

Sample Student

March 2, 2013

English 110 – Greg Christensen

Carver/ New Criticism Essay

Comments & Grade Marks (20 point rubric)

There is some very nicely rendered close textual analysis here – well done. The grade falls down here though because the language is not well proofread yet though. You also need to add two missing pieces to the essay: a paragraph in which you summarize the theory, and a works cited list. Good work, keep working.

Assignment & Proofreading	1/4	*Proof for verb tense; missing theory summary & WC list
Thesis & Argument	4/4	
Focus & Clarity	3/4	
Development & Support	3/4	
Language & Mechanics	2/4	
Late (2 pts = -10%)	-/20	
Total	13/20	

20 = 100% A	17 = 85% B	14 = 70% C-
19 = 95% A	16 = 80% B-	13 = 65% D
18 = 90% A-	15 = 75% C	12 = 60% D-

**Please see the Grading Rubric Explanation found within the course for a detailed description of the numbers and criteria on the grading grid each of the component marks above corresponds to.*

**Remember that I only mark error patterns, not every error – I want you to see what I'm noting in the essay and then actively apply it to all of your own essay work. It's now your job to go back and proofread for these same types of errors throughout the entire essay if you plan to revise and resubmit, or if you plan to simply move on to the next writing assignment. You can review some of the most common error patterns along with detailed explanations in Proofreading Notes found within the course.*

Irony in Literature

Raymond Carver, an influential writer in the late 20th century and author of the bestselling short story novel, *Cathedral*, writes a tale titled, *A Small, Good Thing*. In this story, a car strikes a young boy named Scotty, on his birthday while walking to school. Scotty loses consciousness and then returns home and tells his mother Ann, what has happened. Ann and Scotty's father Howard, rush him to the hospital. Throughout this story Scotty remains unconscious, perplexing the doctors, who ensure Ann and Howard that Scotty, will recuperate. Meanwhile, Scotty's parents continuously receive calls from an unknown person, which unbeknownst to them, is the baker of Scotty's birthday cake, upset that it was never collected. Irony in literature is very important because it engages the reader and helps develop deeper meaning in the text. Carver incorporates many instances of irony throughout *A Small, Good Thing*, which makes for countless surprises that grip and intrigue the reader and propels them to ponder what may happen next. Without these well-placed ironic events, the story would not be as entertaining for reader, and hence, not as rewarding or outstanding.

Comment [1]: Know your source: incorrect name or source reference. Know your sources before you write about them. Do your research, then be sure to refer to the work appropriately and correctly in your writing so that we know exactly who and what you're talking about, and so that we'll see you as a knowledgeable and credible voice in your own work.

Comment [2]: Incorrect title notation. Review source titling rules in **Proofreading Notes**. BIG titles (books, newspapers, magazines, album titles, etc.) get *italicized*. SMALL titles that fit inside big titles (essays, poems, stories, articles, chapters, sections, separately titled excerpts, etc.) get placed in "quotation marks." Titles are never bolded, nor are they ever italicized *and* placed in quotation marks at the same time, nor are they ever underlined in the body of your essay (though they can be in a works cited list). Each word of your title, no matter what kind of title, is capitalized (except for articles and prepositions). Please proofread for this more carefully in your work.

Comment [3]: unnecessary comma

Comment [4]: unnecessary comma

Comment [5]: unnecessary comma

Comment [6]: unnecessary comma

Comment [7]: unnecessary commas

Comma errors: Incorrect comma usage and/or overuse of commas. Please review comma rules here (<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/607/01/>) and then proofread for these more carefully in your work.

Comment [8]: Excellent thesis formulation: very well articulated, appropriate to the assignment, nuanced and compelling observation(s) on which to build your textual analysis. Nicely done.

Irony can create a lot of suspense and wonder which is very beneficial to holding on or creating reader's interest in the text. Carver does this quite well multiple times in *A Small, Good Thing*. He starts off the story as normal as any other story, a mother ordering a birthday cake for her son's birthday. He then unexpectedly takes a major turn by having Scotty be a victim of a hit and run. This is where Carver hooks and really gets the reader interested in the story now that the plot has shifted so abruptly. The story starts off with a happy and joyful mood since the preparations for Scotty's birthday party were underway. But then develops into a tense and stressful plot that will throw the reader around emotionally. Carver does not start off the story, or leave any premonition of what happens to Scotty as he walks to school. This causes ~~for~~ irony right at the beginning of the story bringing in the reader. The reader is filled with curiosity of

Comment [9]: Missing theory summary – Part of the assignment instructions for the essay call for a full paragraph of summary description of the theory to be placed here, after your thesis but before the start of your in-depth analysis of the work. The essay is incomplete without this important piece that explains to the reader the theoretical approach you're using in your analysis. Please follow the assignment guidelines carefully in order to get full credit for your work.

Comment [10]: A focused, well-articulated topic paragraph opening that echoes and extends your summary (and/or thesis) formulation and gives us a very clear idea of where you're taking the discussion. Good.

Comment [11]: Good focus here on strategy and the readerly experience of the rhetorical choices the author(s) makes in the writing at this point in the text.

