Throughout "Fox Hunt" there is a youth representing the young, innocent and pure population. In the end the youth's attention is drawn toward the Blair's wife with her hair down. When the fox is caught

and everyone is heading home, he is the only one who looks back, and he sees the woman crying. This sight causes him to have “. . .rage at the lost woman, despair of the man in whose shape their walked the tragic and inescapable earth her ruin. . . then he began to curse, savagely, without point or subject” (Faulkner 109). Seeing the destruction of this woman who represents the natural environment touches him deep inside and causes him anger. He has obviously never seen anything like this before. This could be the time he makes his decision either to respect and be one with nature like the woman or to bring about nature’s destruction and ruin like Blair, the servant, and Gawtrety. Just as the boy was left making an important decision, another man named Callaghan, felt destroying Blair’s wife “wasn’t right because he liked her and felt sorry for her and so he wanted to tell Blair he had been lying and that Gawtrety never owned no horse” (Faulkner 107). Faulkner leaves the reader to guess at what the boy’s decision will be, just as people are to make their own decision about how to treat the environment. By using the boy’s anger and describing how horrible the destruction of nature is, Faulkner encourages his readers to make a respectable decision toward nature. Faulkner encourages the reader to choose to respect nature, take care of it, and use nature only when needed and only for good. Faulkner wants the reader to see nature as beautiful and fragile and the destruction of nature as a sad excuse for control.