

# [A worn path by eudora welty](https://assignbuster.com/a-worn-path-by-eudora-welty-essay-samples/)

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﻿A Worn Path by Eudora Welty
Eudora Welty’s “ A Worn Path” is a complex work full of symbolism that invites multiple and varying interpretations. My research question is whether the character of Phoenix Jackson presents a redemptive story or a pessimistic story. My hypothesis is that Phoenix Jackson and her journey are a pessimistic story about the destructive nature of racism and Southern Bible Belt Christianity.
In his article “ Eudora Welty’s The Worn Path,” Dennis Sykes argues that all the symbolism in the story illustrates the plight of Southern blacks in post-Civil War America. In his view, the story symbolizes the illusory nature of the quest for equality. Dennis Sykes is reputable as he was a professor of literature at Quincy College. His article also appears in the peer-reviewed journal, Explicator. His argument in the essay is very strong. Particularly, he makes mention of the marble cake as a symbol of integration (Sykes 152). The source is useful for my paper because it provides strong arguments in support of a pessimistic interpretation of the story. The story represents the failure of equality for Southern black citizens.
Dean Bethea’s “ Phoenix Has No Coat: Historicity, Eschatology, and Sins of Omission in Eudora Welty's ‘ A Worn Path’” explores Welty’s story as a criticism of Bible Belt Christianity’s acceptance and promulgation of racism. At the time of the writing of the article, Bethea was a professor of literature at Western Oregon University. Currently, he is an assistant professor of literature at Centenary College and well-qualified to write on the subject. Dr. Bethea’s argument is a bit weak due to the bias present in the article. While he presents a well-reasoned interpretation, at times, his tone and political stance become apparent in his reading of Welty’s work. Overall, the article will prove useful because it presents a pessimistic reading of the story, a reading in which Phoenix is not on a redemptive journey but on one that will still lead to inequality for blacks.
David Piwinski’s short essay, “ Mistletoe in Eudora Welty’s ‘ A Worn Path,’” delves into the Christological symbolism of mistletoe. Piwinski presents the legend that mistletoe was originally the wood used to make Christ’s cross but was cursed to become a parasitic shrub after serving as a means of killing Jesus Christ and presents the reading that Phoenix Jackson is a Christ-figure (Piwinski 40-1). Dr. Piwinski was a professor of literature at Herkimer County Community College at the time of the essay’s composition and thus a credible source. While the argument is strong, the source is of little use to my paper. It only examines a single symbol, and it presents a redemptive view of the story. If it is of any value, it will serve as a counterargument with which I must contend.
After reading these three sources, I am not revising my research question. I still view Welty’s “ A Worn Path” as a tragic story about the illusory quest for equality for Southern blacks. While many critics present Phoenix Jackson as a Christ-figure who suffers for the good of others, I see her sacrifice and journey as ultimately being futile and negative.

Work Cited
Bethea, Dean. “ Phoenix Has No Coat: Historicity, Eschatology, and Sins of Omission in Eudora Welty's ‘ A Worn Path.’” International Fiction Review 28. 1-2 (2001): 32.
Piwinski, David J. " Mistletoe In Eudora Welty's " A Worn Path.." Anq 16. 1 (2003): 40-42. Academic Search Complete. Web. 19 June 2012.
Sykes, Dennis J. " Welty's The Worn Path." Explicator 56. 3 (1998): 151. Academic Search Complete. Web. 19 June 2012.