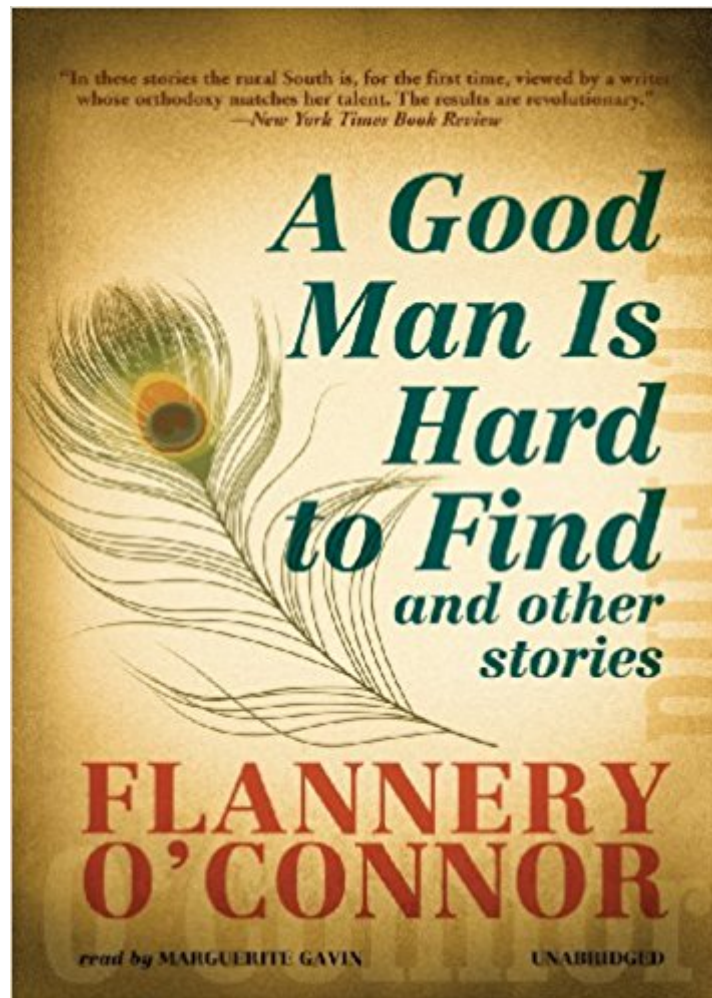




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# A Good Man Is Hard To Find: And Other Stories



## Synopsis

This is the collection that established Flannery O'Connor's reputation as a one of the American masters of the short story. This now classic book revealed Flannery O'Connor as one of the most original and provocative writers to emerge from the South. Her apocalyptic vision of life is expressed through grotesque, often comic situations in which the principal character faces a problem of salvation: the grandmother, in the title story, confronting the murderous Misfit; a neglected four-year-old boy looking for the Kingdom of Christ in the fast-flowing waters of the river; General Sash, about to meet the final enemy. Stories include: "The River" "The Life You Save May Be Your Own" "A Stroke of Good Fortune" "A Temple of the Holy Ghost" "The Artificial Nigger" "A Circle in the Fire" "A Late Encounter with the Enemy" "Good Country People" "The Displaced Person"

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"O'Connor's works, like Maupassant's, are characterized by precision, density, and an almost alarming circumscription. . . In these stories the rural South is, for the first time, viewed by a writer whose orthodoxy matches her talent. The results are revolutionary." -- New York Times Book Review "Much savagery, compassion, farce, art, and truth have gone into these stories. O'Connor's characters are wholeheartedly horrible, and almost better than life. I find it hard to think of a funnier or more frightening writer." --Robert Lowell, Pulitzer Prize-winning poet "With a keen eye for the dark side of human nature, an amazing ear for dialogue, and a necessary sense of irony, Flannery O'Connor exposes the underside of life in the rural south of the United States." --Holly Smith, 500 Great Books by Women "I am sure her books will live on and on in American literature." --Elizabeth

Bishop, Pulitzer Prize winner and poet laureate of the United States, 1949-1950

This timeless collection of nine stories, each with its climactic moment of human weakness, is set at that crossroads. At a roadside, in a stairwell, by a reddish river, O'Connor's flawed and vividly human characters grope toward mysteries they can barely comprehend. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

My God, what a delight. She was not only the greatest female short story writer of the 20th century but one of the all time greats. She makes the mood of the mid 20th century south into a character unto itself. Where someone may think there is no story, she makes a compelling one into the mind s and motives of real people. I can't say enough good about this. Maybe the best book I have read so far this year.

