

# Example of how the elements of the story develop book review

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## **Washing Irvings' Story**

“ The Devil and Tom Walker”

The Gothic was a popular theme in seventeenth and eighteenth century literature. Several American writers, including Washington Irving exercise this topic; in their writings. His story, “ The Devil and Tom Walker,” has two main characters Tom and his wife. The following elements; setting, plot and point of view, are fitting elements used to bring credence to Mrs. Walker’s character.

The very title of the story, “ The Devil and Tom Walker,” foreshadows the story; it is also ambiguous, since it could mean that Mrs. Walker is a devil. “ Tom's wife was a tall termagant, fierce of temper, loud of tongue, and strong of arm. Her voice was often heard in wordy warfare with her husband; and his face sometimes showed signs that their conflicts were not confined to words” (Irving). Throughout the ages it is the norm, a little stereotypical, that women are to remain subdued and dainty, conforming to the will of their husband. Mrs. Walker has none of those virtues She fought equally with her husband and obviously comes out the winner. She is also the better hoarder, Tom could never find her hiding place(s). “ Her husband was continually prying about to detect her secret hoards” (Irving). Figuratively, “ devil” is a well chosen name for Mrs. Walker.

The setting of the story lends to its credibility. The date of the story, 1727 falls into the eras when America was on a witch hunt; especially in the Salem area; although not in Salem, Mrs, Walker lives in the demographic location

ripe for a witch hunt. Another name for Mrs. Walker is “witch.” She is dauntless, most men in this region are afraid to walk near this specific area, but not Mrs. Walker. When other women would have fainted, listening to their husband telling his story, avarice beacons Mrs. Walker to go through a swamp with “thickly grown with great loomy [sic] pines and hemlocks, which made it dark at noonday, Full of pits and quagmires, there were also dark and stagnant pools, the abodes of the tadpole, the bull-frog [sic], and the water snake;” (Irving) to an unscheduled meeting with the devil. The setting shows the imperviousness of Mrs. Walker.

The plot of this story flows smoothly; and the fact that the writer uses the third person’s point-of-view makes it more interesting. Usually first person does not go into lengthy descriptions in their story. Consequently, developing the plot with a third person makes the story more graphic and awakens the senses of the reader. In describing Mrs. Walker, the writer allows the reader to visualize the scene. “All her avarice was awakened at the mention of hidden gold, and she urged her husband to comply with the black man’s terms and secure what would make them wealthy for life” (Irving). One can imagine the sudden change of Mrs. Walker’s temperament when she heard the word “gold” for the first time in her life, she has a pleasant disposition.

Unfortunately, that scene does not last. Nevertheless, if the story ended at this juncture, the plot would remain the same as far as its expression of Mrs. Walker’s characteristics. So far, nothing good is ever said about Mrs. Walker, therefore, the reader can conclude that she would not change for the rest of

the story. The reader would also assume that she is already thinking what she could do with that gold, hide most of it, she is probably devising a scheme how to take her husband's share. Mrs. Walker is written out of the story, to no one surprise she is true to her personality. The exact ending of her disappearance is undecided, nonetheless, it is safe to say she disappeared doing what she does best—seeking her “ pot of gold.”

Washington Irving just like most writers of his time enjoys the supernatural, in this story “ The Devil and Tom Walker,” he expands his story with well chosen setting, plot, and point-of-view, he uses these elements to illustrate the doggedness of one of his main characters, Mrs. Walker.