

Research paper on friendship in fried green tomatoes at the whistle stop cafe

[Technology](#), [Development](#)



Oftentimes people feel more comfortable bearing their personal feelings to friends rather than to relatives because people may choose friends but not family. According to Hays, friendship is a qualitative relationship and defined as a “voluntary interdependence between two persons that is intended to facilitate socio-emotional goals of the participants, and may involve varying types and degrees of companionship, intimacy, affection and mutual assistance” (Hays, p. 395). Demir and Özdemir also state that, “A friend is someone who you enjoy doing things together with, count on to support you when you need it, provide support when he/she needs it, talk about your everyday life, problems, concerns, ideas, and intimate thoughts.” (Demir and Özdemir, 243). Fannie Flagg in her novel, *Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café*, explores the tapestry of life that friendship represents, while depicting the various relationships being formed and disengaged and recounted in the novel. As essential as it may be, friendship does have its own unique challenges, as these characters seek to derive meaning from their relations with others and ultimately from life, whether it is reflecting on one’s own personal life or learning from others narrations.

According to Beacham’s *Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction* (2012), “Friendship, and not genetics, determines familial relationships in Flagg's novel. The Threadgoode surname embodies these themes. Not only do the Threadgoodes exhibit goodness toward everybody, but they also are the thread that connects the disparate parts of the Whistle Stop community. Mrs. Threadgoode's maiden name, Cloud, suggests clichéd meanings symbolizing optimism and happiness such as “every cloud has a silver lining” and “on cloud 9””(Paragraph 3).

In Flagg's "Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop café", the general plot of the book revolves around the development of a friendship between two women, Evelyn Couch who is a middle aged housewife while Ninny Threadgoode who is an elderly woman who lives in a nursing home. In the relationship that develops, several themes that revolve around friendships in America are brought to the fore as the writer seeks to give a deeper meaning to what on the surface may seem to be merely a normal relationship between two women.

According to Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction, "Friendship is closely related to love and truth in the book. While Idgie loves Ruth, she has a deep friendship with Eva based on their mutual love of her brother Buddy and their interest in gambling and drinking, addictions foreign to Ruth's pious, ordered world. Idgie can act wildly unrestrained around Eva, but, with Ruth, she has to control her urges and be civilized" (Paragraph 3).

A closer look at the story also reveals the theme of love relationships between women. In the book, the relationship between Ruth and Idgie in such a traditional southern town is shown to blossom and gains acceptance in the town since everybody knows there is a love relationship between the two women. Though the relationship is not explicitly labeled as a lesbian relationship, there seems to some level of acceptance of such a relationship in the town and this makes lesbianism a theme in the book. It shows how intimate and true such relationships can be.

The other dominant theme in the book is the examination of the process of aging by women. In the book, Evelyn, a main character is shown to be going through the process of menopause and Mrs. Threadgoode is shown as going

through the effects of old age and the deterioration of her health due to aging. The challenges faced by these women as they go through such significant stages in a woman's life are explored and give a glimpse on how such may have significant effects in the relationships that develop between women who are undergoing through such stages in life. In exploring the process of aging in women, the theme of friendship is also explored since the two women, though in different age groups is able to form a strong friendship based on various factors and develops through time. It is through this friendship that the reader is able to grasp how the lives of these two women have been influenced by the friendships that they have developed through time, and through examination of their past, they are able to build a good working friendship.

One of the prevailing themes in the story is the changing face of the American society through a period of almost eight decades. Through narrations, the writer is able to make a discussion of the changes that the society has gone through since the start of the century, the two world wars, the civil rights movements of the sixties and seventies up to the early eighties. Since the story jumps through periods through this time, the reader is able to get quite a clear grasp of how the society has changed, most of these changes being for the better. The status of the African Americans in the American society is one of the changes that have been subtly explored through the book, and the development of the civil rights movements and the inequality that may have existed is explored rather extensively. The activities of the white supremacist group, the Klux Klax Klan are mentioned, and through the story, a change in the perception of the society is depicted

through the use of narrations.

In the book, explorations of the friendships that exist between people in the society is done and clearly show that friendships as depicted in the book give an opportunity to explore the dynamics between individuals and to find meaning as to why they choose to relate to each other the way they do. This is best explained by the friendship between Ruth and Idgie which develops as a result of intimate feelings and the friendship between Ninny Threadgoode and Evelyn which develops as a need to care for each other and share their past and relate to each other. In the growth of a friendship, many factors come into play and the relationship is informed by the dynamics that exist in many forms; the stage of development of the society, the location of the two individuals, their past, religious beliefs and to some extent the economic condition as shown by the two women who were operating a café at a railroad stop. Though not significant at present societal development, the role of race relationships is also critical in the development of friendships.

Friendship as explored in the book also examines the significance of the behaviors of individuals as they relate to particular agendas and objectives that may be entertained at any given moment. The feelings of Idgie to Ruth are a good example of this, and influenced by their friendship and her feelings for Ruth, Idgie chooses to confront Ruth's husband in the belief that she is being mistreated and succeeds. As they go through life together, the behaviors of these two women change accordingly through time but such behaviors are, they are anchored on the friendship that exists between them and essentially indicate that though behaviors may change through time, a

friendship will last through them since behaviors are merely influenced by specific agendas and objectives that may be existing at any given moment in time.

The development of relationships between individuals is influenced by many factors, and to a great extent these factors determine how the relationships are seen by others, their acceptability by the society and the reaction of others to them. From the book, it is clear that these factors change over time and as the society goes through various stages of development, so do such factors change. The acceptance of the friendship between Ruth and Idgie is one of the prime examples of such changes. The relationship that exists between the two women would have been unthinkable a few decades before it happened. However, due to the changes in the perception of the society, such a friendship becomes accepted by the society which has experienced a change in its perceptions and the traditions that would normally have guided and informed the formation of such as relationship are done away with since the society appreciates that they may no longer be relevant.

The guiding principles in the formation of friendships are also explored in the book. In all the friendships that are depicted in the book, there are the guiding principles that run through all these relationships such as loyalty, trust and kindness. In essence, the writer implies that in the absence of these guiding principles, such friendships would be impossible to develop. It is through the strengthening of these factors that the friendships become stronger and the attachment between individuals grows. As such, the author of the book makes a point that as much as behaviors of individuals in relationships may change accordingly depending on the prevailing agendas

and situations, it is important that the guiding principles in such friendships are not affected by changes in the situations that may be experienced over time.

The theme of friendship and its guiding principles is well explored in the book. In the many themes that run through the story, the importance of long lasting friendships is well depicted in the book. It can thus be concluded that the book does an excellent job of examining the importance and quality of friendships through the passage of time and through different settings of societal development.

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