

A worn path



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Phoenix Jackson's fearless journey along the stony path Protagonist of the short fiction, 'A Worn Path' is Phoenix Jackson, an old woman belonging to the African American community. The story opens with her journey to the town on a "bright frozen day in the early morning" (Welty, 1) to collect the medicine for her sick grandson, who is suffering from some kind of chronic throat disease. Since the opening of the story till she reaches the town, from the normal course of her actions it seems that she is a flat character that remains unmoved by any kind of external influences.

Despite the initial impression, one incident shows the roundness of her character as she picks up the nickel that slides from the Hunter's pocket, "God watching me the whole time. I come to stealing" (Welty, 3) This god fearing nature is also typical of her age and racial background who had none but God to trust their fate upon and hence needs to fear them at times. The sole aim of her life is to save her grandson and for that reason she even opts for stealing but her realization that of the commission of her guilt is unmistakable.

Other characters of the story are also of round type. The hunter, for instance, initially appears to be harsh but when he sees that the old woman does not fear death, softens his tone and admires her courage. The nurse and the attendant though both of them spoke initially with the old woman in a harsh note but finally sympathize with her. These ups and downs are signs of a normal human nature. As these traits have reflected from the approach of all these characters, thus, neither of those can be classified as flat characters.

The main aim of literature is to reflect different dimension of life and due to the roundness of characters, the story has become a real depiction of life.

The treatment of a poor, racially inferior old woman normally initializes with

a poor welcome. The disadvantage of old age, economic backwardness and also racial inferiority has been reflected here. However the author does not forget to bring out the courage, typical of a black woman through the other characters' behavior after knowing her. All the characters she meets later become kind towards her. However the woman indulges in the act of stealth but earns the readers sympathy when they know her cause.

Though she is determined to save the life of her grandson yet she remembers her self-dignity. Thus, during the time of picking up the nickel she feels the bite of her conscience. Later on, at the doctor's chamber in the town, when the attendant offers her to give some money, she does not deny but at the same time she "stiffly" accepts the money. (Welty, 5) Due to her extensive experience of life, she mostly looks at life from a rational angle but emotion overwhelms her as she is reminded of her grandson.

The hard stones turned by the old black women of the time in fighting against the social injustice and economic inequality worked well in making them strong enough to face the struggles of life and accept everything in a situation rationally rather than being too sensitive. Phoenix Jackson represents this archetypal nature perfectly.

Works Cited

Welty, Eudora. A Worn Path. N. d. Available at: http://www.myteacherpages.com/webpages/rgunnar/files/_A%20Worn%20Path_%20Text.pdf (accessed on June 16, 2010)