

Collected Works Study Guide

Collected Works by Flannery O'Connor

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Part One

Part One Summary

The story "Wise Blood," begins with Haze Motes riding a train to his hometown. Motes has just been released from the army after four years and is eager to return home. The only thing Motes wants is to become a preacher like his grandfather. However, Motes has a peculiar way of looking at religion and has little reverence for Jesus.

Once Motes reaches the town of Eastrod, he discovers that much has changed in the time he was gone. The old homestead is little more than a shell; the only thing left is an old shifferrobe in the kitchen. Motes wanders aimlessly through the town and finally settles in at a boarding house with a single, older woman. For the first time, Motes sleeps with a woman although he still declares himself to be free from sin.

Enoch Emory is a young man who meets up with Motes and attempts to befriend him. Emory is also new in town and lonely. Motes does not want to be bothered but has a hard time getting rid of Emory, who seems to show up around every corner.

Motes meets Asa Hawks and his daughter Sabbath at a street side gathering. Motes is taken with the blind Hawks and begins to follow them. Motes also has an attraction for Sabbath. Motes learns that Hawks was also a preacher and has deliberately blinded himself in front of a congregation to prove that he was redeemed. Since then, Hawks goes from place to place, handing out religious tracts and preaching to passers by.

Motes decides to go forth with his evangelism and begins to tell people about his "Church Without Christ," where Jesus plays no part; there is no building, and everyone is welcome.

Emory becomes obsessed with the zoo and its animals in addition to his voyeuristic tendencies regarding local women at the swimming pool. Motes eventually gets Sabbath's attention and the young woman wants to be with Motes. Things do not go well. Motes is more interested in being with Hawks than with Sabbath at the beginning. Motes is obsessed with Hawk's story of blinding himself and makes the old man tell the story in detail. Motes follows Hawks' lead and blinds himself.

The act of making himself blind does not encourage Motes to see beyond the natural world. At the end, Motes falls into a gutter and dies.

Part One Analysis

Hazel Motes is a conflicted man who is obsessed with sinning to the point that he is afraid to get near any sort of temptation. The desire to be a preacher like his grandfather is great, yet Motes has fundamental issues with Jesus. Motes preaches at everyone in a combative way and tends to alienate more than attract potential followers.



Motes seems to be at odds with himself and isn't quite sure what to do or where to go, although every action seems to be filled with a sense of urgency.

Enoch Emory is desperately lonely and wants nothing more than to have Motes as a friend. Emory wants to share many things with Motes, from the animals at the zoo to the women at the swimming pool. Motes is not interested and only agrees because Emory will not help him find Sabbath otherwise. Emory is representative of Revelations in that he always expects something big to happen, although he does not know what it is or when it will happen, only that it will be a monumental event.

Asa Hawks has his own agenda. While Sabbath is a large part of his life, Hawks intends to leave her in town and go his own way. Hawks is wary of Motes. Sabbath does not like Motes at first then suddenly does a turn around and is obsessed with the man.



Part Two

Part Two Summary

"A Good Man is Hard to Find" is a story of a Georgia family preparing for a Florida vacation. The grandmother does not want to go to Florida and would rather visit eastern Tennessee where she has "connections." The grandmother loses the fight and the family leaves for Florida.

The family consists of the grandmother, her son, daughter-in-law, and three children, including an infant. The children are argumentative and disrespectful, something the grandmother cannot tolerate. The children tend to fight in the back seat of the car and the grandmother makes attempts to entertain the children by pointing out landmarks and telling interesting stories. The grandmother remembers a house from many years ago that she desperately longs to see. The son will not stop until the grandmother tells the children about an imaginary secret panel in the house. The children are crazed with excitement about the secret panel and put up a fuss until the father agrees. After traveling along a dirt road for quite a while, the grandmother begins to wonder if the house wasn't actually in Tennessee and not Georgia but is afraid to say something about it. The father is getting more irritated by the minute.

The entire trip, the grandmother wonders if they will meet up with The Misfit, an escaped murderer. There seems to be no chance that it could happen, particularly since the family is going to Florida.

The grandmother had smuggled her cat in the car and after something startles it and it leaps onto the son's head and causes an accident. The car rolls over and lands in a ditch. No one is hurt but the car is disabled.

Soon, a group of three men come along and offer to help. The grandmother recognizes The Misfit and puts the family in jeopardy. Two of the three men take the father and son into the woods and shoot them. The mother, daughter and baby are next. All the while, the grandmother is trying to get The Misfit to reconsider, telling him to pray and saying that underneath he must be a good man, truly a good man, that she is never mistaken. The woman's constant preaching and talking annoys The Misfit and the grandmother is shot three times in the chest and dies.

Mr. and Mrs. Ashfield like to drink. The couple has a small son, Harry, who is around three or four years old. Harry is often sent off to a babysitter while the parents recover from their hangovers. In this story, titled "The River," the babysitter is Mrs. Connin, a devout religious widow. Mrs. Connin is older than the Ashfields and is obviously very set in her ways and notions about religion. Mrs. Connin doesn't know about the Ashfields' lifestyle and believes that Mrs. Ashfield is afflicted with a serious illness.



Harry is a personable child and well behaved. Harry is also extremely intelligent for a small child and takes great delight in seeing and learning new things. Mrs. Connin's house is mysterious to Harry and the other three children in the house are curious creatures. Harry watches them from afar and the others are surprised when they trick Harry into letting the pig loose and the boy doesn't get into trouble.

Harry reveals to Mrs. Connin that he doesn't know about Jesus. Mrs. Connin shows Harry an antique book of an adapted Bible for children. When Mrs. Connin isn't looking, Harry slips the book into the inside pocket in his jacket, along with many other souvenirs.

Mrs. Connin is obsessed with a special meeting being held down by the river. A famous preacher and healer will be at the river to bless and baptize anyone in the community. Mrs. Connin takes the children to the river.

During the gathering at the river, Harry is dunked into the river and baptized. The preacher keeps using a metaphor of the river in which he stands in the river of life. Harry is fascinated and begins to believe that the river is where Jesus lives.

Mrs. Connin also asks the preacher to pray for Mrs. Ashfield, who is ill. Harry tells everyone that she will be fine that she is sick with a hangover.

More of the truth comes out when Mrs. Connin takes Harry home. The next day, Harry wakes up and the apartment is quiet. Harry makes breakfast and plays with toys but is soon restless. Harry sneaks into his parents' bedroom and takes a car token from his mother's purse. Harry gets to the river and decides to look for Jesus. Harry drowns.

"A Stroke of Good Fortune" is the story of Ruby Hill. Ruby is a thirty-four year old woman who comes from a large family. Ruby's younger brother, Rufus has just returned from the military. Ruby is not happy because Rufus is "good for absolutely nothing," and Ruby is embarrassed to have her husband realize the fact.

Ruby believes that she is sick. It is true that her shortness of breath may be due to excess weight but her husband likes her that way, even if there has been a recent weight gain.

