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“Good Country People”

Flannery O’Connor is known for her in-depth creation of characters. In her story “Good Country People”, she uses conflicts between characters to create several diverse personalities. For example, one character, Hulga, deals with conflicts between her mother and a Bible salesman. Hulga represents the complexity of humans because of the many challenges she faces due to her intellectual superiority, physical disability, and her false assumption about others.

Hulga is highly educated for her age. She has a PhD in philosophy at thirty-two years old. She is constantly reading; however, her mother, Mrs. Hopewell, is ashamed of her daughter’s degree. Hulga is isolated from the others because of her lack of experience with people. As said by Hulga to her mother, “Woman! Do you ever look inside? Do you ever look inside and see what you are not? God! (O’Connor 267)” The others do not understand Hulga’s complexity due to not only her education, but her physical disability.

Hulga is thirty-two years old, but her mother treats Hulga like a misunderstood child because of her disability; she also excuses her attitude because of her leg (O’Connor 266). Hugla stumps around the house and tends to have angry outbursts. In addition, a visiting Bible salesman, Manley Pointer, assumes that Hulga cannot climb a ladder due to her disability (O’Connor). Hulga is isolated from the others because of her limited physical abilities; she also tends to create false assumptions of others.

Hulga’s lack of social interaction has led her to assume that everyone functions in the same way. For example, O’Connor creates an illusion for both Mrs. Hopewell and Hulga. The traveling Bible salesman, Manley Pointer, creates a front for the two characters by pretending to be the perfect “Christian”. He destroys this front for Hulga by attempting to take advantage of her and stealing her prosthetic leg.

Hulga is a dynamic character who suffers from isolation because of her education, her prosthetic leg, and her false assumption of those around her. O’Connor uses these challenges to illuminate the complexities of humans, and that not all humans can be judged on one’s first impression.

Works Cited

O’Connor, Flannery, et al. “Good Country People.” *The College Writer: A Guide to Thinking, Writing, and Researching.* 5 th ed., VanderMey. Cengage, 2015. p. 264-270.