

A Prayer For Owen Meany - Style and Thematic Overview

John Irving has created the story of a miracle and the reaction of ordinary people to extraordinary events. His literary method stresses story over style and emphasis on character development and recognizable plot rather than complex structure or form. His belief in the entertainment of literature is reflected in the juxtaposition of violence and comedy, joy and sorrow, humor and compassion.

Owen's voice and capital letters:

- The capitals distinguish the dialogue of Owen Meany. Is this a distraction or an effective means of highlighting the expressions of the central character?
- Is Owen always screaming or does he have an exceptionally high pitched or loud voice?
- Do the capitals reflect his boldness in contrast with his size? Does it suggest that he *has* to talk loudly to be heard and give weight to his words?
- Does it call undue attention to what he says, or is it an appropriate reflection of the "hypnotic awfulness" of his voice? Does it underemphasize what others say?

In a *Time* magazine interview, Irving stated that he is "moved and impressed by people with a great deal of religious faith. Jesus has always struck me as a perfect victim and a perfect hero." He is also impressed that Christ is aware of his own destiny. The use of upper case is a feature suggested to Irving by the red letters in which Jesus' utterances appear in some editions of the New Testament. Professing himself an instrument of God, Owen believes that nothing in his life is accidental or purposeless (i.e. the foul ball hit off Owen's bat kills Tabitha and reveals to Johnny the identity of his father).

Johnny Wheelwright's Congregational heritage is from a real ancestor which results in his own "religious confusion and stubbornness" and adopted Anglicanism. He owes his faith to Owen Meany - how it happened and at what cost is at the heart of the recall in the novel and its inception in Chapter 1.

The vital function of memory serves as Johnny's link with Owen. His association with Owen represents an inextricable influence on his own adult views and values.

This novel is based on the belief that faith creates miracles. For Johnny, the miracle of Owen Meany's life became a lifelong influence in the strengthening of his own faith. Look closely at the opening lines of the novel.

Miracle - an extraordinary occurrence ascribed to a divine or supernatural cause.