

Frank O'Connor
First Confession
Essential things so as to understand the story!

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Jackie is a young Irish boy who is being forced to make his first confession. He is terrified of the ordeal because he has several sins which he feels he must hide but this would constitute a "Bad Confession". The punishment for a "Bad Confession" would be an eternity in hell. His confession, however, proves to be very different from what he expected.

One cannot really understand this short story without a knowledge of the Catholic Church as it existed at about the time when the child O'Connor experienced this incident, i.e. about 1910. The following questions try to get to the heart of the most important issues.

1. The short story bases itself on a belief in "mortal sin" and "confession".
 - What is a mortal sin? (4)
 - What is confession? (4)
 - What is a confessional? (4)
 - How would the confessional have worked at the time that this short story was written? (4)
 - What would happen inside the confessional? (4)
 - At what age did a typical Catholic make his or her first confession? (1)

3. The question of hell also plays an important part in this story.
 - What was hell? (4)
 - What was hell like? (4)
 - Could the soul ever escape from the fires of Hell? Explain. (4)

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