

Writing About Literature—A. Lister

Intro Paragraph (adapted from an example in Cole and Lindemann's *Reading and Responding to Literature*)

Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story "Young Goodman Brown" is an allegorical tale that relies heavily on symbolism for its meaning as it traces Brown's journey into the dark forest one fateful night. While symbolism exists in several different forms in this story, perhaps the most significant symbol can be found in name of Brown's wife, Faith. Faith represents the theme of this story – that holding on to faith can be difficult in trying circumstances – as Brown is confronted with doubts concerning his faith in his marriage, in his fellow man, and in his own religious beliefs.

Final Body Paragraph

Most importantly, Faith is symbolic of Brown's personal religious faith. While the narrator never states Goodman Brown's reason for going into the forest, Brown does say to his fellow traveler, "having kept covenant by meeting thee here, it is my purpose now to return whence I came" (42). Clearly it is Brown's appointed time for his faith to be tested. He believes he will withstand the test; however, as the journey progresses, Brown begins to doubt the faith of his peers and the faith of

Amy W Lister 11/1/2013 11:49 AM

Comment [1]: Author and title mentioned; author should be mentioned by full name first time, and by the last name every time after that.

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Comment [2]: The thesis suggests why the symbol of faith is important.

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Comment [3]: The author organized his paper in the manner of working up to his most important point; this is the 3rd of 3 body paragraphs.

Amy Lister 11/10/2014 9:19 AM

Comment [4]: Remember to cite the page number in parentheses after a quote. (You do not need to include the author's name if it is clear which text you are citing from.)

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Comment [5]: interpretation

his wife, and his own faith begins to slip. When he loses faith in his peers, Brown questions rather than states: "Is that any reason why I should quit my dear Faith?" (44). Then when Brown is alone in the forest and finds the pink ribbon, he doubts his wife and cries out, "My Faith is gone! There is no good on earth" (45). Brown's own personal faith, which seems so strong in the beginning, cannot stand alone. He needs to believe in the goodness of his wife and of his fellow man. Brown does not go to his grave with his faith; rather, he is "followed by Faith."

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Comment [6]: interpretation

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Comment [7]: Evidence

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Comment [8]: interpretation

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Comment [9]: evidence

Conclusion Paragraph

At the story's end, Young Goodman Brown sees only evil around him. He trusts no one and lives his life in fear and disillusionment. In short, he has lost his faith. Hawthorne utilizes the symbol of faith, as illustrated by Brown's wife, Faith, to reflect the story's theme that holding on to faith in the face of adversity can be difficult, and if it is lost, the result is emptiness and misery.

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Comment [10]: emphasizes what was mentioned in the intro, but this is worded differently and specifies the theme again.