

A walk in the woods

Literature



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In his dark short story, *Young Goodman Brown*, Nathaniel Hawthorne explores that everyone has two sides, a good and a bad. This story is based in the town of Salem, Massachusetts, where the historic Salem witch trials took place. This story is an example of what people thought and kind of what went on during the witch trials. At first glance the story is about a man's late-night walk in the forest to meet a man and go on a journey to find meaning, but the story has many different themes and a lot of symbolism that's key in the story.

The symbolism can be found throughout the story from different people such as Faith (faith), Goodman Brown and the man in the woods. It can also be found in names and little things like the pink ribbon. Another thing that shows a lot of symbolism and that plays an important part in the theme of the story is the forest. Goodman Brown could represent anyone. He is basically the everyman. The symbolism starts right at the beginning of the story. Goodman Brown is first described as young and newly married.

His wife's name is Faith, a detail that has significance to the theme and symbolism. At the beginning of the story we could assume that Goodman Brown is a believer and follower of God, but he is still curious. His connection to "Faith" is young and still being established since they just got married. He doesn't really cling to faith yet, which can be seen from his thoughts about leaving on his journey, away from Faith for the evening: "Poor little Faith!" thought he, for his heart smote him. "What a wretch am I, to leave her on such an errand!"

Well, she's a blessed angel on earth and after this one night I'll cling to her skirts and follow her to Heaven" (p. 326). Goodman Brown intends to come

back and take care of his Faith, but only after he gets the journey out of the way and gets the answers he wants. Faith (or faith) did not want him to go but, he didn't let her change his mind. When he met up with his walking companion after being late, Goodman Brown makes the comment, " Faith kept me back awhile" (p. 326). This is a statement that has a lot of meaning and shows a lot of symbolism within the context.

Goodman Brown's wife kept him back and so did his faith because going on this dark journey through the forest, he only gets further away from his faith. The confusion and doubt in Goodman Brown's mind continues as he goes deeper into the forest, kind of like when you get further away from god, you get closer to doing bad things. At one point in time Goodman Brown wants to go back and he even calls out for his " Faith", but he lets himself be drawn further into the forest and further away from " Faith". The character of Faith in this story is the picture of innocence: she is sweet, young, and pretty.

She is also a young bride and she wears pink girly ribbons in her hair. By her name and description she sounds like a good person and a follower of god. This is what Goodman Brown is traveling farther from and the devil in the forest wants him to. Then when the pink ribbon falls down and Goodman Brown sees it, he loses it. During his panic he states: " 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 to thee is this world given. And maddened with despair, so that he laughed loud and long, did Goodman Brown grasp his staff and set forth again at such a rate that he seemed to fly along the forest path rather than to walk or run. (p. 331) The pink ribbon falling from the sky shows a great deal of symbolism in

the story. It pretty much shows that he did lose his Faith and faith. He told her to stay inside and she didn't listen. The ribbon falling is a dangerous breaking point, which we can see from Goodman Brown's reaction, of going crazy and just heading headfirst into the rest of the dark forest.

Even though Goodman Brown claims that he has lost his Faith (faith), he still looks for her when he arrives at the witch meeting. Then at the final moment when they are about to be baptized into this group of witches, he calls out to Faith and says, “ Look up to Heaven, and resist the Wicked One” (p. 335). Despite all the things that happened, faith was still there, and he made a desperate attempt to reach out to it. Goodman Brown presents the main inner struggle of the story but, there are a few supporting characters who contribute to his struggle.

The first is the elder man that meets with Goodman Brown and walks with him into the forest. He is dressed in decent clothes and does not seem hostile or dangerous; he even looks like Goodman Brown. His potent influence mixed with his serpent cane, gets Goodman Brown to travel further and further into the forest with him. The other characters in the story are also significant because they are all people with whom Goodman Brown is familiar with, such as Goody Cloyse, who was a spiritual adviser to him when he was young.

There are also other people he sees at the witch meeting that he knows to be follower's of god. The reality that comes to him at this point is that despite appearances, these godly people are all here taking part in a witch meeting, and tomorrow they will go on about their daily life and activities. Finally, the forest plays a large role in this story and has a lot to do with the

theme. “ The forest has always been a place of initiation for there demonic presences, the ancestral spirits, and the forces of nature reveal themselves” (Cook, p. 473).

It is a place that fills Goodman Brown with doubt and fear, as he travels through it. At the same time the forest has a certain pull on him that gets him to travel further into the forest. At times he wanted to turn around and go back to Faith but, the devil and the forest convinced him not to. The forest made Goodman Brown crazy and he went all the way to the end of his journey which was the witch meeting. Nothing good happened at the witch meeting or on his journey. Goodman Brown wasn't strong enough to resist the evil hold that the forest and the devil had on him.

The outcome of this story is just sad for Goodman Brown. He went on his journey found his answers and he was pretty much miserable for the rest of his life. He had kids and was still married to Faith but, nothing was ever the same for Goodman Brown. The story of Young Goodman Brown is filled with symbolism and themes. The symbolism shows from the beginning of the story to the very end. It's a very deep short story that's pretty religious but, it's about a man that could be anyone in the world today and he just wants answers.