

# everything that rises must converge story

**everything that rises must converge story** is a profound exploration of the themes of identity, race, and the human condition, encapsulated in Flannery O'Connor's short story. This narrative intricately weaves the lives of its characters, particularly focusing on the interactions between a mother and her son, highlighting the tensions that arise from differing worldviews shaped by their backgrounds and experiences. As the story unfolds, it presents a rich tapestry of social commentary, deep psychological insights, and symbolic elements that resonate with contemporary issues. This article will delve into the summary of the story, its characters, themes, and the significant symbols O'Connor employs. The aim is to provide a comprehensive understanding of "Everything That Rises Must Converge" and its lasting impact on literature and society.

- Summary of the Story
- Character Analysis
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## Summary of the Story

"Everything That Rises Must Converge" is set in the American South during the 1960s, a period marked by significant social change, particularly regarding race relations. The narrative centers around Julian, a young man who is disillusioned with his mother's outdated views and prejudices, especially regarding race. Julian's mother, a product of her time, holds on to her old-fashioned beliefs, which are increasingly challenged by the evolving social landscape. This conflict forms the crux of the story.

As the story progresses, Julian and his mother take a bus trip to a local Y where she intends to attend a weight loss class. The bus ride becomes a microcosm of the racial tensions present in society. Julian is embarrassed by his mother's overt racism and attempts to confront her by engaging with a young African American man—a character who serves as a critical point of comparison to Julian's mother. The interactions on the bus illustrate the complex dynamics of race, class, and generational conflict that permeate the narrative.

The story culminates in a dramatic confrontation between Julian's mother and a black woman, which leads to unexpected consequences. This climax not only highlights the personal conflicts between the characters but also serves as a metaphor for the larger societal struggles in America during that era. Ultimately, the story leaves readers contemplating the themes of convergence, identity, and the painful realities of societal change.

## Character Analysis

The characters in "Everything That Rises Must Converge" are richly developed and serve as representations of broader societal issues. Each character embodies specific traits and ideologies that resonate with the themes of the story.

### Julian

Julian is portrayed as an educated young man who is deeply conflicted. His disdain for his mother's outdated beliefs creates a rift between them. Although he attempts to present himself as progressive and enlightened, his actions often reveal his own prejudices and insecurities. Julian's character arc reflects the struggle between the old and new societal norms, making him a complex protagonist.

### Julian's Mother

Julian's mother represents the older generation, clinging to traditional values and racial prejudices. Her character offers insight into the mindset of many individuals during the civil rights movement, illustrating how deeply ingrained beliefs can be. Her eventual confrontation with the black woman on the bus serves as a critical moment of revelation, forcing both her and Julian to confront the realities of their beliefs.

### The Black Woman

The black woman in the story, though not named, plays a pivotal role in the climax. She symbolizes the changing social landscape and the challenges that arise when different worlds collide. Her interactions with Julian's mother bring to light the tensions surrounding race and class, ultimately leading to a poignant moment that encapsulates the story's central themes.

## Themes Explored

Flannery O'Connor's narrative is rich with themes that invite readers to examine societal norms, personal beliefs, and the human experience. Some of the most significant themes include:

- **Racial Conflict:** The story delves into the complexities of race relations in America, particularly in the South. It highlights the generational divide in attitudes towards race.
- **Identity and Self-Perception:** Characters grapple with their identities and how they are perceived by others, especially concerning societal changes.
- **Generational Conflict:** The contrasting beliefs between Julian and his mother illustrate the broader societal shifts occurring at the time.
- **Social Class:** The story explores how class influences the characters' interactions and perceptions, particularly in a racially divided society.

## Symbolism in the Story

O'Connor employs various symbols throughout "Everything That Rises Must Converge" to enhance the narrative and deepen its themes. Understanding these symbols is essential for a complete interpretation of the story.

### The Bus

The bus itself serves as a symbol of societal change. It represents a space where different social classes and races come together, often highlighting the tensions that arise from this convergence. The confined space of the bus amplifies the characters' conflicts and their inability to escape their prejudices.

### The Hat

Julian's mother's hat is another important symbol. It signifies her adherence to outdated social norms and her desire to maintain her status. The hat becomes a focal point during the confrontation on the bus, symbolizing the clash between her old-world views and the new reality of racial equality.

## Literary Significance

"Everything That Rises Must Converge" is not only a critical piece of Flannery O'Connor's oeuvre but also a significant work in American literature that addresses themes of race, identity, and societal change. The story's exploration of complex social issues through personal relationships provides a profound commentary on the human condition.

O'Connor's use of vivid imagery, sharp dialogue, and compelling character dynamics showcases her masterful storytelling abilities. The story's enduring relevance is evident in contemporary discussions around race and identity, making it a vital piece of literature that continues to resonate with readers today.

## **Conclusion**

In summary, "Everything That Rises Must Converge" offers a powerful exploration of the intersections of race, identity, and societal change. Through its rich characters, complex themes, and significant symbolism, Flannery O'Connor crafts a narrative that challenges readers to reflect on their beliefs and the societal structures that shape them. The story remains a poignant reminder of the ongoing struggles regarding race and identity, encouraging continuous dialogue and introspection in our modern world.

### **Q: What is the main conflict in "Everything That Rises Must Converge"?**

A: The main conflict centers around the generational divide between Julian and his mother regarding their beliefs about race and societal changes. Julian's modern views clash with his mother's outdated prejudices, leading to tension and ultimately confrontation.

### **Q: How does O'Connor use symbolism in the story?**

A: O'Connor employs various symbols, such as the bus and Julian's mother's hat, to enhance the narrative. The bus represents societal change and the tensions that arise from different social classes and races, while the hat symbolizes adherence to outdated social norms.

### **Q: What themes are prevalent in "Everything That Rises Must Converge"?**

A: Key themes include racial conflict, identity and self-perception, generational conflict, and social class. These themes are explored through the interactions of the characters and the societal context in which the story is set.

### **Q: Who are the main characters in the story?**

A: The main characters include Julian, his mother, and a black woman who plays a crucial role in the climax. Each character embodies specific traits and ideologies that reflect broader societal issues.

**Q: What does the ending of the story signify?**

A: The ending signifies a moment of revelation for both Julian and his mother, forcing them to confront the realities of their beliefs and the societal changes occurring around them. It highlights the painful convergence of their different worldviews.

**Q: How does the story reflect the historical context of the 1960s in America?**

A: The story reflects the historical context of the 1960s by addressing the racial tensions and societal changes during the civil rights movement. It captures the struggles of individuals grappling with evolving social norms and the clash between old and new ideologies.

**Q: Why is "Everything That Rises Must Converge" considered important in American literature?**

A: The story is considered important because it addresses complex themes of race, identity, and societal change through a personal narrative. O'Connor's masterful storytelling and character development provide a profound commentary on the human experience, making it relevant across generations.

**Q: What literary techniques does O'Connor use in the story?**

A: O'Connor employs techniques such as vivid imagery, sharp dialogue, and dynamic character interactions to convey her themes. These techniques enhance the emotional impact of the narrative and underscore the complexities of the characters' experiences.

**Q: How does Julian's character evolve throughout the story?**

A: Julian evolves from a disillusioned young man who feels superior to his mother to someone who must confront his own prejudices and beliefs. His journey reflects the broader themes of generational conflict and the struggle for identity in a changing society.

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