

# [Thomas his own free will to turn](https://assignbuster.com/thomas-his-own-free-will-to-turn/)

[](https://assignbuster.com/)[Literature](https://assignbuster.com/essay-subjects/literature/)

Thomas F. Walsh Jr. argues that inorder to obtain better understanding of what happens to Goodman brown, weshould be aware of three major symbols within the text: first, we have Faith, who is Brown’s wife who represents religious faith and faith in mankind. Second, we have the forest which shows Brown’s journey which represents theinward escape into the black and despairing depths of his soul. Third, theDevil represents Brown’s darker side which is filled with doubt, whicheventually believes that evil is the nature of mankind (F. Walsh Jr.

1). Thesymbolic movement of the forest scenes is from the bosom of Faith to the lossof Faith which includes despair, from the village of belief to the depths ofthe forest of despair, and from a doubting balance of Brown’s personality tothe complete submergence of the brighter side into the darker side whichobjectifies despair. He says that these three symbols “ tell the story of ayoung and naïve man in the ways of the world” (F. Walsh Jr. 1). He eventuallyfinds out that men are all not good and he became so convinced they are all badthat he could remove the doubt of the universal evil from his mind.

Korb discusses how Brown is aninconstant character in the story. Hawthorne presents Brown as a “ naive youngman who believes his own free will to turn back on his sinful promise and wealso see his increasing struggles to resist evil which then show hisdevelopment as a man” (Korb 1). For example, Brown decides to challenge his fellowpartner who happens to be the Devil for “ any reason that I should quit my dearFaith” (28). But when he has affirmed his decision to stand up to the Devil, hediscovers that his dear love Faith is on her way to the Black Mass (Korb 1).

Brown then turns into a personification of Devil and soon finds out that thereis no real good on earth. Brandishing the Devil’s own staff, he rushes throughthe dark forest and against the fearful backdrop of beasts and Indians, hebecomes “ himself the chief horror of the scene” (30). Kelly King Howes touches upon therole the Devil plays and how figure of the Devil in Young Goodman Brown is shown as an older man who wields a twisted, snake-like stick.

He seems to vaguely resemble Brown and he could be looked atas a “ reflection of the darker side of Brown’s nature” (Howes 1). The Devilclaims he has had relations with Brown’s grandfather who was involved in thepersecution of the Quakers, and his father who was involved in an attack on theIndian village. Deacon Gookin, Goody Cloyse, and the minister serve as greatexamples of the wickedness that may hide in the souls of those who appear mostvirtuous (E. May 1). The three are “ distinguished from among the crowd oftownsfolk at the gathering due to the fact that they represent a standard ofpiety and godliness that is destroyed, and for Brown, by his experience” (Howes1). It may be tempting to look upon thisstory as a tale because it is difficult to draw conclusions from. Korb says theambiguous nature of the story is apparent throughout.

For example, in theseeming appearance of Brown’s dead father beckoning him to attend the BlackMass “ while a woman, with dim features of despair, threw out her hand to warnhim back. Was it his mother?” (Hawthorne 32). One of the more alarminguncertainties lies in the character of Faith because from the very beginning ofthe story, her Faith is called into question when she wears “ pink hair ribbonswhich could symbol a sign of frivolity” (Korb 1).

It could also be said thatFaith herself has also agreed to a covenant with the Devil. She asks Brown notto leave the night of his departure because she is filled with “ such thoughtsthat she’s feared of herself sometimes” (24). But her voice is sad and it is asif she had resigned herself to accepting that the evil is approaching.

We findout at the end of the story that Brown never knows if Faith also rejects theDevil.                Howes argues that at the start of thestory, Brown appears confident in his ability to choose between good and evil. This then alters once he stands before the Devil’s altar with the other damned communicants; he longer believes that good always prevails (Liebman 1).

He soon becomes a “ profoundlydisillusioned man who sees wickedness everywhere he turns and in even in thosewho are closest to him (Howes 1). It could be said that Brown’s finaldistrustful, alienated state is due to the result of a guilty conscience. Hecannot forgive himself or others for hidden sinfulness. Brown is unwilling toaccept the duality of human nature, which is the simultaneous ability to beboth innocent and evil. Young GoodmanBrown could also be seen as an illuminating allegory of Calvinist belief inthe Devil’s power and humanity’s basic depravity. Brown is seen as a victim ofPuritanism unlike those who were persecuted as witches in Salem.