

Human nature



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Human Nature Evil is unfortunately abundant in our world today just as it was during the Puritan times of Nathaniel Hawthorne's day. In the short story "Young Goodman Brown," Nathaniel Hawthorne writes about how evil and hypocrisy can turn the faithful bitter and distrusting.

The protagonist, Young Goodman Brown, leaves his wife for only three months to journey through the forest with the devil. During the journey, Brown struggles with his own faith and learns of the hypocrisy and evil of society including his wife. He loses his faith in people and God. Brown dies a lonely and bitter man. Through setting, characters, and symbolism, Hawthorne illustrates the theme that it is human nature to be evil.

The story begins with Hawthorne abandoning his innocent wife to meet with the devil: "My love and my Faith, of all nights of the year this one must I tarry from thee." (Hawthorne 300). Hawthorne is creating an eerie setting of night and darkness to foreshadow the evil to come.

Young Goodman Brown sets out on his journey into the forest where he meets with the devil. "It was now deep dusk in the forest, and deepest in that part of it where these two were journeying" (Hawthorne 304). The forest is a place of evil, deep enough for the devil to reside.

Paul J. Hurley suggests the forest is Brown's inner evil. Hurley writes, "The forest, symbol of Brown's retreat into himself, is associated with images suggestive of evil" (Hurley 413). The evil forest is the setting in which Hawthorne has prepared the reader to sense the wickedness to come. Young Goodman Brown tries to resist the devil during the journey.

As he prays, the sky becomes blue with the exception of one black cloud over the townspeople. Hawthorne explains, "The blue sky was still visible except directly overhead, where this black mass of cloud was sweeping swiftly northward" (Hawthorne 305). The contrasting colors in the setting suggest an inner battle between good and evil. According to Paul Hurley, "Goodman Brown's alliance with evil is suggested by the contrasting images of light and dark which intimate a symbolic opposition between good and evil" (Hurley 412). The author continues to paint a gloomy picture through setting to show his theme that it is human nature to be evil. Through characters, Hawthorne exhibits the theme that it is human nature to be evil. The name, Young Goodman Brown represents a title of respect during the Puritan times (Hawthorne 299).

Young Goodman Brown represents the respected members of his town that were found to be evil. According to Jamil, "Hawthorne suggests the character is a commoner both socially and morally and represents the average human mind as it ponders faith" (Jamil 144). Goodman Brown lost all respect for the hypocritical townspeople and loses his faith in the end.

The wife was named Faith. Faith was innocent and also represented all that was good in the life of Young Goodman Brown: "And Faith, as the wife was aptly named, thrust her own pretty head into the street" (Hawthorne 299). Young Goodman Brown abandons his wife, just as he abandons his actual faith.

Brown begins to struggle with his faith during the journey into the forest. Becnel suggests, "Doubting one's faith can cause one to be fixated on

the motives of everyone around him??? (Becnel 4). Brown does doubt his faith for the rest of his life causing him to believe that it is the nature of mankind to be evil. Goody Cloyse who was Brown??™s spiritual adviser also represents evil in the story and takes part in the devil??™s communion. In the story, Goody Cloyse calls the devil by name and the devil responds, ??????™ Then Goody Cloyse knows her own friend??™ ??? (Hawthorne 303). Brown is surprised to find the woman he thought was so righteous to be friends with the devil.

Through symbolism, Hawthorne shows that it is human nature to be evil. One symbol in the story is faith. When Brown is explaining to the devil that he is tardy: ??????™ Faith kept me back a while.??™ ??? (Hawthorne 301). Paul J. Hurley writes, ??? Most readers are agreed that faith must be interpreted as faith in one??™s fellow men as well as religious faith??? (Hurley 412). Brown is referring to his actual wife named Faith and his faith in God.

Another symbol in the story is the devil. The fellow in the forest had a staff that was indicative that he was actually the devil because the staff resembled a writhing serpent: ??????| it might also be seen to twist and wriggle itself like a living serpent??? (Hawthorne 301). Hawthorne is showing the reader that the companion in the forest has the qualities of the devil. During the devil??™s communion he sees his innocent wife Faith about to take part and Young Goodman Brown yells, ??????™ With Heaven above and Faith below, I will yet stand firm against the devil!??™ ??? (Hawthorne 305). Brown is proving to be the only one resisting the devil symbolizing his bleak and lonely future.

Brown's journey symbolizes that mankind is naturally evil. David Levin suggests that the story represents the possibility of universal evil. Levin states, "The story is not about the evil of other people but about Brown's doubt, his discovery of the possibility of universal evil" (Levin 351). Hawthorne creates his theme that it is human nature to be evil throughout his story. The circumstances found in the short story "Young Goodman Brown" resemble many circumstances in life today. Good versus evil is a battle that faces many people today just as it did in Hawthorne's time.

Good and evil is the theme for many of Hawthorne's literary works. In conclusion, Hawthorne perfected his idea about the evil of mankind when he wrote about Brown's journey. Through setting, characters, and symbolism, Hawthorne proved his theme that it is the nature of mankind to be evil. Works Cited Becnel, Kim. "Literary Contexts Hawthorne, Nathaniel." "Young Goodman Brown." Perrine's Literature Structure, Sound and Sense.

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