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Ms. Nelson

Unjustified Action

Police officers are trained to think and react quickly however, their actions can proveto be deadly.In an instant, the officer’s decision to fire the pistol at the man and kill him was unjustified. Written in 1986, the short story, “Identities,” by W.D. Valgardson follows a wealthy middle-aged man as he leaves his safe neighbourhood and enters a seedy part of town. Set in Winnipeg, Manitoba, the man drives out of his community in his expensive and lavish Mercedes Benz to temporarily escape his secure and comfortable home. As he was completely focused on finding a phone to let his wife know his whereabouts, he was not aware of the police car following him. He nervously got out of his car and kept his eyes on the three young men and girl looming in the background. He was surprised by the presence of a police officer, but was relieved as he felt uneasy about the area. The police officer demanded him to halt, but the man went to reach for his identity and the untrained officer fired the deadly pistol. The police officer’s action was not justified for many reasons. Firstly, the police officer made assumptions about him as he had a day-old beard and the neighbourhood they were in. The setting can be an indicator of how a person may act, but the officer should not have profiled the man’s character based on his looks. The police officer had an image in his head of what a suspicious man would look like, “Trained to see an unshaven man in blue jeans as a potential thief” (Valgardson 3). The man’s appearance did not show his true nature. Secondly, the police officer should not have been patrolling the area with his lack of experience, “The officer, who is inexperienced, who is nervous because of the neighbourhood” (Valgardson 3). His vague knowledge was not enough to support him as he was anxious when approaching the man. The officer should have been confident when he saw the likely suspect to reduce the chance of a devastating situation. Lastly, the policeman was quick to trigger his pistol after he demanded him to halt and did not take any further actions to prevent the man from reaching for his wallet. The man was comforted to see the officer and did not expect to be targeted as he did not show he was a threat towards him. The decision of the officer to pull and fire his gun was an error in judgement. The police officer’s conclusion about the man’s identity was based on fear and as a result, the man did not return home.