

Contrast paper essay samples

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Cathedral by Raymond Carver and A Good Man to Find, by Flannery O'Connor are both fictional stories. In many literary works, there are characters who symbolize how ignorant people are in the society. In a society, many people believe that they are good or perfect, yet inevitably, they have their flaws. In A Good Man to Find, by Flannery O'Connor, and the Cathedral, by Raymond Carver, the protagonists in the stories are enforced to deal with situations, which change their values and those of others. These stories talk of real life situations in the society.

In the Cathedral, by Raymond Carver, the story has two main characters, an unnamed narrator, and Robert, a blind man. The author details two polarizing characters, whereby, the blind man is a likable character, while the unnamed character is an unlikable man. The blind man is depicted as a sympathetic character, while the unnamed character is portrayed as an ableist and racist. The unnamed character was a racist and this is evident when he says, " Beulah! That's a name for a colored woman" and he was an ableist and this is evident in the lines, " A blind man in my house was not something I look forward to" (Carver 1989). Carver uses the unnamed character to symbolize the people in the society who fail to understand that people are made different. The unnamed narrator has character flaws, whereby he fails to understand that, people are born differently, and will never be the same. He was distasteful for blind people after he felt bothered when his wife informed him of Robert's visit.

Conversely, in A Good Man to Find, the author presents a family of five people; an unnamed grandmother, a father named Bailey, an unnamed mother, a daughter named June Star, and a son called John Wesley. Different

from Cathedral, these family members have obnoxious personalities and none of them is depicted as sympathetic. The unnamed grandmother is the protagonist in the story, and she is depicted as the most ignorant in the family. She is portrayed as manipulative and obsessive with image (O'Connor, 2011). This is evident when she tells the story about a man who tried to court her in the past, Mr. Teargarden. When one listens to the story, it is very clear that to her, a “good man” is based on superficial qualities like appearance, presents, and wealth. In addition, she is manipulative because, she manipulates her family at the beginning of the story, when she tells them, a criminal, Misfit was in the area and therefore, they should change their destination. This later led to their demise.

In the Cathedral, the authors use symbolism to point the danger of ignorance to the reader. In addition, he uses various symbols to reveal his perspectives. A good example of symbolism in the Cathedral is blindness, and this is used to symbolize not seeing the truth. The blind man knew the truth, but Robert does not see that, he only sees his blindness. Another symbol is the cathedral, which represents the amazement one sees when he/she walks into a church. In the story, the unnamed character is seen helping Robert to understand what a cathedral is, and he does it by describing it to him, and later on drawing it. Conversely, in A Good Man to Find, symbolism is not obvious; however, the author uses motifs. For instance, “A good man is hard to find,” this phrase is constantly used in the story to reference how men were the most qualified people (O'Connor, 2011).

A Good Man to Find, by Flannery O'Connor, and the Cathedral, by Raymond

Carver are novels about different things, however, they both detail hypocrisy, naivety, and the ignorance of the characters who believe they are good as well as fail to see their flaws; but they were able to experience epiphanies. In *A Good Man to Find*, the protagonist experiences an epiphany. This can be seen where while she tries to explain to the Misfit that he was actually a good man, she is able to realize her flaws. At the end of the story after realizing her flaws, she is heard crying, “ Why, you’re one of my babies. You’re one of my own children” (O’Connor 2011). However, she was able to reach her enlightenment before she was shot, since she realized that, she had to change her ways. Just like in *A Good Man to Find*, in *The Cathedral*, the narrator started his journey to enlightenment after his encounter with the blind man. For the first time, the narrator was able to experience what a blind man experiences, and for the first time also, he sympathized with Robert and truly understood that, people are different, and being different is not bad. Nonetheless, the circumstances in the stories were different, but made the characters experience epiphanies, which were also different. The protagonists in the stories are dynamic characters, even though their fates were completely different. In *A Good Man to Find*, the grandmother finally reaches her enlightenment at the end of the story. She was able to understand her flaws; however, it was too late for a change. On the other hand, in *The Cathedral*, the unnamed narrator was able to understand the faults in his beliefs after his encounter with Robert, the blind man. He was able to learn from a blind man and this is ironical because, at the beginning, he felt sorry for him seeing him as physically challenged.

Flannery O’Connor and Raymond Carver are influential American short story

writers who influenced their readers with their short stories *A Good Man to Find*, and *The Cathedral*. The settings of their stories are a home setting, which makes it easy for the reader to relate with the story and its characters. Through their writing and elements used in the short stories, the audiences are left to ponder what could have happened if the characters were enlightened at the beginning of the story.

In conclusion, the authors did an incredible job of conveying ignorance in the society. The protagonists in the stories were ignorant about the things and people in the society, but in the end, they were able to experience a change. The main character in *The Cathedral* experienced a change after meeting the blind man, while in *A Good Man to Find*, the protagonist only realized his flaws, at the time of her death, and there was nothing much she could have done, she had to pay for her deceitfulness. Ignorance is by far the most important concept in the short stories. O'Connor and Carver toy with their characters and readers, but at the end of the stories, the main characters were enlightened.

References

O'Connor, F. (2011). "A Good Man is Hard to Find." *The Bedford Introduction to Literature*. Ed. Micheal Meyer. Boston: Bedford/ST. Martins.

Carver, R. (1989). *Cathedral*. New York: Vintage publishing.