**"Young Goodman Brown" by Nathaniel Hawthorne** name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*Background: The story is set in the town of Salem some time during the 1600s Young Goodman Brown is married to Faith. He tells his newly married wife that he must run an errand and will be back after morning. Here he is, then, traveling down . . .*

. . . a dreary road, darkened by all the gloomiest trees of the forest, which barely stood aside to let the narrow path creep through, and closed immediately behind. It was all as lonely as could be; and there is this peculiarity in such a solitude, that the traveler knows not who may be concealed by the innumerable\* trunks and the thick boughs overhead; so that, with lonely footsteps, he may yet be passing through an unseen multitude.

5 "There may be a devilish Indian behind every tree," said Goodman Brown to himself; and he glanced fearfully behind him, as he added, "What if the devil himself should be at my very elbow!"

*[Goodman Brown meets the "traveler" he had planned on meeting in the woods. It is clear that the traveler is Satan. He carries a walking stick shaped like snakes, and talks about knowing Goodman Brown's father, helping his grandfather exterminate Native Americans. Brown is determined to return home to Faith, when a storm kicks up. Brown discovers the pink ribbon his wife Faith wore. Wildly, Brown runs through the forest until . . . ]*

He paused, and heard the swell of what seemed a hymn, rolling solemnly from a distance, with the weight of many voices. He knew the tune; it was a familiar one in the choir of the village meeting-house. The verse died heavily away, and was lengthened by a chorus, not of human voices, but of all the sounds of the benighted\* wilderness, pealing in awful harmony 10 together. Goodman Brown cried out; and his cry was lost to his own ear, by its unison with the cry of the desert\*.

In the interval of silence, he stole forward, until the light glared full upon his eyes. At one extremity of an open space, hemmed in by the dark wall of the forest, arose a rock, bearing some rude, natural resemblance either to an altar or a pulpit, and surrounded by four blazing pines, their tops aflame, their stems untouched, like candles at an evening meeting. The mass of foliage, that had overgrown the summit of the rock, was all on fire, blazing high into the night, and fitfully 15 illuminating the whole field. Each twig and leafy festoon was in a blaze. As the red light arose and fell, a numerous congregation alternately shone forth, then disappeared in shadow, and again grew, as it were, out of the darkness, peopling the heart of the solitary woods at once.

"A grave and dark-clad company!" quoth Goodman Brown.

In truth, they were such. Among them, quivering to-and-fro, between gloom and splendor, appeared faces that would be 20 seen, next day, at the council-board of the province, and others which, Sabbath\* after Sabbath, looked devoutly heavenward, and benignantly over the crowded pews, from the holiest pulpits in the land. Some affirm, that the lady of the governor was there. At least, there were high dames well known to her, and wives of honored husbands, and widows, a great multitude, and ancient maidens, all of excellent repute\*, and fair young girls, who trembled lest their mothers should espy\* them. Either the sudden gleams of light, flashing over the obscure field, bedazzled Goodman Brown, or he recognized 25 a score of the church-members of Salem village, famous for their especial sanctity. Good old Deacon Gookin had arrived, and waited at the skirts of that venerable saint, his reverend pastor. But, irreverently consorting\* with these grave, reputable, and pious people, these elders of the church, these chaste dames and dewy virgins, there were men of dissolute\* lives and women of spotted fame\*, wretches given over to all mean and filthy vice, and suspected even of horrid crimes. It was strange to see, that the good shrank not from the wicked, nor were the sinners abashed by the saints. 30 Scattered, also, among their pale-faced enemies, were the Indian priests, or powows, who had often scared their native forest with more hideous incantations than any known to English witchcraft.

"But, where is Faith?" thought Goodman Brown; and, as hope came into his heart, he trembled.

"Bring forth the converts!" cried a voice, that echoed through the field and rolled into the forest.

At the word, Goodman Brown stepped forth from the shadow of the trees, and approached the congregation, with whom 35 he felt a loathful brotherhood, by the sympathy of all that was wicked in his heart. He could have well nigh sworn, that the shape of his own dead father beckoned him to advance, looking downward from a smoke-wreath, while a woman, with dim features of despair, threw out her hand to warn him back. Was it his mother? But he had no power to retreat one step, nor to resist, even in thought, when the minister and good old Deacon Gookin seized his arms, and led him to the blazing rock. Thither came also the slender form of a veiled female.

40 "Welcome, my children," said the dark figure, "to the communion of your race! Ye have found, thus young, your nature and your destiny. My children, look behind you!"

They turned; and flashing forth, as it were, in a sheet of flame, the fiend-worshippers were seen; the smile of welcome gleamed darkly on every visage\*.

