

# Symbolic conflicts in 'young goodman brown'



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## Introduction

In literature, short stories convey a significant meaning that people tend to relate with the current events. In this case, short stories tend to have certain hidden meanings for the readers. Therefore, when readers are looking through these short stories, they should not only receive aesthetic pleasure from the process itself but also take time to find out the hidden meaning. An excellent example of a story that conveys a significant hidden meaning is 'Young Goodman Brown' by Nathaniel Hawthorne (Hawthorne, 1992). Hawthorne applies symbolism to introduce allegory in the story. For this reason, an analysis of symbolic conflicts of the present world in relation to the short story 'Young Goodman Brown' is done.

## Discussion

The short story by Hawthorne is about Young Goodman Brown who sets on a one night journey in the forest (Hawthorne, 1992). He leaves behind his wife to embark on a quest that will take only one night. Brown takes a journey despite his wife begging him to stay home and spend a night with her (Hawthorne, 1992). During his journey, Brown encounters certain events that baffle him. Brown is a straight Christian who follows all the Christian values and teachings. However, through his journey, he comes to learn the evils that surround mankind. He is filled with a lot of guilt in his heart (Hawthorne, 1992). Brown is left questioning his Christianity when he comes home in Salem (Hawthorne, 1992).

Young Goodman Brown and the serpent man plays a symbolic role in the story. Both of them show the symbolic conflicts that people are constantly

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facing in the current world. According to Hawthorne, Brown is a stooge Christian who follows the Christian beliefs without doubts (Hawthorne, 1992). On the other hand, the serpent old man plays the role of an evil person who takes short cuts for his own benefit (Hawthorne, 1992). Presently, everybody has an excellent side that follows all the rules. However, when people are facing daunting tasks, the evil side emerges, presenting several temptations for people to follow. An excellent example is a politician. When seeking votes from the voters, the politician promises to deliver milk and honey. However, once elected, the evil side appears, tempting the politician to preach water while taking wine for his or her own personal gain at the expense of his or her voters' wish. Therefore, Hawthorne's story depicts the evils present in the society by applying symbolic conflicts.

Throughout the story the serpent old man narrates Brown a story of how Brown's grandfather was using him. The serpent old man states that once his grand father used him to burn a town so that they could win a war; yet it was unjust (Hawthorne, 1992). People never came to know of this since they trusted his grandfather because he was an important man in the society (Hawthorne, 1992). Presently, the men and women of God who are trusted in the society also have evil sides (Stevens-Arroyo, 2012). For instance, many religious leaders are using church funds for their own gain instead of helping the needy (Stevens-Arroyo, 2012). This proves that humans have different conflicts of interests.

Conclusion

According to ' Young Goodman Brown', many symbolic conflicts arise depicting what is happening in the current world. This story shows that humans are extremely cunning and hypocritical. At one point they are extremely honest and trustworthy while, on the other side, they are extremely evil since they use any possible means to help themselves. This creates a symbolic conflict because it is difficult for a person to trust the world. In comparison to Brown, a person is left sitting on the fence due to the conflicts and guilt he or she is facing.