

At the start of the story, the drill instructor represents rigid authority, aligning with a Confucian li-driven role. He upholds discipline and structure, which are critical for maintaining order within the unit. For instance, early in the story, he harshly reprimands or punishes soldiers who fail to follow orders, reinforcing his commitment to maintaining structure. However, as the narrative progresses, his demeanor shifts from strict leadership to a more disillusioned and indifferent attitude. This change is not necessarily due to a formal shift in his role but rather his personal disillusionment with the system, mirroring Ranju's growing skepticism about the mission. In Confucianism, junzi acts according to the moral obligations of their station, ensuring harmony within their community. If the drill instructor had adhered to Confucian values, he would have remained a guiding figure, fostering moral and social order within the ranks. However, his moral detachment suggests a departure from ren and yi, key Ruist values. By abandoning his role as a moral model, he enables corruption within the ranks, shifting from an authoritative figure to a passive, ineffective leader.

Ruism holds that leaders and authority figures must cultivate virtue and act as moral exemplars. Early on, the drill instructor enforces discipline, but his methods lack de, as they are driven more by force than ethical guidance. His later disengagement worsens the moral decline among his subordinates, showing a failure to uphold his responsibilities. A Confucian leader should guide their followers toward righteousness, but the drill instructor neither prevents unethical behavior nor fosters a sense of duty. As the story progresses, his increasing apathy and participation in moral degradation contradict the Confucian principle that those in authority must lead with integrity. Soldiers like Ranju, already conflicted and skeptical, are further misled by the drill instructor's lack of ethical guidance. This failure suggests that the drill instructor is not always acting in the best way possible for his role. From a Confucian perspective, the drill

instructor does not consistently do the right thing. Initially, while he enforces order, his methods lack the moral cultivation expected of a true leader. As discipline crumbles, soldiers trade and gamble rat carcasses for personal gain, reflecting the growing corruption enabled by the drill instructor's detachment. The drill instructor's detachment and passive acceptance of unethical actions reflect a loss of virtue, further distancing him from Ruist ideals. Ruism advocates for hierarchical responsibilities based on moral development. This corruption portrays the disorder spreading within the ranks, partially due to the absence of strong moral leadership. Had the drill instructor embraced ren and yi, he might have guided the recruits toward ethical conduct, even in an unjust system. Instead, his moral failures contribute to the broader collapse of order and personal integrity among the soldiers. As discipline crumbles and selfish motives take precedence, the sense of duty and communal responsibility diminishes. This is evident as recruits begin to prioritize personal survival over mission objectives. There, in a Ruist framework, he ultimately falls short of his obligations.

The drill instructor's evolving behavior in *The Year of the Rat* does not result from an official change in role but rather from his personal disillusionment. Through a Ruist lens, he fails to fulfill his ethical duties as a leader, lacking both moral integrity and benevolence. Confucianism emphasizes that those in power must act as moral role models, but his increasing apathy contradicts these ideals. In the end, he fails as a leader in both role and virtue, falling short of Ruist principles by abandoning his moral responsibility as a leader.