

Characterization Response

I believe that the barber from the story “Lather and Nothing Else” By Hernando Téllez is someone with negative traits and positive traits just like every other person. The barber's traits are unique and forged by his morals and what happens around him, such as being a barber and a revolutionary during the Columbian civil war.

One day the protagonist is faced with a massive internal conflict. The captain of the Columbian Military goes to his barber shop for a shave. This is such a big problem because the barber is a revolutionary and is the military's enemy. The internal conflict he faces is whether to kill the captain which helps his cause, but it will make him have to be on the run or focus on treating him like any other customer and continue his not so normal life. During the shave, one positive trait is extremely clear. The barber is very devoted to his job and does not kill the captain and when he was thinking about if he should do it, he reminded himself that, “I was also a barber of integrity” (Téllez Para 21). At that moment, he knew that he would not try and kill the captain and instead he would do what the captain went to his shop for: a shave.

When he finished the captain's shave, the captain noticed that he was very pale and sweaty: “[he] must have been pale and sweaty” (Téllez Para 35). This shows how devoted the barber was because he himself did not notice how pale and sweaty he was because throughout the shave, he was trying hard not to cut the captain: “[I was] scraping and scraping this skin, making sure that blood doesn't spill from those pores” (Téllez Para 31). He spends a lot of time cautiously shaving the captain's beard and making sure that no blood is spilled from his chin. Shaving requires a lot of focus, and you cannot be callous when shaving because the blade is sharp, and it is easy to cut yourself or others.

Like anybody else though, he has negative traits too. The barber can shave the captain's beard and gain information from the captain that may be useful to the rebels which proves that he is very deceitful because he was able to trick the captain into telling him information such as: “How many did you get?” (Téllez Para 6). Right before this question, the captain tells him, ““But you know what? It was a success. We got the leaders. Some we brought back dead, some are still alive. But soon they'll all be dead.”” (Téllez Para 5). Later, he even says how many are left which can be extremely vital for the rebels because they can plan accordingly. In the middle of the shave, the captain tells the barber that there is a lot of work to do then the barber asks, ““Firing squad?”” (Téllez Para 17) and, ““What do you plan on doing?”” (Téllez Para 25). He confirms the barber's first question and says that he hasn't decided yet. The barber, whether he realized how deceitful he was or not, ended up with a handful of information that benefits the rebels because he deceived the captain and the captain give him the answer to his questions.

The barber is a good and honest person with some negative traits but most times he is deceitful without even knowing it so it could mean that deep down he is not a good person, but I don't think that is true because throughout the text, he is trying his best work and treats the captain like any other customer. He also doesn't want to be seen as a murderer and he doesn't want to kill him or have anything to do with his death. Truly, it's just lather and nothing else.