Comment [12]: Use the text for support. This discussion is unsupported. Provide paraphrases (or direct quotes if this is not summary work) of textually specific moments or passages to anchor your general statements in explicit examples that support and illustrate your statements. Always point to the text for support – never rely only on your own general and unsubstantiated conclusions to summarize or make an argument about how a text is written. Use the text in concert with your own analysis, always – it adds legitimacy and credibility to your claims in every instance.

Comment [13]: Incomplete sentence (fragment). This group of words lacks one or more of the basic required features in order for a group of words to qualify as an independent thought, or sentence: a subject, a verb, and a complete thought. The easiest solution is to add this partial, unfinished thought to a full sentence nearby that is closely associated with it in meaning. Or, you can add a subject and/or verb (or whatever is missing) in order to turn this partial thought into a complete and independent one that also stands alone as a grammatically complete sentence. Please proofread for this more carefully in your work.

what might happen to Scotty after the incident. This is just the first of many ironic events that Carver strategically creates in this short story.

The most irony in the story is found while Scotty lays unconscious in the hospital. Many doctors come in and evaluate Scotty during his stay at the hospital. They are trying to find out what is wrong with him, and why he continues to remain asleep. Each doctor ensures Ann and Howard that Scotty is not in any danger and will wake up soon. "Now he simply seemed to be in a very deep sleep – but no coma, Dr. Francis had emphasized, no coma, when he saw the alarm in the parent's eyes"(61).

Comment [14]: Closing discussion:

Unclear link to thesis. It's unclear how this discussion and/or point(s) is related to your thesis or to the paragraph topic, and because that link remains unexplained the paragraph/point becomes summary description rather than clear and specific development of your thesis/topic arguments. Try not to build and close body paragraph discussions with simple summary description of the writing: you do not want your readers to guess how your points are connected to your paragraph topic (if you've given us one) and thesis argument. Offer an evaluation of *how (in)effective the writing is based on your analysis of it above* that clearly ties us back to your thesis proposition. We need to be constantly reminded how and why your paragraph discussions are connected to the larger arguments you're making about the text, the ones that define the thesis and the essay as a whole.

Comment [15]: Missing topic idea

statement. This opening lacks a topic argument focus that reiterates a portion of the text and is instead only a summary of the text and/or a lead-in to a textual reference. Remember that body paragraphs always require a clear announcement of topic at the start, an "idea statement" that lays out the argument to be developed in the paragraph and which links us back to the thesis formulation laid out in the beginning of the essay. This needs to happen *before* any textual summary or lead-in to a quote is offered – it needs to be the first statement of the paragraph.

Comment [16]: Integration of textual

support – Good deployment of textual support here to illustrate and extend the descriptions you're offering of the selection. Nicely done.

Ann and Howard felt a little more at ease that the doctor ensured them he is not in a coma.

After all the doctor would know more about what is going on than they would. However as time went on they became more and more worried Scotty was not waking up. Another doctor again ensured Ann and Howard, "He's just in a very deep sleep. It's a restorative measure the body is taking on its own. He's out of any real danger, I'd say that for certain, yes" (66). The irony during this part of the story grows as Scotty continues to remain asleep. This is because everything the doctors are saying does not seem to be the case, as Scotty still lays in the hospital unconscious. Carver is bringing the reader closer to the story with this irony. The reader begins to get involved with the text by wondering themselves why isn't Scotty waking up? Carver does this intentionally to evolve the story and build up for the eventual climax. Each time a doctor reassures Ann and Howard that Scott will be fine causes for more irony and growing suspense in the story. This in turn causes the reader to become more interested in the plot and if there will ever be a resolution in the story's conflict.

Unexpectedly Scotty finally opens his eyes for the first time since he lost consciousness.

Something that Carver wanted to wait until later in the story to build up anticipation for the resolution. In the story Ann and Howard excited with energy rush over to speak with him, but then yet another unexpected and ironic turn happens. "The boy looked at them, but without any sign of recognition. Then his mouth opened, his eyes scrunched closed, and he howled until he had no more air in his lungs. His face seemed to relax and soften then. His lips parted as his last breath was puffed through his throat and exhaled gently through the clenched teeth" (80). The doctors said, "... it was a one-in-a-million circumstance" (80). So much irony was built up

Comment [17]: Verb Tense error. Use *present tense*, NOT *past tense*, when discussing the text, even though the text itself is written in the past about events in the past. (If an author explicitly uses *past tense* to describe a specific textual moment, however, you may briefly adopt the same verb tense he/she uses at that point if you're writing about that same moment in the text. Otherwise though, stay in the present when discussing the writing more generally.) This is the academic standard for this type of writing and it's what I need to see you practicing throughout the term. Write "The book *IS* published..." or "The author *WRITES* that..." instead of *was* and *wrote*, for example. Look for incorrect and/or unclear verb tense shifts in your work, and work hard to stay in the present tense throughout your discussion. Proofread carefully for this in your work.

