

# Symbolism in the road

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In McCarthy's book, *The Road*, McCarthy is able to illustrate not only the setting of the book, but feelings, expressions, and actions, by various literary devices. Although he brought into play several devices such as: imagery, tone, metaphors, and a couple of similes, the most significant would have to be symbolism. Symbolism is when the author uses an object or reference to add deeper meaning to a story. The author may constantly use the same object to express deeper meaning.

Symbolism is also often used to support a literary theme in a subtle manner, which in this case is what McCarthy did. An example of symbolism, and the most noteworthy would have to be the road. Just like that, the plain road. McCarthy refers to the road on several instances, thus making it imperative to the novel. The road symbolizes hope, as well as courage. The road means that for them it is the only hope of surviving. Hope that when they get to the end of that road they will be safe in a safe place.

It also represents courage because they have the bravery of going on without knowing anything about the road, courage of going into the unknown. Not knowing what awaits them. Another example of symbolism is when the man tells the boy that he they are the only ones carrying the fire. In this quote the man refers to fire as being a symbol of them being the only ones left who have feelings in the world, who have a conscience, who still hold true to things that make us human, like empathy, hope, love and the will to survive without sacrificing your beliefs, things other people in this new world have lost.

Compared to the others, “ the bad guys,” The man and his son don’t kill, they don’t steal from the living, they help where it’s possible to do so, and, most importantly in the novel’s symbolism, they don’t eat other people, which can differ you from “ good” and “ bad. ” Another example of symbolism is the mirror. The man and the boy went into a house and as they turned around a corner there was a mirror, and as the man saw his reflection he instantly reached for his gun, thinking it was someone else.

In this case the mirror symbolizes what the man has turned into. It represents and supports the theme of survival present through out the novel, what they have to be in order to survive in this new world. In another scene the man and the boy come across a river, which symbolizes after death, or the gateway to the afterlife. This symbol goes in hand with the quote “ the grass is greener on the other side,” it is like if they are on the wrong side of it, like if they go to the other side everything would be better, and prettier.

Therefore, the sea stands for the other life, the one you get when you’re dead, which in the case of the man and the boy would be best for them since the life they are “ walking dead,” they are living a pitiable life. The boy himself is also a form of symbolism. The boy exemplifies innocence; he demonstrates that there still is purity in the world. He is always looking for the goodness of people. Throughout the novel they run into different people, he always wanted them to come along with his dad and him, and he was always willing to help them no matter if they are “ good” or “ bad. In a certain time the boy is willing to sacrifice himself to help the man they ran into. He was willing to give him his food and not eat himself so the man could

eat. A further example that goes hand-in-hand with the boy's innocence would be his kindness. In this case kindness stands for his vulnerability. Since in McCarthy's post-apocalyptic world, the line between kindness and vulnerability is very fine. Thanks to his father though, the boy survives, and keeps focused. His father serves as a realistic intermediary between the boy and ideal goodness.

The boy's hair being described as a "golden chalice," stands for the boy sometimes being like a divine child who can inspire the man to goodness. The "golden chalice" makes the boy seem angelical. The boy's gentle nature provides us, readers, with hope for the future. Though he has only known this wild, post-apocalyptic world, he's still full of kindness and innocence. Speaking of the boy another symbol about him is the "yellow truck". This "yellow truck" represented the boy's youth, and his childhood, despite the fact that they live in a world where he could not be a child.

In this world he was not able to live his infancy like any other child, and when he played with this truck, it was like if one saw another side of him, like if we were able to see the child that lives within him. Cannibalism is another form of symbolism that represents what the world has come to, what mankind has turned into. It symbolizes the end of civilization, and that eventually there will be no human in this "new world" due to it. Cannibalism also forms a major part of the novel since it can differentiate the man, and the boy from the "good," or "bad" guys.

However, when you are living in a world like the one in the novel, if you are a cannibal is it being a "bad guy," or is it you're survival instincts coming into

play? Does it make you a bad person to want to live? Due to symbolism along with the help of other literary elements McCarthy brings to life a world that no one else could have ever imagined possible. There are so many books and films that try to portray the end of the world, but no other has done so as Cormac McCarthy has.