

# **“The Destructors” By Graham Greene**

**Purpose of the Short Story:** To teach the reader about the destructive element present in human nature.

**Atmosphere:** The atmosphere is quite dark and has a very pessimistic outlook of the World. The fact that the neighborhood has been demolished by bombs in the Second World War only adds to the negative, violent mood.

## **Characterization:**

- **Protagonist: T/Trevor:** He is a round character because we learn quite a bit about his personality. He is also a static character because he does not change throughout the story.
- **Antagonist: The House:** Although it is not a person, the house is the force that opposes T. Without the house that was left standing after the bombing, there would be no plot.
- **Blackie:** He is a flat character because we do not know much about him at all. He is also a static character because throughout the story, he remains hesitant about the gangs plot to destruct the house. He does not ever voice his concerns.
- **Old Misery/Mr. Thomas:** He is a stock character because he is the typical “old man” who lives for peace and the preservation of beauty.

**Foreshadowing:** As we are aware that the story is about post WWII, and after London was bombed by Hitler, the reader gets a sense that nothing is left standing. Therefore, it is safe to assume that the London Bombing foreshadows that Mr. Thomas’s house will also be destroyed.

## **Plot:**

- **Exposition:** The reader is introduced to Trevor, or T, and his plan to destroy Mr. Thomas’s 200 year old home that survived The Blitz. It is learned that Blackie is the gang leader and that he accepts T’s plan, which will be carried out when Mr. Thomas is away. The setting is revealed as it is set in London, post WWII and the above characters, along with the rest of the gang, are briefly introduced.
- **Complication:** This occurs when T unveils his plan to the full extent. He plans to systematically destroy the house from the inside out as to make sure that none of the remains, including the frame or the objects inside, can be used again. He says that he will destroy it simple because it is beautiful.
- **Climax:** When the boys are mercilessly working away and destroying the house from the inside, it is clear that the story has reached its climax as the ending is now inevitable. Once the reader finds out how hard the gang is working, it is probable that the house will be destroyed completely.

- **Denouement:** Mr. Thomas returns home early and he is locked in his own outhouse by the gang while they go on with destroying his home. However, T's internal conflict is never settled as he does not change.

***Point of View:***

- **Indirect Presentation:** We do not get a direct analysis of any characters, such as Blackie, nor does someone else in the story tell us about Blackie or other characters. We are left to gain information about character from the story itself.

**Limited Omniscient:** Graham Greene tells the story in third person but in the perspective of T. We do not gain any knowledge of any other characters, such as Blackie

**Conflict:** Trevor versus himself → As Trevor, or T, works long and hard to systematically destroy every part of the house, he is not committing casual vandalism. T's destruction of the house has to do with how he has never experienced love or hate in his life. He sees them both as equal, "All this hate and love ... 'it's soft, it's hooey. There's only things, Blackie.'" Therefore, his internal conflict of never having felt love drives him to destroy one of the only houses standing after The Blitz.

**Setting:** The setting of this short story is essential to the plot development. It is set in London in the mid-1950's, in the exact area in which Hitler bombed millions of homes during WWII. The setting connects directly to Hitler, linking the pair to senseless destruction.

**Tone:** This story has a serious tone which makes the reader think about the harsh realities of war on all people.

**Suspense:** The suspense of this story is driven by the curiosity of the motivation of T to destroy the only standing house for miles. It seems to be a random idea to destroy the house to the reader, but it is more than that to T. He sees beauty and value in the house and believes that should be destroyed.

**Theme:** Destruction is senseless. For example, the boys burn the money which they could have used for their own benefit however, they demonstrate the story's theme with such an action.

**Imagery:** As this story is set in post WWII, following Hitler's bombing of London, the images that are left with the reader are a city left in shambles, grey skies, and a gloomy atmosphere. The imagery in general is very dark.

**Irony:** The irony in "The Destroyers" is the opposite of what we expect. We see destruction as a way of life for the Wormsley gang and we gain a sense that this level of destruction must have happened for a reason. However, it is the opposite of what we expect as we learn that destruction is senseless (which is the theme).

**Parable:** The moral, or lesson, in "The Destroyers," is that destruction is senseless because destruction takes away where as creation builds.

**Symbol:** The house is a symbol of a beacon of hope during dark times. This is one of the few, if only, fully intact houses following the Blitz. T decides to mercilessly destroy this beacon of hope as perhaps he does not have any positive motivations in his own life and he wishes the same for everybody else.