

Where Are You Going and A Good Man Is Hard to Find Comparison

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Comparative Essay

The stories “[Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?](#)” by Joyce Carol Oates and “A Good Man is Hard to Find” by Flannery O’Connor bear many similarities and differences related to the plot and characters. “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?” depicts the story of a young and naive teenager who begs for attention from men and ultimately meets her match in the form of Arnold Friend, whereas “A Good Man is Hard to Find” illustrates the story of a family, taking a vacation, unaware that a slight detour would result in their tragic deaths at the hands of The Misfit.

The story “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been” reaches an intriguing excitement when one fine day, Arnold Friend appears at Connie’s residence in a gold convertible while Connie’s family is away for a family barbecue. Initially trying to charm Connie with his mild manners and sweet talk, he keeps insisting that she gets in his car, but Connie’s continuous refusal agitates him, and she realizes the frightening aspects of his personality.

The initial impression of Arnold Friend soon diminishes as Connie realizes that he isn’t what he seems to be with his wig-like hair and a stumbling stroll. She notices other aspects, too and discerns the details of his face that seem to be plastered with make-up. Observing his stance closely, she could see that although he claimed to be around her age, he wasn’t – he was older, thirty or maybe more (Oates). She also grasped the reality that he might be a stalker as he knew where she lived; he knew her name, the details about her family and what they were doing.

Background and Context

When his persistent attempts to convince Connie to take a ride with him fail, he becomes progressively forceful, and Connie is left with no choice but to threaten him to call the police, which further aggravates him. Though he kept addressing Connie in a sweet manner, using terms like “honey” and “sweetheart” and continuously saying that “you are my lover”, he also made his displeasure at her fooling around absolutely clear with his frighteningly chilly tone (Oates). The story ends when Connie is compelled to leave with him, her future left ambiguous.

The complication of the [story “A Good Man is Hard to Find”](#) unfolds when the family, while on vacation, takes a detour and faces an accident on a dirt road. Approached by a big black automobile, what seemed to be an opportunity to get help soon resulted in a sad ending of their lives. The initial

description of The Misfit highlights that he had an unwavering gaze and a scholarly outlook (O'Connor). He appeared quite familiar to the grandmother. She later recognized him as The Misfit. This was the turning point because the Misfit did not want to be discovered.

Throughout her encounter with The Misfit, the grandmother persistently appeals to his better nature, repeatedly saying, "I know you're a good man. You don't look a bit like you have common blood. I know you must come from nice people!" (O'Connor 147). She also endeavoured to seek his mercy by urging him to pray and talk about Jesus. The Misfit, in turn, revealed much about his childhood, his relationship with his father and his struggles at the penitentiary.

He divulged that his mother was a fine woman and his dad had a heart of gold; however, his later comment that his father knew how to handle authority shows that he resented him for not being punished for his crimes – this could also be the reason that he ended up murdering him although he did not remember doing so. The Misfit talked to the grandmother further and acknowledged that he isn't a good man; however, as an afterthought, he also added, "but I ain't the worst in the world neither. My daddy said I was a different breed of dog from my brothers and sisters" (O'Connor 148). This statement gives an insight into his childhood and how his father's discriminatory behaviour diminished his self-esteem.

Discussion of Key Issues

During the entire course of his encounter with the grandmother, The Misfit's tone of voice remains polite, and he carries on with his conversation, all the while sending the other members of the family into the woods with his partners, who shoot them. Till the very end, the grandmother tried to reason with him to not kill her, and when she reached out and touched his shoulder, it was as if something snapped within him – her gentle touch was too much for him to bear, and he shot her three times through the chest.

The encounters in both stories are very similar. Both characters experience a dramatic incident that endangers their well-being. It also portrays the unpredictability of life – the uncertainty of how and when life might change, as it did for Connie, who was enjoying a leisurely day of dreaming in the dazed warmth of the sun, and the grandmother, who had embarked upon a family vacation.

Comparative Analysis

Another similarity is the initial connection that the writer illustrates between Connie and Arnold Friend; and grandmother and The Misfit. This is also linked to the encounter they had with these characters at the end of the story. When the grandmother read about The Misfit, she exclaimed that the burden of taking children out while a criminal is on the loose is too much to bear, while Arnold's words to Connie, "Gonna get you, baby", were regarded by her as a mere expression of adoration (Oates 1). During the encounter, both characters realize that they caused what eventually came their

way because Connie tried to grow up too soon while the grandmother could not grow out of her old life.

The encounters also reveal certain similarities between the two antagonists as initially, both Arnold Friend and The Misfit seem to be harmless. Arnold pursued Connie with affectionate pet names while The Misfit continued his conversation with the grandmother revealing to her details about his life and sharing with her the traumas he had been through.

Conclusion

However, the one difference between the two encounters is that Arnold became agitated and there was a frightening chill to the way he talked to Connie. It had a threatening undertone, and it revealed the duplicity of the character's actions and intent. In contrast, The Misfit had an overall polite demeanour and came off as someone who had been misunderstood all his life. He remained civil while talking to the family and addressed them by wishing them a good afternoon. His tone was not assertive; rather, he courteously asked the family, "Would you mind stepping back in the woods there with them?" (O'Connor 148). This gentlemanly style of the Misfit, as opposed to Arnold's conniving approach as a lover, sets the two protagonists apart (Jenn).

The two encounters also make the readers reflect on the protagonists' characters. It is the way Arnold spoke to Connie that made him such a dreadful character, whereas the Misfit killed an old woman without showing signs of any remorse. Lastly, the encounters also reveal that the grandmother kept begging Misfit to spare her life, though she had heard gunshots that killed her family, whereas Connie's decision to go with Arnold at the end of the story depicts a growth of her character – once a selfish girl, now made a selfless decision in order to keep her family safe.

Works Cited

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