

Review of flannery
o'connor's book, a
good man is hard to
find



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We live in a world that is characterized by good and evil, and as most individuals struggle with being good and performing good acts, others are comfortable exercising evil and performing bad acts. The idea of good and evil is depicted in most artistic pieces ranging from paintings, films, music, and literature. Interestingly, everyone has individual perceptions regarding good and evil, while some draw their ideas from philosophical thought, others base their ideas on religious teachings and practices. One such literary piece is the book, *A Good Man is Hard to Find*, written by the famous American novelist Flannery O'Connor. Influenced by her religious background and her home region, the O'Connor narrates the story of a family who are murdered while taking a vacation trip.

O'Connor is well famed for her emphasis of grotesque stories and characterization, which is considered as being realist, as opposed to, idealist (Connie 74-78). Her literary works were, greatly, influenced by the South, and she uses this setting to bring out her ideas in every literary piece she produces. Accordingly, the author uses her religious background when judging moral and ethical behavior, and for that reason, her literary pieces of work have good versus evil as their central themes. Using morally flawed characters, as well as, presumably morally upright characters, the author presents intriguing stories that capture the interests of her audience at all times (Connie 74-78). More specifically, the novel, *A Good Man is Hard to Find*, the story is set in Georgia, with the year and time having no explicit definition or designation. The story takes place in two main places: the first place is Georgia, whereas the second setting is on a roadside, more

specifically in a ditch. Using these two settings, the author tells the story of how a family was murdered during their trip for a vacation in Florida.

This paper presents a literary analysis of the book, *A Good Man is Hard to Find*, by Flannery O'Connor. The paper provides an analysis of characterization, and point of views as brought out in the novel. The paper also examines how the author uses symbolism, irony, foreshadowing, and similes to elucidate and enhance the theme of good versus evil.

In literature, the characters refer to the people in the text, whose story the author is keen on narrating to readers and audience. In view of that, characterization refers to the author's development and presentation of characters in the novel (Peterson 1). Just like all other writers, O'Connor has employed two main methods of presenting her audience with her characters in the novel, *A Good man is Hard to Find*. These methods include direct characterization and indirect characterization. With direct characterization, the narrator directly informs readers about the characters in the novel (Peterson 1). This information can range from providing a description of the characters, as well as, the use of names and overt commentary. Direct characterization in the novel, *A Good Man is hard to Find*, is presented in two ways including an analysis of the characters by the author, as well as, naming. The author gives Misfit his name as an illustration of his personality and life experiences. Indirect characterization has also been utilized for the novel's story development, and the author allows each of her characters to reveal themselves and their personalities as the story continues. O'Connor manages to bring this out through the provision of details such as, appearance, mannerisms, as well as, speech (Peterson 1). Evidently, two <https://assignbuster.com/review-of-flannery-oconnors-book-a-good-man-is-hard-to-find-review-paper-samples/>

main characters are revealed in the novel including the grandmother and the misfit. Whereas the grandmother is brought out as the protagonist, the misfit is obviously the antagonist in the story. As a character, the grandmother is the focal point of the story, and she because she considers herself as morally upright, she constantly passes judgment to other characters and criticizes their activities. She does not judge her own ways, something that she later comes to regret immediately before her death. The misfit, on the other hand, is the character that seems to lack moral conscience and is constantly in conviction. Observably, the misfit is brought out as the strongest character in the book in relation to disposition, as he possesses characteristics that all other characters do not.

The novel, *A Good man is Hard to Find*, is written from the third person or omniscient point of view. Accordingly, it is the grandmother's thoughts and point of view that the readers have access to, thus revealing the use of the third person point of view in the novel. In the novel, O'Connor reports the grandmother's thoughts, as well as, her actions and conversations thus introducing a new point of view namely, the limited omniscient point of view. An example of this is revealed where the author writes " she knew that Bailey would not be willing to lose anytime looking at an old house" (O'Connor 35). This statement reveals to the readers the grandmothers thoughts about her son Bailey. Misfit is the only other character whose actions, and thoughts that the readers are introduced to, thus building on the third person point of view. However, readers get to learn about Misfit's ideas in the last part of the novel after he has murdered the family. In one of his thoughts regarding the grandmother, Misfit states, " She would have

been a good woman,.. if it had been somebody there to shoot her every minute of her life" (O'Connor 89). This statement reveals Misfit's thoughts about the grandmother, as well as, good versus evil.

Symbolism is one of the literary elements that O'Connor has employed in telling the story. In essence, symbolism refers to the process of giving a person, object, or event a meaning that is outside its literal meaning (Peterson 6). Put simply, it is a literary element, which involves the use of representation or imagery. A closer examination of the novel reveals the use of various symbols including grandmother's hat, Misfit's car, Toombsboro, the dark forest and the sunless cloudless sky. More specifically, Toombsboro, the town which grandmother and her family pass before their death is used symbolically in the novel. Ideally, Toombsboro is the old plantation where grandmother has memories about (O'Connor, 85). However, the name of the plantation, as well as, the events that take place immediately after passing the plantation reveal something deeper than an old plantation. The name of the plantation suggests doom and misfortune, thus the death of the grandmother and her family.

O'Connor also employs the use of Irony as a literary element in her novel, *A Good man is hard to Find*. In literature, irony occurs when one of the characters fails to perceive the obvious (Peterson 5). More specifically, the character fails to understand what the reader and the audience automatically understands when reading the novel. Irony in the novel is demonstrated in the way the grandmother considers herself as a proper and morally upright lady, something that the readers would not consider as true.

To the readers, the grandmother actions and thoughts bring her out as a
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different person from who she think of herself. She is manipulative, she lies and has racist tendencies, and the character sees herself as the opposite of this. However, towards the end of the novel, the character soon realizes that she is not who she considers herself to be but she dies before she can make any changes.

In literary writing, foreshadowing is a literary technique where the author uses his characters to foretell the activities that are likely to occur in the novel. Evidently, foreshadowing is O'Connor's main choice in relation to literary techniques and the author uses the character of the grandmother to foreshadow the tragic developments that occur later on in the novel. An example of the use of foreshadowing is illustrated when the grandmother wears her best clothes and hat for the trip with the excuse that something tragic might happen to the family during the trip. The grandmother states, "in case of an accident, anyone seeing her dead on the highway would know at once that I was a lady" (O'Connor 6). This statement foretells the death of the entire family in the hands of the Misfit, which occurs in the last section of the book.

In the novel, O'Connor also utilizes a number of literary devices to tell her story. Evidently, the author makes her words contribute to the effect of the story through the use of similes. The author's use of similes in the novel both demonstrates her literary skills, as well as, the events taking place in the novel. An example of a simile used in the novel is in the description of the children's mother. "She was a young woman in slacks, whose face was as broad and as innocent as a cabbage"(O'Connor 24). This simile, illustrate the

gullibility and incompetence of the mother, which makes it easy for others to manipulate her.

In her novel, *A Good Man is Hard to Find*, Flannery O'Connor employs the use of various literary elements, techniques and devices to narrate her story. These literary elements and devices include irony, foreshadowing, symbolism, and similes among other things. Because the central theme of the novel is good versus evil, the author uses these literary elements, techniques, and devices to tell her story. Observably, the author effectively utilized these elements, techniques, and devices to communicate the theme of good versus evil in the story.