Appendix C

Close Read and Annotations—Teacher Version
"Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?"

by Joyce Carol Oates

First published in *Epoch*, Fall 1966. Included in *Prize Stories: O. Henry Award Winners* (1968) and *The Best American Short Stories* (1967).

Her name was Connie. She was fifteen and she had a quick, nervous giggling habit of craning her neck to glance into mirrors or checking other people's faces to make sure her own was all right. Her mother, who noticed everything and knew everything and who hadn't much reason any longer to look at her own face, always scolded Connie about it. "Stop gawking at yourself. Who are you? You think you're so pretty?" she would say. Connie would raise her eyebrows at these familiar old complaints and look right through her mother, into a shadowy vision of herself as she was right at that moment: she knew she was pretty and that was everything. Her mother had been pretty once too, if you could believe those old snapshots in the album, but now her looks were gone and that was why she was always after Connie.

(Paragraph One)

What role does identity play throughout the story? How does Connie define her identity? *The role of identity is prominent throughout this story as Connie, like most teenagers, tries to define herself by testing parental and societal boundaries.*

Identify the point of view in the story. How does Oates effectively use point of view to communicate the character of Connie to the reader? *The third person narrator reveals Connie's point of view. Through the narrator we learn Connie's thoughts and feelings without additional commentary or judgment. This allows the reader to feel Connie's fear and eventual victimization.*

...Everything about her had two sides to it, one for home and one for anywhere that was not home: her walk, which could be childlike and bobbing, or languid enough to make anyone think she was hearing music in her head; her mouth, which was pale and smirking most of the time, but bright and pink on these evenings out; her laugh, which was cynical and drawling at

home—"Ha, ha, very funny,"—but high-pitched and nervous anywhere else, like the jingling of the charms on her bracelet.

(Paragraph 4)

How is Connie's behavior typical of most teens? How does it differ? *Like many teens, Connie establishes a different identity at home than she does with her peers. She identifies her worth with her physical attractiveness.*

Why do you think Oates wrote this story? What message might she want to relay to the audience? *Connie fulfills the role of a typical, pretty teenage girl. Oates created this fragile persona to show how unstable one is when one relies on looks alone. Teenage girls may be especially susceptible and easier to exploit. Oates originally titled the story "Death and the Maiden," which she said was meant to show the "fatal attractions of death" for a girl "seduced by her own vanity."*

...Connie sat with her eyes closed in the sun, dreaming and dazed with the warmth about her as if this were a kind of love, the caresses of love, and her mind slipped over onto thoughts of the boy she had been with the night before and how nice he had been, how sweet it always was, not the way someone like June would suppose but sweet, gentle, the way it was in movies and promised in songs; and when she opened her eyes she hardly knew where she was, the back yard ran off into weeds and a fence-like line of trees and behind it the sky was perfectly blue and still. The asbestos ranch house that was now three years old startled her—it looked small. She shook her head as if to get awake.

(Paragraph 12)

Why is the setting of the story significant? How does Oates create tension throughout the story? *The setting of the story is purposely vague and uneventful. The unexpected violence is juxtaposed with the boring, generic suburban life. This creates an additional tension.*

How does Connie view the idea of love? Is it a realistic portrayal? Why or why not? *Connie's view of love reveals her naivety. She considers herself a talented flirt and enjoys the power that comes from gaining boys' attention.*

There were two boys in the car and now she recognized the driver: he had shaggy, shabby black hair that looked crazy as a wig and he was grinning at her.

"I ain't late, am I?" he said.

"Who the hell do you think you are?" Connie said.

"Toldja I'd be out, didn't I?"

"I don't even know who you are."

She spoke sullenly, careful to show no interest or pleasure, and he spoke in a fast, bright monotone. Connie looked past him to the other boy, taking her time. He had fair brown hair, with a lock that fell onto his forehead. His sideburns gave him a fierce, embarrassed look, but so far he hadn't even bothered to glance at her. Both boys wore sunglasses. The driver's glasses were metallic and mirrored everything in miniature.

"You wanta come for a ride?" he said.

Connie smirked and let her hair fall loose over one shoulder.

