

The minister's black veil: a tale about mr. hooper

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"The Minister's Black Veil" by Nathaniel Hawthorne tells the story of a reverend called Mr. Hooper who wears a black veil over his face which "concealed his features, except for the mouth and chin (1312). Mr. Hooper was known to be a "good preacher" but was always a gloomy man (1313). The townspeople's reactions to the veil were very negative and superstitious. It was the talk of the town, they "gathered in little circles [...] whispering in the center," gossiping, trying to figure out why Mr. Hooper is wearing the Veil (1313). The veil seems to make everyone uncomfortable that even one of Mr. Hooper's friends "neglected to invite Mr. Hooper to his table where the good clergyman had been wont to bless the food, almost every Sunday since his settlement" (1313). The townspeople sparked up ideas as to why Mr. Hooper is wearing the veil, some saying that "there is no mystery at all, but only that Mr. Hooper's eyes were so weakened by the midnight lamp, as to require a shade" (1313). During a funeral for "a young lady," speculations arise on the relationship between Mr. Hooper and the lady (1314). Some people even go far enough to say that they saw "that the minister and the maiden's spirit were walking hand in hand" (1314). Another lady claims that, "she would not be alone with him for the world" because she believes that the veil "makes him ghost-like from head to foot" (1314). Despite it being the talk of the town, "not one venture(s) to put the plain question to Mr. Hooper," and instead they gossip and create rumors about the veil and the reverend's reasons for wearing it (1315). Even his "wife," leaves him because he refused to reveal the veil (1316). I don't think that any of these are true, however, they do reveal a certain quality that the townspeople share, and because it shows that they are very curious people but not really

in a good way. I think that they react extremely negatively on the veil and they focus onto to why he wears it, not because of the symbol it could represent, but because it makes them uncomfortable.

Towards the end of the story, “ no attempts [are] made to remove Mr. Hooper’s black veil” after Elizabeth, his wife, fails to reveal the reasons why Mr. Hooper decided to wear it (1317). For the rest of Mr. Hooper’s life, no one ever finds out what his reasons are for wearing the veil, and in result the reverend is left isolated in some way from his peers. At his deathbed, “ Reverend Mr. Clark” requests for the “ lifting of the veil,” because he believes that “ a father in the church should [not] leave a shadow on his memory that may seem to blacken a life so pure” (1319). He does not want Good Father Hooper to be remembered for his veil, but he wants him to be remembered for his work as a reverend. But of course, Mr. Hooper declines. With his last words, Mr. Hooper reveals his reasons as to why he wore the black veil for so long. He claims that, ““ men have avoided [him], and women shown no pity, and children screamed and fled,” because the veil made them feel uncomfortable (1320). He continues on by saying that “ when the friend shows his inmost heart to his friend” they open up to them, but not God, which aggravates Hooper (1320). Then the good father Hooper lastly says that “ “[he] look[s] around [himself], and lo! on every visage a black veil,”” meaning that everyone who judged him and gossiped about the veil is a hypocrite because they themselves wear a black veil, metaphorically speaking (1320). When the townspeople made assumptions, I notice that most of them create so much drama and because of that they seem more interesting, adding more to the story when in reality, it’s the complete

opposite. For example, during the funeral, two townspeople claim that they saw “that the minister and the maiden’s spirit were walking hand in hand” (1314). This was probably not true, but it adds drama to the story and it kind of makes it a bigger deal than it really was. The assumptions that the people made and gossiped about support Mr. Hooper’s reason for why he wore the veil in the first place. The effect that the veil had on Hooper and the villagers were very negative. When the reverend Mr. Hooper, first makes an appearance revealing the black veil, the crowd was filled with gasps and they were so “wonder-struck [...] that his greeting[s] hardly [meet] with a return (1312). A man also claims that the black veil “throws an influence over his whole person, and makes him ghost-like from head to foot” (1314). This effect also spread to the people around him as well because Mr. Hooper’s presence seemed to add a “deeper gloom to the funeral, and could portend nothing but evil to the wedding” (1315). Because of this effect, it urged the villagers to gossip about it behind the reverend’s back. In the end I think the veil served a real purpose and it really proves a point to the townspeople. Their first instinct was to gossip about it, and create stories that add drama to the story rather than actually taking a step back digging into the actual meaning. This relates to the overall purpose which is to show that everyone themselves wear a black veil, because they hide their sins. I think that the villagers realized this at the end when they “shrank from one another, in mutual affright” and they allowed him to be buried in his coffin, “still veiled” (1320).