

# Theme of "young goodman brown"

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Theme of " Young Goodman Brown" " Young Goodman Brown" was written by Nathaniel Hawthorn, one of the most talented American novelists and storytellers of the Romantic Age. He was affected deeply by Puritanism and Mysticism so that he formed a suspicious attitude towards the world, just like in " Young Goodman Brown". This story is really short but the content of the story is meaningful. Hawthorn has an allegory technique in fiction writing and shows a strong tendency towards symbolism. He uses the profound symbolism and delicate descriptions of the characters' minds to convey the distinguished thematic meanings.

The main idea throughout Hawthorn's works is digging out the " evil" hidden in human soul. As a result, the most prominent theme of this short story is that evil is the nature of mankind: " We see a man who began to doubt, with some reason, the goodness of his own family, which led him to doubt the goodness of all men, until he concluded that, " Evil is the nature of mankind," words uttered by the devil, who represents the dark side of Brown's nature" (Thomas 336). Hawthorn describes the characters and plots to represent other things and symbolically express a deeper moral meaning.

His words are so exquisite that every character, setting and plot results in crisp and sharp theme. The plot of the forest journey is the most important part to confirm the theme. This is not a journey, but it is the experience of searching and exploring the evil of human nature. Brown is a young, pure, and good person. After he marries Faith, he is tempted to join a devil's party, and promises to his wife he will be back home in the early morning. Faith tries to persuade him to stay, but he refuses. Brown looks at Faith's pink ribbon hat before he leaves.

After Brown enters the forest for a while, he is struggling and wanting back home. The reason is he does not want to hurt his wife—Faith. However, he hears Faith's voice and sees the pink ribbon hat. He is soon at the destination, he was astonished to find that he normally respected person also come to the party. The worst is that Brown finds his wife there also. Hawthorn says that the experience might be a dream, but Brown feels agony and is suspicious of everyone around him, including his wife. Obviously, no matter if the journey is real, the psychological impact to Brown is affirmative. Xianzhun Zhu thinks his experience leads him to realize that evil is indeed very widespread and existent in his world. The forest journey seems to be not a real forest journey, but only an inward journey into the black, despairing depths of Brown's soul. With the description of forest journey strengthens the theme of the story that " Evil is the nature of mankind" (Zhu 60). These settings, including the time, place and environment factors in " Young Goodman Brown," play a significant role in expressing the theme. First, the story happens at night and Brown backs to Salem village the next morning.

Brown sees the sin of human at night and feels desperate. On the contrary, nothing is changed after he backing to village next morning. The time of night and morning form a contrast, embodying the sin and good respectively. Also, there are many description of scene in the story especially for the dark of the night. However, these descriptions highlight the darkness and mysterious, such as " dark night," " big black snake," " black pine," " great wall of dense dark" and " dark human figure. " They also gave a dark atmosphere of Brown's future life and tragic ending. In addition, the story

happened in a forest. The forest may equate with temptation and sin. Clearly Brown is uneasy about venturing upon this temptation. But as any sinner might think, he seems to say, "just this once, and then" So the forest itself is a complex symbol in which nature, sin, and danger are ambiguously and richly combined" (Zhu 59). People always associate the mentioning of a dark forest with evil. Setting of forest should be the best choice to represent the theme. What is more, "He had taken a dreary road, darkened by all the gloomiest trees of the forest, which barely stood aside to let the narrow path creep through, and closed immediately behind. Obviously, the dark and dreary road, narrow path and closed the way behind means Brown is surrounded by evils and he cannot return any more. One of the features in "Young Goodman Brown" is that every character has symbolic meaning. This is an important foundation to express the theme. Goodman Brown, Faith and fellow-traveller are three main heroes in the story. The symbolic meaning of Goodman Brown and Faith is kind of the satire of human nature. The name "Goodman" is a commonplace honorific for persons, it means Goodman Brown is a person who is kindly and good.

Hawthorne's use of "Young" shows that Brown is vivid and optimistic. Also, his last name, Brown, is also a kind of color. It points just as the young man's affinities with the gloomy and dark forest where most of the story takes place, the strange world outside the settled village (Zhu 58). Furthermore, Faith as Brown's wife, represents religious faith and faith in mankind. It is symbolic of Brown's faith that he gradually loses and he doubts more and more the existence of any goodness in man (Thomas 332).

The character of Faith demonstrates the great painful inner struggling and confuses between the good and evil. As a result, Brown losses Faith and his faith at last. On the contract of the meaning of his name, Goodman Brown has a tragic ending. These two settings satire that good is not human nature, but is evil. Finally, Fellow- traveller has symbolic meaning of devil and he tries to persuade Brown to turn to evil. Brown thinks he is the first person went into the woods on such an errand in his family. However, Hawthorne mentions that he looks like Brown's father and they are friends.

It exposes that Brown's father and grandfather also has an evil side. Brown's family is more powerful to make Brown in despair. Overall, the character of fellow-traveller has more powerful demonstration of evil is the nature of mankind. In conclusion, Hawthorne is a writer with an outstanding skill on symbolic technique. His unique style makes his works more special and enhances readability. " Young Goodman Brown" is a simple story but yet is allegorical and symbolic, too. Hawthorne bases on the theme of morals exploring the evil of human nature.

The symbolic meaning in all the characters and symbolism in the time and place the story happens makes a deeper moral theme, that evil is nature of mankind. He also describes the tragedy of human that has negative attitudes to sinful nature. Brown's negative attitude leads him is gloomy in his whole life. Works Cited Zhu, Xian-chun. " Allegory And Symbolism In Hawthorne's Young Goodman Brown. " US-China Foreign Language 6. 1 (2008): 58-60. AcademicSearch Complete. Web. 9 Nov. 2011. Walsh Jr. , Thomas F. " The Bedeviling Of Young Goodman Brown. " Modern Language Quarterly 19. 4 (1958): 331. Academic Search Complete. Web. 9 Nov. 2011