

Name: _____

Class: _____

Date: _____

SCORE/GRADE:

CHARACTER: *The Bronze Bow*

In a single page, evaluate the thematic significance of this story's ANTAGONIST – that is, explain how the author uses this structural element to emphasize the story's main themes. As always, refer to the events of the story in your answer. For page-length answers, attach a separate sheet if necessary.

There are five possible antagonistic forces in the story: Amalek the blacksmith, the Romans, Joel's father, Jesus himself, and Marcus (the young Roman soldier).

Amalek, the blacksmith to whom Daniel was apprenticed as a boy, beat and misused Daniel. Daniel runs away from him, hiding with Rosh in the hillside.

The Romans occupy the whole region of Jerusalem and subject the Israelites to taxation and forced labor in some instances. The Jews resent their presence and control, and Daniel is no exception. His family's history with the Romans only worsens this situation. For both these reasons, Daniel exerts himself against the Romans, and hates them wholeheartedly. "I live for just one thing – to rid us of our Roman masters" (p. 151).

Daniel's family history with the Romans is a brutal one. The Roman tax collector had come early to Daniel's newly married uncle. Because he had splurged and bought his wife a gift in honor of the birth of their first child, he could not pay the taxes. He was a proud man and did not ask for the help of his family. He was arrested. Daniel's father and four other men tried to rescue him. In the process, all were caught. The Romans decided to make an example of the men and crucified them. Daniel's mother refused to leave the cross of her husband. She caught pneumonia from exposure and died shortly thereafter. His young sister was so traumatized by the event that she became possessed by demons of fear.

Consequently, she refuses to leave her home, or to be seen by anyone. She hasn't left her home since she was 5-years-old. Daniel's grandmother, his sole remaining relative, became the children's caretaker. Without a male provider, she was reduced to poverty. She sold Daniel to Amalek, the abusive blacksmith, as an apprentice/slave. It was in this situation that Daniel made the acquaintance of Simon the Zealot, and from it that he fled into the mountains.

Joel's father is a learned man who has sided with the conservative majority in the crisis of Roman rule. Rather than cast his lot with bandits like Rosh who hide in the hills and antagonize their Roman oppressors, he hopes to work within the new framework the Romans provided to establish a peaceable kingdom. He believes the violence that the zealots fomented is damaging to the Jewish people, and refuses to allow the vitriolic poison to infect his own household. To prevent this, he denies Daniel access to Joel and Thacia. Personally, Joel's father holds nothing against Daniel. He somewhat likes Daniel's spirit. He is of like mind concerning the need for a Messiah Redeemer. Yet his approach to this event is entirely different than Daniel's.

While Jesus in no way physically opposes Daniel, nor ideologically opposes him, Jesus' concept of how to realize their shared objectives represents a paradigm shift for Daniel and the other Israelites. Jesus in no way advocates the pursuit of vengeance on the Romans, neither does he advocate a military overthrow of their government. Rather, he suggests the establishment of the kingdom they all await through peaceable means, and describes it as being already present, in fact, in Himself. He cautions Daniel against rash actions, vengeance, and bitterness, encouraging him rather to forgive his enemies. For Daniel, who lives for vengeance alone and whose hatred of the Romans gives his very life meaning, Jesus' words are menacing. Even so, he is strangely drawn by this man.

The young soldier, Marcus, was enlisted by the Romans as they charged across the then known world, dominating and subjugating other nations. He befriends Daniel's sister Leah. He is lonely and recognizes a kinship in this young and beautiful girl. When he gives her a gift of fine fruits, Daniel is incensed. He destroys the gift, nearly destroying his sister in the process. She, having come so far out of the darkness that plagues her, retreats once again into the shadows where demons enslave and terrorize. The soldier is concerned when he hears of her ensuing illness, pacing the sidewalk across from her house, enduring Daniel's stormy looks in the process. Again, his presence as an opposing character is not intentional. He had been forced to join the Roman army, caring nothing for their goals or agendas. He knows nothing of their violent treatment of Daniel's family. His only relationship to Daniel's family is one of concern and friendship. Yet his very presence and uniform is antagonistic to Daniel.