Comment [18]: ^ insert comma here after introductory phrases like this one to avoid creating a fragment sentence

Comment [19]: Very articulate **explication and synthesis of textual concepts**. Focused, thorough and succinct, providing nicely detailed and perceptive summary coverage of the selection. Good work.

Good discussion of how form informs content. You're linking the choices an author(s) makes to use certain rhetorical strategies in his/her effort to deliver to us the specific content of meaning within the work. Form always serves and justifies content in good writing. This is exactly the kind of connection you should always be reaching for in your textual analysis for this class. Very good.

Comment [20]: Don't use ellipsis points at the beginning of quotes. Indicate that you are beginning the quote from the middle of a passage with just a lower case letter for the first word of your quote.

leading to this climax of the story by Carver. There was no way to foreshadow the way Carver intended to take this storyline the way he did, but that is why it becomes such an entertaining and successful story for the reader. The reader becomes so involved with the text by imagining what it would feel like to be in Ann and Howard's shoes waiting for their only son to wake up. But then unfortunately, contrary to doctor's opinion, Scotty dies in a rare circumstance that the doctors did not believe would happen. It is a very strong feeling of sadness that some people can relate to and others wonder how they would feel in a similar situation. Irony makes to be very important to the story because without it, the story would become very unexciting and predictable. Although that the unexpected passing of Scotty seemed to be the key ironic event that Carver placed in the story, it is not the biggest ironic event of the story. Carver saves the biggest irony for the conclusion of his story which really wraps up the overall storyline for the reader.

Ann and Howard return home from the horrible ordeal that they have just been through; they continue to receive the harassing phone calls. Unaware to them still, that the person calling was the baker upset by the birthday cake that was never paid for. Ann filled with rage says, "That bastard. I'd like to kill him. I'd like to shot him and watch him kick" (83). Ann shows a side that the reader has not seen before, and the reader most likely can understand why; due to all of the things that happened to her in the past couple days. Carver wanted to show how much this was affecting Ann and that the situation can become explosive if she knew who it was. Then Ann finally arrives to the conclusion that it is the baker who has been harassing them. "I know who it is. It's the baker, the son-of-a-bitching baker, Howard... That's who has

Comment [21]: Very articulate **explication and synthesis of textual concepts**. Focused, thorough and succinct, it offers perceptive summary coverage of the selection. This is exactly the kind of close and **detailed textual evaluation** I'm looking for – it succeeds in its attempt to make conclusions about *how (well)* the work is composed (rather than what the ideas might be or whether they're good ones or bad ones). Good work.

Comment [22]: Again:
Missing topic idea statement. This opening lacks a topic focus and is instead only a summary of the text or a lead-in to a quote. Remember that body paragraphs always require a clear announcement of topic at the start, an "idea statement" that lays out the argument to be developed in the paragraph and which links us back to the thesis formulation laid out in the beginning of the essay. This needs to happen *before* any textual summary or lead-in to a quote is offered – it needs to be the first statement of the paragraph.

the number and keeps calling us. To harass us about that cake. The baker, that bastard” (84). Carver showed how Ann was filled with anger after all of the built up stress and now she wants to confront the person she knows now is responsible for the harassing phone calls. Once Ann and Howard arrive to the bakery, Carver creates a lot of tension when both parties meet. It seemed like an altercation was all but certain. But Carver surprises the reader yet again with irony. Once the baker is informed of what happens his mood changes, “God alone knows how sorry. Listen to me. I’m just a baker. I don’t claim to be anything else. Maybe once, maybe years ago, I was a different kind of human being. I’ve forgotten, I don’t know for sure” (87). Both Ann and Howard sit with the baker until the next morning talking and eating the baker’s rolls. This is the biggest unexpected event and this is where Carver decides to end the story. With two parties that are upset for their valid reasons, coming together to share in some support and gifts of friendship. Carver does this to somehow end off the story in more of positive light, after leaving a large negative feeling after Scotty’s passing. This really leaves the reader with some type of closure that would have not been possible if Carver did not create this final piece of irony in the text.

The way Carver sets up his ironic event throughout *A Small, Good Thing* creates a piece of work that draws in and involves the reader in the text all at once. The reader can put themselves in the story and wonder how it would be in the character’s shoes that are in the story. This causes the story to be very successfully and entertaining. Also, exciting in the way that the reader cannot predict what is going to happen next and keeps them on their toes for the next unexpected twist. If the reader was able to predict most of what happens in the story,

Comment [23]: Noun-pronoun agreement error. Nouns must “agree” in number with all the pronouns that refer back to them. For example, “the reader” gets paired with “he or she,” not “their,” because “the reader” is singular, not plural. “Readers” would get a “they” or “their” pronoun, because both “readers” and “they” or “their” are plural words, and they need to match. If one is singular, the other must also be singular; if one is plural, then the other must also be plural. Break the habit of writing like we speak. Proofread carefully for this in your work.

the story would be unexciting and not engaging. Even without just one ironic event in Carver's story, the story would not blend and flow as successfully as it does for the reader. The irony in this story is the main driving factor in why this story is made to be very successful as a piece of literary work.

Comment [24]:
Missing Works Cited list page