

In "A Good Man is Hard to Find" by Flannery O'Connor, the cat represents misfortune. A cat, in general, is a symbol of bad luck or misfortune, especially a black cat. The story never specified the color of Pitty Sing, but he definitely brings misfortune to the family. The reason the Grandmother took the cat is "because she would miss him too much" (O'Connor 3). The Grandmother was afraid the cat might "accidentally asphyxiate himself" (3). She did not want the beloved cat to die, but since she brought Pitty Sing, everyone else was ultimately killed. The Grandmother's mischief with the cat leads to misfortune with the Misfit. The cat only appears twice in the story, when he attacks Bailey and when the Misfit picks him up and cares for him. After "Bailey removed the cat from his neck with both hands and flung it out the window against the side of a pine tree" (15) he disappears until the Misfit picks him up and pets him. Pitty Sing does not go in the ditch with the rest of the family or go back into the woods to witness their last breaths. He stayed on the side, just an extra, only watching, the misfit of the family. The cat directly and indirectly causes the main problem in the story. He is a literal misfortune when he attacks Bailey. The cat was thrown out of the car as if he was being thrown out of the family. It was nice to see this misfit be taken in by one of his own kind.

In the short story "Once Upon a Time" written by Nadine Gordimer, the privileged, white family's wall symbolizes apartheid in South Africa. Although riots took place outside of the suburb, the wife "was afraid that someday such people might open the gates and stream in" (Gordimer 23). Because of this fear, her husband had electronically controlled gates fitted around the house. This symbolizes apartheid in South Africa because this literal separation from the outside community mirrors the separation of whites and blacks in the nation. The family also believed that when the house was locked and secure "someone might still be able to climb over the wall or the electronically-closed gates into the garden" (25). Since the gates could possibly be climbed over, the husband and wife decide to add bricks and make the wall higher. Again, this symbolizes apartheid because the white society was increasingly segregating itself from the black community, and their desire for isolation was growing. While taking a walk around the neighborhood, the family decides they need even more protection from the people on the street, so they decide to add coils and jagged blades to their wall. With this wall "there would be no way out, only a struggle getting bloodier and bloodier" (27). Thereafter, the wall destroyed the family because they lost their son when he tried to climb over it. The family could not "live happily ever after" anymore (23). This is symbolic of apartheid in South Africa because the segregation of the black community continued to grow until the system of apartheid finally collapsed.