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[Literature](#), [Fiction](#)



David Lopez Professor E. Bloom ENG102/CRN 1429 11 April, 2013 A Good Man Is Hard to Find: The Misfit Versus The Grandmother Flannery O'Connor's short story "A Good Man is Hard to Find" is written partially in order to "convert" people who have not yet fully accepted the Christian faith.

O'Connor, herself being a strong believer in Christianity, probably thought that writing this story will help make people who aren't really living by the Christian guidelines to extremely consider doing so. Flannery O'Connor sound deeply concerned with the standards and the direction of the youth at the time. She believe that Christ was no longer enough of a priority to the people of her generation. On the other hand, The Misfit did not believe in Christ. According to the short story in the book, "Jesus thrown everything off balance. It was....." (33). In the story "A Good Man is Hard to Find", it have many similarities and differences between The Misfit and the Grandmother. An example of this, in "A Good Man is Hard to Find," involves the grandmother's strong, southern heritage. According to the article from Owens, "the grandmother fights on behalf of blood: she dresses like a lady, she rebukes rudeness wherever she sees it, and she looks benignly down upon the quaint "piccaninnies" who sit at the bottom of her social ladder" (9). She dresses with the intention that anyone who finds her dead on the road will know she was a lady, and she is always telling stories of southern gentlemen courting her. Then, the Misfit, whom she "knows" is of quality, southern blood, shoots her and her family, despite her belief in southern hospitality. The Grandmother is a woman who believes in God, but it seems that her belief isn't really strong up until her confrontation with the Misfit. The character named "The Misfit" is self-named, and his name got several

different meanings. He's the most dangerous criminal and the Grandmother knows that. It seems she wants to buy herself time by having conversation with The Misfit. The Misfit seems to be having a nice conversation, because he was talking about his life and the meaning behind his name. He explains in their conversation why he call himself " The Misfit", according to the story, " I can't make what all I done wrong fit what all I gone through in punishment. " (33). So he named himself The Misfit, because of the wrong things he had done in the past. He talked about how his dad had something to do with him being what he is. On page 31, " My daddy said I was a different breed of dog from my brothers and sisters. " It seems that his father knew he was different in a bad way and he expresses it with his son The Misfit. For him, murdering people is only to give them a punishment they deserved, but killing the Grandmother is justified as the ultimate punishment for her sins of manipulation and deviousness. Like Satan, The Misfit is also an anti-Christ. According to the Article from Bethea, " like Satan, The Misfit is an anti-Christ. Jesus loved children, whereas children make the anti-Christ Misfit ' nervous'" (4). It seemed that he killed her because he feel that he is doing the world a favor by sending a cranky old grandma to her final judgment. It's not hard to list The Misfit as the antagonist, but who's the protagonist. The Misfit is obviously the bad character in this short story, but many reader might not see that the Grandmother can also be a bad character too. In today's world, grandmothers are usually nice and sweet, but O'Connor's grandmother is very manipulative, domineering women who talks way too much for her and her family's own good. According to the story, " There was a secret panel in this house," she said craftily, not telling the truth but

wishing that she were, " and the story went that all the family silver was hidden in it when Sherman came through but it was never found . . ." (26)

This quotation from the short story shows that the Grandmother is self-fish and demanding, because she wants to see it again but let the children changed their father's mind. She want things to go her way, and she would use someone to get things done her way. The Grandmother, much like Satan, is very sneaky and crafty, but not sneaky enough because her words ultimately lead to the death of her and her family. So the protagonist in this story would be the cat in the house in the beginning of the story. The comparison between The Misfit and the Grandmother is probable, because they share some things in common. It's kind of clear that The Misfit and the grandmother have some things in common, for instance, they both have strong will in their beliefs and they will not let anybody get in their way. It seemed that it was obvious and The Misfit saw the similarities when he first met the Grandmother, so he knew who he was dealing with. It seemed that the Grandmother was the only one or the closest one to have a long conversation with The Misfit, because he was talking about his background and they were sharing information with each other. It seemed that she was making it worse every time she would speak with The Misfit, because she tried to speak like a " lady" and it makes her look weak. The Misfit sees her weakness and tries to hear her out by listening, until she went over and touched him. The worst mistake she did was her going to him to touch him, because it led her to death. According to the article from Bandy, " The Misfit, withdrawing ever deeper into the dank recesses of his memories, hardly seems to hear her words, or even to notice her, until she mentions Jesus.

And then, misjudging his reaction, she makes the great mistake of reaching out to touch him. " (20) With no hesitation, The Misfit shot her three times to the chest and he watched her die. The Grandmother was trying to use the same technique she used for her family on The Misfit, but it backfires and she is probably on her way to hell. By looking at Flannery O'Connor's work in the past, most of her works follow a similar pattern. The main character(s) are in some kind of trouble and at the end they see "the light" of God's ways and have their redemption. Christians have often criticized her works for being immoral but in actuality she uses these extreme situations and portrayals to express the power of God in a positive light. The immoral character of the Misfit is very skillfully portrayed, as is the 'enlightened' character of Grandma. Most of the characters in "A Good Man is Hard to Find" and, probably her other works, go through some kind of transformation, a change in their views of the world and in their perceptions about life and death. Such a character in this particular story is Grandma and the Misfit. It seems that the Misfit is constantly experiencing a deep inner struggle and this is revealed in his conversation with Grandma. Of course, O'Connor's skillful portrayal of him helps the reader to detect some obscure details of the Misfit's behavior, which are key elements in determining the Misfit's state of mind. Those details are his gestures, his speech, and his thoughts. Maybe, in a way, the Misfit represents the new generation of young and religiously misguided people, and Grandma symbolizes the old generation, which has grown somewhat distanced from religion. In my opinion this is a take on the missionary concept. Someone in the storyline is "converted" to stronger faith in God, and also there is a form of conversion

of the reader by the author. Flannery O'Connor probably hoped to provoke her readers and to make them re-consider their own spiritual notions and ideals. All said, "A Good Man is Hard to Find" is an exceptionally well-written short story with both tension and provoking religious content. The ending doesn't come as much of a surprise, though, it still is good for a short story. To make this clear, this story is not about Catholic versus Protestant doctrine. The story is more about the religions in the past being compared to religions today. The plot may be a bit specious when given more thought, but overall this is an exciting and interesting work, which can be enjoyed by non-Christian readers as well.

Work Cited
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