

# Greatly drive the course of future

[Life](#), [Friendship](#)



As stated by Janet Muslin in her criticism of *The Road*, "the boy was born a few days after [the mother] and [father] 'watched distant cities burn.'" (Muslin 2). The boy grows accustomed to the fiery world in which he inhabits, but his parents do not adapt as easily. They openly express how unnatural and unbearable the conditions are, and consequently the whole family suffers from an extremely depressing domestic life. After the death of the mother, the father and son only have each other for physical and emotional support. The boy learns many crucial life skills from his father through the successes and mistakes they share. He learns the importance of not making rash decisions like they make in the farmhouse encounter in which they almost die.

Occasions such as the discovery of the underground bunker helps provide the son with a brief but crucial moment of hope. After the mother and father die, the boy must continue to survive and [carry the fire] (McCarthy 278). In *The Road*, Cormac McCarthy demonstrates that one can survive against all odds in the face of adversity. Over the course of his life, the son has influences from his mother and father, which greatly drive the course of his future.

His mother is by far the least helpful of his parents. Treating her son as though the apocalypse were his fault, she avoids him as if he were contagious. She assumed nurtures him to allow him to survive, but nothing suggests any remote interest in her son. In later years, the son yearns to know his mother better, but does not realize the unfamiliarity is due to her negligence of him.

Much of the mother's disinterest in the son is a result of the apocalypse. Perhaps she would be more caring for her son if the future if it were more certain. She has the unhealthy mentality that since the world is in ruins, there is no longer a season to continue living. Her life before the apocalypse is entirely a thing of the past. The family and friends she has before the apocalypse, other than her husband or son, smolder along with the rest of the world.

Due to the loss of her friends and some of her family, the mother loses most of her will to live, especially on the barren rock that is Earth. The world itself is quite a depressing sight to behold in its own right, as critic John Holt describes in his criticism of *The Road*. The "incinerated" wasteland is home to few survivors. Since it is "smothered in ash," the "snow is grey," and "the rivers run thickly logged with ash and soot," the world is quite an inhospitable place (Holt 2).

With these facts painfully fresh in her mind, the idea of suicide is quite favorable to the mother. The mother and father spend many depressing years planning how to destroy themselves. Years of overhearing the numerous discussions of self-destruction likely introduced the son to the concept of committing suicide. To prevent the son from following his mother's example, the father tries to instill the importance of virtue and survival in his son. To give his son a sense of purpose, he invents the concept of "carrying the fire," telling his son to imagine he has a fire inside him that he must maintain by staying alive. In a campsite conversation, McCarthy expresses the belief in the "fire." "[son] .

.. Nothing bad is going to happen to us.

[father] That's right. [son] Because we're carrying the fire. [father] Yes.

Because we're carrying the fire" (McCarthy 83). Due to the father's Christian background, he also encourages the son to believe in God. However, faith IS not enough for the son to become self- sufficient; he needs to gain life experience, which the father has a great amount to share.

The father has an extremely sharp mind when it comes to just about anything. He has a perfectly tuned degree of survival senses, which repeatedly come in handy for him and his son. During the thug encounter, McCarthy displays the father's intelligence in this quote by the father speaking to the thug: bullet travels faster than sound. It will be in your brain before you can hear it. To hear it you will need a frontal lobe and things with names like coliseums and temporal gurus and you won't have them anymore.

They'll just be soup" (McCarthy 64). With such an intelligent father, the son has an excellent role model. In his endeavor to prepare the son to fend for himself, the father protects and nurtures his son as he is growing up. Since the world has become a dangerous place, the father safeguards his son during their travels from various threats.

The father does an exceptional job defending his son from the elements, thugs, and cannibals. In the mother's absence, the father must provide his son with the affection that the son needs to promote the idea of survival. In her criticism, " The Road Through Hell, Paved With Depression," Janet Muslin

describes the significance of the father's love, "The father's loving efforts to shepherd his son are made that much more wrenching by the unavailability of food, shelter, safety, companionship or hope in most places where they scavenge to subsist" (Muslin 1).

The father serves as an excellent role model for the son, and has given plenty of guidance to him. With the mother dead, the father and son must now try to continue surviving without assistance. As the traveling pair knows all too well, the wasteland that is the remains of the United States is quite an inhospitable place.

