

Explain Spenser's treatment of good and evil in "The Faerie Queene, Book 1".

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Or, Write a discourse on Spenser's treatment of good and evil in "The Faerie Queene, Book 1".

In *"The Faerie Queene, Book I"* (1590), Edmund Spenser (1552/53-1599) shows a clear fight between good and evil. Here, good and evil take the form of knights, ladies, monsters, and sorcerers. The poem teaches us that good people must fight against evil things in life, like lies, sin, and false religion. Here we will discuss how Spenser shows good and evil in this poem.

The Red Cross Knight: The Red Cross Knight is the central figure of good in *"The Faerie Queene, Book I."* He represents holiness. The Red Cross Knight is on a mission to defeat a dragon and save Lady Una's parents. The dragon symbolizes sin and evil. Spenser portrays the knight as a brave man. He is devoted to his faith. We learn this because the knight carries the bloody cross on his shield and armor. This red cross is a reminder of the sacrifice of his lord, Jesus Christ. Spenser writes:

"But on his brest a bloudie Crosse he bore"

So, the knight is a good Christian. Here, the knight's mission shows us a good Christian's journey to be holy.

Lady Una: Lady Una is the knight's companion on this journey. She is pure, kind, and wise. Spenser describes her as:

"So pure an innocent, as that same lambe."

The knight is going to her kingdom to save her parents from a fire-breathing dragon. Here, Lady Una is the symbol of truth and goodness. She stands for true religion. The journey of the

lady and the knight symbolizes that a good person must be guided by truth or true religion.

Monster Error: Spenser introduces evil through characters like the monster Error and the deceitful Archimago. Error is an ugly creature that looks like half-woman and half-serpent. This vile monster represents falsehood. It means lies and false religious beliefs. Error is—

“A monster vile, whom God and man does hate:”

The Red Cross Knight's battle with Error is a fight against evil. The fight is a symbolic struggle against the dangers of false religion and sin. The monster's thousands of offspring are the followers of false religion. Spenser suggests how lies and false can spread and cause harm. When the knight finally defeats Error, it shows that holiness and faith can win over evil.

Archimago: Archimago is an evil magician/sorcerer. He tricks the knight and the lady to create a conflict between them. Archimago represents hypocrisy and lies. At first, when he meets the Red Cross Knight and Lady Una, he seems to be a pious man. He tries to gain the knight's trust. He seems to pray and repent even when walking:

“And all the way he [Archimago] prayed, as he went”

When alone, Archimago summons/calls bad spirits to deceive the knight. He uses evil spirits to separate the knight and the lady. This highlights that evil often hides behind a mask of goodness.

Religious Allegory: Spenser's “The Faerie Queene” is an allegorical poem. So, the good and evil characters in this poem have symbolic significance. All the good characters are symbols of the Protestant Church of England, while all the evil characters are symbols of the Roman Catholic Church, in Spenser's view. Monster Error and Archimago are the lies and tricks of false religion. Through his journey, the knight learns that he needs truth (Una) and faith (God) to win against evil.

In conclusion, Spenser presents the struggle between good and evil as a central theme in Book 1 of “The Faerie Queene”. Through Red Cross Knight's journey with Lady Una, Spenser shows that a good Christian must fight sin, lies, and temptations. We learn that truth, faith, and goodness can win over lies, sin, and evil.