**Discussion of the Lesson Plan for O’Connor’s “A Good Man is Hard to Find”**

by Adriana Obiols Roca ’16 / Swarthmore College

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The objectives stated in the lesson plan cover a number of skills that students are expected to gain or employ during the class and in the completion of reading and homework assignments. Some of these goals are specific and content-related, while others focus on the development of broader abilities. First are the objectives related to learning the literary terms of direct and indirect characterization, irony, and foreshadowing. It is important that students not only learn the definitions of these concepts – which are typically taught in high school English classes – but that they are able to see them applied and that they learn to recognize them in writing. The story is used in this lesson to illustrate the use of these terms so that they do not remain vague and abstract ideas.

Second are the goals relating to Flannery O’Connor specifically as a writer. Students should be exposed to the work of famous and important authors both to become more cultured persons and to familiarize themselves with a variety of different writing styles and cultivate an appreciation for them. Flannery O’Connor’s style is very distinctive and complex, and the characters she has created in this story are deceptively simple. Approaching her work in a class setting allows for the dissection and exploration of her writing. The emphasis on her use of the grotesque, which is one of the most important and particular characteristics of her style, provides students with a clear way to identify O’Connor’s prose should they encounter it again and allows them to draw connections between her and other authors that may use similar techniques.

The application and development of critical thinking and analytical skills are also important goals of this lesson. These kinds of skills are useful for the critical examination of literature and texts in general, a valuable ability that will undoubtedly be required of students later, especially as they prepare for higher education. Entering discussions in which they must employ analytical skills is also beneficial for students because they must naturally present original ideas, which creates opportunities for them to understand the text from a variety of approaches. Listening to their classmates’ points of view and focusing on specific aspects of the story compels them to think about the story from different angles. They will, quite literally, discover what is so good about O’Connor’s “A Good Man is Hard to Find”. Finally, the objectives pertaining to reading comprehension, summarization, and writing skills are important because all of these abilities enable students to further exercise critical thinking as well as prove their capacity to express ideas coherently orally and in writing.

The introductory activity is structured in a way that allows for the participation of the whole class in the creation of definitions that will be used subsequently throughout the lesson. Since some of these definitions will be based upon the article “Grace and the Grotesque: Flannery O’Connor on the page and the screen” by Jon M. Sweeney, which is required reading for the class, the students will need to draw upon and demonstrate their reading comprehension and summarization skills. Using both the article and the story to identify some of the fundamental qualities of O’Connor’s fiction also creates opportunities for them to display their individual understanding of the writing techniques she uses. The emphasis placed on students’ contributions to the definition of concepts that will be useful later in the lesson is also based on the notion that recognizing students’ ideas as valuable, valid and important is crucial to the development of a positive classroom environment in which student to teacher relationships are not unilateral or hierarchical.

Two of the introductory level questions from the developmental activity are directly related to the material that was covered in the introductory activity and therefore serves as a smooth way to transition from the beginning of the lesson to the discussion portion of the class. The questions ask that students apply the concepts previously defined to the story specifically, which inherently requires that they comprehend the terms with sufficient depth to be able to recognize their use in “A Good Man is Hard to Find”. With the help of the teacher’s guidance, the connection between the content and its real application is made clear and explicit. The last introductory question is less grounded on specific terms and focuses on broader features of the story, and as such provides a transition to the middle level and concluding questions, which delve into deeper aspects of the plot and of characters’ personalities. The subsequent division of the class into small discussion groups for students to work on middle level and concluding questions is due to the fact that it allows each group much more freedom to converse than a whole-class discussion would. Students generally feel more comfortable voicing their opinions in smaller groups and the contained nature of the discussion allows them to reply to each other’s ideas without having to wait for a turn to speak, encouraging them to engage in thought-provoking discussion grounded on critical thinking. Additionally, it provides them the flexibility to explore interesting avenues of thought that might seem tangential in a whole-class discussion. The middle and concluding questions ask students to think critically about characters’ actions and motivations and are more focused than the introductory questions. They require insightful analysis and encourage the students to truly take in and appreciate the complexity and depth of the characters and the themes in O’Connor’s story. The reason why the class later reconvenes is that it is useful for students to learn from each other and listen to their classmates’ ideas. By sharing, the teacher and the students may come to understand “A Good Man is Hard to Find” in new and exciting ways, generating and refueling discussion for the class as a whole. In conveying their ideas to their classmates, students must also make effective use of summarization skills.

The closure activity, a short essay, is meant to provide an opportunity for students to express in formal writing the ideas that were the most stimulating or exciting for them. It demands originality and critical analysis as well as the ability to expand on ideas that originally formed during class discussion. In the assignment students will demonstrate their understanding of O’Connor’s story and express their opinions and theories about it. Providing a wide range of options for the students to choose from for the essay prompt in addition to the possibility of creating an entirely new prompt gives students the freedom to explore aspects that truly interest them about the story while still offering a certain degree of direction and focus. The assignment is also meant to help develop students’ writing skills, which are essential for academic success in all disciplines. Since the essay must be short, it must also be concise and to the point. Moreover, scoring will depend upon students’ ability to effectively communicate their ideas in a coherent and appropriate manner.