(Paragraph 17)

Identify Oates's use of symbolism throughout the story. What might Arnold Friend represent? *Many literary critics have read Arnold Friend as a "devil" figure representing evil. He misrepresents himself and deceives Connie, which leads to her eventual downfall.*

How is Arnold Friend characterized? Describe the relationship between Arnold and Connie. *Oates's descriptions show us that Arnold is not as he seems. He is clearly much older than Connie. She flirts and banters with him as if he were a peer. Arnold's character is not genuine, but he is skillful at manipulating Connie. She is not experienced enough to realize what she is dealing with.*

Guiding Questions

1. What was the topic of your journal? How does this topic relate to Joyce Carol Oates's story? Explain with two text references.
2. What message do you think Oates sought to convey to the audience through this story? What questions does she pose to the audience? List at least three questions.
3. Compare Oates's style of writing with other authors you've read. Discuss patterns of symbols, images, and allusions in your analysis.

Writing about Literature in the Real World

Unless you are a professor of literature, you may never have to write about literature in your career or everyday life; however, at some time in your college or university career, you will probably be asked to provide a critical analysis of a play, poem, film, or novel. Elective literature surveys, humanities courses, and some first-year composition classes often include such an assignment. An increased sense of empathy, sympathy, and self-awareness about our place in the world and relationship to others can be a result of reading works of literature. Writing about literature allows us to take shared human experiences and translate them into emotional and intellectual growth. In order to write about literature effectively, you will have to learn how to analyze it; to understand, appreciate, and use varying interpretations of the same work; and to synthesize the work of scholars with your own opinions and insights.

Active Reading

Whatever type of work you are reading, you need to approach it in a systematic and careful manner. Reading a novel or a book of short stories for the sheer pleasure of it is certainly worthwhile. However, reading literature assigned in a college course is often a far more demanding and time-consuming task than reading the latest bestseller. Academics expect **active reading:** a level of reading that prompts analytical, interpretive, and evaluative responses from students, thereby improving their ability to think critically and to discuss sophisticated ideas intelligently. (See Chapter 1 in *Writing Today* for more on active reading.)

To approach a work of literature and to write about it require the same attention to the rules of academic reading and writing that you apply in any other discipline. In addition, you should adhere to the guidelines given below.

General Guidelines for Reading and Writing about Literature

READING LITERATURE

- Reading, like writing, is a process. To understand and appreciate a short story, play, or poem, you may have to read it more than once. The same is true for a novel, but time constraints might permit you to give multiple readings only to selected passages or chapters.
- As with any text, don't be afraid to underline significant lines or passages or to make marginal notes that will help you construct a coherent analysis of the piece later on. The most common types of notes that students make when reading a short story or play are descriptions or analyses of particular characters, descriptions of setting, or ideas that lead to a fuller understanding of the **theme**—the vision or message about human experience that the author is trying to convey. The most common types of notes students

make when reading poetry relate to word choice and figurative language (see Chapters 5 and 27), to tone, and to metre and rhyme scheme.

- Make your notes and markings in pencil so you will be able to revise, erase, or replace notes when you read the work a second or third time.
- Adopt an active stance. Reading sophisticated literature demands intellectual curiosity and a willingness to engage the text. For example, to discover the deeper meaning of a short story, you need to do more than simply follow the plot. You need to understand the ironic twists in the plot caused by pure coincidence, setting, or motivations of a particular character. You also need to consider how setting informs tone, and how tone, in turn, contributes to the story's theme. All of these tasks require you to draw conclusions and to interpret what is happening, what is being said, where and when the action is taking place, who is involved, and how one event or character affects another.
- When analyzing literature from another culture, try not to make assumptions based upon what you know of your own culture.

After you have decided on an aspect of the short story or poem to write about and have developed a plan, or outline, for your essay, you are ready to draft your paper. The following guidelines apply to all types of literary analyses.

WRITING CRITICAL ESSAYS ABOUT LITERATURE

- If you quote directly, summarize, or paraphrase from a primary or secondary source, provide citations for those sources. The piece of literature you are reading and analyzing is one type of primary source. A book, journal article, or other scholarly commentary about that piece of literature is a type of secondary source. The system that is normally used to cite such sources is the one recommended by the Modern Language Association and found in *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers,* seventh edition (2009). MLA style is also discussed in Chapters 3 and 17 of the *Writing Today* textbook.
- Double-check to make sure that you are quoting, summarizing, or paraphrasing accurately. You can find out more about using direct quotations, summaries, and paraphrases in Chapters 3 and 17.
- Whether you are analyzing a story, novel, poem, play, or film, use the present tense (sometimes called the *literary present*). For example, "At the beginning of John Updike's short story 'A&P,' the main character, Sammy, *is* a clerk at a grocery store. He *had been* a high school student." Note that the past perfect tense is used for narrative events that happened before the time that you are discussing.
- Refer to authors by their last names.