Ruby struggles to get up the five flights of stairs to the Hills' apartment and finds that she cannot make the climb with the groceries she just purchased. Ruby pauses often to take a breath and sit on the stairs. Ruby sits on a toy gun belonging to a little boy who lives upstairs. Ruby is angry because she could have been hurt. All through the story, Ruby is obsessed with her health. When Ruby returns the toy to the boy's mother, a single woman, the mother of the boy is cheerful and carefree about the whole situation. When the mother begins to tease Ruby, Ruby gets angry, professing that she is sick. The young mother suggests Ruby is pregnant. Ruby says that it is not possible for her to be pregnant and gets upset because a single woman shouldn't be talking to a married woman that way. After a long talk, Ruby leaves to go to the Hills' apartment and realizes that the young woman was right.



"The Life You Save May be Your Own" is the story of a vagrant named Tom Shiflet. Shiflet wanders into a rural town looking for work and finds it at the home of Lucynell Carter and her daughter, also named Lucynell. When the mother sees Tom Shiflet walking down the road toward the house she shares with Lucynell, she immediately thinks that a man with only one arm can not be dangerous and that the man obviously means no harm. Tom approaches the woman and explains that he is a carpenter looking for work. Lucynell says she does not have any money to hire a carpenter, but Shiflet can work for food and a place to sleep. Shiflet accepts.

Within a week, it was clear that Shiflet is a good carpenter. The house and yard begin to look much better. At night, Shiflet sleeps on the back seat of an old abandoned car in the yard. Shiflet also seems to take interest in the younger Lucynell, who was born deaf and mute. Shiflet teaches her to speak and the mother is thrilled. Eventually, Lucynell begins to plot a marriage between Shiflet and Lucynell. Shiflet is hesitant at first but is finally convinced. The family takes the newly-repaired car into town to the courthouse for the wedding ceremony. Shiflet complains that it does not feel proper and the only way he and Lucynell can have a real marriage is if he can take her away for a proper honeymoon. After much bargaining, the mother gives Shiflet money for a hotel and trip.

Shiflet and Lucynell set off in the car for their honeymoon. Lucynell is withdrawn and does not seem to know what is going on. The couple finally stops at a lunch counter where Lucynell promptly falls asleep at the counter. Shiflet tells the waiter to give Lucynell food when she wakes up. Shiflet explains that Lucynell is no more than a hitchhiker and he cannot afford to wait for her to wake up. Shiflet leaves.

"A Temple of the Holy Ghost" is the story of a 12-year-old girl and her cousins, two sisters who live in a convent. The sisters are sixteen, frivolous and rude. The 12-year-old girl is fat with braces and deemed as persona non grata to the sisters. The girl thinks the two sisters are stupid.

The sisters are at their aunt's house for the weekend. The aunt has no idea what to do with the sisters. The girl makes several suggestions which are inappropriate. The girl is hysterical at her own jokes; no one else is amused. Finally, it is decided that two farm boys will visit with the sisters and take them to a county fair. The girl denies being jealous, although she is curious to know what goes on at the fair when only the adults are allowed to go. Certainly there must be some great mysteries behind the closed tents.

The sisters treat the girl poorly. Everything is an inside joke and the sisters even poke fun at their teacher at school, Sister Perpetua. No one else finds this funny.

The young girl has an unstoppable imagination and for every comment or happening, the girl imagines some outrageous scene, including being an officer in the war.

The sisters go to the fair with the boys although it is clear that they are merely using the good natured boys. When the sisters return to the house just before midnight, they refuse to do anything but drop clues at what they saw at the fair.



"A Late Encounter with the Enemy" is the story of a woman's relationship with her grandfather. General Tennessee Flintrock Sash is 104 years old. The man has lost nearly all of his memory but retains his personality. Sally Poker Sash, the General's granddaughter, is preparing to graduate from college after twenty years. It means the world to Sally that the General attends the ceremony. The only way the General will attend is if he sits up on the stage, a place of honor. Since this was Sally's intention all along, the three go to the ceremony.

General Sash takes great delight in being fawned over. It is clear to Sally that the old man has little to no memory of anything. The man has forgotten the first war in which he fought and the names of his wife and children. The stories he tells are half truths at best.

Sally has to be in the procession, so someone has to be with the General to push his wheelchair. Sally's ten-year-old nephew gets the job.

While the ceremony is going on, the General starts to feel strange as if there is a hole in his head that keeps growing wider. The man only takes slight notice of Sally's big moment. As the boy wheels the General back to Sally, the General dies.

"Good Country People" is a tale of a Bible salesman and a family. The Hopewells own a farm and live there with three daughters, Joy, Glynese, and Carramae. Joy is the focus of the story.

The Hopewells also have tenants, a couple named Mrs. and Mrs. Freeman. The Freemans are also caretakers. Mr. Freeman is a good man, while Mrs. Freeman is a busybody. Joy is the oldest daughter who appears surly and argumentative for the most part. Joy lost her leg at age ten and wears a prosthetic device.

The Bible salesman ingratiates himself to Mrs. Hopewell. Mrs. Hopewell has no interest whatsoever in buying a Bible. The woman tells the salesman that Joy is an atheist and refuses to allow Bibles out in plain sight. Although Mrs. Hopewell wants nothing to do with the salesman, she invites him to dinner. Joy is rude throughout the meal and walks off.

The salesman finds Joy outside and begins speaking with her. Somehow, the salesman wins Joy over and the two adjourn to the hayloft. Joy begins to think this could be the way to escape from the farm. The salesman cajoles Joy into taking off her leg. After some convincing, Joy complies. All the while the couple is in the hay loft, Joy reminds the salesman that he is religious and shouldn't behave this way. The salesman laughs and says he doesn't believe in God or the Bible, that it's just a job.

The salesman steals Joy's leg.



Part Two Analysis

The grandmother is constantly preaching to anyone who will listen about the old days and how things have changed. It is obvious that the woman knows how the world should be and is displeased that it does not conform to her wishes. This also holds true when the grandmother cannot persuade or bully her son into going to Tennessee. The grandmother also shows defiance when she goes against the son's wishes and takes the cat in the car.

The son is determined and strong while his wife is passive and barely speaks at all during the story. Instead, the wife tends to the baby.

The grandmother knows that if she confesses to leading her son down the wrong road a huge argument will ensue. The confession is completely out of the question after the accident.

The son cannot believe what is happening and tries to overrule the three men who seem hesitant to help with the car repairs. The grandmother's ongoing insistence that the man is really good underneath and can be redeemed precipitates her own death.

Although Mrs. Connin is trying to do right by Harry and the other children, her zealotry proves to be too much for the little boy. There is something about the river at the ceremony that Harry likes. Harry notices that when the preacher dunks him, the current tries to spit him out. Harry is determined to be a part of the river of life.

Harry is not at all embarrassed by his parents and their behavior. The couple seems to love Harry and do not realize how much the child is being neglected. Although Harry seems content at home, the pull of the river and promise of eternal life and happiness is too much. Harry forces himself to fight against the current and finally succeeds.

Ruby Hill believes she is sick and nothing can change her mind. She vacillates between being convinced she is ill and trying to talk herself out of it by referring to her young age. Ruby is very good at rationalizing every situation and has very definite boundaries about how people should act. Ruby has worked hard to be where she is and no one can take that away from her.

