

# Young goodman brown

Literature



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Christianity has had a major impact on Western civilization. The strong presence of the Christian church in Europe for several centuries shaped societies ideology way back then and even shape ours today. The church affected society socially and politically as much as it did spiritually. People's imaginations and fantasy's were not separate from this Christian way of thinking. In Nathaniel Hawthorne's story Young Goodman Brown (Hawthorne) you see an example of this Christian type of fantasy, although the work appears to contain a deeper message of faith, which is also a fundamental Christian value.

In Young Goodman Brown Hawthorne depicts a young man named Goodman Brown who leaves his wife, who is ironically named Faith, and heads into the unknown of the wilderness. The story contains very dark imagery of demons and everything devilish, and Goodman Brown struggles with exhaustion, fear, and anger. Hawthorne sets the stage for a downward spiral that sends Goodman Brown straight to a Christian Hell. It is a story that serves as example of what could make a good young man turn into a wicked old fool.

This story is a detailed and very dark depiction of a major Christian fear which is to succumb to the wishes of the devil. It shows that all men, even those who have it as good as young Goodman Brown could fall at the hands of the fallen angel. A story I am sure, in its time was very frightening and most certainly not for children's eyes. Was Hawthorne trying to ignite fear in Christians? Is the wilderness a metaphor for the real world? A young Goodman Brown the symbol of a Christian who could easily lose his path in the harshness of the real world? All of these questions could be true.

The loss of faith is the beginning of all of young Goodman Brown's woes, because after he leaves his wife Faith and heads into the forest that is when his downward spiral begins. Perhaps, Hawthorne is saying that if you stay home with your Faith then the real world would not affect you and you would be closer to the Lord. That the wilderness that is the real world will only lead to evil and wicked ways. There is a scene in the story that shows an interaction between young Goodman Brown and a stranger. The stranger appears to be an older gentleman who young Goodman Brown speaks with as if he is an old friend.

The old chap is walking with a twisted staff that resembles a serpent. For Christians the serpent serves as a symbol of the devil. In The Bible Eve is deceived in the garden of Eden by a serpent a deception that led her to eat a piece of fruit from the tree that God ordered them not to eat from. Goodman Brown is noticeably getting weary from his journey, and his new companion continually offers the young man his staff to walk with so it may ease his travel. After the sudden appearance of the elder traveler he addresses Goodman Brown as if he knew him well and in a way that says he was expecting him.

The traveler then comments on the slow start to the young man's journey and says, "Come, Goodman Brown," cried his fellow traveler, "this is a dull pace for the beginning of a journey. Take my staff if you are so soon weary." (2) Hawthorne also writes that the elder traveler and young Goodman Brown could be mistaken for father and son. Could the elder traveler actually be an older Goodman Brown who was expecting his former self on this road to darkness and despair? The traveler encourages the young man along his <https://assignbuster.com/young-goodman-brown/>

journey when he says, " Let us walk on nevertheless, reasoning as we go; and if I convince thee not shall turn back.

We are but a little way in the forest yet. " (2) Goodman brown responds to the traveler by saying. " Too far! Too far! " exclaimed the goodman unconsciously, resuming his walk. " My father never went into the woods on such an errand, nor his father before him. We have been a race of honest men and good Christians since the days of the martyrs; and shall I be the first of the name of Brown that ever took this path and kept-" (2) We learn that the Brown family has a tradition of good Christians. It seems as if the young Goodman Brown is asking the older version of himself if this is true.

Asking if he is destined to this dark fate the elder goes on to explain how he has observed his family for many years among the other Puritans. He talks about how he helped his grandfather, the constable when he lashed the Quaker woman through the streets of Salem and how he was with his father when he gave him a pitch-pine knot, kindled at his own hearth, to set fire to an Indian Village. It seems as if this elder traveler had seemed to be around when Browns grandfather and father made some decisions to act in some violent behavior.

A elder traveler who helped his father and his father before him in violent acts wielding a twisted black staff in resemblance of a serpent? This doesn't feel right. As their journey continues young Goodman Brown notices a woman who served as a spiritual adviser to him in his youth, Goody Cloyse was her name. Goodman Brown finds himself flustered at the sight of the " old dame," and the embarrassment of his newly found cohort is surely the

cause. Goodman Brown can't stand the thought of the woman seeing him with this ghastly man so he begs his companion to take detour. The elder man exclaimed. Be it so," said his fellow traveler.

" Betake you to the woods, and let me keep the path. " (3) After Goodman Brown acknowledged the words of the elder traveler he stood aside the path, and kept a keen eye on the old man as he approached Goody Cloyse. After the elder traveler came within a staff's length of the old woman he stretched out the serpent like staff touching her neck with its tail. The woman screamed out, " The devil!!! " screamed the pious old lady. " (3) What could young Goodman Brown be witnessing? Is the devil killing his spiritual mentor in from of his eyes?

The elder traveler answers the withered woman. " Then Goody Cloyse knows her old friend? " (3) A scene that leaves Goodman Brown in astonishment. After their initial exchange the old traveler drops his cane at the feet of the woman. The staff appears to take life and slithers away. The young man looks into the air not believing what he had witnessed. When he looks up he notices the elder traveler, waiting, as if nothing had occurred. Hawthorne writes, " That old woman taught me my catechism," said the young man; and there was a world of meaning in this simple comment. (3) You can observe from this comment that Goodman Brown is clearly disturbed by this sight.

The woman, who had taught him his catechism, (which are the principles of Christianity,) was seen fraternizing with the devil himself. You have to think that the sight of this is a major blow to the young man psychology. In this

time religion (Christianity) was a governing factor in every way of life and to see the figure who gave him guidance away from the devil as a child to now be associating with him is horrifying. Imagine if the Police who were at school telling the kids not to use drugs were seen later selling them?

Or if your parents told you not to drink and party and “do wrong” were later seen drunk and vomiting at a bar? Same principle, but don't types of things like that make it easier for us to not feel as bad about when we do wrong?

Goodman Brown is beginning to realize that everyone is destined to sin, and the fear of this inevitable sin turns Goodman Brown to anger. His fear and anger increased when he heard the clattering hoofs and the rambling of a carriage approaching on the path. The passenger on this carriage is none other than the minister Deacon Gookin accompanied by another minister.

The minister addresses the aforementioned Deacon saying. “Mighty well, Deacon Gookin!” replied the solemn old tones of the minister. “Spur up, or we shall be late. Nothing can be done you know until I get on the ground.”

Goodman Brown wondered, what could these good Holy men be doing traveling to the depths of the heathen wilderness? (4) A confused and angered Goodman Brown screams out. “With heaven above and Faith below, I will yet stand firm against the devil!” Goodman Browns anger was paused at the sight of a dark cloud traveling ahead swiftly northward.

Goodman Brown could distinguish the sounds of the voices come from the clouds as the towns people he had known and even sat at communion table with. This is when the young man begins screaming for his wife, “Faith!” He screams, screams that could be heard piercing the night air waiting for a

response in terror. He hears nothing. " My Faith is gone! " cried he after one stupefied moment. " There is no good on earth; and sin is but a name. Come, devil; for thee is this world given. " (4) Goodman Brown's downward spiral is now complete. He has succumb to the wishes of the devil.

After he saw the falling of his fellow towns people and that led to the loss of his Faith. With Faith gone he had nothing. I think that these statements were trying to be portrayed by Hawthorne in a way that would serve as example to not let the downfall of others hinder your faith but rather strengthen it as well as your relationship with the Lord. At this time, as stated before, the church ran people's lives. This story likely served as a teaching tool as well as an interesting story about the relationship between Christian Faith and sin.