

FOUNDATIONS IN COMMUNICATION, COMPOSITION & LEARNING  
SEMESTER 2, SPRING 2017

**The Role of Buddy Palms in *The Good Negress***

Thesis: Although the character of Buddy Palms does not occupy a large portion of the novel, his central importance is revealed in three ways: as a foil to Big Jim, as an important influence on Denise's developing sense of her role within the family, and as early reminder in Denise's mind of the fragility of life.

- I. Denise's juxtaposition of similar scenes involving Buddy and Jim reveals her preference for her father.
  - A. When Denise describes the party Jim and Margarete have to introduce Denise to their friends, there is little description of strong feelings of affection between Jim and Margarete.
  - B. In contrast, her description of the Easter gathering with her parents is suffused with details of their expressions of love.
- II. The description of her Easter dinner with her father offers insight into one of Denise's earliest stages in her development into her role as a female in the family.
  - A. Her desire to please her father—through both cooking and cleaning—forms the basis for her later compulsion to clean and cook for the family.
  - B. Denise's description of her parents as they walk to church suggests that she recognizes them to be models for a happy, loving relationship.
- III. Buddy's death forces Denise to confront the ever-present threat of loss.
  - A. Retrospectively, the death of Lonts Ownes's death takes on added significance.
  - B. The description of the death of Alma Jones's son, presented in the midst of the description of Clara's birth, reinforces this lesson.