If you are a fan of Flannery O'Connor then you know what you're in for. If you've never read her works then hold on... it's a different kind of ride. Some of what you read will have you laughing out loud... and hard! But every story will have a dark, if not disturbing, twist. The grandmother in "A Good Man is Hard to Find" reminded me quite a bit of my own grandmother in that she was prim, proper, and yet manipulative as hell... in a very funny way. And the darker characters were, at first, like any ol' redneck you might run into in the old, deep south. But then the darkness sets in... and man, it leaves you shocked and silent. Don't read unless you want to be slightly depressed. Good cerebral read that I do occasionally enjoy.

She has the colloquialism down for the south and even though her characters can be unpleasant you follow them faithfully throughout the stories.

Tough read about another time in our country. Fabulous Southern Gothic. Each story made me squirm. Happy we've come so far. Many will not finish, but I hope you do. Next to last story could have been written today. Serious thoughts will haunt you after you read this.

The characters in these ten stories are invariably grotesque -- ugly of body and mind, perverse and/or perverted, and mostly moronic -- but they are not incredible. They're all revoltingly real, as recognizable as the most hideous sinners in a Bosch painting, unerringly portrayed specimens of human devolution in the racist impoverishment and isolation of the American South. Whether

equally loathsome characters could be matched in stories of other regions isn't in question; all of Flannery O'Connor's gargoyles are from the South. Also NOT in question is O'Connor's genius with words. Here's her first-paragraph introduction of one of her monsters: "Besides the neutral expression that she wore when she was alone, Mrs. Freeman had two others, forward and reverse, that she used for all her human dealings. Her forward expression was steady and driving like the advance of a heavy truck. Her eyes never swerved to left or right but turned as the story turned as if they followed a yellow line down the center of it. She seldom used the others expression because it was not often necessary for her to retract a statement, but when she did, her face came to a complete stop, there was an almost imperceptible movement of her black eyes, during which they seemed to be receding, and then the observer would see that Mrs. Freeman, though she might stand there as real as several grain sacks thrown on top of each other, was no longer there in spirit." Oh my! That woman is REAL. But however realistic O'Connor's grotesque characters might be, the situations in which they are placed in these stories are flamboyantly bizarre, at the edge of plausibility. That pattern is so marked that one has to ask why. It's probably pre-post-modernist of me to ask, but I will anyway: what on earth is the intention behind this so-well-written weirdness? Humor? Caricature? One could imagine that the Coen Brothers turned to O'Connor for ideas their ferocious mockery of the South in their film "Oh Brother, Where Art Thou?" The tenor is awfully close. Or simple sensationalism for the sake of sales? Plenty of that around today, but O'Connor wrote these stories in the 1940s, and I can't help suspecting that she had more earnest intentions than selling to the New Yorker. Self-loathing? An indictment of her own milieu? Some of the younger and less deformed of her characters do express an aspiration to get out of the muck of their lives. Did she? I almost never want to know details of the lives of authors; if 'it' isn't in the words of the writing, it isn't there at all. What I know about O'Connor is that she died young, and if her short life was enclosed in the world she describes, it's no wonder! I also know, inadvertently from other reviews, that O'Connor was Catholic, that her writings are taken by critics to have meanings related to her Catholicism. Frankly, I have trouble with that thought. If we are supposed to perceive the innate depravity of humankind, and the lust for any kind of salvation, then O'Connor goes too far toward Gnosticism. To suggest that the depraved 'souls' of her stories were created in G\_d's image is to deny the sublimity of the Divine. Perhaps the Catholicism of her 'South' had inherited the Cathar dualism, or else exchanged genetic particles with the most extreme Calvinism. Or perhaps O'Connor was on her way, in these early stories, toward 'painting herself into a corner' in her struggle with the ideas of sin and redemption. There is a priest, by the way, in the last story of the collection, but he is a simpering fool, the closest thing in the book to an outright caricature. The first

five stories of this collection could be brushed aside, as just writing for writing's sake, but the sixth story, "The Artificial Ni\_\_er", is a mind-blower, a monument in the graveyard of literature, that extinct human pursuit. Plainly I've got to read the rest of O'Connor's work before the prions get the rest of my brain...

One of Flannery O'Connors most fantastic stories. A must for all fans and lover's of literature.

Ms. O'Connor always leaves me wanting more--'nuff said!

Flannery O'Connor is truly a master of the short story. After the first one, you're hooked. Reading her work is like getting throat punched repeatedly, but liking it. Highly recommend if your looking for a quick read full of suspense and anticipation.

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