

Term paper on literary analysis of "worn path" by eudora welty

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The Worn Path short story is a captivating short story, in which Eudora Welty narrates about the journey the old woman Phoenix Jackson to the doctor, for her ill grandchild's medication. While the short story might be linked to Welty's personal life, the story generally uses symbolism and other literal terms to portray the troubles and challenges that guardians go through and sacrifices they have to take so that their loved ones can live comfortably. The initial parts of the story describe Phoenix Jackson's physical appearance and the environment that surrounds her as she walks along the pine forest path (Welty 142). Phoenix is symbolic of a guardian who has a loved to care for. Phoenix is an old person, which is symbolic of having many life experiences. The path ahead of Phoenix represents the unknown future of the guardian, but the guardian has definite duties and responsibilities, which is why the guardian has to go through the path of life. Therefore, the path represents future life experiences. For the guardian to be able to support the loved one he/she needs to have a means of income, this as symbolized by Phoenix's apron that suggests that she is a worker of maybe a sugar factory since the apron is made out of bleached sugar sacks. Welty uses the simile "big dead trees like black men with one arm," that signifies the importance of having two arms to work, without which the person is as good as dead (Welty 1). Welty also presents another aspect of a guardian whereby, the guardian is not perfect. The guardian has some shortcomings symbolized by untied shoelaces and poor vision, but these shortcomings do not put down a determined guardian since they get up and proceed with their lives after tripping over their shoelaces, and they device solutions to compliment their shortcomings just as Phoenix uses a cane to guide her through the journey.

Right before the guardian is a hill, the hill is symbolic of a big obstacle to an individual's goal. Going uphill presents various challenges, as Phoenix went up-hill there was quivering in the thicket, which is also a use of suspense in the story. Phoenix mentions several animals that would have been the cause of the quiver, and some are dangerous animals such as the fox (Welty 1).

This part of the story symbolizes the hidden challenges that a guardian should expect, but these challenges should not hinder the guardian. Phoenix got weary as she went up the hill and compared the tiredness to the presence of chains around her feet. She also relates the tiredness when going up the hill to something pulling her back. On the hill Phoenix uses the analogy, "Up through the pines" and "Down through the oaks" to describe her past and her future (Welty 1). According to Owen, Phoenix's journey can be viewed from a Homeric perspective, whereby Phoenix is the hero but before she can save her grandchild, she has to go through trials and tribulations that try to abstract her from her main goal (1).

Phoenix's downhill walk poses a different challenge of thorns therefore she treads carefully while holding her dress to avoid it from being torn by thorns. This is evident when she says that thorns are doing their appointed work and that she will not let them to succeed. She also describes the thorns as deceptive since they look like pretty little green bushes to the eyes of the elderly (Welty 1). Throughout the journey, Phoenix takes great care for her dress. This is also evident as she walks over the log, and when she crosses the barbed wire. It is ironic that so much attention is given in caring for her dress, as compared to the risks she exposes herself to, but the dress is symbolic of the guardian's image. The guardian should take great care of

his/her image since people treat someone according to the way they present themselves and young ones emulate the presentations of their guardians.

When Phoenix reaches to the bottom of the hill, she is not relieved, she hints of another problem ahead when says that "the trial is about to begin," since she has to walk over a log. Phoenix is brave and lucky since she closes her eyes and successfully goes across the log. Life presents all individuals with opportunities they can take advantage of, as well as luck. Phoenix had some experiences of luck such as walk over a log, collecting the hunter's nickel, getting a random person to tie her shoelace, and receiving a nickel from the hospital attendant (Welty 1). Hence, despite the hardships that life presents, there are also positive aspects of life that the guardian can enjoy such as luck. Life presents several challenges and some of them do not have straightforward solutions, this presented in the story using the cornfield. The cornfield presents a challenge of finding the way across since it has no path; Phoenix relates the field to a maze (Welty 1). Within the maze, there are obstacles such as scarecrows, which act as deterrents to solving problems. Other human beings are a source of discouragement as guardians try to achieve their goals. The hunter is symbolic of such an individual, because he persistently tells Phoenix to head back home (Welty 1). At some point, the hunter points his gun at Phoenix as a test of Phoenix's courage. It is not very clear whether the hunter is insincere since he comments that he would have given Phoenix some money if he had some, or whether he made the comment after checking and finding out that he had no money. This short story has some relation with Welty's personal life. After publishing the book *The Ponder Heart* in 1954, Welty stopped writing for more than ten years

because of personal tragedies and she commenced publishing in 1970 with the book *Losing Battles* (Marrs 1). The *Collected Stories of Eudora Welty*, which contains the *worn Path* short story was published in 1982, which means that the short story expresses some of the personal hardships she went through and other hardships she was still going through.

While guardians are posed with many challenges in life, it is important that they remain focused, brave, and determined for them to achieve their goals, and for them to support their loved ones. The use of suspense in stories lures the reader's appetite (Buffington, 9). One major message from Welty's story is that problems and challenges never cease in life, this is evident the story whereby Phoenix faces obstacle after obstacle and the ends in suspense after Phoenix is handed her grandson's medicine. A story's open ending leaves the reader with questions on the probable direction the story can take (Rodari 1). The reader is left with questions of how Phoenix headed back home; it would be very interesting and challenging if she went back using the same route.

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