Ruby also has definite ideas about what is and is not proper. The woman has worked hard to differentiate herself from the rest of her family, who seem to accomplish nothing and have lives which Ruby sees as substandard. The young mother speaking to Ruby about babies is especially disturbing since unmarried women have no credibility.

Tom Shiflet is obviously a very convincing conman with no conscience. The mother wants so desperately to have a son-in-law to help around the house and thinks Shiflet would be a good husband for Lucynell. Shiflet is clever and even manages to outwit the mother, who is quite sharp. The fact that Shiflet would just leave Lucynell at the diner shows that the man has no regard for the safety and welfare of others.



The two sisters are rude to their little cousin. The girl takes great offense at this, knowing she is smarter than the two sisters put together. It is obvious that the sisters attended school at the convent to keep them out of trouble.

The sisters do show a small amount of decorum, but just barely. While staying at their aunt's house is boring, at least it is better than the convent. The girls transform themselves back into good students as they return to the convent where Sister Perpetua is waiting to greet them.

Sally is concerned that her grandfather will not live to see her graduate. The woman has studied hard while working as a teacher and is proud of her accomplishments. Although the General is irascible, it is obvious that Sally loves him.

Although the General's mind is gone and certain bodily functions are reluctant, the man's heart still beats. The General has no doubt that he will live to see Sally graduate. The General knows something is wrong during the graduation ceremony but is too befuddled to know what it is or what to do about it.

Joy is an angry woman who resents being forced to live at the farm and being treated like a child. The salesman seems like a good way to get away. Although Joy is an atheist who is not nearly as naïve as one might think, she is completely taken in by the salesman who is obviously a seasoned conman who likes to take away souvenirs from his marks.



Part Three

Part Three Summary

"The Violent Bear it Away" is the story of Mason Tarwater, a man who considers himself to be a prophet. Tarwater lives on a farm with his great-nephew, Francis Marion Tarwater. Mason Tarwater kidnaps young Francis when the boy was only a baby to teach the boy the ways of the Lord. Francis lives with Mason for fourteen years until the day Mason dies.

Before being taken by Mason, Francis had lived with Mason's nephew, a schoolteacher. The school teacher was a heathen in Mason's eyes and all attempts by the teacher to get Francis back failed.

Francis is given the task of burying the old man, who dies at the breakfast table. This is a difficult job for Francis, who is required to dig a hole ten feet deep and drop the old man inside. Along the way, Francis discovers the old man's still and gets drunk on moonshine. A Negro who comes to buy the liquor ends up burying the old man.

The story details the standard trials and tribulations of a teenager growing up with an old man. Mason declares that he has been called by God and until Francis has been called, the boy must trust the old man's decisions. One of those decisions is to override an existing will and leave everything Mason owns to Francis, bypassing the heathen schoolteacher nephew. The lawyers are bound by law and cannot abide.

Francis goes to the schoolteacher to tell him about Mason's death. The schoolteacher is shocked and asks about the burial. Francis tells him that the old man was too big to move and so Francis set fire to him, burning the house down in the process. The schoolteacher doesn't believe him.

The schoolteacher tells Francis that the old man lived a useless life and it is not too late for Francis to be redeemed and to be set on the right path. Francis goes through a series of experiences, realizing all that he has been missing while being stuck on the farm with Mason. In the end, Francis returns to the tree to visit Mason's grave.

Part Three Analysis

Mason Tarwater is a man who is completely convinced that God has called him and that the old man must devote his life to the Lord. Mason has kidnapped children before in order to baptize and save them. The schoolteacher had been kidnapped and lived with the old man for several years before being taken away. The schoolteacher made great efforts to save Francis from the same kind of fate but was met with hostility by the old man. Mason is so convinced of his role in Francis' life that he actually shoots the schoolteacher twice in an effort to deter him from ever returning to the farm.

The foray into the real world is a shock to Francis' system, nearly as much as discovering Mason's still. Francis does not understand how a man so devoted to God can make a living by manufacturing and selling moonshine.

The schoolteacher is both disbelieving and relieved that Mason is dead. He does not, however, believe that Francis burned down the house. The main concern for the schoolteacher is that Francis now has a chance, even at age fourteen, to be redeemed and taught the truth about the world and religion.



Part Four

Part Four Summary

"Everything That Rises Must Converge" is the story of a young man and his mother. The son, Julian, is a recent college graduate who has moved home until he is able to get a job and live on his own. The mother dotes on Julian and does everything for him. Julian appreciates some of what his mother does yet is often rude and dismissive toward her and her ideals.

Julian must take his mother to the YMCA on Wednesday nights to take a reducing class. The mother needs to lose about twenty pounds and is excited that the class is free. The mother won't take the bus downtown alone since the system has integrated. The mother is fairly proper which annoys Julian. The mother has purchased a new hat that she loves but feels is frivolous. Still, it is one of a kind. The mother fusses over the hat while Julian is impatient to leave. Julian hates the hat and thinks it is ridiculous and ugly.

The scene at the apartment before leaving for the bus seems to be routine. The mother fusses while Julian berates and criticizes. Now and again, Julian uses a softer tone with his mother, although not often.

Julian also resents that while the mother came from a prestigious family, the money was gone and she continued to be a struggling widow. The mother fondly recalls her family's former status and works hard to portray the same character and class. This also angers Julian.

On the way to the YMCA, Julian becomes increasingly sullen and rude. There is much discussion of the integration taking place and their differing views on it. Julian sees his mother as being old fashioned and prejudiced, while Julian believes that he is much more progressive and open.

The mother and son argue off and on the entire way downtown. Julian often does things to prove his mother's ideas are inferior. The mother operates the best she can and regardless of what Julian says or does, she treats him well. The mother gets on well with the other passengers on the bus, particularly a small Negro boy that toddles around. The mother adores the little boy and holds him in her lap. When the ride ends, the mother does what she would do with all children, which is to offer him a penny. The boy's mother becomes enraged, misunderstanding the meaning and punches the mother in the face. As the mother collapses, Julian goes through a rant saying, "I told you so." Julian is awful to his mother until she begins to walk and it is obvious the woman is having a stroke.

"A View of the Woods" is the story of the relationship between Mr. Fortune and his nine-year-old daughter, Mary Fortune Pitts. The family lives on the Fortune family farm, a large dairy farm that started out at 800 acres of prime property. At seventy-nine years



old, Mr. Fortune is in need of help around the farm. Mr. Fortune's daughter moved into the farm house along with her husband and children ten years ago. Mr. Fortune dislikes the husband, thinks his daughter is useless, and has no time for any of the eight children, save Mary who is the youngest. Mary and Mr. Fortune are alike in every way, from their appearance to their boldness and opinions. Mary is Mr. Fortune's constant companion and the two spend every morning watching workman dig up the ground recently sold off by Mr. Fortune.

Mr. Fortune decides that he might sell off another parcel of land. The previous year, Mr. Fortune had sold off 25 acres of land located at the back edge of the property. The son-in-law wanted to buy the land but Mr. Fortune forbade it. Mr. Fortune did not want the son-in-law to have any claim on anything that rightfully belonged to the Fortunes. Mr. Fortune did not charge the family rent so that he could lord over them the extent of his generosity. Mr. Fortune was not willing to give up that advantage.

