

# A significant theme in young goodman brown by nathaniel hawthorne

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## **The Great Eye Opening**

So many themes are packed into Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story, "Young Goodman Brown" that it's nearly impossible to touch on just one, without integrating another. Because there is so much depth and feeling radiating from Hawthorne's writing, a reader can get easily confused. I know I myself had to read it multiple times before I could sort things out. One thing that I grasped right away though, was the fact that his main character, Young Goodman Brown, had a real life meeting with the devil himself.

After meeting a strange traveler not far into the forest, the story takes an odd turn. As the strange man is described, he is portrayed as stunningly similar to Brown. Being "apparently the same rank of life as Goodman Brown, and bearing a considerable resemblance to him, though perhaps more in expression than features" gives the hint that the man is perhaps just an older reflection. I've always been taught that the devil reflects in appearance what we fear or what we don't like about ourselves. While the story is written with the intention of fiction, I think what the character experienced was real to him. After reading the entire story more than five times, I'm stuck with the fact that before meeting the devil, Brown was in a fog. Brain washed by the elders of the town, he was lead to believe that all was good.

As he continued on with the devil through the woods, he sees many of the town folk following and seemingly convening in the forest with purpose. When they come upon the old woman Goody Cloyse, she acts as if she's

seen Brown's companion many of times. "The Devil!" she screeched when she saw him. Although at first glance it seemed like she was afraid, he replied to her, "Then Goody Cloyse knows her old friend?" After going on to complain about the walk, she takes the serpent-like walking stick that is offered to her and vanishing. In the other people they came across, I think it was the devil's way of showing Goodman Brown the other side of the people he lived and worshipped among.

This story makes so much sense and I think that the forest experience was actually real. In the times when our country was young, there was many a soul ripe for the picking. Because the new world offered freedom of religion, people became more lax than they ever were. Easier swayed they were because all of the towns had different ways of worship, some being less strict than ever before. The devil was able to weave himself into their lives and show them the power he offered. It's a stretch to think that maybe, he was the reason so many came to the new world. There is a reason for all happenings that sparked the great migration to the Americas. When religious oppression became so bad against the Puritans and other religions, they realized they needed a way out. Maybe the devil was luring them to the wild, uncharted land to weasel himself into their lives.

Upon returning home from his night in the forest, Young Goodman Brown discovers that all of his faith has been lost. Because of his night in the forest, he was brought into the light. No longer was the world full of God, but full of the devil. "Oh the Sabbath day, when the congregation were singing a holy psalm, he could not listen because an anthem of sin rushed loudly upon his

ear and drowned all the blessed strain." Ironically, his poor wife's name, Faith, is the one thing he can no longer cling to and he would often "awaken suddenly at midnight and shrink from her bosom..."

When looking at all of the evidence presented in short story, you can easily come to the conclusion that the experience is real. From the many people they meet along the way, to the devil morphing himself into an older version of Young Goodman Brown himself, the evil that morphed its way into the pages of this book is really astounding.