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Symbolism in *The Road*-

While reading *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy one of the main passages that stuck out to me was on pages 49-50 about the man who was “struck by lightning” that emerged from the woods. The page starts with the boy and the man backtracking their way on the road when they come across a couple of tracks that had been burned into the road. While following the tracks from a distance they see a man ahead of them limping and slowly shuffling his way forward. Eventually, the man realizes that the person ahead of them was struck by lightning and was going to collapse any second now. The boy asks the man if they can help him but the man says no which causes the boy to start crying. They argue for a little while but then the boy stops and accepts the dad's words to move forward without looking back for the scorched man. This passage itself reveals a lot about the symbolism in the text and the rest of the book through the writing and imagery.

For starters, we still have yet to find out the names of our two main characters and probably won't ever find out this important information. I believe the reasoning behind this is to acknowledge the book's dark/gloomy setting, which McCarthy illustrates perfectly. The way the scenes are described and written also brings a lot to the story. For example, when they first saw the lightning-struck man we were described the way he walked, “They came upon him shuffling along the road before them, dragging one leg slightly and stopping from time to time to stand

stooped and uncertain before setting out again,”(49) with a description like this it is nearly impossible to not imagine it in your mind. You can tell that something is wrong with the man before finding out he had been struck by lightning. There is almost an uneasy or eerie feeling when reading through this section. Just imagine it, you and someone else walking through a path that has footprints scorched into the road, and then seeing a shadowy-looking figure in front of you that is dragging their body like a zombie.

We are also given an in-depth description of the man they were watching. “He was as burnt looking as the country, his clothing scorched and black. One of his eyes was burnt shut and his hair was but a nitty wig of ash upon his blackened skull. As they passed he looked down. As if he'd done something wrong. His shoes were bound up with wire and coated with road tar and he sat there in silence, bent over in his rags``(50) he had been burned from head to toe. There was also a simile embedded into the sentence, “He was as burnt looking as the country,” which seems like a pretty amazing way to bring back the dark/gloomy setting of the book. In a post-apocalyptic world that has practically passed the “breaking point,” what better way to describe the situation than “burnt looking.” McCarthy’s writing and word choices fit *The Road* amazingly well and match up with the gloomy aspect of its story.