"There," resumed the sable form, "are all whom ye have reverenced from youth. Ye deemed them holier than yourselves, 45 and shrank from your own sin, contrasting it with their lives of righteousness, and prayerful aspirations heavenward. Yet, here are they all, in my worshipping assembly! This night it shall be granted you to know their secret deeds; how hoary- bearded\* elders of the church have whispered wanton words to the young maids of their households; how many a woman, eager for widow's weeds, has given her husband a drink at bed-time\*, and let him sleep his last sleep in her bosom; how beardless youth have made haste to inherit their father's wealth; and how fair damsels\* have dug little graves in the 50 garden, and bidden me, the sole guest, to an infant's funeral. By the sympathy of your human hearts for sin, ye shall scent out\* all the places--whether in church, bed-chamber, street, field, or forest--where crime has been committed, and shall exult to behold the whole earth one stain of guilt, one mighty blood-spot. Far more than this! It shall be yours to penetrate, in every bosom, the deep mystery of sin, the fountain of all wicked arts, and which inexhaustibly supplies more evil impulses than human power--than my power at its utmost!--can make manifest in deeds. And now, my children, look upon 55 each other."

They did so; and, by the blaze of the hell-kindled torches, the wretched man beheld his Faith, and the wife her husband, trembling before that unhallowed altar.

"Welcome!" repeated the fiend-worshippers, in one cry of despair and triumph.

And there they stood, the only pair, as it seemed, who were yet hesitating on the verge of wickedness, in this dark world. A 60 basin was hollowed, naturally, in the rock. Did it contain water, reddened by the lurid light? or was it blood? or, perchance, a liquid flame? Herein did the Shape of Evil dip his hand, and prepare to lay the mark of baptism upon their foreheads, that they might be partakers of the mystery of sin, more conscious of the secret guilt of others, both in deed and thought, than they could now be of their own. The husband cast one look at his pale wife, and Faith at him.

"Faith! Faith!" cried the husband. "Look up to Heaven, and resist the Wicked One!"

65 Whether Faith obeyed, he knew not. Hardly had he spoken, when he found himself amid calm night and solitude, listening to a roar of the wind, which died heavily away through the forest. He staggered against the rock, and felt it chill and damp, while a hanging twig, that had been all on fire, besprinkled his cheek with the coldest dew.

The next morning, young Goodman Brown came slowly into the street of Salem village, staring around him like a bewildered man. Turning the corner by the meeting-house, he spied the head of Faith, with the pink ribbons, gazing 70 anxiously forth, and bursting into such joy at sight of him, that she skipped along the street, and almost kissed her husband before the whole village. But Goodman Brown looked sternly and sadly into her face, and passed on without a greeting.

Had Goodman Brown fallen asleep in the forest, and only dreamed a wild dream of a witch-meeting?

Be it so, if you will. But, alas! it was a dream of evil omen for young Goodman Brown. A stern, a sad, a darkly meditative, a distrustful, if not a desperate man, did he become, from the night of that fearful dream. On the Sabbath-day, when the 75 congregation were singing a holy psalm, he could not listen, because an anthem of sin rushed loudly upon his ear, and drowned all the blessed strain. When the minister spoke from the pulpit, with power and fervid\* eloquence, and with his hand on the open Bible, of the sacred truths of our religion, and of saint-like lives and triumphant deaths, and of future bliss or misery unutterable, then did Goodman Brown turn pale, dreading lest the roof should thunder down upon the gray blasphemer and his hearers. Often, awaking suddenly at midnight, he shrank from the bosom of Faith, and at morning or 80 eventide\*, when the family knelt down at prayer, he scowled, and muttered to himself, and gazed sternly at his wife, and turned away. And when he had lived long, and was borne to his grave, a hoary\* corpse, followed by Faith, an aged woman, and children and grand-children, a goodly procession, besides neighbors, not a few, they carved no hopeful verse upon his tombstone; for his dying hour was gloom.

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| innumerable (3) (adj): | benighted (9): | desert (10): Hawthorne seems to be using "desert" here to describe the people. The best definition to fit is "any place lacking in something;" and if that's the definition NH is using, he is creating a metaphor telling us that these people *lack something*. |
| Sabbath (20): Holy day; Christian day of worship | repute (23): | espy (24): catch sight of |
| consorting (26): | dissolute (28) (adj): | "spotted fame" (28): literally, to have spots or marks on your reputation; these women have poor reputations |
| visage (43): | "hoary-bearded" (46-47): white bearded; i.e., old | "has given . . . bed-time" (48): i.e., has poisoned him |
| damsels (49): literally, girls of age who are not married | "scent out" (50-51): discover | fervid (76) (adj): |
| eventide (80): end of the day; evening | hoary (81): old | NOTE: "Goodman" is basically the same thing as calling someone "Mr." |

1. Note how NH describes the forest. Find passages in *TSL* where similar descriptions of the forest are given.

2. What sort of people does Goodman Brown find gathered in the forest with Satan? Is there anything they all have in common?

3. Satan claims that the congregation he has gathered were "‘deemed holier than yourselves'" (44). But, obviously, this is not the case. What is NH suggesting about sin? If even these supposedly "holy" people were stained with sin, what hope do the rest of us have?

4. Do Brown and Faith “‘resist the Wicked One' " (64)? Why does NH not obviously tell us?

5. Is Brown's death a good one? Did he live what sounds like a good life?

6. Note where NH talks about sin in *TSL*. Find two passages from the novel and compare.

PAGE # / CH PASSAGE ANALYSIS: What does NH think about sin?

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