

# Life has a hopeful undertone

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McCarthy follows a father and son who are struggling to survive after some global apocalypse. The father struggles to keep his faith and "carry the fire," he starts to question his faith in humanity but still believes to have hope in the most difficult of times. Despite civilization falling apart, in the novel *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy hope is revealed to be a major theme by symbolism in the fire and the boy. The man and boy often find themselves in difficult situations.

The boy considers that he would be better off dead because of his loss of hope. He says he would be better off with his "mom" (55), who is dead. The man tells him that he has to "carry the fire." Although it is not directly said in the novel, the fire is implied to be related to hope and goodness. The father and son are some of the few survivors who refused to exploit human beings, because they have not given up and lost faith in their morals. Hope helps them find alternatives from cannibalism. Even when they were "starving" (129), they still refuse to eat any human flesh.

In the novel, the cannibals represent a fallen society that the man and boy have to live through. The boy is a symbol of hope and is one of the "good guys" (77). Those who carry the fire have not given up hope and need to preserve the faith and sake of humanity, because if the two characters decide to eat a charred human infant (198), everyone on Earth would be killing each other and ending humanity; there would be no hope or love left, there would be nothing or no one left to live for. The man and boy both believe "nothing is going to happen" (83), to them because they are carrying the fire.

Ultimately at the end of the novel the man ends up dying, but hope continues to live on in the boy, who meets a new family that is "carrying the fire" as well (284). This shows that even in hard times you can still have hope that things will get better. When his son was born the man says that the boy was "beyond the window just gathering cold, the fires on the horizon" (59). The man found hope when his son was born, and found another reason to live. The mother states "the boy was all that stood between him and death"(29).

The child was an embodiment of hope and salvation; he was a light in the darkness. The man thought of his son as God; he asked Ely noon thought he was an angel? What if I said he was God? "(172). The man saw his son as a symbol of hope in a place where hope was no longer relevant. Overall, hope in a ruined society can begin the dullness, but *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy shows that hope can still remain. Hope when a salvation lies in ruins can easily be forgotten between the fight with death and the desperation to live, but it remains as the only thing that can begin to rebuild humanity again.

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