

Questions for short story

Literature



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“ Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been Magazine and newspaper articles about Charles Schmid of Tucson inspired Oates to write “ Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?” Oates based her story on the tale of Charles Schmid. Oates thought Charles Schmid was a strange character as he embodied adolescent culture and its hidden dangers in charming and killing the three teenage girls (Ramsland 1). His character inspired Oates to write a short story from a potential victim’s view where Connie was the victim and Arnold Friend, a killer. Oates reflected on Schmid’s luring a young girl and gave voice to a fifteen-year-old girl (Oates 1-7), Connie, who suffers from seduction and promises of security from a killer (Ramsland 1). Notably, Connie and the three teenage girls killed by Charles Schmid manifest an embodiment of the old myths of females being vulnerable to the illusive blend of death and eroticism (Ramsland 1).

2. Joyce Carol Oates listened and used some words from Bob Dylans song, “ Its All Over Now, Baby Blue (Ramsland 1).” Notably, Bob Dylan derives huge influence on popular music and culture as propagated in the story by Oates. The story and the song came up for publication when there was American obsession with violence (Ramsland 1). Ideally, the haunting melody of “ Baby Blue” rhymes with the atmosphere of Oates’s story (Dylan 1).

3. Arnold Friend has a strange and mismatched appearance that suggests danger. He wears mirrored sunglasses, tight faded jeans stuffed into black, scuffed boots, a belt, and a wild hair that suggests a mentally disturbed person or a demon (Oates 4). His dialogue which encompasses a calm voice, gentle coaxing, and conviction symbolizes a concealed threat (Oates 3-7). An alteration of Arnold Friend’s name to Arch Fiend leads to an ominous meaning. Arch Fiend derives a negative connotation where the word “ fiend”

means enemy or devil.

4. Oates refers to a fairy tale “ Little Red Riding Hood.” Charles Perrault published the story, which revolves around a young girl and a Big Bad Wolf (Perrault 1). In the story, we can see the big wolf stalking Little Red Riding Hood behind the bushes and tall grass with a view of eating her (Perrault 1). The story depicts how an innocent victim can fall prey through a criminal intent to the dangers of the forest far from the safety of the village (Perrault 1).

5. Connie is a round (dynamic) character. Three quote sandwiches identify the representation of Connie as the story opens, as it progresses, and as it ends. Connie was fifteen years old had a nervous giggling habit of craning her neck to glance into mirrors or checking other peoples faces to make sure her own was all right and her mother scolds her saying, “ Why dont you keep your room clean like your sister? How have you got your hair fixed—what stinks? Hairspray? You dont see your sister using that junk (Oates 1).” This scene describes the naivety and outgoing nature of Connie compared to her sister June who was twenty-four and still living at home (Oates 1). Connie is also vulnerable to seductions from strangers where Oates states, “ She couldnt decide if she liked him or if he was just a jerk, and so she dawdled in the doorway and wouldnt come down or go back inside (Oates 3).” This scene foreshadows Arnold’s ability to lure Connie out of their house to the immense danger possessed by Arnold. Indeed, Connie fell into Arnolds’ scheme as she finally stood to follow him. Arnold directs her “ Now, turn this way. That is right. Come over here to me. — Ellie, put that away, didnt I tell you? You dope. You miserable creepy dope (Oates 9).” This marked the beginning of Connie’s experience to the dangers posed by Arnold.

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6. The ending of the story manifests the success of Arnold and the vulnerability of Connie to harm. Indeed, at the end, Connie unwillingly and inevitably came out of the house and followed Arnold (Oates 9).

7. Possibly, the title of the story seeks to question the past and the future aspirations of the young girls, which constantly fall prey to the dominant and scheming violent acts in America. The title may equally seek to establish the background and the future trends of violence in America.

Works Cited

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