

# Psychoanalytical criticism of "a good man is hard to find" essay



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Psychoanalytical Criticism of " A Good Man Is Hard To Find" A seemingly innocent family vacation can turn into a disaster if the members of the family only care about themselves. In the story " A Good Man Is Hard To Find" by Flannery O'Connor, a self-absorbed Grandmother, too consumed with her own opinions, fails to address the views, feelings and overall well being of others. Her family is not much different in their self-interested ways. This leads them straight to the Misfit whose childhood trauma has caused him to grow up into a damaged individual.

The Misfit does not believe in the Grandmother's religious beliefs and she ultimately cannot reach out and help him. The characters get themselves into a predicament for living in the Id stage, and O'Connor uses their actions to express her unconscious thoughts from her own view of life. She displays their detestable behavior in a negative manner leading up to their downfall. O'Connor shows her repressed, lonely emotions and religious focus through the thoughts and dialogue of her characters' past experiences and self-absorption. Being brought up religiously, Flannery O'Connor unveils her repressed feelings about life through her writing.

She also conveys her displeasure with materialistic society. This is displayed with the family's horrid behavior. It is also believed that O'Connor writes about the hardship of her father's death. After her loss, O'Connor felt out of place and alone like the Misfit. Though unlike the Misfit, O'Connor kept her faith close. For O'Connor, God's grace comes from forces outside the character, something they did not deserve, or a moment of epiphany.

However, O'Connor's characters miss their opportunity to make a connection. The poor connection with God keeps them from seeing the light.

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She expresses religion throughout the story. She created it to be the family's fate by God to die when they did. Also, for the Misfit not having a strong relationship with God, he winds down the wrong path of sin. In essence, O'Connor's faith made her strong but her weaknesses and displeasures were key points in her stories (Gale). O'Connor's disapproval of the grandmother, who was constantly trying to get what she wanted, ultimately lead to her destruction. The Grandmother new where she wanted to go in the beginning and she changed her family's desires to her demands.

This selfish way of manipulating puts the Grandmother in the Id stage. It was clear from the start that she was willing to manipulate her family to get her way. After this, she gets her family into tribulation with the Misfit. She uses her weapon of manipulation again on him by convincing him he is a good man and he should pray. For the Grandmother, it seems she is trying to look like a good Christian rather than actually being a good Christian. By this, O'Connor is displaying the Grandmother's repressed feelings of being any different than the way her religion told her to be.

In the end, she is finally forced to face the reality of her own fate and a circumstance she cannot manipulate. It seems to be the first time she considers someone else when she cries, " You're one of my own children! " (O'Connor) and reaches out to the Misfit. She finally realizes he is wearing her son's shirt and makes one unselfish act of care. This compassion for another seemed to be her ticket to heaven. All in all, being in the Id stage kept the Grandmother from truly portraying a good Christian and lead to her and her family's demise.

Like the Grandmother, the Misfit had his own problems. The Misfit's traumatic childhood experiences with his father impaired his ability to adequately cope with stress. The abuse from his father caused him to feel worthless and unlovable. This turned him to violence. The Misfit was sent to a penitentiary for killing his father, but he is in a stage of denial and forms new solutions to deal with his pain. The Misfit says, " I set there and set there, trying to remember what it was I done and I ain't recalled it to this day" (O'Connor).

The painful memory of murdering his father was pushed back into his unconscious mind so he does not have to think about it consciously. " According to Freud, the unconscious [mind] continues to influence our behavior and experience, even though we are unaware of these underlying influences" (Cherry). So, because of this, he sacrifices humanity to deal with the pain and thinks nothing of it. Another reason for killing his father could be he was suffering from the Oedipal Complex. The Misfit says, " God never made a finer woman than my mother" (O'Connor).

The Oedipal Complex would refer that the Misfit has, " fallen in love with one parent and developed hatred for the other" (Gill). His desire for his mother drove him to eliminate his father. Unlike the Grandmother, religion was not a factor for the Misfit. He thought God, " shown everything off balance" (O'Connor). He believed rationally only what he could sense. O'Connor made this one of the Misfit's greatest faults. To Summarize, the Misfit's experiences and religious disbelief kept him from being a recognizably " good" person in O'Connor's eyes.

Though the family did not turn to violence like the Misfit, they still had their own set of issues. The other members of the family seem to be embodiments of society's most self-interested and materialistic. O'Connor illustrates that with each generation of this family, there were no positive role models. Each generation had no effective parent to exhibit the correct way to function in society. Each generation then was stuck in the Id stage. For this, O'Connor proved that the family did not deserve to live and form new generations.

The family was overly concerned with their own narrow-minded needs to even care about each other's feelings. Bailey barely noticed his mother, and when he did, he only got frustrated with her. He did not know how adequately handle any situation. He cowers away from the Misfit. He also could not control his kids and instead gives into their demands and screams at them. The children are rude, and misbehaved. At one point, the children start to slap each other right over the Grandmother. June Star says, " I wouldn't live in a broken-down place like this for a million bucks! " (O'Connor) right in front of the people that live there.

She has no regard for others' feelings and cannot even comprehend how rude her statement was. John Wesley refers to his father as " Pop" which is not respectful, and he kicks the back of his seat in the car when he gets frustrated with him. When the Grandmother hobbles weakly out of the car June Star disappointedly says, " But nobody's killed" (O'Connor). She greedily yearns for constant entertainment. She would not even mind her Grandmother dying for it. Overall, the children come off as spoiled rotten brats, and Bailey cannot control anything whether it is his kids, his mom, or any situation.

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In final analysis, O'Connor's repressed feelings and religious upbringing were portrayed in the story through her characters. Their actions lead to their mortality. She showed the importance of her own faith and what it truly means. She also proved that being in the Id stage could only lead to misfortune. The Grandmother's self interested and manipulative ways forbade her from being the Christian she needed to be. The Misfit's past experiences and lack of religious belief turned him to deal with his pain in harmful ways. The family could not seem to deal with each other and died out of their own greed and selfishness. When family members do not care for one another, catastrophe occurs.

Works Cited Cherry, Kendra. " The Conscious and Unconscious Mind. " About. com. n. p. n. d. Web. 26 April 2010 Gill, N. S. " Oedipal Complex" About. com. n. p. n. d. Web. 27 April 2010 O'Connor, Flannery. " A Good Man is Hard to Find". Pegasus. cc. ucf. edu. Mariner Books. 23 August 1977. Web. 30 April 2010. " O'Connor, Flannery (1925-1964). (Narrative biography). " Encyclopedia of World Biography. Thomson Gale, 1998. General OneFile. Web. 17 May 2010.