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### Human Selfishness

Selfishness is a part of human nature. That one is more concerned about themselves than others. However, there are great consequences to this. Selfishness is the main theme in Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, in which she vocalizes the damage humans do to the environment, as well as the ignorance in human decisions. Through anecdotes, figurative language and rhetorical questions, she is able to make an effective argument towards the negativity of human selfishness.

From the start she utilizes the anecdote, "*a group of farmers went together in the summer of 1959 to engage a spray plane to treat an area of river bottomland with parathion,*" (Carson), explaining the poor decision made by a group of farmers to poison a river in order to get rid of blackbirds who were feasting on their crops. However, this turned out to be a dreadful decision as this killed the birds. Instead of enacting a "*slight change in agricultural practice,*" (Carson), they turned to death by poison. This story displays how the farmers in this case decided to take the easy way out, while not considering the birds' lives; further aiding in supporting Carson's argument.

Figurative language is used throughout the argument to help communicate her view on human recklessness through their decisions. She states, "*the unselective bludgeon of insecticidal poisons,*" (Carson), highlighting that there is no other use for it, only to destroy; with immense

consequences if used wrongly. One would know the consequences of using such a substance as this. Carson as well compares the farmers to a “*judge and jury who neither knew of their existence nor cared,*” (Carson), exemplifying the ruthless decisions humans make, and how they do not use any sort of opinion when making a decision.

As the argument comes to a close, Carson poses to the audience numerous rhetorical questions to get them thinking. Such questions as “*who has made the decision that sets in motion these chains of poisonings?*” (Carson), and “*who has decided-who has the right to decide?*” (Carson), help force the audience to think on the consequences that their actions create. As well all sides must be considered when making a decision, not just one.

Throughout the passage, Carson makes an effective argument that helps to bring light to human selfishness, and the negative consequences that can come along with it. Through anecdotes, figurative language, and rhetorical questions, she is able to make the audience reconsider the effect that their actions have on others; and challenges them to consider all sides.

Works Cited

Carson, Rachel. "2004 AP English Language and Composition Free-Response Questions."

*College Board*, [secure-media.collegeboard.org/apc/ap04\\_frq\\_english\\_lang\\_35921.pdf](https://secure-media.collegeboard.org/apc/ap04_frq_english_lang_35921.pdf).

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