

## Young Goodman Brown

Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story, Young Goodman Brown alludes to the struggle between good and evil, particularly, epitomizing the persona of the human race. In the story, Brown faces many decisions that will make the reader assume that the author had many issues and disagreements with the Puritans.

Throughout the story of Young Goodman Brown, the main character of Brown is in conflict with his conscience. The good versus evil struggle is evident within the first few paragraphs. Brown's feelings of guilt over taking a journey in the forest for evil purposes instead of staying safely with his wife of three months, Faith, was the situation pulling him in two directions at once. Hawthorne states:

“What a wretch am I to leave her on such an errand! She talks of dreams, too. Methought as she spoke, there was trouble in her face, as if a dream had warned what work is to be done tonight. But no, no! ‘twould kill her to think it, Well; she’s a blessed angel on earth; and after this one night, I’ll cling to her skirts and follow her to heaven”

This last statement eased Brown's guilt and justified his behavior enough that he kept his rendezvous in the forest with the devil. While on his rendezvous with the devil, Young Goodman Brown was tempted many times, the struggle between good and evil was always present. Brown expressed his desire to turn back; he did not want to be the first to take this path and dishonor the family name. Brown listens as the devil tells him he has been well acquainted with both his father and grandfather for years. The devil further states incidents where he has helped them both.

This is the first Young Goodman Brown had heard of their acquaintance with the devil. Both men were perceived as honest men and good Christians. Brown stated “We are a people of prayer and good works, to boot, and abide by such wickedness” (Hawthorn, 1200). Their visit to the side of evil was not present in their everyday life.

Another example of good verses evil being present in the story is Goodman Browns meeting with Goody Cloyse on the path, deep in the forest. Brown recognizes her “a very pious and exemplary dame who had taught him his catechism, in youth, and was the moral and spiritual advisor, jointly with the minister” (Hawthorn, 1201). However, Goody Cloyse conversed easily as if they were long lost friends. They spoke of the disappearance of her broomstick and witches recipe. He loaned her his staff so that she could make it to the meeting in the woods. All the while this was going on, Young Goodman Brown was watching; yet he still wanted to turn back.

Alone in the forest, Young Goodman Brown heard the voices of the minister and the Deacon Gookin conversing. Brown considered these men very holy and revered them both.

“Of the two, reverend Sir, said the voice like the deacons, I had rather miss an ordination dinner than tonight’s meeting. They tell me that some of our community are to be here from Falmouth and beyond, and the others from Connecticut and Rhode Island; besides several of the Indian powows who after their fashion, know almost as much deviltry as the best of us. Moreover, there is a godly young woman to be taken into communion. Mighty well, deacon Gookin! replied the Solemn old tones of the minister.”

The results of this conversation made Brown so sick of heart, he almost fainted. He was still determined to stand firm against the devil. These two holy men, who exemplified pure goodness in the daylight were on their way to the meeting.

Young Goodman Brown heard voices above him as a black mass of clouds passed by. He thought he heard the voice of his wife, "Faith." Brown called her name. He noticed her pink ribbon caught on a branch of a tree "My Faith is gone! cried he after one stupefied moment. There is no good on earth; and sin is but a name. Come evil for to thee is the world given" (Hawthorn, 1204). Thus he ended up at the meeting.

Upon his arrival at the meeting so many pious people were present. They were "withering to and fro, between gloom and splendor." Faces that were familiar to Brown would the very next day looking "devoutly heavenward and benignantly over the crowded pews, from the holiest pulpits in the land" (Hawthorn, 1205). Some of the quests were as high up as the governor's lady, and high dames well known to her were visible. Also present were wives of honored husbands and widows, a great multitude, and ancient maidens, all of excellent repute and fair young girls. So many members from the church in Salem Village, who were known for their especial sanctity were recognized by Young Goodman Brown.

When the devil welcomed Brown and Faith to the communion of the human race, they turned to see all whom ye have reverend from youth. People he had placed above him thinking they were holier than he was yet, here they were in assembly worshipping the devil. Brown called out Faiths name telling her to look up to heaven and resist the wicked one.

The end of the story finds Brown an empty, bitter, mistrusting soul who went to his grave filled with gloom. He never recovered from his fretful dream. All through the story Young Goodman Brown struggled between the choices of good and evil. He managed to stay strong until the relations, one after another, of the dual nature of mankind. Their persona in the daylight and their evil nature at night.

#### Works Cited

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. "Young Goodman Brown." The Norton Anthology of American Literature. Ed. Nina Baym and Wayne Franklin. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1994. 1198-1207.