

A critique of the short story A Good Man is Hard to Find

Thesis

O'Connor's succeeds to bring out his arguments in this short story to sum up the feeling that in today's world, societal morals and values have drastically crumbled making the world an inhabitable place.

Introduction

The author presents his main theme of fate by bringing the reader to a family's holiday which is unfortunately brought to a sudden end by a murder (O'Connor 36). The grandmother argues that the family should go to Tennessee instead of Florida. Her insistence makes the family to deviate from the right path in an attempt to look for a fake treasure. The rebelliousness the family exhibits is a sign of moral decadence. The grandmother's decision makes the family appear like it admires the Misfit. At the beginning of the story, the author illustrates clearly that the family was to suffer in the hands of Misfit. O'Connor effectively uses characterization in this story. He uses symbolism to show how the morals of a society have been destroyed (O'Connor 36).

Discussion

In the story "A Good Man Is Hard to Find", the author features the grandmother as a central character. Her character is evidently presented in the story as a very pushy persona who dearly loves herself to an extent of being myopic (O'Connor 36). Similarly, the author paints her as an authoritative and manipulative person. This is confirmed when she manages to push the family to reschedule its plan. Her mean character is noticeably shown when she wants to visit the house she used to live in when she was young. Following her conversation with her son Bailey, the old woman tries to pressure him to change his plan to her advantage. Her character is the same up till the end of the story (Getz 234).

O'Connor extensively uses characterization to bring out lack of respect and poor discipline in America's society. The message in his story can be understood from differences that subsist between the old and young generations (O'Connor 36). The grandmother in the story symbolizes the old generation. The author describes how the old lady clothes herself such that even if a misfortune occurs, any person could easily recognize that she was a female because of her dressing. In the past, there were good morals. The children could respect the elder people and everybody in the society would reinforce such behavior all the time (Getz 234). However, the grandchildren are immoral and undisciplined. The author through his employing of characterization elements shows that Misfit is a product of crumbled values and culture devoid of demeanor. However, Misfit seems to be respectful in a way especially when he uses polite words like 'Maam'.

Similarly, O'Connor uses symbolism in the story to show bereavement and faith. The author says that the family deviates from the good road to follow a dreadful one where they end up getting killed. This symbolizes how people move away from the kingdom of God to go to down the evil paths. The town's name called "Toombsboro" is used by the author to symbolize death (O'Connor 36). The old woman hopes that she would find a plantation in Toombsboro town. It is in this town still that the old lady is sidetracked. This symbolizes that her faith in Jesus is getting low. In the

story, the author writes that June and John tries to guess what the sky's color is. The clouds in are used by the author to present the faith of the old lady (Getz 234). At the end of the story, we are told that there are no clouds anymore and the sky has nothing. The author is trying to show that the old woman's faith at that stage is already depleted. The author uses a grave yard to symbolize death. Furthermore, in his quote "big black battered hearse like automobile" is applied to show that death is the final destination (O'Connor 36).

The author strongly backs up his theme by titling the story "A Good man is hard to find". He uses personalities like Misfit to support it. This propping up is evidenced by the use the grandchildren and Jesus. In the story, the old woman says that she could go with her children anywhere and could give answer to her consciousness if possible. Finally, this lady comes into a situation where she tries to give answers to her conscience by frustratingly assuming that Misfit is not a bad person. Misfit on the other hand insists that indeed he is a bad person (O'Connor 36). Misfit compares himself to Jesus where he says that Jesus suffered for other people's sins just the same way he got punished for mistakes he never did. The theme that "a good man is hard to find" undoubtedly refers to Jesus. This is because Misfit tries to compare himself to Jesus but he finally commits a murder. The old woman's shaky faith in Jesus is over. By Jesus not delivering her shows that indeed "a good man is hard to find."

Conclusion

The author ultimately does well to bring to the reader's attention how the world is changing from being a good to a bad place (O'Connor 36). By use of characterization and symbolism he clearly shows the various vices in the society which are making the world a bad place. The author also uses the theme of the story "a good man is hard to find" to show that if people would accept Jesus in their lives then the world could be a good place just like in the past. This is because people would acquire good morals, be respectful and also practice discipline in everything they do.

Works cited

Getz, Lorine, *Nature and Grace in Flannery O'Connor's Fiction*, New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2000.

O'Connor, Flannery, *A Good Man Is Hard To Find*, Chicago: Rutgers University Press. 2009.