

### The Colors of Young Goodman Brown

In 1692, a mass hysteria erupted in the town of Salem, Massachusetts. The village of Salem had recently had its charter revoked. Villagers were becoming increasingly fearful of the devil. These events lead to the Salem Witch Trials, because people were trying to find a scapegoat for all the bad that was happening to the community. The story of "Young Goodman Brown" is based on this time period in Salem Village. The story presents a clear divide between the orderly society of the town, which is Christian centric, versus the chaotic woods, which is unconverted wilderness. The story of "Young Goodman Brown" is an allegory where each character has a literal level, as well as a symbolic level, that are represented by colors.

Young Goodman Brown's character is demonstrative of all people, especially Puritans. He embodies the color brown, which is a muddy color. This muddy color represents Young Goodman Brown's character, because he is confused and his feelings are jumbled. Young Goodman Brown's confusion is exposed when he has to make a choice of taking the path through the woods or the path along the road to get into the town. "He may yet be passing through an unseen multitude" (70). The color brown is also a color that is a combination of multiple different colors. Young Goodman Brown exhibits a combination of multiple emotions, just like the color brown. He wants to have faith, but he is conflicted. He tries to find sins in others, rather than looking for sins within himself. "And what calm sleep would be his, that very night, which was to have been spent so wickedly, but purely and sweetly now, in the arms of Faith" (75). This illustrates that Young Goodman Brown is confused, and he wants to live in sin for the night. In the morning, he is saying he will go back to having faith. Young Goodman Brown's character is much like the color brown, since it is made up of many things and is very muddled.

Faith is Young Goodman Brown's wife, and she is represented by the color pink. The color pink is first introduced in the story when Young Goodman Brown describes his wife as having "Pink ribbons on her cap" (69). Faith's name not only symbolizes Young Goodman Browns faith, but since she is

represented by the color pink, it shows her purity. The color pink is not completely untainted since it has a bit of red in it, but pink is still a bright and happy color. Pink also is a color of innocence and youth. Young Goodman Brown describes Faith as his “young wife” (69) and how “she’s a blessed angel on earth” (70). This shows that pink is a good embodiment of Faith, since she is young, bright, and happy.

Lastly, the traveler that Young Goodman Brown meets in the woods is a representation of the Devil and the color black. This traveler encourages Brown to go deeper into the dark woods, which is symbolic of giving himself to sin. "His staff, which bore the likeness of a great black snake" (71) demonstrates that the traveler is the devil and should be represented by black. Black signifies darkness and evil. The snake denotes the devil, so together the traveler is evil and dark. The traveler is represented by the color black and embodies the devil, because he entices Young Goodman Brown to commit sins.

The story of “Young Goodman Brown” is about how people look outside of themselves and doubt others, rather than looking inside themselves to find sin. Young Goodman Brown represents society and the color brown, because everyone is confused and trying to be faithful. However, sometimes faith can be muddled with sin. The character Faith represents the faith people have and the color pink, because it represents the youth and happiness you can find with faith. Finally, the traveler represents the devil and the color black because he tempts Young Goodman Brown and others to commit sin and embrace the darkness. The story of “Young Goodman Brown” is a story about how colors can symbolize literal characters.

Work Cited

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. "Young Goodman Brown." *Mosses from an Old Manse*. Vol. 6. London: Wiley & Putnam, 1846. 69-84. Print.