

Sample Student
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English
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A Test of Faith

“Young Goodman Brown” is a story about a man who goes into the forest at night to test his faith. There are many symbols throughout the story that help the reader understand Goodman Brown’s intense experience in the forest. Goodman Brown’s wife, Faith, wears pink ribbons in her hair, as she and her husband are embracing on the threshold of their house, discussing his departure into the forest. This essay will show how these three symbols, “the pink ribbons,” the “threshold” and the “forest” help the reader understand the extreme test of faith that Goodman Brown goes through in this story.

At the beginning of the story, Goodman Brown and his wife Faith, are standing in the doorway, expressing their love for each other. She has pink ribbons in her hair as she reluctantly tells her husband goodbye. These pink ribbons symbolize innocence, purity and goodness, just like her name implies. At this point in the story, Goodman Brown’s “Faith” is strong and based on love, as the pink ribbons symbolize.

While Goodman Brown and Faith are embracing, they are standing at the “threshold” of the doorway. The threshold is an important symbol at this point in the story because it represents the boundary between two different worlds. One world is Goodman Brown’s house, where Faith and all that is “good” exists. The other world is the forest, where all that is “evil” exists. Goodman Brown is standing on the boundary between these two worlds, about to go into the dark and wild forest to test his faith.

When Goodman Brown goes into the forest, he is immediately greeted by a “grave” man carrying a “staff.” As these two journey into the darkness, the wickedness of the forest begins to animate with devilish characters, sounds and shadows. Even worse, all of these dark characters are actually the “good” people from his church and village. Goodman Brown struggles to maintain his faith in God, as he cries out to wife, “Faith! Faith! Look up to heaven, and resist the wicked one” (p.7). The forest is a powerful symbol at this point in the story, as it represents all that is “evil” and it tests Goodman Brown’s faith to its very core.

This test of faith may have been too strong for Goodman Brown, as he was never the same after he returned from the forest, and he died a “gloomy” man. At each point in the story there are important symbols that help the reader understand Goodman Brown’s journey. As the story reminds us, it’s easy to have faith when things are “good,” but what happens to our journey when things are the opposite of “good?” This is a true test of faith.