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## Character Profiles:

**The Protagonist:** The protagonist was a wealthy businessman who comes from a wealthy neighborhood with his wife and children. The man was the protagonist in the story. He was a flat and dynamic character in the short story, "Identities." This character was flat because the reader didn't get a good idea of what he was like. Mainly because the point of view being third person objective, the audience never knew the character's thoughts. However, this character was dynamic as, in the beginning of the story he is very confident to be going for a drive through his childhood hometown. The man also changed his physical appearance from his wealthy, trustful self to blend in with his surroundings. But, as the story progresses it becomes evident he is quite scared and feels like he is lost. He begins to realize how different his childhood neighborhood is, and unsafe it is. A quote of indirect characterization would be, "Normally, he goes clean-shaven into the world.." (Valgardson 1). The reader can infer that this man is quite well kept most of the time, and most likely has a stable career.



**Antagonist:** The cop was the antagonist in which, he was the one who ended up shooting the man, with no apparent evidence. The cop was a stock, flat and static character. He was stock because he was depicted as a typical, inexperienced, nervous police officer. The audience is not shown the cop's thoughts and don't get to know all of his character traits therefore, he is flat. The cop does not change at all throughout the story, therefore, he is a static character. An example of direct



characterization in the story describing the police officer would be, “When the officer, who, is inexperienced, who is nervous because of the neighborhood, who is suspicious because of the car because he has been trained to see an unshaven man in blue jeans as a potential thief and not as a probable owner, orders him to halt, he is surprised” (Valgardson 2). It is clearly stated, that the police officer is inexperienced and is nervous. He has been trained to stereotype by appearance.

## Character Types

### **The Man**

Dynamic and flat:

The man undergoes a great change throughout the story. He first starts off in a boring and monotonous neighbourhood which similarly reflects his personality. Therefore, unknowingly trying to break free from his mundane life, he wanders into a run down neighborhood which could reflect his true inner feelings of loneliness and needing some help. While in the ghetto, he realizes that he had made a mistake of being in that area where he could not adapt to which costed him his life.

### **Police**

Flat and static: The police officer only showed one personality trait towards the end of the story which is being nervous and unsure about patrolling the streets in the ghetto neighborhood.

## Gang people

Stock: The members in the gang are all stock characters in that they are stereotyped to have an intimidating and terrifying appearances. They wore dark sunglasses and black leather jackets, which can often be associated with what criminals can be seen wearing.

### Setting

Physical: There are two physical settings. The protagonist leaves the comfort of his **big house** in a **wealthy** neighbourhood (Figure 1) to explore a **rough, poor** area. Here, all the properties are locked up and damaged. The story progresses over the course of a day and ends in the late evening.



In both the picture and the short story, there are shattered windows, broken gates,



*This picture is similar to how the protagonist's neighbourhood is described, "neat suburban labyrinth of cul-de-sacs..." (Valgardson 1). One difference between the short story and the picture is that they are different season. In the picture, it appears to be summer. However, in the story it is autumn, "...narrow lanes adrift with yellow leaves..." (Valgardson 1).*

### Example Quotes

First neighbourhood: "...but the promise of a Saturday liquid with sunshine..." (Valgardson 1).

Second neighbourhood: "The gate is double locked..." (Valgardson 1).

Emotional Setting: Sombre

### **Plot Points:**

**Exposition:** In the beginning of the story the reader is introduced to a wealthy man, who is normally clean shaven, however, this one Saturday afternoon. The story begins to explain the, well kept, neat neighborhood this businessman is living in. It goes into a lot of detail vividly explaining "twice-cut yards and hundred year old oaks." The audience can almost imagine exactly what this neighborhood looks like also how neat and safe it seems. The man is setting out for a drive



**Initiating Incident:** The inciting incident would be when the man leaves his neighborhood and travels by car to his childhood location. His childhood neighborhood is very unsafe and can be portrayed as the (Ghetto).

**Rising Action:**

1. Unshaven man leaves his neighborhood and goes on a drive to the ghetto in his Mercedes.
2. The man begins to seem lost and comes across a gang, staring at him
3. The man realizes a Police car has been following him, so he eases out of the car and thinks the police officer was, going to save him, who advances with a pistol in his hand.

**Climax:**

The climax of the story would be the man getting out of his car to call his wife and is shot by the cop.



**Falling Action:** N/A this is not applicable because the reader does not find out what happens once the man is shot, or how his family finds out.