A local gas station owner expresses interest in buying a parcel of land between the front of the house and the roadside. Mr. Fortune wants to sell for the money as well as the added traffic that a gas station will bring to the dairy. When Mr. Fortune tells the family of his plans, everyone argues with him, particularly the children. Mr. Fortune does not really care what any of the children think except for Mary. Everyone is upset because that particular parcel of land is where they play and it also offers a view of the woods across the road. A new gas station will take that away from them.

Mr. Fortune thinks that everyone will get over it but he is wrong. The deal goes through and the relationship with Mary disintegrates rapidly.

Mr. Fortune sees the son-in-law whip Mary for sassing him. Mr. Fortune asks Mary about it but the girl denies it happened and says that no one ever beat her and if anyone tried, she would kill him. Mary repeats this often.

Mr. Fortune closes the deal with the gas station owner. Mary goes berserk, wrecking a local store, and throwing a bottle at Mr. Fortune. Mr. Fortune suddenly realizes his error. Mr. Fortune had never disciplined Mary and decides that it is time to do so.

Mr. Fortune stops on the way home from town and takes off his belt. When the man attempts to hit Mary with the strap, Mary launches a vicious attack. The pair struggle and eventually, Mr. Fortune bashes Mary's head against a rock and then dies.

Mrs. Turpin has many realizations throughout "Revelation," a story that takes place mainly in the waiting room at a doctor's office. Mrs. Turpin and her husband Claud are waiting to see the doctor due to an ulcer on Claud's leg. A cow had kicked Claud and caused a large purplish lump and the ulcer.

Mrs. Turpin is appalled that the waiting room is very small and that a young child does not have enough manners to move over so that she can sit down. Claud offers his seat but Mrs. Turpin tells Claud he needs to rest.



There are other people in the waiting room, including one other man, a stylishly dressed woman, a thin leathery woman, a white trash woman, and an ugly girl in her late teens or early twenties. Mrs. Turpin carefully observes each and is grateful that she is not ugly or unkempt or rude. Mrs. Turpin immediately determines that it would be better to be a nigger than to be like the white trash woman, whose lips are stained with snuff.

One of Mrs. Turpin's favorite pastimes is to categorize people by class. According to Mrs. Turpin, most colored people are at the bottom of the ladder, followed by white trash, then homeowners, then home and landowners, such as Claud and herself. Above them were people who owned bigger homes, more land, and had much more money.

Claud is oblivious to everyone in the room as he reads a magazine. Mrs. Turpin chats with the other ladies about a wide variety of things, from the clock in the room, to children, behaviors, and manners. Mrs. Turpin notices the ugly girl glaring and smirking at her from time to time. Mrs. Turpin starts a silent dialogue with the girl in her head, reminding the girl to mind her own and not to glare at strangers. The girl continues to behave in an inappropriate way.

Mrs. Turpin ponders over what type of person she might be if she wasn't herself. At first, being a nigger would be the worst. Then Mrs. Turpin decides that white trash is worse than that. Most of all, being ugly with an ugly attitude, like the girl across the room, would be the worst of all.

As time goes on, the girl begins to be openly hostile toward Mrs. Turpin. Mrs. Turpin and the other ladies were talking about being grateful for their lives and suddenly the ugly girl jumps up and begins to strangle Mrs. Turpin. The girl is eventually pulled off and is taken away by an ambulance. The girl is obviously mentally disturbed.

The story ends with Mrs. Turpin and Claud returning home to the farm.

"Parker's Back" is about a married man who is obsessed with tattoos and remorse over his marriage. Parker hates his wife. There is no way to please the woman and pregnancy made the relationship even more difficult. Parker had never intended to marry anyone, particularly a woman as plain and disapproving as his wife.

The couple first met when Parker's truck broke down on the highway. The woman approached him as he burned his hand under the hood of the truck. Parker was cursing and the woman immediately disapproved of Parker. For some reason, Parker was drawn to the woman and began to court her. The courting was all right with the woman's excessively religious family because Parker always brought gifts of food to the house. Parker is finally accepted despite the large number of tattoos on his body.

After the pair marries, Parker discovers that his wife likes nothing. Parker suspects that it is an act and often antagonizes her. Parker works for an old woman but convinces his wife that his boss is a "hefty young blonde" in an attempt to make her jealous.

Parker tries everything to please his wife and nothing works. Eventually, Parker gets the bright idea to get a tattoo of God on his back. After all, Parker really wanted a new tattoo



and getting a tattoo of God on his back would surely please his wife. After all, how could one look at the face of God and be repelled?

Parker has an accident at work in which the tractor overturns and catches fire. Parker is not seriously hurt. Parker takes off and goes into the city where he gets the new tattoo over a period of two days.

When Parker finally arrives home, the wife has locked him out. The employer came by and explained about the accident and the wife was furious. She was even more furious to find out that Parker had been drinking. Parker insists on showing his wife the new tattoo and his reasoning behind it. Instead of coming around, the wife screams about idolatry and throws Parker out of the house.

Part Four Analysis

Julian's mother has made a lot of sacrifices for her son, working hard to provide him with food, clothing, and a first rate education. Because the mother dotes on Julian, Julian takes her for granted and does not appreciate her. Julian is openly critical of everything about the mother, from her heritage to her hat to her ingrained behaviors regarding Negroes. Julian does everything in his power to overshadow his mother and to embarrass her in front of others. Even after the mother is hit, Julian must tell her how the whole incident was her fault. Only when it is obvious that the mother is ill does Julian act like a proper son.

Mr. Fortune adores Mary, mostly because she is his spitting image. The girl is smart and sassy, even for a nine year old. Because Mr. Fortune dotes on Mary, the girl has never received any discipline from him. When Mary begins to rail against her grandfather for the land deal, the grandfather reacts in the only way he knows how - by attempting to whip the girl. Mr. Fortune is possessed by the need to survive when he kills Mary and then dies.

Although Mrs. Turpin has very definite ideas about who she is and how people should be categorized, she means no harm and rarely says anything insulting out loud. Mrs. Turpin is happy with her life and her realization that other people do not feel the same comes as a shock. Mrs. Turpin does not know that the ugly girl has mental problems and even after she finds out about the girl's condition, there was no provocation for the attack.

Parker does not know where his life went wrong. There is no logical explanation for his attraction to his wife except that the only way to have her was to marry her. This turns out to be a bad idea. Eventually, Parker snaps and can no longer live up to the high moral standards of his wife. After the tractor accident, Parker is afraid of the consequences and also realizes that he knows what he must do to remain sane. Parker believes that the tattoo of God is a good compromise and is surprised when his wife throws him out of the house for practicing idolatry.

Part Five

Part Five Summary

"Wildcat" details the obsession with a wildcat that is supposedly in the area. Old Gabriel is the grandfather to several of the boys in the story who intend to go out hunting the big cat. Old Gabriel tells the boys not to go that they do not have the right weapons to hunt a cat that is likely to kill them for blood. The boys scoff and say that wildcats only want cows, not people. Old Gabriel tries to convince the boys otherwise but the boys gently mock the old man, not believing that he knows anything at all about wildcats.