They are relentlessly battling against various elements of the wasteland. Of their many enemies, one of their most constant issues is the perpetual lack of food. At times, the deficiency of food proves to be more lethal than the other problems they must endure, such as bandits, cannibals, and severe weather. During their travels, the father and son are almost always on the brink of starvation. When the lack of food becomes too much to endure, they resort to irrational measures to obtain food for survival. Even in the face of starvation, the son often disagrees with his father's reckless bids to get food, knowing that any food they may find would be worthless if they are killed in the attempt to find food.

The father's decision serves as a steep gamble; to either be lucky enough to find some food, or to pay the heavy price of death. When the father and son search for food in the farmhouse, McCarthy demonstrates that the son's abundance of caution is not without reason. To their horror, they find a source of food they would never consider consuming - live humans

(McCarthy 1 10). Soon after this unpleasant discovery, a group of cannibals almost take the father and son as food.

Thankfully, the father and son were able to escape the clutches of the cannibals. Cannibals, borne from the lawlessness of the land, abduct people from all over the wasteland. In order for the cannibals to make use of the people they abduct, they “ stowed [them] away in hidden places [to be their] food supply” (Muslin 2). Conditions such as these come close to killing the father and son on numerous occasions throughout the novel.

However not all was gloom and doom for the traveling pair. Sometimes, they would be lucky enough to strike a windfall. Recovering from their disastrous experience at the farmhouse, the father and son stumble upon a deserted town. While there, they come across an regular sight – freshly turned soil.

This is not normal because the ground is usually not visible due to ash drifting across the land, quickly covering it up. To make this sight even more tangible, there is a spade stuck in the soil, in an almost inviting way. Taking this queue, the father digs through the freshly turned soil and digs deep enough until he finds a door underground, which looks similar to a door to a cellar. After opening the door, the father and son descend the staircase into the unknown. When the father and son get into the bunker, McCarthy illustrates the amazing sight they behold. [The father] held [his son] by the hand and they went along the rows of stencil cartons.

Chile, corn, stew, soup, spaghetti sauce. The richness of a vanished world” (McCarthy 139). The bunker serves as a stark contradiction to the entire

novel; providing hope, happiness, and long needed sustenance to the father and son. The bunker also contains a wide variety of survival supplies, such as electric torches, lighter fluid, batteries, and many other rarities. In the bunker where they seem to find everything they could possibly ask for, they find ammunition as well. Ironically, there are several ammunition cases for paeans, but the bullets are not the proper caliber for their pistol, and there are no weapons lying around that are compatible with the abundance of ammunition (McCarthy 138). After taking a rest in the underground bunker, the father and son leave with a great amount of food to continue their travel southward.

Even though the father and son sunrise various perils in their travels, the harsh reality is that the father will not be around forever to safeguard the son. Throughout the father and son's travels, the father tries to keep a saddening truth from his son. For a large amount of the novel, the father has been offering from a fatal affliction. Mostly near the end of their journey, the father would cough violently, sometimes violently enough to produce blood. This illness weakens the father considerably, as aforementioned, near the end of their travel.

Shortly after they leave a port town where they search for supplies, the father cannot endure his pain any longer (McCarthy 278). Sensing his father's approaching death, the son grieves heavily. Not only is his father the only friend he ever knew, he is also his lifeline. Even though the father is confident that his son will be able to carry on without him, the son is cared of losing his father and being alone in the world. To ease the son's remorse,

McCarthy mercifully allows his father to soothe his son with a touching farewell. 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" (McCarthy 279).

Three days after his father's passing, the son continues to watch over his father's body which is still lying on the ground with a blanket over the body. The son mourns for his father as he watches over him because he is unclear what the future will bring, and he feels there is no purpose or goal for him in life. A stranger then approaches the son at the site where the son has been staying. William Kennedy illustrates this uncertain scene as it unfolds in his criticism of *The Road*. [He] arrives on cue as a *dues ex machine* that has been following the [father and son] and swiftly enfolds the boy into a holy family, maybe a holy commune, where they talk of the breath of God passing man to man through all of time" (Kennedy 5). As Kennedy describes in his criticism, the stranger appears as a savior for the son, providing the son a new purpose in life. He allows the son to pay his final respects to his father, and then takes the son with him to his village.

The citizens in this village practice the Christian faith, which they encourage upon the son. A woman in the village speaks to him about God, but the son instead chooses to "talk to his father" instead of God (Holt 3). Even though the father's beliefs lie in Christianity, the son chooses to believe in his father instead, either out of ignorance of the faith or out of continuous respect and



love of his father. In the caring hands of the holy pilgrimage, the son manages to survive the cold, earner wasteland.

Despite the various perils in *The Road*, Coral McCarthy shows how a person can persevere through the most challenging threats against life.