

Where are you going, where have you been

Literature



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

College Is Arnold Friend a Dream or Reality? and Number Paper Due Is Arnold Friend a Dream or Reality? The story creates quite an ambiguous impression, and this is not surprising given that the author leaves the story open even at its end – it is unclear whether Arnold Friend is a dream or just a human. The answer depends on a reader's viewpoint and imagination. In other words, readers are welcome to choose. Some of them may think that Arnold is a human, while others would insist that he is a supernatural being. There is no single answer. Therefore, Arnold is both a dream and reality, simultaneously.

Many people tend to believe that Arnold is more likely to be a fantasy. Arnold Friend, quite a mysterious figure, seems to be an image from Connie's dream, or rather a nightmare. There is something demonic even in the name of this character. The name of Arnold Friend is often associated with Arch Fiend, which this character looks even more ominous. There is an impression that poor Connie is standing face to face with a demon.

Arnold's appearance is worthy of attention. His skin is pale, almost translucent. His shaggy black hair resembles a wig, as described in the story. His age is difficult to guess – he seems to be simultaneously young and old. What is more, the way Arnold looks gives readers ground to assume that he suffers certain mental health problems. Attention should be drawn to the way he walks. It looks as if his shoes do not fit him. As assumed by some critics, this is because of hooves, which only reinforces associations his name evokes. It is also necessary to mention Arnold's buddy, Ellie. He looks like 'a forty-year-old baby', which makes Connie feel dizzy. Altogether, these two characters, Arnold and Ellie, seem to be nightmare guests, but not just

ordinary people, albeit with sinister intentions.

Arnold's voice makes him look even more threatening. It seems to be calm and gentle as he persuades Connie to come out. At the same time, his voice and strange grin only aggravate the atmosphere of imminence. Both Connie and readers feel that something bad is about to happen. The way Arnold behaves is difficult to understand, too. He appears to be quite amiable and even sexual as the story begins. His threats and demands, however, extirpate all the positive feelings Connie has. What he makes her feel is actually fear. Connie is really frightened and astonished when she understands that Arnold knows many things about her family and friends that he is not supposed to know. There is an impression that Arnold has always lived in Connie's town, but she still cannot remember him. 'You're not from around here', she says. It is indeed true that Arnold and his friend are absolutely different from all the people around Connie. All of this, especially Arnold's awareness, gives Connie and readers ground to suggest that he is something more than just a human being.

In summary, it is possible to offer two versions of what actually happened. First, it could be just a dream. Connie was tired and she fell asleep, and then she saw two strange men in her dream. After this she would probably wake up and regret she had not gone for the barbecue. Arnold Friend is a dream, in this case. Another version is more pessimistic. A lot of critics associate Arnold with the serial killer Charles Schmid, also known as the Pied Piper of Tucson. Therefore, this could be a real meeting – Connie has probably become a victim of an evil man. In such case, mysterious aspects of the story may be explained by sensitivity and imagination of a frightened

teenager. Therefore, Arnold Friend is real. The second version may be called into question too, taking into consideration the fact that the whole story is told in third-person narrative. If the first-person narrator was used, all the unexplainable details could be definitely attributed to Connie's impetuous imagination.

To leave the end of the story open always means to intrigue readers and give them food for thought. The story perfectly illustrates this. Readers will never find out what happened to Connie and who or what Arnold Friend was. This meeting would certainly change the girl and her attitude to life, in case it came off well.

Works Cited

Joyce Carol Oates. *Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?*

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