The whole way through the story, all the people comment on how they can smell the wildcat. No windows are open in case the cat should try to jump into the house and kill someone for his blood.

The cat kills someone and Old Gabriel is convinced he is in danger. The old man begins to hear noises in the night. Foolishly, the old man goes outside to find the source of the noise. There was a bat. Then Old Gabriel hears the wildcat. Old Gabriel begins to walk toward the source of the sound until he realizes that walking toward a hungry wildcat is not a wise move. Gabriel hears more noises and scrambles up onto a shelf above the fireplace which eventually breaks. The wildcat kills a cow but Old Gabriel knows the cat will be back tomorrow.

"The Crop" is a story of Miss Willerton and her family. Miss Willerton is a writer who looks forward to the time after breakfast cleanup to go to her typewriter and begin a new story. Getting started is difficult and Miss Willerton, whom everyone calls Willie, is stumped for ideas. After discarding several ideas, Willie decides to write a story about sharecroppers. The story begins with a sharecropper and his dog. Eventually, Willie writes herself in to the story. Willie has a lot of different ideas about the kind of things that could happen in the story but is worried about the opinions and teasing that would come from her family. Willie ends up saving the main character from a horrible wife and together the two are living happily ever after until Willie's sister interrupts the reverie and asks Willie to go to the grocery store. Willie grudgingly obliges and leaves the story behind. All the way to the grocery store, Willie is thinking about the sharecropper. After doing the shopping, Willie returns home to the typewriter and decides that the story is horrible and should be thrown away.

"The Turkey" is a story about a boy named Ruller and a hunting expedition into the woods with his brother and others. The men and boys are hunting for wild turkey. Although the group got separated, Ruller finds a wild turkey and begins to chase it into the bush. Ruller makes several unsuccessful attempts at capturing the turkey even though the bird appears to be injured. Ruller explains to the bird that it cannot fly and continues to chase it. The chase goes on for nearly an hour until the turkey collapses and Ruller captures it. All throughout the chase, Ruller discovers that he likes to swear. All of a sudden, the boy has plans on what he could do and say to shock his mother and



grandmother. Of course Ruller would never actually say those things, but the boy giggled just thinking about his mother's and grandmother's reactions.

Ruller is incredibly proud of himself for chasing down and capturing the wild turkey. The whole way home Ruller receives a lot of attention from different people who want to know the story about the turkey's capture. Ruller is convinced that the presence of the turkey would help explain his torn shirt and the knot on his forehead from when he fell. The turkey would keep him out of trouble. Along the way, some older boys approach Ruller and ask about the turkey. In the excitement, Ruller allows one of the boys to hold the turkey while he points out a bullet hole underneath the turkey's wing. One of the boys takes the turkey, throws it over his shoulder, and walks away. Ruller is so shocked that he does not move. As darkness begins to fall Ruller suddenly becomes afraid and runs the whole way home.

"The Train" is a short story about Haze Motes and his trip home from the service to Eastrod, Tennessee. Motes is not comfortable on the train and isn't quite sure how things work. The porter is not terribly friendly, in part because Motes keeps insisting that the porter belongs to a nigger named Cash from Eastrod. The porter claims he is from Chicago but Motes does not believe him.

Motes remembers a trip on a train as a child when he would go with his brothers and sisters and their mother on the Tennessee railroad to Chattanooga. Motes is unlike his mother in that she was fond of speaking with everyone she met and very often remembered them for many years. Motes wants to be left alone.

For most of the trip Motes ends up spending time in the company of Mrs. Hosen, a woman who is traveling alone from her sister's house in Waterloo to her own home. Together they go to the dining car, where there is a long wait. After dinner, Motes decides to investigate the condition of the berth where he is assigned to sleep. The berth is small, and after a little while, Motes becomes bothered by the lights. Motes sleeps and dreams about his mother until the train jolts him awake once more.

"Why Do the Heathen Rage" is a story about an attorney named Tilman who suffers a stroke while visiting the state capital where he was on business on behalf of a client. Tilman was picked up in an ambulance and traveled for two hours with his wife to their home. The wife was stricken by her husband's once lively face. The only hint of the man's personality was one eye. The rest of Tilman's face looks as if he is prepared for death. The wife wonders if this tragic illness will serve to force their son into action.

The Tilmans' children are at home when they arrive. The daughter immediately takes charge and instructs the paramedics where to put the old man. The son, Walter, doesn't seem the least bit affected. In his parents' eyes, Walter is lazy and useless. The boy does not want to do anything except write letters to various people, most of whom he has never met. Nor does Walter use his real name. The mother and father are baffled.

The mother tells Walter that if he intends to stay in the house, he will have to take over since the care of Tilman will be all consuming. Walter barely reacts. The mother tries to



assure Walter that she is not asking him to leave, just that she will need help. After all, Walter is only waiting for something good to happen.

"The Fiction Writer and His Country" is one of O'Connor's pieces of non-fiction prose. O'Connor addresses an article that appeared in Life's editorial section. The writer asked, "Who Speaks for America Today?" According to the article, the answer was not to be found among prominent novelists. The major point in the article is that writers tend to focus on everything but the joy of life itself and how the prosperity being enjoyed by the country goes mainly unnoticed by the novelist. The writer accuses the novelist of separating oneself from the country in writing, thereby doing a disservice to the nation. O'Connor disagrees and says that it is impossible for a writer to separate from the country as it is everywhere, in the state, region or neighborhood in which one works and lives. The influences can be seen in the imagery and the language, as well as the character of the people and places.

O'Connor also addresses Christian writers. Some people have accused Christian writers of having a narrow scope. As a Christian writer, O'Connor says this is not true, that moral fiber allows one to observe and does not constrain the work.

In the end, novelists will write what they want. If someone is looking for an organization to promote joyfulness throughout the country, O'Connor suggests that the task be left to advertising agencies.

"The Church and the Fiction Writer" details the debate amongst writers and academicians on the influence of the church in regards to the creative writer. There are many opinions, from both Catholics and non-Catholics who seem to have strong ideas but not much proof to back them up when it comes to documentation. One writer believes it is impossible for a Catholic to be a good creative writer because of the restrictive moral code, that to be a devout Catholic, one must be brainwashed and therefore cannot see straight. Additionally, the Catholics are rooted in ancient dogma and have no real relevance to the modern world. Others believe that Catholics can see better since they seem to know their spirituality is a part of the whole and are able to delve into separate parts of themselves. There are also those who accuse the Catholic writers of using their creative skills to convince others of their faith, to mold and manipulate. O'Connor says that this is not possible since writing is a concrete medium and will not work with such an abstract concept.

Regardless of one's beliefs, O'Connor asserts that fixed dogma has nothing to do with the work since beliefs cannot fix the problems. One must go forth with faith and instinct.

"The Regional Writer" is a speech O'Connor gave at a commencement ceremony. O'Connor starts by saying that she is pleased that somebody remembers the name of her book, "The Violent Bear it Away." O'Connor jokes about the titles some people come up with, such as "The Valiant Bear it Always," "The Violets Bloom Away," and perhaps the most comical, "The Bear That Ran Away With It."



