**Flannery O’Connor Stories Assignment**

**Read “Good Country People”-answer book questions and complete the multiple-choice test (pick up test in class).**

**Read “A Good Man is Hard to Find” complete the questions below.**

**Research O’Connor’s philosophy and religious views. See essays in your text. Explain how O’Connor’s philosophy is communicated in both stories. (A Venn Diagram with quotes is fine.)**

**Questions for Discussion**

**1. What tone does the epigraph set for the story? Reconsider it after you’ve read the story. How**

**does your interpretation change?**

**2. What can you infer about the grandmother by reading the opening paragraph? What does she**

**represent in the story? Consider the role she plays in her family as well as how she might**

**embody a different era in the culture of the South. What does the grandmother mean when she**

**tells The Misfit, “Why you’re one of my babies. You’re one of my own children” (para. 136)?**

**3. The main characters in a story usually have names. In this story, however, several main**

**characters—The Misfit, the grandmother, and the children’s mother—are unnamed. What is**

**the purpose of not giving these characters names, referring to them only by their roles? How**

**might leaving these characters unnamed connect to a theme of the story?**

**4. In what ways is the family in this story fairly typical in terms of the tensions and conflicts**

**most families experience? How does O’Connor introduce comedy by depicting these differences**

**between and among generations and relationships?**

**5. When Red Sammy says to the grandmother, “A good man is hard to find” (para. 43), what**

**does he mean? Why did O’Connor choose this particular line for the story’s title? Also consider**

**why, in the final scene, the grandmother repeatedly tells The Misfit that she knows he is a**

**“good man.”**

**6. Discuss instances in which the grandmother’s nostalgia for the past seems warranted and**

**others in which it becomes limiting, even threatening. You might begin by considering some of**

**the following: her desire to paint a picture of the “pickaninny” in the doorway, her story about**

**Mr. Teagarden, her story of the house with the secret panel.**

**7. O’Connor has said that the short-story collection that included this story is about “original**

**sin.” What role does religion, specifically Christianity, play in this story? How do the grandmother’s**

**traditional views on salvation and prayer differ from The Misfit’s? What does he mean**

**when he asserts that Jesus has thrown “everything off balance” (para. 134)?**

**8. Were you surprised by the violence in the story? Why do you think O’Connor chose to leave**

**the murders of everyone but the grandmother “off stage” rather than describing them directly?**

**What is the impact of providing details about the shooting of the grandmother and describing**

**her lifeless body?**

**9. How does The Misfit explain his behavior to the grandmother? Why does he shoot her precisely**

**when he does? How do you interpret his assertion that “she would of been a good woman . . . if it**

**had been somebody there to shoot her every minute of her life” (para. 140)? What does The Misfit**

**understand about the grandmother’s character?**

**Questions on Style and Structure**

**1. How does O’Connor use foreshadowing in “A Good Man Is Hard to Find”? What effect did the**

**foreshadowing have on your first reading of the story? When you read about The Misfit in the**

**first paragraph, did you think that you would meet him?**

**2. Contrast the description of the grandmother’s outfit with the rest of the family’s traveling**

**attire (paras. 12, 69). What do the characters’ clothes tell us about them? What is significant**

**about The Misfit’s appropriation of Bailey’s parrot shirt (paras. 122–23)?**

**3. “‘In my time,’ said the grandmother, folding her thin veined fingers, ‘children were more**

**respectful of their native states and their parents and everything else. People did right then. Oh**

**look at the cute little pickaninny!’ she said and pointed to a Negro child standing in the door of**

**a shack” (para. 18). What is ironic about this passage? How does the grandmother define “did**

**right”? What evidence suggests a contrast between the character’s and the author’s perspectives**

**of what it means to “do right”?**

**4. What is the purpose of the scene at Red Sammy’s barbecue place? Consider the conversation**

**between the grandmother and Red Sammy about the difficulty of finding a “good man.” How**

**does this scene develop the story’s themes as well as plot?**

**5. Take another look at the allusion the grandmother makes to *Gone With the Wind* in paragraph 24.**

**What deeper meaning can you find in her joke about the plantation? How does this joke affect your**

**reading of the story?**

**6. Explain how the setting shifts once the family takes a detour off the main road. Why is this**

**shift important to the story’s plot? How does the shift in setting contribute to the shift in the**

**story’s tone?**

**7. Why do you think O’Connor chose to capitalize “ACCIDENT!” in the children’s dialogue? After**

**the accident, a slow-moving car appears on the horizon, “a big black battered hearse-like automobile”**

**(para. 70). Why might the author have chosen not to use commas between these adjectives?**

**How do the punctuation and alliteration contribute to the effect of this description?**

**8. The Misfit’s words are often given a phonetic rendering:**

**• “I pre-chate that, lady.” (para. 92)**

**• “The boys want to ast you something.” (para. 94)**

**• “I’ll look and see terrectly.” (para. 101)**

**• “Nome.” (para. 107)**

**• “I . . . seen a man burnt alive oncet.” (para. 109)**

**• “I don’t want no hep.” (para. 121)**

**What effect does this use of dialect have on your understanding of The Misfit’s character? What**

**other characters in the story speak in dialect, and what does it say about them?**

**9. Examine the following similes used in “A Good Man Is Hard to Find”:**

**• “whose face was as broad and innocent as a cabbage” (para. 2)**

**• “her big black valise that looked like the head of a hippopotamus” (para. 10)**

**• “His jaw was as rigid as a horseshoe.” (para. 49)**

**• “She could hear the wind move through the tree tops like a long satisfied insuck of**

**breath.” (para. 108)**

**• “the grandmother raised her head like a parched old turkey hen crying for water”**

**(para. 133)**