

Powerful Imagery and Themes in The Killer Angels

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In *The Killer Angels*, Michael Shaara fictionally illustrates the historical facts of the battle at Gettysburg. Shaara gives action and words to characters of another time, and then places these players on the stage of this great battle. Through the use of powerful biblical and non-biblical imagery and themes the epic nature of the battle at Gettysburg and its characters are enhanced. Such [imagery](#) and themes, combined with [Shaara's](#) fictionalization, help to contribute to why this single battle holds such monumental significance and influence upon the lives of Americans over a century removed from its occurrence.

In the Foreword, before the battle begins, Shaara starts with a list of the principle players in the upcoming tragic drama of the battle at Gettysburg. Like in a program to a stage play, the armies and the characters are listed before they take the stage. As the curtain opens, the first actor who appears on this stage is the Confederate spy, Harrison, who is actually an actor by profession. Through this solitary and seemingly insignificant man, the reader is taken backstage to witness the drama unfold in person.

Upon meeting General Robert E. Lee, "the spy worshipped" (Shaara 14) Lee as he spoke to the General. Although this behavior of the spy may seem rather excessive, it is

consistent with the Confederate troops' attitude towards Lee. To the Confederates, the Civil War was a type of "Holy War" (Shaara 67) and Lee was like God the Father leading them in "the Cause". (Shaara 361) Indeed, even to General Longstreet, Lee's second-in-command, Lee had taken the place of God. (Shaara 134)

Through the use of biblical imagery and themes, the epic proportions of the battle at Ge...

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...that what has been will always be a part of what remains. It is doubtful that the curtain will ever close on Gettysburg.

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