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Not So Good After All

Many times authors write first impressions for their characters that end up changing by the end of the story. Flannery O’Connor is no exception. The characters she creates have depth showing how flawed they actually are. In O’Connor’s “Good Country People”, she reveals through her characters’ experiences that people are not always who they appear to be.

The first character that O’Connor shows is not who they really are is one of the main characters known as Hulga. Hulga is the crippled and highly educated daughter of Mrs. Hopewell. At the beginning of the story, her characteristics give the impression that she has a harsh, realistic view of the world, but by the end of the story, her vulnerability reveals that she wants to see and believe the world as more. The character that brings out her vulnerability is Manley Pointer who hides his real nature as well.

Manley Pointer’s character transformation is as equally important as Hulga’s. He starts out as a polite but boring Bible salesman and eventually earns the trust and approval of everyone. At the end of the story, however, he exhibits his real character as shrewd and deceitful. In like manner, another one of O’Connor’s characters manifests change.

Throughout the story, Mrs. Hopewell’s true character is unveiled. She starts off in the story as a hopeful, positive, and kind mother, but her judgmental personality is revealed when she gossips with another character saying “He bored me to death but he was so sincere and genuine I couldn’t be rude to him...” (O’Connor 272). In addition, Mrs. Hopewell saw many people as beneath her unless they were “good country people”.

Through the experiences of three of her characters, O’Connor illustrates that a first impression of a person can be quite different than who they actually are. Hulga turns out to be naïve instead of realistic. Manley Pointer turns out to be untrustworthy instead of friendly. Mrs. Hopewell turns out to be condemnatory instead of kind. Some of the “good country people” ended up not being so good after all.

Work Cited

O’Connor, Flannery. “Good Country People.” The College Writer: A Guide to Thinking, Writing, and Researching. 5th ed., edited by VanderMey et al., Cegage, pp. 264-278.