

# Hermeneutic gaps in young goodman brown

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



1) Explain the hermeneutic gaps to be found in “ Young Goodman Brown” and in “ The Masque of the Red Death. ” See A Study Guide for American Literature to 1900, page 99. As readers, we come across pieces of information that are deliberately withheld by the writer. These information or hermeneutic gaps can range from trivial details to crucial parts of the texts that become the main interest of the reading process. Gaps can both be temporary and resolved at some point of the story or permanent and remain unsolved even after the end.

Permanent gaps exist both in the story and in the text, for the information is never given and readers must take a dynamic participation to “ reconstruct” and make the text signify. Gaps enhance interest and curiosity, add suspense and contribute to achieve later maximum impact. Both Hawthorne as well as Poe, supreme masters of the narrative techniques handle hermeneutic gaps brilliantly. Within “ Young Goodman Brown”, Hawthorne deals with Good and Evil resorting to allegorical features and intermingling gaps, both temporary and permanent.

The voyage this young man takes through a gloomy, spectral forest, his companion with the serpent-like staff and even Faith? s pink ribbons stand as temporary gaps that hold our interest in the story. The final question we are left with (Was it a dream? ), is a good example of a permanent gap that leads us to examine many elements that will, in another level , stand as symbols of a deeper degree of significance. Poe gives us a new approach to fiction highlighting the importance of Aesthetics and condemning didacticism. The “ Art for Art? sake” concept is a big step towards the New Criticism theory in which the text should stand out for its own, without

considering the circumstances that deal with its composition and/or the particularities of the authors' biographies.

In this new esthetic criterion, which foreshadows the later known Close Analysis, literary devices and techniques take a prominent protagonism. "The Masque of the Red Death" draws different interpretations in its multiple significance and shows that it is not only a mere tale of horror. Poe's "theory of unity or impression" proves perfectly demonstrated in it, for everything is carefully calculated to contribute to the story's organic unity and strong impact. Its prevailing Gothic mood and mysterious atmosphere are enhanced by missing details that readers must "recreate" in order to find an explanation to the temporary and permanent hermeneutic gaps that appear. The seventh black room with its scarlet windowpanes and the ebony clock, both permanent gaps, takes us into a deeper significance of symbolism, too.

The horrid disguised figure, that enters the castle and later reveals itself as the Red Death, stands as a temporary gap as well as the colours and design of the seven rooms, which Poe himself relates to the cycle of life. 2) Discuss the place and time settings of the excerpts you have read from the works of Frederick Douglass and Harriet Beecher Stowe. See A Study Guide for American Literature to 1900, pages 130-33. In their writings, both Frederick Douglass and Harriet Beecher Stowe dealt with slavery.

Both showed testimony of the cruelties of the "institution" and exerted strong influence on the public opinion, as well as they proved effective in supporting the antislavery movement. Nowadays, some of the slave narratives are regarded as historical documents and others also as texts, for they are worthy of a prominent position in the canon of American Literature

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for its superb command of the rhetorical figures. Such the case of Frederick Douglass. As a politician, he embellished his writings and showed an outstanding mastery of the language.

Douglass attained a political career and came to be one of the most important black political leaders in American History. His writings were linked to his political concerns. In his “ From the Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass” he places his story in Maryland, the slave state in which he was born. As we know, settings are far from being incidental and play a significant role in texts, for they affect other narrative elements( theme, plot, characterization).

Thus, his biography highlights the ignorance of his own birthday and his father's identity as well as tells about the separation that babies experienced from their mothers predicting the sufferings slaves went through. Although places are not described in detail, his portrait of the Chesapeake Bay serves to contrast his submission against the freedom of the “ mighty ocean”. Finally, New Bedford is the place where, now a free man, he engaged himself in “ pleading” the cause of his brethren. Place setting stands for a certain kind of evolution or growth he is forced to go through in order to become a respectable man and make his dreams of freedom true. Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote from the position of a religious woman, raised in a family of preachers and social reformers. She disapproved the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 and subscribed to the romantic racialism of her time. She created a universally famous classic treating the theme of evil in its theological, moral, economic and political dimensions.

Her novel is a combination of different sources, blending sentimentalism and realism. In “ Uncle Tom? s Cabin” settings cover other dimensions such as the social context and historical milieu in which the plot is developed. Chapter XXX describes the slave warehouse in New Orleans, the men? s sleeping room, the women? s sleeping room and the auction room. But she does not resort to lengthy expository description of setting. Instead, she gradually integrates them to the text giving them a cinematic treatment as if a camera were moving slowly across the scene.

The mythological setting she describes at the beginning clearly emphasizes the slaves? feelings. The contrast between the neat exterior and what is happening inside highlights one of the themes: hypocrisy. Characters and locations are perfectly attuned and Uncle Tom? s mood strongly opposes the gay atmosphere of other slaves while mother and daughter grieve singing together and despairing. People function as part of the setting and day contrasts night, its darkness and shadows reflect the characters? feelings.