**Conclusion/ Denouement:** N/A

**Type of ending:** Expository sad, resolved (explicit)



The ending of the story is quite abrupt and somewhat, suspicious. It is quite sad as, the man was completely innocent and was simply just trying to identify himself. He goes to grab his ID out of his pocket however, the inexperienced, nervous cop was quick to stereotype this unshaven man in blue jeans. The inexperienced cop ends up shooting this man as he assumed the man was grabbing a a gun out of his pocket.

### Conflict

#### **Person vs Person (External):**

The external conflict is between the narrator and the police officer. The narrator, protagonist, is struggling with an outside force which is the police officer. The officer mistakenly assumes that the narrator was a criminal who stole a Mercedes Benz. Therefore, due to the police officer's incorrect profiling, the narrator was shot and killed without hesitation.

#### **Person Vs Self (Internal):**

The internal conflict is between the narrator and himself. It can be assumed that the narrator was experiencing a midlife crisis as he felt dissatisfied and unfulfilled with his mundane life. He meanders through two vastly different neighborhoods which can reflect his inner feelings. The narrator struggles to keep a good balance in his home life and personal life as he knew that he had once again brought worry to his family with his absence that day.

Normally, he goes clean-shaven into the world, but the promise of a Saturday liquid with sunshine draws him first from his study to the backyard, from there to his front lawn. The smell of burning leaves stirs the memories of childhood car rides, narrow lanes adrift with yellow leaves, girls on plodding horses, unattended stands piled high with pumpkins, onions, or beets so that each one was, in its own way, a still life. Always, there were salmon tins glinting with silver, set above hand-painted signs instructing purchasers to deposit twenty-five or fifty cents. This act of faith containing all the stories he has read in childhood about the North – cabins left unlocked, filled with supplies for hapless wayfarers – wakes in him a desire to temporarily abandon the twice-cut yards and hundred-year-old oaks.

He does not hurry for he has no destination. He meanders, instead, through the neat suburban labyrinth of cul-de-sacs, bays and circles, losing and finding himself endlessly. Becoming lost is made all the easier because the houses repeat themselves with superficial variations. There grows within him, however, a vague unease with symmetry, with nothing left to chance, no ragged edges, no unkempt vacant lots, no houses rendered unique by necessity and indifference.

The houses all face the sun. They have no artificial divisions. There is room enough for everyone. Now, as he passes grey stone gates, the yards are all proscribed by stiff picket fences and, quickly, a certain untidiness creeps in: a fragment of glass, a chocolate bar wrapper, a plastic horse, cracked sidewalks with ridges of stiff grass.

Although he has on blue jeans – matching pants and jacket made in Paris – he is driving a grey Mercedes Benz. Gangs of young men follow the car with their unblinking eyes. The young men stand and lean in tired, watchful knots close to phone booths and seedy-looking grocery stores.

Their slick hair glistens. Their leather jackets gleam with studs. Eagles, tigers, wolves and serpents ride their backs.

He passes a ten-foot wire fence enclosing a playground bare of equipment and pounded flat. The gate is double locked, the fence cut and rolled into a cone. Three boys throw stones at pigeons. Paper clogs the fence like drifted snow. The school is covered with heavy screens. Its yellow brick is pock-marked, chipped.

**Labyrinth:** This is a good descriptive word because it uses a metaphor to describe the neighbourhood. It is comparing the layout to an intricate maze.

This is an example of a hyperbole because the author is exaggerating the eyes of the men. The author describes the eyes as unblinking, but in reality, the eyes must blink.

This is an example of personification because it is giving human attributes to the animals. These animals are not actually riding on the backs of the men.

This is an example of a simile because it uses the word 'like' to compare two unlike objects. The paper in the story is compared to snow to describe the setting.



The houses are squat, as though they have been taller and have, slowly, sunk into the ground. Each has a band of dirt around the bottom. The blue glow of television sets lights the windows. On the front steps of a red-roofed house, a man sits. He wears black pants, a **tartan** vest, a brown snap-rimmed hat. Beside him is a suitcase.

Fences here are little more than fragments. Cars jam the narrow streets and he worries that he might strike **the unkempt children who dart back and forth like startled fish**. Street lights come on. He takes them as a signal to return the way he came, but it has been a reckless, haphazard path. Retracing it is impossible. He is overtaken by sudden guilt. He has left no message for his wife.