The crux of the speech is that the appeal of the regional writer does not only apply to Southern Writers. The influence of the regional type of writing began in Massachusetts, traveled to the Midwest and ended up in the South, where it seems to have spent most of its time. The appeal of Southern literature, according to O'Connor, is that southerners are a social group that tends to spend a great deal of communicating with one another. It is through this communication that stories and ideas are transferred, created, and developed. O'Connor dispels the myth that the life of a writer is solitary, lonely, and requires much suffering. While that may be true for some, the southern writer does not participate in this stereotype. In the end, the quality of the fiction depends on the internal and external balance in the artist and the degree of observation in one's surroundings.

"Fiction is a Subject with a History - It Should Be Taught That Way" addresses a common conflict in the school system regarding children, specifically eighth and ninth grade students, who are assigned particular pieces of modern fiction to which some parents object. Two separate cases of outrage in Georgia schools are addressed. The case is somewhat long and involved but the overview is that a teacher was dismissed due to required reading of modern fiction. The books in question in the cases were John Steinbeck's "East of Eden" and John Hershey's "A Bell For Adano." The antagonists are against the level of "obscenity," while the protagonists claim that the children are not interested in reading the more subdued and "fusty" novels of the 19th century. O'Connor believes that this is the main problem. Children should not be asked which types of work he or she will tolerate. It is the children's time to be instructed, not to instruct.

A great deal of the argument centers on morality. Some believe that the more modern literature reveals too much and is filled with sinful acts, like adultery. The opposite side claims that the Bible is filled with the very same information. It is clear to O'Connor that there will never be an agreement on what is and is not moral. The best the school system can do is to have a "safe" reading list and to adhere to it. This is not to say that there should be censorship, merely practicality. This is also the reason that O'Connor feels the students should be required to study all literature, much as one would study history - chronologically - while discovering the importance of each era. O'Connor also states that if the children do not like the material, it is "most regrettable" but certainly not a factor in the making of the decision.

Part Five Analysis

Old Gabriel is upset when the boys question his knowledge about wildcats. It is true that Old Gabriel has never seen a wildcat close up much less killed one, but the old man claims that he knows about them. The boys almost see hunting the wildcat as a game while Old Gabriel knows the dangers. As the night sounds play tricks on Old Gabriel, the old man suddenly realizes that he is afraid and should not be left alone to face the wildcat.

Willie has a great deal of imagination, and yet it is afraid to let the ideas flow for fear of ridicule. Willie secretly studies other writers and struggles to emulate their technique and style. Although Willie finally decides not to write the passionate scenes that she



longs to write. She ends up being one of the two main characters with a sharecropper as a love interest. It is obvious that Willie is getting carried away with the story and resents being interrupted by her sister. The walk to and from the grocery store helps to clear Willie's mind and suddenly the idea of the story is no longer appealing, showing Willie's true lack of commitment to her work.

Ruller is at the age where it is important to be seen as being his own man. Ruller is known for entertaining himself while his older brother seems to command more attention. While walking in the woods, Ruller begins to feel different as if he has matured just over the period of that day. The chase makes Ruller feel strong and accomplished, and for the first time, the boy begins to speak differently in his own mind. Ruller even swears out loud just to hear what it sounds like. The feelings continue on the way home, a sense of pride washing over Ruller. The older boys prove that Ruller is still a young boy and the realization makes Ruller run home to his sanctuary.

"The Train" is a more cursory view of Haze Motes and the trip back to Eastrod, Tennessee. The entire story takes place on the train, while that is only the beginning of the story in "Wise Blood." Motes is a solitary man who cherishes his heritage and desires to keep the memories close even though there is nothing left for him in Eastrod but his mother's old shifferrobe. Motes wonders if his dead mother ever goes back to the house to wander through it, and Motes knows that she will be happy once he gets to the house to claim her most prized possession.

Mrs. Tilman feels removed from her son, Walter. Walter is the idlest of creatures and does not seem to have any interest in anything that is not trivial. The parents have attempted to be supportive, even if Walter is not cut out to be an attorney but Walter has no interest in anything.

When Mrs. Tilman says that Walter must take over or leave, she suddenly realizes that Walter is already displaced, homeless no matter where he goes, and she as his mother can do nothing about it.



Characters

Ruby Hill appears in A Stroke of Good Fortune

Ruby Hill is a thirty-four year old woman, with mulberry colored hair and carries too much weight. Ruby is married to Bill Hill and has been for five years. The couple lives on the fifth floor of an apartment building. Ruby is convinced that something is wrong with her, only confirmed by a shortness of breath as she tries to carry groceries up the stairs. Ruby ends up leaving them for her husband to carry up when he gets home from work.

Ruby's brother Rufus has just returned from the service. Ruby is embarrassed by the brother, who is fourteen years her junior. The family had hoped that the military would give Rufus some incentive, some ambition and a sense of responsibility. It didn't happen. Instead, Rufus had to live with Ruby and Bill because the family home no longer existed. Ruby is embarrassed by the fact that Rufus is "good for absolutely nothing" and even more embarrassed by the fact that Bill noticed it right off.

Ruby takes pride in being different from the rest of the family. There were eight children in the family, two were stillborn and one died in infancy. Ruby swore she was nothing like her mother at thirty-four, a sour, puckered-up woman with gray hair.

Ruby's belief that she is ill is confirmed by Madam Zoleeda, a palmist. Madam Zoleeda told Ruby that she would have a long illness but that it would bring Ruby a stroke of good fortune. Ruby is prepared to discover the worst while everyone but Ruby seems to know that she is pregnant.

Julian appears in Everything That Rises Must Converge

Julian is a recent college graduate who has returned home to live with his mother until he gets a job. The mother dotes on Julian, something that Julian both takes for granted and resents.

The mother has a need to lose twenty pounds and goes to the Y once a week. Because the buses have been newly integrated, the mother will not travel alone. Julian is annoyed that he has to take his mother but is reminded of all the things the mother does for him.

From the very beginning of the story, Julian is rude to his mother. Everything the mother does is wrong, from the way she speaks to the way she acts and dresses. Julian has no patience. On the bus on the way to the Y, the mother and son discuss integration. Julian wants to embrace the modern world and is disgusted by his mother's resistance to change. A well dressed Negro gets on the bus and is reading a newspaper. Julian



insists on trying to talk to the man, although the man isn't interested and becomes annoyed. Julian is better than all of these people and feels the need to prove it.

Julian continues to be annoyed with the mother no matter what the woman does. A Negro child likes Julian's mother and it seems as if the child's mother and Julian's mother switch places. At the Y, the mother offers the child a penny against Julian's advice. The child's mother proves Julian right when she punches the mother in the face. Julian berates his mother until he notices that something is wrong. As Julian begins to realize that his mother is having a stroke, he begins to treat her with respect.

Hazel Motes appears in Wise Blood

Hazel (also called Haze) Motes is a man just returning from the Army after the war. Motes goes back to his hometown to find his childhood home has been abandoned. Motes' goal in life is to become a preacher like his grandfather.

Asa Hawks appears in Wise Blood

Asa Hawks is a preacher and self-proclaimed prophet who travels around with his daughter trying to convert sinners. Hawks blinded himself to prove he had been redeemed.

Enoch Emory appears in Wise Blood

Enoch Emory is a boy who works in a small town zoo. Emory attempts to befriend Haze Motes.

