“The Utterly Perfect Murder” by Ray Bradbury

Discussion Questions:

1. How do we know Doug's relationship with Ralph has bothered him on a subconscious level for a long time? Why do you think he plots murder now? Is this rational? Explain.

2. How did you feel about Doug’s wife’s response to his midnight journey? Was it appropriate and what might it suggest?

3. What had Ralph Underhill actually done when he was younger to deserve to be murdered according to Doug?

4. What was your reaction to when the adult Ralph Underhill appeared in his doorway? Describe how his appearance was like or unlike what you expected.

5. How does Doug's "shooting" Ralph provide catharsis (closure)? What does he really mean when he says, "Oh, God, Ralph, you're dead"?

6. Reflect on the title of this short story. Why do you think that this story is called “The Utterly Perfect Murder”? Think about and address who or what is symbolically “killed.”

7. List (that’s it, just list) what themes this story addresses. Reminder: a theme is an idea or message about the human condition.

Writing Prompt:
What would be a better title to this story?

Plot Diagram:
Write an example of when you believe each part of the story occurs.

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Real World Connection
Adult lives rarely turn out as expected. To prove this point, interview ten adults about their childhood aspirations to determine which have been fulfilled. Then, devise a mathematical representation of their findings using a pie chart.

Example of how to get the correct angle in your pie chart:

Explanation:

In any sector, there are 3 parts to be considered:

The arc length,
The sector area
The sector angle

They all represent the SAME fraction of the whole circle.

The arc length is a fraction of the circumference
The sector area is a fraction of the whole area
The sector angle is a fraction of 360°

If the sector is 20% of the pie chart, then each of these parts is 20% of the whole.

The sector angle is therefore:

$20\% \times 360°$

$.20 \times 360 = 72°$