There have been no trees or drifting leaves, no stands covered in produce, no salmon tins, but time has run away with him. His wife, he realizes, will have returned from bridge, his children gathered for supper. He also knows that, at first, they have explained his absence on a neighbour's hospitality and gin. However, by the time he can return, annoyance will have blossomed into alarm. His safe return will, he knows from childhood and years of being locked in domestic grief, **degenerate** to **recriminations** and apology

Faced with this, he decides to call the next time he sees a store or phone booth. **So intent is he upon the future that he dangerously ignores the present and does not notice the police car**, concealed in the **shadows of a side street**, nose out and follow him.

Ahead, there is a small store with windows covered in hand painted signs and vertical metal bars. On the edge of the light, three young men and a girl slouch. One of them has a beard and, in spite of the advancing darkness, wears sunglasses. He has on a fringed leather vest. His companions wear leather jackets. Their peaked caps make their heads seem flat, their foreheads non-existent. The girl is better looking than she should be for such companions. She is long legged and wears a white turtle-necked sweater that accentuates her breasts.

In spite of his car, he hopes his day old beard which he strokes upward with the heel of his hand, will, when combined with his clothes, provide immunity. He slips his wallet into his shirt pocket, does up the metal buttons on his jacket and slips a ten dollar bill into his back pocket. Recalling a television show, he decides that if he is accosted, he will say that the ten is all he's got, that he stole the car, and ask them if they know a buyer. He eases out of the car, edges nervously along the fender and past the grille. The

Like the Mercedes Benz, the tartan vest is another item that can be an indicator of what neighbourhood the person is from. Tartan is a checkered pattern that looks similar to plaid. In the story it is worn by someone from the lower-class area.

This is an example of a simile because it uses the word 'like' to compare two unrelated nouns. The children are being compared to startled fish.

The oblivious protagonist does not notice the police car trailing behind him. This foreshadows that the officer has already targeted him as a criminal despite the fact that the narrator has done nothing wrong. The police car that's following him also foreshadows that he will be the predator of law enforcement.

This is an example of alliteration because all of the words begin with the same letter. The repetition of the letter 's' puts an emphasis on the sentence and adds a sense of fun to the piece.

store window illuminates the sidewalk like a stage. Beyond the light, everything is **obscured** by darkness. He is so intent upon the three men and the girl that he does not notice the police car drift against the curb, nor the officer who is advancing with a pistol in his hand.

When the officer, who is inexperienced, who is nervous because of the neighbourhood, who is suspicious because of the car and because he has been trained to see an unshaven man in blue jeans as a potential thief and not as a probable owner, orders him to halt, he is surprised. When he turns part way around and recognizes the uniform, he does not feel fear but relief. Instinctively relaxing, certain of his safety, in the last voluntary movement of his life, he reaches his hand not in the air as he was ordered to, but toward his wallet for his identity.

This is an example of dramatic irony because the reader knows that there is an officer following the man towards the store, but the man is unaware of this. The man feels relieved when he sees the police officer, but the officer shoots him.

When a police officer approaches an individual with a gun, it can be implied that death is imminent

An inexperienced officer foreshadows the possibility of chaos. Patrolling in a dangerous neighborhood, a new officer could have a more impaired judgement of a situation. His actions could be more impulsive due to nervousness rather than good judgement. Also, being in a neighborhood stereotyped as being crowded by many criminals, an inexperienced officer could also mistake one's identity and easily abuse his authoritative power.

This is an example of situational irony because the man expects to be protected by the officer. Instead, the man is killed by somebody who gave him a sense of safety. In this situation, the result is opposite of what is expected to happen.

This is an example of situational irony because the man's identity is supposed to protect him, but reaching for it is what ends up getting him killed. The reader expects the man to be safe because he is providing his identification to the police. Instead, the man is killed trying to identify himself.

## Thematic Statements

1. Fate is not always determined by one's own actions.

Despite the protagonist believing he was acting in a non-threatening and rational manner, the police officer thought he was drawing a gun. In reality he was reaching for his ID.

**2. Prejudices are often not accurate testaments to a person's character.**

The police officer stereotyped an innocent man which caused him to unjustly murdered him on the basis of an incorrect judgement.

**3. Being in the wrong place, at the wrong time can have fatal consequences.**

Perhaps, if a different officer was on shift, the ending may have played out differently.

**4. The identity a person has is a vital part of their lives.**

It can control how society thinks of you.