

A short tale young goodman brown by hawthorne

[Literature](#), [American Literature](#)



Like so many of Hawthorne's short tales, *Young Goodman Brown* is filled with symbolic connotations, in that it is explicit that the characters and actions stand for abstract qualities.

As Goodman Brown commences on his trip into the forest, a "fellow-traveler" walks with him, who it is obvious to be the Devil. The journey into the woods itself has symbolic importance, as is made plain when Goodman Brown responds to the request of the Devil to go farther into the woods. It is apparent then that Goodman Brown is pleased and satisfied of his own "goodness," as portrayed by his name. For him, in his imaginings, at least, he is a "good man." The journey into the forest, therefore, is representative of engaging with evil. Also, we see how the Devil responds to this affirmation of honesty. Vital to this story and so many of Hawthorne's tales is the belief of the evilness of humanity, however righteous it pretends to be.

Hawthorne makes it explicit that sin affects everyone, including the seemingly "Goodman" Brown. There is a touch of irony to be known at those references to Brown's family members. Brown affirms that he comes from a long line of honest and upright citizens of the Puritan society and the Devil agrees and brings up two examples. He states, "I helped your grandfather, the constable when he lashed the Quaker woman so smartly through the streets of Salem." To Brown's ears, the efforts of his grandfather are great because Quakers were not of the true faith and needed to be disciplined for their tradition of their differing religious views. But we as readers realize that Hawthorne is representing the narrow-minded and evil behavior of the Puritans.

The second example portrays that the Devil suggests that it was he that “brought [Brown’s] father a pitch-pine knot, kindled in [his] own hearth, to set fire to an Indian village.” Once again, Brown recognizes his father’s action against the innocent Indians as a proper thing, because the primitive Indians were “bad,” and Hawthorne is freshly depicting the irony of these people’s actions. In the name of assumed good, they are causing evil.

The Devil is forever influenced by immoral conduct, generally at the direction of “doing the right thing.” Understanding Hawthorne’s tone and his rhetorical position are essential to a sharp perception of his stories. When the Devil requests that Goodman Brown follow him into the woods, Brown determines that it is just too far and that his father and grandfather had never proceeded into the forest on such a corrupt job, so he mustn’t do so either. Brown affirms that “[they] have been a race of honest men and good Christians.” He assumes that if he follows the Devil into the woods, he would be the first of his family to do so.

Nonetheless, the Devil believes differently. In fact, he insists that he has been well-acquainted with Brown’s family. As an example, the Devil had supported Brown’s grandfather in striking a Quaker woman and Brown’s father in destroying an Indian village.