

O'connor and chaotic life

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In "A Good Man is Hard to Find", Flannery O'Connor highlights a chaotic family relationship in a chaotic and changing world. The grandmother is the most animated member of the family and is constantly reminiscing about the past and lamenting about the current state of mankind.

Her life is in constant contrast with the lives of the rest of her family; her aloof son Bailey and especially, the disrespectful grandchildren. In her is the embodiment of southern values and respect, even a sense of piety. She worries about the loss of values that others obviously disregard and dismiss.

She makes an ominous statement about the character "the Misfit", who embodies all that is bad in the world that would later make a connection with the setting of the deaths of the family. In this final setting, the true face of human nature shines through, as the grandmother attempts to reason with the Misfit, to no avail, and then tries to save only her own life and not the lives of the family. It is here that it becomes obvious that reasoning with people, in this case the family and the murderer, is impossible in a world of chaos.

More importantly, the human condition is presented to show that each person cares more for him or herself than their fellowman.

The characters of the mother, baby, and the Misfit's friends are very peripheral and offer little or nothing to analyze. The couple at the barbecue place do illustrate turmoil in their lives that is easily connected to the family in the story.

Red Sammy is an interesting character, who laments about the dangers of the world, as does his wife and their obvious disconnection with each other in their conversations, point to the parallel nature of an individual in a family.

The grandmother seems to not be moved by the way that the woman is dismissed by Red Sammy and this reflects the grandmother's views of people. The grandmother constantly says that she is "a lady", so the treatment of Red Sammy's wife may be looked at by her as fine, because the wife was not as special as she. There is another instance in the story that illustrates the way that the grandmother feels about herself, in an arrogant sense.

When she sees a young black child with no pants, she explains to the grandchildren how poor people are in the country. Though she makes no mention of how unfortunate this is, instead she begins to talk about her wish to learn how to paint, and how she would paint a picture of that boy in front of his old shack.

In believing that she is a lady, she attempts to rule the family and teach the grandchildren about how they should view the world, through her own lens.

Although the lens does not fit, as the world has changed and the grandmother goes back and forth between looking to the past and dealing with the future. There is an obvious disconnect of time here, just as there is within the family. The obvious disconnect of the family highlighted is the exasperation of Bailey toward his mother and the condescension of the children toward the grandmother.

Though the grandmother sometimes acts haughty and overbearing, she does act as if she has the welfare of her family and the world at large in her thoughts and actions. Though her lie about the plantation leads them all to death. The lie she tells about the plantation is that there is treasure hidden somewhere in a secret place in the house.

This excites the children, as they want to explore the passage and even come up with ways to get into the house (an illegal act itself). The grandmother knows that this family is very chaotic and unbalanced, so the children would get their way. The lie and the talk of finding treasure, because of the children's greed led the family to their destruction, as one lie begins a course of what may be considered sins, to the ultimate sin of all.

This lie leads to the meeting with the Misfit. The Misfit embodies all that is to be feared in the world. He is lawless and immoral. He is dangerous and sneaky. But his view on the acts that he has done, illustrate the imperfection of every person and even the family, itself.

He makes an interesting statement when he reveals that if you murder someone or steal from them, you will be punished. In this way, the grandmother is forced to face her own demons, as she has believed that she is the most sensible and moral person in the family, but it is this side-tracked and mis-led trip that leads her to the realization that she is neither sensible or moral.

She had remembered just before the accident that the plantation was not even in Georgia at all and the adventure that she wanted to take personally was only agreed too, because she lied to the children about its uniqueness.

Had she been sensible and moral, she would have not burdened the family with her lie. This mistake leads them all to death, one she cannot prevent for herself and does not seem to do for the rest of them.

In conclusion, "A Good Man is Hard to Find" is an illustration of a chaotic family in a chaotic world. The grandmother, who acts like a beacon of hope in the family, ends up being the agent of their death.

She must come face-to-face with her own demons, literally with the encounter with the Misfit and metaphorically with her own sense of herself. The finality of the family's deaths and the continuation of the lives of the Misfit and his friends further shows how there is no real sense of justice in the world, only chaos.

The sense is there too of it being very easy to judge someone else and to then be judged. The grandmother continuously tells the Misfit that he is not "common", showing her disdain for common people. It is that type of judgment that can be said to have caused her downfall from grace.

Additionally, it is exactly what the Misfit wants, to be common and to blend in with others. He puts on her dead son's shirt to be this common person and her last thoughts, arguably, would have been about the way she has led her family, both in their lives and on the final journey they would ever take.

Works Cited:

O'Connor, F. "A Good Man is Hard to Find." *The Norton Anthology of Short Fiction*, 7th Edition. Ed. Richard Bausch, R. V. Cassill. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 2005.