The Misfit appears in A Good Man is Hard to Find

The Misfit is an escaped convict and murderer.

Mrs. Connin appears in The River

Mrs. Connin is a devoutly religious babysitter to Harry, a small boy who has no concept of Jesus or religion.

Harry Ashfield appears in The River

Harry Ashfield is a little boy of about 4 or 5 years old who was baptized and later drowned in the river while looking for Jesus.



Tom Shiflet appears in The Life You Save May be Your Own

Tom Shiflet is a homeless man and vagrant working as a carpenter.

Lucynell Carter appears in The Life You Save May be Your Own

Lucynell Carter is a young girl who is deaf and mute until Tom Shiflet teaches her to speak.



Objects/Places

Fortune Farm appears in A View of the Woods

The Fortune farm was originally 800 acres of farmland owned by the Fortune family. The owner of the farm is 79 year old Mr. Fortune, who allows his daughter and her family to live on the land and farm in exchange for room and board. The family has been on the farm for ten years. Mr. Fortune has no use for any of them save for the youngest child, Mary Fortune Pitts, who is a spitting image of her grandfather.

The farm is sold off in small lots in order to pay the bills that aren't covered by the dairy cows. The son-in-law resents not being able to own the farm but Mr. Fortune won't hear of it, and besides, if the son-in-law owned the farm, it is likely that Mr. Fortune would no longer have a home.

Mr. Fortune and Mary watch work being done on some of the land that has been sold. Mr. Fortune decides to sell the lawn in front of the house to a local gas station owner. Mr. Fortune feels that it is a smart use of the land and that the new gas station will bring more people to the farm. Despite everyone's arguments and temper tantrums, Mr. Fortune sells the land. This is the end of the relationship between Mr. Fortune and Mary.

Mrs. Connin's House appears in The River

Mrs. Connin's house is located about half a mile away from the end of the car line, making it easy to walk to and from the only transportation into town. The house is tan paper brick with a tin roof and a porch that stretches across the front. There is another porch at the back. The house consists of two rooms, including a room that is used as both a kitchen and a bedroom. The house is filled with photographs and calendars. There is a photo of the late Mr. Connin although Mrs. Connin claims it is not a good picture. There is also a picture of Jesus over Mrs. Connin's bed.

There is no solid floor and Harry can watch as the family dog scratches his back on the underside of the planks on the floor.

The house is quite crowded with Mrs. Cronnin, three boys, a girl and a dog.

Outside in the yard is a field of rough yellow weeds. There is a path to a hog pen, five foot square and made from boards, where Mrs. Connin keeps shoats. The wood along the bottom is rotting and is easily pulled away to let one of the pigs loose.

The house is also within walking distance to the river.



Eastrod appears in Wise Blood

Eastrod is home to Hazel Motes.

Church Without Christ appears in Wise Blood

Church Without Christ is Hazel Motes' imaginary traveling church.

Atlanta, GA appears in A Good Man is Hard to Find

Atlanta, GA is home to the family in "A Good Man is Hard to Find."

YMCA appears in Everything That Rises Must Converge

Place where Julian's mother goes for her reducing class.

Melsy appears in Wise Blood, A Stroke of Good Fortune

Rural town mentioned in both "Wise Blood" and "A Stroke of Good Fortune." Hazel Motes passes through Melsy on his way home; Ruby Hill used to walk to Melsy to escape her family.

The Train appears in Wise Blood

The first part of "Wise Blood" takes place on a train. Hazel Motes is traveling to his hometown. The train is comfortable with small sleeping areas and a dining car. Hazel does not like the train very much and is eager to get home.

Mt. Saint Scholastica appears in A Temple of the Holy Ghost

Mt. Saint Scholastica is the convent and school where Joanne and Susan go to school.

Doctor's Office appears in Revelation

"Revelation" takes place in a doctor's office where Mrs. Turpin engages in conversation with other patients and is attacked by a mean girl.



Themes

Jesus

Most of the characters in O'Connor's work are devoutly religious. There are some that are morally and spiritually corrupt - scammers, thieves and murderers, but they always come in contact with someone who preaches the word and redemption of Christ. Most of the time, the non-believers are repelled or angered by the vehemence of the preachers and there are times when violence ensues. A good example of this can be seen in "A Good Man is Hard to Find."

The grandmother in the story is a religious woman who believes in proper behavior and manners. There are certain ways people should behave in accordance with God's law, and that law must be obeyed. The practice and theory of this law seems to have been lost on her son, Bailey, and the two older children. The grandmother hates that the children do not honor her or their parents.

Meeting The Misfit is a shock to the entire family. The grandmother prays and works hard to make her faith save her and the family from the clutches of such a violent man. The grandmother tries fervently to convince both herself and The Misfit that underneath he is truly a good man, one with integrity that would not hurt women and children. The Misfit almost convinces himself that it might be true but reflecting on his life and actions knows it is not true. Some people just aren't meant to be spiritual or religious. The old woman's zealousness is ultimately her undoing as she continues to preach and beg, causing The Misfit to be afraid enough to shoot her in the chest.

Prejudice

At the time the stories were written, Negroes were often considered to be less than equal to the Caucasian. This applies in all circumstances, regardless of religion, gender or class. Many of the characters, particularly the older ones, see this as a way of life and see nothing wrong with treating Negroes as nothing more than fixtures. There are many instances where the Negroes are servants and others where they are seen as those who are trying to rise above the past, and still others who simply accept their lot in life.

A good example of the differences in point of view regarding prejudice can be seen in "Everything That Rises Must Converge."

Julian wants to lord his education and social awareness over others, particularly his mother. The mother simply sees things as they are, particularly because she was raised in a house with slaves. The concept of integration scares her and only adds to the woman's longing for the past. The mother means no harm in her ideas, she simply knows no other way.



Julian, on the other hand, wants to embrace the modern world and is frustrated by his mother's attitudes and behaviors. Julian sees the Negroes as some kind of underdog, people to be rooted for and protected. Julian does not see that he is doing the same thing as his mother. Julian is using other people to prove his superiority.

Julian continues to be humiliated by his mother while they ride the bus. The mother adores the little boy wandering the aisle and dotes on him, showing that she is not truly prejudiced. Julian craves nothing more than intelligent conversation and to prove that his mother's ideals are ridiculous. A well dressed Negro gets on the bus and immediately, Julian feels the need to speak to the man, who is quietly reading a newspaper. Julian insists on trying to talk to the man although the man isn't interested and becomes annoyed.

Confrontation

There is a great deal of confrontation in O'Connor's stories. This occurs mainly between believers and non-believers of Christ, although there are instances in which conflicts arise among people for other reasons.

For example, the conflict between the grandmother and her son in "A Good Man is Hard to Find" has almost nothing to do with religion but is more about respect and the son's refusal to give in to his mother's wishes. Another confrontation that does not deal with religion is the conflict between Mr. Fortune and Mary in "A View of the Woods." The grandfather and granddaughter seem to have the perfect relationship until the old man decides to sell a piece of property. The decision angers Mary, who begins to act out in a surprisingly violent way. The old man always took great pride in saying that Mary was "pure Fortune" although she was not. The girl went along with the grandfather until he went against her wishes, at which time she became volatile and unruly.

