

# A visit of charity



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Hope Biggs Character Analysis Paper Dr. Brookter January 22, 2013 No Charity, No Change Charity is defined as a voluntary giving of help and generosity especially towards the needy or suffering. This small simple word conveys a much bigger meaning, one of compassion and selflessness. In the story, “ A Visit of Charity” the true act of charity seems to be missing. It is as if the main pieces of the puzzle are missing. The story has framework but lacks the compassion and selflessness needed to bring it to life. The reality is, charity never came to visit.

The story is about a young teenage girl, Marion, who in order to gain points for her Campfire Girl Club must visit the Old Ladies Home. By simply buying a potted plant and taking it to one of the residents, she gained three points but she can earn extra points for bringing her bible and reading it to the residents. Marion brings only a plant. (Welty 111) “ A Visit of Charity” begins by describing the cold winter day and a description of the nursing home, “ a whitewashed brick and reflected the winter sunlight like a block of ice” (Welty 111).

This description alone not only describes the buildings appearance but also is descriptive of the coldness and the lack of feeling for the elderly. Marion is no different. No thought was put into what might be helpful and useful for the residents, like toiletries, socks, or even food. Instead her only preparation for the visit was buying the potted plant. It is a clear indication of her selfishness and a reflection of a society that does not value its elderly. Her main concern is in getting points because she brings a potted plant.

No real thought is put into who to give it to or who might actually enjoy it. She receives more than she gives and this reveals a true character flaw in

Marion. Repeatedly in this story she reveals a selfishness and lack of connectivity to anything or anyone that does not benefit her. This is evident when Marion tells the nurse, " I have to pay a visit to some old ladies" (Welty 111). And when she is asked if she knows any of them, Marion states, " no but that is, any of them will do" (Welty 111). The use of " some" and " any" are evidenced that she has no interest in where she is or whom she will meet.

There has been no preparation or thought of who could benefit from her visit other herself. In addition, either out of fear or self-preservation, Marion's views the two old women not as people but as animals and birds. She refers as to one as having a " bleating" sound of a sheep and the other as having a " birds claw". Her descriptions of the women are reflective of disrespect for older people. In a sense she dehumanizes them as to not see their real needs or pains. Sensory deprivation is often seen in older adults that lack stimulation and human contact.

Older adults who are confined to a nursing home often lose track of time, place, and person. Joseph Casciani, a geropsychologist, stated in an article about sensory loss, " Added restrictions, such as confinement to bed or Geri-chair, increases the risk (of sensory deprivation). " But the old ladies are not the only ones experiencing sensory deprivation. Marion has difficulty answering the old women's questions and to her surprise " Marion cannot remember her name" (Welty 111). It would be nice to believe that Marion's lack of response was evidence of a tiny bit of empathy towards these old ladies but it is doubtful.

Marion is oblivious to the older lady's needs; her thoughts are only of herself and her desire to escape. Time stands still and the tiny room closes in on her. She realizes that the doors are closed and at one point she contemplates if she were to get sick, would they let her leave? Her only sign of compassion comes when she is told of Addie's birthday and she asks her how old she is. Addie's response is to cry, possibly from the realization that she is spending her birthday alone with her roommate, a stranger, and isolated from anyone else. Or maybe she cried because she actually thought Marion cared.

Regardless, Marion's compassion was short lived. It is a mirror image of our present day society and our seemingly short attention span to the needs and hurts of our elderly. Brief encounters, brief awareness, but little intervention, and no real change. Clearly, all that Marion has encountered is a bit too much for her. Her lack of forethought and preparation of what to bring is also carried over in lack of planning on what she would do or say while she was there. Her thoughts quickly move to how she can escape without physical contact from either of the two old women.

The harsh realities of life close in and she quickly escapes into the hallway with one of the old women following her begging for a penny, " Oh, little girl, have you a penny to spare for a poor old women that's not got anything of her own? We don't have a thing in the world-not a penny for candy-not a thing! Little girl, just a nickel-a penny? "(Welty 111). Her mind was only on escape, her ears may have heard what the old woman was saying but her heart did not respond to the need. Marion was out of her comfort zone and her one desire was to get back in it as quickly as possible.

The same can be said for our generation that ignores the cry of our elderly. To truly see and respond to their needs, readers must get out of their comfort zones. We have become a generation that has found value in the selfishness of our own desires instead of the needs of the greatest generation that gave sacrificially for the freedoms we now enjoy. Marion may have escaped the discomfort of the Old Ladies Home but she could not escape the knowledge of the harsh realities that she witnessed there. At the end of the story a red apple appears.

It is uncertain what the apple symbolizes and how it pertains to the story. One can merely speculate to its importance. In biblical times the apple was symbolic of the knowledge of good and evil. This shows the evidence, “When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.” (New International Version, Genesis 3: 6). An apple was given to Adam to eat and when he did his whole life changed.

It is quite possible the apple represents that once we have the knowledge of another's needs but we fail to act on it, then we are no different than any other evil generation. With knowledge comes responsibility. “A Visit of Charity” is a story that sends a message to our society. What will we do with the knowledge once we discover it? We are clearly a generation that has unlimited access to all kinds of information and knowledge. But with knowledge must come responsibility and that requires that we get out of our comfort zones and meet the needs of the less fortunate and the hurting.

Otherwise we are a generation of Marion's who think only of themselves and lack the character to change not only their own destiny, but anyone else, as well. Work Cited Welty, Eudora. "A Visit of Charity." Making Literature Matter. Ed. John Schilb, John Clifford. New York: 2012. 55-56. Print. Casciani, Joseph. "Sensory Touch in Older Adults- Taste, Smell & Touch - Behavioral Approaches for Caregivers". Ezine Articles. com. April 9, 2008. Web. January 16, 2013. Zondervan NIV Study Bible. Ed. Kenneth L. Barker. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002. Print.