

# A worn path literary analysis essay



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In Eudora Welty's "A Worn Path," the character Phoenix Jackson is introduced. Phoenix Jackson is an uneducated, African-American woman without any family besides her sick grandson. Phoenix is the hero of this story and fits the role well by delivering much-needed medicine to her grandson. Phoenix shows many distinct traits that reveal her to be a hero to her grandson. The heroic feats she accomplishes pave a path that leads to her satisfaction as well as protection of her most beloved asset, her grandson.

Throughout the story, Phoenix's humble, caring, and determined character is displayed through her actions. Phoenix Jackson displays a humble, Southern attitude. As an African-American woman during very racially-divided times, she was not able to receive much of an education. She uses very simple grammar in her communication to others that would be quite normal to her peers. Jackson's humble nature is also seen through her playful monologues with various inanimate objects and animals. Jackson's simple dialect can be seen when she states, "My senses is gone. I too old, I the oldest people I ever know.

Dance, old scarecrow while I dancing with you"(Welty 139). Jackson's simple, humble nature is clearly seen through her speech. This humble nature gives Jackson a modest attitude that adds a local feeling to the story. Jackson conveys her humble elegance again when she asks a young lady to tie her shoe for her before entering the healthcare facility. "Phoenix wants her laces tied not because she fears that she might trip over them and fall; she has walked the long path over hills and through bushes and thickets and over the creek on a log with these laces flapping.

Here Miss Welty conveys Phoenix's sense of place which demands that the laces be tied," Mary Ann Dazey explains very clearly. Jackson was reared in a disadvantaged manner and did not have an extraordinary grasp of the mannerisms of the much more economically, socially, and politically free whites. Phoenix displays an extremely respectable sense of regard for the establishment that provides her the most important substance in her life, despite the lowly treatment she receives.

Phoenix's humble attitude through her actions provides evidence for her heroic aura. Phoenix Jackson also displays a very caring personality. Phoenix's caring nature is seen through her journey to retrieve her grandson's medicine. Phoenix shows her compassionate nature when she states, " I going to the store and buy my child a little windmill they sells, made out of paper"(Welty 143). Phoenix demonstrates this loving quality through this action because with the money she received from the attended she chose to buy her sick grandson a toy.

Phoenix is noticeably poor, so relocating funds to buy a toy may not be the most financially wise purchase; however, this shows how much Phoenix values her grandson's livelihood. Robert Phillips states that, " Phoenix's act of love and compassion is primary to the story: the ' deep-grained habit of love,' says Welty is what gives the story its ' emotional value'"(419). Phoenix also displays a strong determined attitude. Despite the many dangers and fears she faces, Phoenix overcomes all of her struggles. Many times Phoenix muttered to herself in order to keep her self-occupied during her long trip.

In one instance Phoenix says, " Out of my way, all you foxes, owls, beetles, jack rabbits, coons and wild animals!... Keep out from under these feet, little bob-whites.... Keep the big wild hogs out of my path. Don't let none of those come running my direction. I got a long way"(Welty 138). Her ability to complete her arduous mission shows determination as well because she is accomplishing her day-to-day tasks alone. Most people accomplish difficult tasks with support systems such as family or friends. Phoenix knows she is alone in the world to care for her grandson.

This knowledge of solitude makes Phoenix's mission all the more difficult. The incident with the white hunter along her travel also demonstrates Jackson's determination. As stated by Dennis Sykes, " Phoenix realizes that the importance of the trip far exceeds the possible harm that can be done to her brittle frame"(151). Phoenix's ability to stare down possible bodily harm all for the sake of her grandson's wellbeing demonstrates her heroic determination. By overcoming adversity, Phoenix's determined character is revealed very well.

Overall, Phoenix Jackson's character adds to the story through her humble, maternal strength. Phoenix's love for her grandchild brought her through many challenges, but year after year as she completes her trek, she keeps her grandson as her top priority. This overwhelming level of determination allows her to keep hold of her most valuable possession. Through her actions she reveals to the reader that her humble, caring, determined nature allows her to overcome the odds and provide for her family as well as maintain a simple Southern elegance.