The grandfather is perplexed and wants the conflict to end. There seems to be no resolution except to confront the girl and assert his authority. The result of the decision to confront the nine year old ends in tragedy.

Style

Point of View

The point of view used in Flannery O'Connor's Collected Works is third person omniscient. The third person point of view works well in the Collected Works due to the diverse nature of the subjects and their characters. Third person omniscient allows the reader to be able to experience all of the story, giving a more detailed and thorough description of people, places and events that would not be accessible through the first person point of view.

This is especially important due to the clash in cultures, social standings, and locations. Good examples can be seen in "Everything That Rises Must Converge" in which the main characters are Caucasians who come into contact with Negroes and a different way of speaking, thinking and living. Another example may be the difference in age and experience. For example, in "Wise Blood," there is a great difference in perception and action between Haze Motes and Asa Hawks. While Motes believes he is worldly and knowledgeable, his cynicism cannot match the experiences of Hawks.

A third person point of view is also a good way to express differences between people in regards to their opinions. In "The River," Mrs. Connin is no better or worse than Harry's parents, yet her lofty ideals set her apart. The Ashfields dismiss Mrs. Connin and both parties are worse off for their prejudices.

Setting

The settings used throughout O'Connor's works vary but are restricted to the southeastern United States, mostly Tennessee and Georgia. This is in keeping with O'Connor's love of the south, although the writer also lived in Massachusetts during her career.

The places depicted in the stories are rural, somewhat economically depressed, and portray the condition of the country and the specific region as it was during the time period, which is generally in the 1940s and 1950s.

Many of the stories take place in people's homes, most of which are not elaborate by any means. Mrs. Connin's house in "The River," for example, is little more than a well kept shack on a farm and does not even have a solid floor underneath, rather, one can see between wooden planks to the underside of the house.

Some of the best descriptions of setting, from the train to the small rural towns of Tennessee to the inside of a boarding house are depicted in "Wise Blood." Haze Motes is fond of looking out the window for a town he will recognize, pointing out various components, from fields to farms to small towns, while realizing at night they all look the same from the window of a train.



Language and Meaning

Flannery O'Connor's works are set in a time period in which the language is regional and rough, with a heavy influence of slang and mispronounced words. The language used is representative of many aspects of southern life, from upbringing, to race, class, and education. Some of the people who are well educated still use the accepted slang, which sometimes seems out of place although it would be acceptable in that time and place.

There are many references to various stereotypes and monikers that are representative of the times. The most noticeable of these are "Negro," "nigger," and "pickaninny," words that are considered highly unacceptable and taboo in modern society. However, in the context of the stories, the language is appropriate, if the reader can get past being offended by what are considered to be racial slurs.

The reader will not have great difficulty in understanding most of the language, although there are some instances when it seems misused. The language often works well when used in dialogue but may seem frivolous when used elsewhere.

There are some instances where the language does not seem out of the ordinary, even by modern standards. This is most applicable to the narrative and dialogue used in "Why Do the Heathen Rage."

Overall, the use of southern vernacular, both slang and proper, works well in allowing the reader to catch a glimpse into the mind of the reader and the thoughts, feelings, and socially accepted behaviors of the time.

Structure

The Collected Works of Flannery O'Connor is separated into five parts. Among those are two novellas and many short stories, essays, and occasional prose. There are no distinct separations by era or topic.

The first section, "Wise Blood," is a novella of 132 pages. The second section, "A Good Man is Hard to Find," is a collection of ten short stories that is 196 pages in length. The third section, "The Violent Bear It Away," is a second novella that is 152 pages in length. The fourth section, "Everything That Rises Must Converge," is a collection of short stories that is 216 pages in length. The fifth section, "Stories and Occasional Prose," is a series of short stories and essays that is 168 pages in length.

Overall, the book contains 865 pages. The average length of the five sections is 173 pages.

The short stories and novellas vary in their scope, meaning, and content. The Occasional Prose tends to lean toward essay form in which O'Connor addresses many topics that are often considered to be controversial in the world of writers as well as



general society. O'Connor addresses the facts and myths revolving around fiction writers, religion in writing, and regional writers. O'Connor also responds to an editorial regarding the use of modern fiction in the public school system. The essay contains both sides of the issue, using quotes and opinions of educators, writers, experts and parents. However, O'Connor's format does not allow her point to be lost among the opinions of others.



Quotes

"They stared at each other for almost a minute, and neither moved. Then he said in a voice that was higher than his usual voice, 'What I mean to have you know is: I am no Goddam preacher.'"

Page 18

"'Now I just want to give you folks a few reasons why you can trust this church,' he said. 'In the first place, friends, you can rely on it that it's nothing foreign connected with it. You don't have to believe nothing you don't understand and approve of.' "

Page 86

"Once he had been beaten up in the park by some strange boys when his sitter forgot him, but he hadn't known anything was going to happen that time until it was over."

Page 158

"In the darkness, Mr. Shiflet's smile stretched like a weary snake waking up by a fire."

Page 179

"The sun was going down and the sky was turning a bruised violet color that seem to be connected to the sweet mournful sound of music."

Page 201

"He stood appalled, judging himself with the thoroughness of God, while the action of mercy covered his pride like a flame and consumed it. He had never thought of himself a great sinner before but he saw now that his true depravity had been hidden from him lest it caused him despair."

Page 231

"Her eyes, as she opened them, looked as if they would keep on enlarging until they turned her wrongsideout."

Page 234

"Mrs. Shortly did not say a word, but her dark suspicion grew like a black thundercloud."

Page 295

"He came regularly once a week with a bag of bread crumbs and, after he had fed those to the peacock, he would come in and sit by the side of her bed and explain the doctrines of the Church."

Page 327



"The old man's thought not always move at the same rate of speed through every point in his story."

Page 334

"'Listen,' he said. 'I never asked much of you. I taken you and raised you and saved you from that ass in town and all I'm asking in return is when I die to get me in the ground where the dead belong and set up a cross over me to show I'm there.'"

Page 338

"The liquor lay like a hot rock in the pit of the stomach, heating his whole body, and he felt himself pleasantly deprived of responsibility or of the need for any effort to justify his actions."

Page 471

"The insufferableness of life at home had overcome him and he returned to New York two days early. So far as he was concerned, he had died there, and the question now is how long he could stand to linger here."

Page 560

"After one of his furloughs, he didn't go back to the Navy, but remained away without official leave, drunk, in rooming house in the city he did not know. "

Page 659



Topics for Discussion

How long do you think it took before the landlady noticed Haze was dead?

Would Mrs. Connin or Harry's family understand why the little boy drowned? Discuss.

What brought about the sudden change in Sabbath Hawks in regards to Haze?

Would the average person have trusted Tom Shiflet enough to work around Lucynell? Explain.

Do you think that the family would have been murdered in "A Good Man is Hard to Find" if the grandmother hadn't insisted on finding the old house? Discuss.

Do you think the use of affected language helped or hindered the stories?

Ruby's mother had very bad experiences with raising children, including two stillborn babies. How do you think this will affect Ruby's pregnancy and the birth of the baby?