

“A Good Man is Hard to Find” Questions

Directions: After reading “A Good Man is Hard to Find,” answer the following questions on your own paper. You may work in a group of NO MORE THAN TWO. (For those of you who struggle with mathematics, THREE is too many; so is FOUR).

1. What qualities of the grandmother do you like? What qualities do you dislike? How did you feel when The Misfit killed her? Why?
2. How would you characterize the other members of the family? What is the function of images like the following: the mother's "face was as broad and innocent as a cabbage and was tied around with a green head-kerchief that had two points on the top like a rabbit's ears" and the grandmother's "big black valise looked like the head of a hippopotamus"?
3. How does O'Connor foreshadow the encounter with The Misfit?
4. What does the grandmother mean by a "good man"? Whom does she consider good people? What are other possible meanings of "good"? Why does she tell The Misfit that he's a good man? Is there any sense in which he is?
5. What is the significance of the discussion of Jesus? Was he a good man?
6. What is the significance of the grandmother's saying, "Why, you're one of my babies. You're one of my own children"?
7. What is the significance of The Misfit's saying, "She would of been a good woman if it had been somebody there to shoot her every minute of her life"?
8. What is the nature of the humor of this story?—how would you characterize it?—on what does it depend?
9. Which parts of the story are realistic and which exaggerated or improbable? What does that mixture achieve?
10. Do the negative qualities of the family members have any bearing on their fate? Would the outcome have been the same if they had acted differently? What is the significance of their being on the wrong road at the time of the accident?
11. Is the Misfit a philosopher or a psychopath? Can you explain his statement that Jesus had “thrown everything off balance”?
12. What is the significance of the title?