
Literary Analysis Of Good Country People By Flannery O' Connor

Does anyone know what a political cartoonist is? Its literal job description is to enhance a character flaw usually of a politician or the stupidity of a political event by drawing it larger. In other words, a political cartoonist job is to point out people's flaws and make them known and to maybe push for change. The reason I am saying this is because Flannery O' Connor dreamed of being a political cartoonist. In her short story, Good Country People, every character has a distinct flaw and the way she points them out is by their names. She is completely transparent, and you will find that by reading this short story. I would describe her theme as an ongoing persona of the characters and their development in relation to the real world.

One of the main flaws in Good Country People is the hypocrisy of humans. For example, Mrs. Hopewell, she is so naïve, and she sees the absolute best in people. "Good country people are the salt of the earth! Besides, we all have different ways of doing, it takes all kinds to make the world go 'round. That's life!". This is one of many times during the short story that Mrs. Hopewell will claim that everyone is good, but in reality, she just turns her back on mankind and refuses to see evil in the world. Joy is another character that demonstrates hypocrisy. She pronounces herself as a self-proclaimed atheist yet has never left her bubble, she spends all of her time reading science books that have explanations for what Christians and Christianity as a whole believe. She thinks she knows everything because all she is surrounded with are "good country people" who are strong in their faith. Mrs. Freeman is another key character. We can see by her name alone it means "free man." She is on the opposite end of the spectrum of Mrs. Hopewell. She sees the world for how it truly is, she is not oblivious of the evils and wrong doing that humans are capable of, but ironically, she is so interested in other people's life and drama, she has little freedom and life for herself. Last but not least, a bible salesman named Manly Pointer. He shows innocence yet is evil. There is irony and flaws presented that has a much deeper meaning than just deceiving. It relates to all of mankind. He shows that there are people in this world that claim to be Christians but do not live the lifestyle.

The interesting thing about this short story is that while O'Connor is introducing the characters she is explaining and opening up the amount of hypocrisy that truly is in this world. Not only that, but all of the characters have something to do with each other. Not just because they are in the story but because they all represent something that is deeper and relates to flaws of the world today. One thing about this short story of just some good country people with flaws is that it is timeless. I am not comparing it to the bible in any way, shape or form; or inferring that O'Connor is God. But she hit on something that will always be present, human flaws and sin.

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Back to my point in the paragraph above, all of the characters are interrelated. It is a circle of hope, deceitfulness, flaws and realization. It starts with Mrs. Hopewell who is so oblivious to the world but is strong in her faith. To Mrs. Freeman who is so into everyone else's business she doesn't focus on her own life. Then to Joy, who changes her name to Hulga because she thinks she is ugly, and it matches her prosthetic leg, and wants nothing to do with society yet cannot cut herself out completely because every human desire attention in some way. Then she met this bible salesman named Manly Pointer who shows Hulga (Joy) that attention that she has been seeking and he takes complete advantage of her. The irony behind that is that he took the only thing that Hulga was attached to in life. "She was as sensitive about the artificial leg as a peacock about his tail" and then it points back to Mrs. Hopewell's faith. The irony behind all of this is that every character claim to be something and every single one of them learn something from the other. Just like us in the real world. We all learn something from each other every single day. We are all flawed, and we are all at times something we say we aren't. We can be naïve, up in someone's business, perhaps atheist or distant from God because of this false sense of Christianity, and then we have reminders of what is good.

An interesting tactic Flannery O'Connor used was pointing out flaws of everyone in the story, the good and the bad. It did not matter who you were in this story, whether you were the atheist or the woman that saw good in everyone, you were not the good person. So, in the end of this story, especially with how it ends, the reader is left with not knowing who to like and who to not like. Or for that matter, knowing the theme. One thing in discussing Good Country People, a criticism online says about this book and about what to take from this story is "O'Connor's use of criticism simply allows the reader to come closer to what is meaningful and good by unmasking what is not." This is exactly what O'Connor wants us to take from her story, She deliberately shows flaws of characters from faithful to non-believers because "none are fully developed in their conceptions of what is good and what is meaningful." Flannery O'Connor puts together a brilliant short story based in the 1900's and uses their style and language and somehow intertwines the world as we know it today and makes it relatable.

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