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Temptation: Satan's #1 Weapon

Temptation, a powerful tool often used in the art of persuasion, clouds an individual's mind, rendering it to succumb to whatever temptation wants them to do. Throughout time, temptation has existed in one form or another, from peer pressure this generation, to unusual illusions in the seventeenth century. Temptation often leads to someone doing something that they did not intend to do, which often leads to regret. Pathos is an emotional appeal often used by the author of a work to generate feelings in the reader. In Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown," the author utilizes pathos to convey that temptation can lead to one's downfall.

The story begins as Goodman Brown is required to leave on an "errand" through the forest, one which he intends "to return whence [he] came," meaning that he wants to return unchanged from when he left. Brown, fearfully walking through the forest, meets up with this old man, carrying a "staff, which bore the likeness of a great black snake...." From that description, it is obviously the man carrying the staff is the devil. As Brown and the devil walk further in the forest, both notice a woman in the background who happens to be Goody Cloyse, the woman who taught Goodman Brown catechism. Goody Cloyse, Brown's "moral and spiritual adviser" is assumed to be, in the eyes of Brown a good "Christian woman." While watching the devil converse with Goody Cloyse, Brown notices that the devil gives her his staff,

which “assumed life.” Watching Goody Cloyse accept his staff, Brown becomes astonished that his adviser would give in to the devil. At this point, the reader, like Goodman Brown, invokes emotions of surprise and curiosity, to Goody Cloyse becoming evil. This curiosity tempts Goodman Brown to continue his journey with the devil, leading him closer to his downfall.

After seeing Goody Cloyse, Brown, stubbornly resisting the devil, makes up his mind and decides not to “budge on this errand.” The devil, composed, tells Brown to rest and offers “[his] staff” in supposed good faith, to “help [him] along” when he feels like moving. While Brown is resting, he hears “travelers” who were not visible. Brown recognizes the voices as the minister and Deacon Gookin. As Brown overhears their conversation, the minister and Deacon Gookin discussed “a goodly young woman taken into communion.” In this context, the communion that the minister and deacon are referring to is in fact an evil communion. At this point, Brown feels “faint and overburdened with [a] heavy sickness [in] his heart.” The reader once again surprised, feels sympathetic towards Brown, who is losing faith in those around him. This loss of faith leads to Brown’s gullibility to believe this conversation that he cannot see actually took place. Brown’s gullibility ultimately tempts Brown into “doubting whether there really was a heaven above him,” which hints that Brown is starting to abandon his belief system.

While gazing upward to the brightening stars in the blue arched sky, a “black mass of cloud” “hurried across the zenith and hid the brightening stars.” Brown’s belief system begins to crumble as he begins to hear voices in the forest of “familiar tones, heard daily in the sunshine at Salem village.” Out of desperation, Brown calls for Faith, only to be mocked by the forest’s echos of “Faith.” It is at this point, where a pink ribbon, supposedly the one that was in Faith’s hat earlier that evening, “fluttered lightly down through the air and caught on the branch of a

tree.” Brown then cries that “[his] Faith is gone” and that “there is no good on earth; and sin is but a name.” At this point, Brown has lost all faith in the world, which leaves the reader sad and compassionate. The devil tempts Brown and the reader, through sadness, to believe that good faith in the world is over, and that everybody is evil.

Goodman Brown then gets a surge of insanity, starts to laugh, and takes the staff which causes him to “fly along the forest path.” This bizarre act reflects Goodman Brown giving into sin. It is until Brown comes across an evil congregation, that he gains some hope in the world, when he discovers that he does not see Faith among them. The evil ceremony starts as the converts are asked to come forward, and behold Brown and Faith are to be converted together. At the last gasp of desperation, Brown tells Faith to “look up to heaven and resist the wicked one.” It is at this point that even though some hope was restored, it was quickly taken away, sending the audience on a roller coaster of emotions first feeling content with a somewhat better ending only to succumb to the irony of having both Brown and Faith converted together. It is at this point that Brown wakes up and distrusts all that is around him. The reader is feeling a sense of relief at first to find out that this “errand” was somewhat fake but feels surprised and bad to find out that Brown has become a bitter cynic and believes that he is better than everyone else. This tempts Brown into a feeling of arrogance leads him to believe that everybody is evil, which in fact he, himself, has become emotionless and evil. .

“Young Goodman Brown” is a short story which provides the readers with various amounts of feeling, from sad to content, and sympathetic to surprised. These feelings lead to the irony of the story that Goodman Brown ends up as the evil one, rather than the rest of the community, which further proves that temptation, a seductive tool used to render people to

succumb to temptation's needs, can lead to one's downfall. Goodman Brown lives a life with no remorse or compassion which condemns him to a spiritless and emotionless life.