

The Uniqueness of Our Differences

We've all met people who are open minded to differences but we've also met people who, instead of appreciating other people's differences, feel threatened by them and don't make an effort to get to know that person. In the short story, "A Very Old Man With Enormous Wings" by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, this conflict is shown among the main characters and a newcomer who is considered "different" than the rest of the people in their town. The main characters, Elisenda and Pelayo, feel threatened by a new human angel who has come into their town. Because of their fear, they don't treat him as they would any other person in their town, and instead objectify him. The author uses indirect characterization to leave it to us to characterize the main characters by their actions, thoughts, and words. The author of this story uses literary devices, like characterization and mood, to convey the theme of not feeling threatened by other people's differences and instead embracing what makes us all unique.

The townspeople were intrigued by the angel's different features, but instead of trying to figure out who he was and where he came from, they outcasted him right off the bat. Paragraph 4 says, "On the following day, everyone knew that a flesh-and-blood angel was held captive in Pelayo's house." This quote tells us that the main characters treat the angel in a different way than they would anyone else and they treat him like an object instead of a human being. If another person, that was considered "normal" came into the town, Elisenda and Pelayo would most likely *not* hold them captive, and maybe even find them a decent place to stay. But because the angel is so different from them, they don't think he's worthy of a fair treatment and decide to make him feel less worthy than everyone else.

Halfway through the story, Elisenda and Pelayo decide to charge an admission for anyone who wants to come and see the angel. They figured that everybody in the town would like to witness the angel with their own eyes. Paragraph 7 says, “Pelayo and Elisenda were happy with fatigue, for in less than a week they had crammed their rooms with money.” Through this description of Elisenda and Pelayo, the author exposes us to indirect characterization by helping us infer that they are selfish without him having to tell us directly. The fact that they weren’t doing anything to make the angel feel at home or feel welcomed and were still getting a benefit out of having him in their house shows us how much they care about themselves and not the angel’s feelings or thoughts. They put his well mental and emotional well being at risk all for their own benefits.

Towards the end of the story another “different” human being, a tarantula woman, came into the town. After everyone seemed more interested in this new woman, Elisenda and Pelayo realized that maybe they didn’t have anything to fear after all regarding the angel. In paragraph 13, Elisenda was glancing at the angel through the window, “because then he was no longer an annoyance in her life, but an imaginary dot on the horizon of the sea.” The author uses this metaphor to show us how much Elisenda has grown fond of the angel. At first, she did feel threatened by his differences and wasn’t sure how to feel about him showing up, but by the end of the story, she finally realized that he was just another human being who didn’t deserve to be outcasted for something he did not have control over.

This particular theme is an important message for all people because it teaches us a great lesson about judging someone that we don’t know based on their differences and how they are unlike us. The way the author chose to share the theme of the story, by using major differences between the angel and the townspeople, made everything easy to understand. To conclude, this story teaches us a lesson that we will all eventually learn on our own. We’ve all been victims of being outcasted because of our differences, but we all have also outcasted someone because of their differences from us.