Writing about Fiction

Short stories and novels are called **fiction.** Although they are narratives, they differ from narrative essays, which are based on real events and are considered nonfiction. Short stories and novels are products of the author's imagination or are imaginative recreations of real events.

Many first-year English classes that cover fiction have students read short stories rather than novels. When instructors assign a critical essay on a short story, they are normally looking for an essay about a feature or an issue associated with that work—for example, the personality and motives of a character, the use of a particular type of symbol, or the effect of setting on the characters and theme. These instructors want more than a simple recounting of the narrative, point by point, event by event—a practice that is unnecessary and that fails to address the assignment.

Useful Terms for Writing about Fiction

In order to analyze a short story and then to use this analysis as the basis of a critical essay, you will need to learn a few literary terms and the way they work together. The following terms will improve your understanding of the elements of a short story as you read and analyze it.

antagonist The character, force, or situation that opposes the *protagonist,* the main character.

character A person involved in the action of a story. In a more particular sense, *character* refers to the personality and motivations of a person.

characterization The way that a *character* is developed by the author.

climax The moment at which the events in the narrative reach the most intense crisis, usually near the end of the narrative.

conflict The struggle that shapes a narrative. Three broad areas of conflict are individual versus society, individual versus nature, and individual versus himself or herself.

denouement The period after a narrative's *climax* in which final questions and details are addressed.

dramatic irony A device created when characters in a short story, novel, play, or film discuss an issue at cross purposes; each character has incomplete information about the issue, but not the same incomplete information. Furthermore, the characters do not realize that each is referring to a different set of facts. Only the audience knows all of the truth. The device's power is due to this gap between the audience's knowledge and the characters' knowledge. See also **irony.**

epiphany A profound revelation experienced by a character as the result of a narrative's events.

foreshadowing The writer's use of hints in a narrative to suggest an upcoming event in the plot.

image A description meant to evoke a mental picture for the reader: "A drowned dog floated by, or was it a damaged piñata?" The image of the piñata reinforces the image of the disfigurement caused by drowning.

imagery Images working together to create a desired effect.

irony A discrepancy between appearance and reality: "That the people of the 1920s believed the first world war was the final global battle is **ironic** when the events of the late 1930s are considered." See also **dramatic irony.**

metaphor A figure of speech in which one thing is represented by or is compared to another without using *like* or *as*. Thus, "The club scene is a black hole for my wallet" uses the metaphor of *black hole* to describe the financial losses suffered by the writer as a result of club crawling.

motif A recurring word, musical phrase, or visual object with thematic significance: "Each major character in *Death of a Salesman* has his or her 'own' music that announces the character's stage entrance; this motif engages an audience in a very interesting way."

narration The telling of a story.

narrative A story.

narrator The storyteller. The narrator and the author are not necessarily synonymous. The narrator might even be a character in the story.

parody A literary work that imitates another literary work in order to ridicule it.

point of view The perspective from which the story is narrated. In **first-person narration,** the narrator (storyteller) is a character in the story who uses *I*. Novels using first-person narration include *Great Expectations, Moby Dick, Fifth Business,* and *Invisible Man.* The *I* narrator does not have to be the main character; *The Great Gatsby* is told by Nick Carraway, a secondary figure.

Third-person narration does not use an *I* narrator. However, the writer can have the reader experience the plot through the eyes of one character, a technique called **third-person limited omniscience.** A good example is Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage.* The author can also tell the story from multiple points of view, letting the reader see events from the perspectives of several characters, but again without using an *I* narrator. This approach is called the **third-person omniscient** point of view.

plot The events that make up a narrative.

protagonist The main character of a narrative: "Ruby Turpin is the protagonist of Flannery O'Connor's 'Revelation.'" The protagonist is not necessarily heroic, just the main character. See also **antagonist.**

satire A work that ridicules either for entertainment or to suggest reform: "Voltaire's *Candide* is a wide-ranging satire of the Enlightenment's belief systems."

setting The time and place of a narrative. Given the differences among cultures, countries, regions, and eras, knowing both when and where a narrative is set is crucial to understanding it.

simile A figure of speech in which one thing is represented by or compared to another by using *like* or *as*. The Scottish poet Robert Burns wrote that "My love is like a red, red rose."

symbol An object used to suggest something else, usually an abstract concept. For example, a broken pair of eyeglasses could symbolize a character's loss of moral perception.

theme The "point" of the story—its controlling idea or message.

Keeping these elements in mind and remembering the general guidelines for reading literature that were presented earlier, read the following short story, and then consider the two student responses that follow it.