

Cormac mccarthy's the road- theme of hope

[Religion](#), [God](#)



The Road is set sometime in the future after a global catastrophe.

The Road follows the story of a nameless father and son, possibly the last of the “good guys”, as they travel along an abandoned stretch of highway populated with occasional marauders and cannibals. The post-apocalyptic setting plays upon the public's fear of terrorism, pandemics, genocide, and weapons of mass destruction. Since the cause of the destruction remains unanswered, it is left open to the mind to make assumptions. The Road is set somewhere in the south eastern United States. There is mention of distant mountains, several rivers and creeks, and a coastline. The landscape and the air are soaked in thick, gray ash. Vegetation has been destroyed.

There are no fish in the water. When snow falls, it collects the ash in the air and falls to the earth already gray. The setting is the main antagonist in the book, because it is the number one adversity the father and son have to endure. This creates the theme as the father continually struggles to keep his faith and “carry the fire”. The hardship he faces with his son makes him question his faith in humanity and god, but in the end, it is his son who makes him see that you can always have hope in the most difficult of times. The boy and the man continually search among the debris in the aftermath of the cataclysmic event for morsels of food and warmth. Though they are forced to breathe thick ash in the air and travel in constant cold, they continually trudge forward.

It is apparent that the father is slowly losing his faith in humanity and their situation, and parts of him wish it could just all be over. They must find food and clean water, and they must constantly hide. There are marauding groups

of cannibals who look upon the man and boy as nothing more than meat.

The lone bullet in the man's gun is saved for the boy, who has been instructed on how to kill himself should something happen to the man. This young boy, the only hope in a dismal environment, is all that matters to the man. " You know how to do it. You put it in your mouth and point it up.

Do it quick and hard. Do you understand? Stop crying. Do you understand? " (113). This shows that the father does not trust his son to be able to survive in this environment, and he would much rather have him die easily than have to attempt survival and risk suffering. The man and boy encounter few people in this story. Most of those they do come across are brutish because everyone is starving and fighting for survival. Almost all the people in this story are constantly on the move.

The father trusts no one, his goal is to make it to the south, to the coastline. However, neither warmth nor bounties of food are found once the man and the boy finally reach the edge of the water. The shoreline is just as cold as the mountains were, and everything is the same: drained of life, bitterly cold, and hopeless. Though the boy wants to write a message in the sand to the " good guys" the father finds it hard to stay positive. " What if the bad guys saw it? ...

I shouldn't have said that, we could write them a letter" (245). Though through it all the boy is still able to hold on to hope that there is still good in the world. Yet, father also starts to question his faith in god, which contributes to his pessimistic attitude. The father subconsciously focuses attention on the questions of God, does he exist? If so, is he present, or has

he vacated the premises? Is he good? Does he care? It become clear that the father's faith in god is shaky after all the incidences he has witnessed. In one case, when he meets an elderly blind man, the father tells him how only god could know what is going to happen. The blind man then says, " There is no god and we are his prophets" (170). This shows that the old man has lost all faith in god.

He believes that they have been left there to fend for themselves. The father says nothing to oppose the statement and seems to push it in to the back of his mind. The old man later mention, " Where men can't live gods fare no better" (172). Referring to how it is near impossible to keep your faith in such hard times. Later in the novel when they find a flare gun, the father shoots it off as a celebration. His son asks if anyone could see it, to which the father asks " Like god? " (246). The flare is symbolic in the sense that they shot it in to nothing but smog and pollution but could still make it out, even though no one from any further away would be able to.

This make the father realize that god can work in the same way, and even though you can't see him, he could still be present. Over time, the boy's optimism starts to work on the fathers hope in the future. He starts to trust in his son and understands that he is able to make the right decisions. He also regains some of his hope for the future through it all. " We're still here. Alot of bad things Abraham 3 have happened but we're still here" (269) His love for his son continues to make him strong and he braves each day even though he knows he will die soon from sickness. At one point the boy asks him what the bravest thing he has ever done was.

The man replies, “ Getting up this morning” (272). In time the father comes to see how much his son has matured and is able to make the right decisions. The father notices how the boy always went out of his way to help people and had a good moral compass. The child begged to give food to the old man even though they knew he would die, as well as returning clothes to a thief even though he didn't deserve it. The father tells the boy that he has been carrying the fire himself this whole time inside of him, “ It's inside you. It was always there. I can see it” (279).

In the end, the father realizes that he must trust his son to survive on his own and that there is hope for the future. He promises the boy that he will never leave him, but he cannot keep death at bay. The man finally succumbs. And the boy still young in years, but aged through his challenging experiences must find his own way. Despite the setting, the father learned from his son that you can always keep hope alive, no matter how hard times get. “ You have my whole heart. You always did.

You're the best guy. You always were. If I'm not here you can still talk to me. You can talk to me and I'll talk to you. You'll see” (279).