

Free the treatment of  
family in a good man  
is hard to find and the  
rocking horse ...

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In O'Connor's "A Good Man is hard to find" and Lawrence's "The Rocking Horse Winner," both writers look at the destructive nature of the family. Although the setting and conflict is different in both stories, the writers choose to show that all families have disagreements with each other. These disagreements often lead to negative reactions to the members of the family. In "The Rocking Horse Winner," the story centers on a young boy's need to experience a positive relationship with his mother. He tries to win her love, but fails in his attempts. Similarly, the grandmother in "A Good Man is Hard to Find," tries to find love in her family, but in the end she faces disrespect and opposition from her family. O'Connor and Lawrence use irony to show the negative impact of the family on the major characters.

In "A Good Man is hard to find," O'Connor shows the family as a broken unit. The grandmother is vain and has a self-centered attitude. The first three lines of the story suggest that she wants things to go her way. The narrator shows "the grandmother didn't want to go to Florida and she was seizing every chance to change Bailey's mind," (O'Connor, p. 422). The reader sees quickly that Bailey is the "son she lived with, her only boy," (O'Connor, p. 422), but Bailey shows her much disrespect as he does not answer as she tries to sway his mind about going to Tennessee instead of the family visit to Florida. Similarly, Lawrence shows disrespect in the family, but in a different manner. The mother disrespects her son in "The Rocking-Horse Winner." Paul tries desperately to win his mother's attention when he attempts to alleviate her financial burdens, but she shows no appreciation for his attempts. Arguably, both his parents are estranged from each other that their love does not reach their children. While both stories share different

ways the breakdown in family values, the similarity in the negative treatment of family members lead to the ultimate destruction of the main character.

O'Connor shows the ironic foreshadowing of the escaped murderer to show the negative relationship in the family. Even as an old woman, the reader sees that the grandmother contributes to the ultimate destruction of the family. After she fails to get Bailey's response to the change of venue, she tries to convince her daughter-in-law to help to get Bailey to change his mind. She uses the argument that John Wesley, June Star, and the children had never been to Tennessee. But this only heightens the level of disrespect that comes to the grandmother. In addition, the children follow the non-vocal disrespect that the adults display towards the grandmother. Similar to the grandmother, Paul tries desperately to gain the love and attention of his mother. He gambles on the horses and wins money in an effort to silence the voices in the house, while the grandmother attempts to persuade the other two adults to change the family plans because the escaped prisoners were on the loose. Arguably, each of the major characters in the two stories, reach out to the other characters, but they find that the love they seek will never be found in their respective families.

Paul and the grandmother are similar in their moral principles. Each of the two possesses good moral s regardless of the situation they were in. Paul attempts to ease his mother's selfish destructive ways, but he becomes a victim of his mother's greed and selfishness. The grandmother is a victim of the disrespect her family shows towards her and a victim of the murderer who appears much nicer to her than her real family. Both Paul and the

grandmother attempt to turn their situation into a positive one, but fail to do so in the end. In addition, Lawrence and O'Connor use irony in both pieces to reveal qualities about each character. The grandmother hides the cat, Pitty Sing, as she believes the cat could not survive by itself. But, ironically, the cat is the lone survivor after it is responsible for the chain of events that follow. In "The Rocking Horse Winner," the irony lies in the fact that the mother appear to love her children. But, she prefers the luxurious lifestyle that she can hardly afford. Outwardly, she appears to love her children as she calls and checks on them when she is out at a party. She asks the the children's nursery-governess "Are the children okay? We shall be home early," (Lawrence, p. 610) but, she does not return until "about one o'clock," (Lawrence, p. 610). The reader questions the "love" of a mother who appears concerned about the well-being of her child, but still does not sacrifice her own happiness for their safety. It is the

The events that lead to the two scenes of death show the shortcomings of the family as a unit and craft a feeling of foreboding in the two pieces.

Lawrence uses the strong images of Paul riding his horse in frenzy as he realizes that his mother's need for money becomes more intense and the house continues to demand more money. Conversely, it is the lack of appreciation for the five thousand pounds that shows the reader that the mother is selfish. She does not care much for the small help that she receives as she immediately asks the lawyer to release all of the money at once. Her greed and superficial nature allows her to want more than she can afford financially, and ultimately places as strain on Paul to get her love and affection. Lawrence extends the imagery of Paul's frantic final ride, and

combines it with the ironic comments of Uncle Oscar. He notes " my God, Hester, you're eight-odd thousand to the good, and a poor devil of a son to the bad. But, poor devil, poor devil, he's best gone out of a life where he rides his rocking horse to find a winner," (Lawrence, p. 612) as Uncle Oscar notices that Paul could not do anymore to gain his mother's love. Ironically, Hester now has the money she wants, but she loses her son.

Similarly, O'Connor uses life-versus-death imagery to show that impending disaster. In contrast to Paul, the grandmother acts as the tour guide as she shows the children a number of scenes that foreshadows their deaths. She points to the old family cemetery with the five or six graves that equals the number of passengers in their car as foreshadowing the violence that will come to her family. She shows the readers that death will come to her

family. Walls note " violence serves as a catalyst to produce the Grandmother's moment of grace at the climax of the story, when the Grandmother makes the right gesture to the Misfit," (Walls, p. 44)

O'Connor's use of the self-centered monkey biting the fleas is similar to Lawrence's creation of Hester as she craves a lifestyle that makes [them] superior to anyone in the neighborhood," (Lawrence, p. 601), and foreshadows the deadly sacrifice that Paul makes for his mother. In addition, she cannot afford the lifestyle that she chooses and spends the five thousand pounds making unnecessary changes to the family's home and way of life.

Finally, O'Connor and Lawrence use their characters to highlight the presence of religion in the story. The grandmother uses religion to escape death, but she is unsuccessful as the Misfit weighs the situation and

concludes " Jesus was the only One that ever raised the dead . . . and He shouldn't have done it. He [has] thrown everything off balance. If He did what He said, then it's nothing for you to do but throw away everything and follow Him, No pleasure but meanness," (O'Connor, p. 432). Additionally, in order to save herself the grandmother concedes that " Maybe He didn't raise the dead," (O'Connor, p. 432). Still, the Misfit decides against the Christian premise and kills the grandmother. Lawrence shows Paul attributing his luck to God after his mother's casual remark that God knows why some people are lucky and some are not lucky. " Paul becomes convinced of the need to seek out luck, and therefore he associates luck with money," (Ufukege, p. 42). In addition, Ufukege notes " clearly, the personification of the house through the haunting phrase is the level of Lawrence's analytical intention," (Ufukege, 42) and forces Paul to try to change the luck of his family. Similar to O'Connor's, Lawrence uses his major character to show the reader that God plays an integral role in the lives of people. In addition, O'Conner uses the Misfit and Lawrence uses Hester to show that many people do not believe in the power of God.

In concluding Paul and the grandmother have the right gesture throughout the story. Paul tries to help his mother to get out of her debt, and the grandmother attempts to change the Misfit's mind from killing her in the end. However, both characters fail in their attempts to accomplish good deeds. Both of the major characters represent the typical Greek tragedy as they are developed to establish the ultimate catastrophe. Both, Paul and the grandmother face a crisis in their lives and their as they attempt to deal with the crisis, they destroy their self-confidence. Paul's occurs because of his

need to find luck, while the grandmother dies because of her selfish ways and the fact that she misinterprets bad for good.

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