

Greasy lake by t. coraghessan boyle



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Greasy Lake by T. Coraghessan Boyle and Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been? by Joyce Carol Oates are two works that have the generalized theme of death in them. They may differ in contextual ways, but the deeper theme they share is present. The more in depth comparisons are about teenagers trying to find their way through life as portrayed through their looks and actions, and the thought of how you perceive yourself can get you into trouble. Greasy Lake contains teenage bad boys trying to find their self identity, and Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been surrounds a girl who doesn't know the power of attention she attracts, until it's too late.

In Greasy Lake the main characters call themselves bad characters. They are putting on a facade of leather jackets, mischief and rock and roll. These main characters were Digby, Jeff and the narrator, who really didn't know what they were getting into late one night at Greasy Lake. What started out as a joke led to a string of unfortunate events, and how the three boys in the end realized that they were indeed, not bad characters anymore; hence the teenage self exploration. From a fight, to attempted rape, to the smashing of the narrator's mother's car, one night was all it took for those boys to see that they weren't who they thought they were. This all ties in with the theme because of the things that are going through the narrator's head as he leads the readers through the events.

The whole scene is dark to begin with. It's late at night when the boys arrive at the lake, they end up in trouble with a big greasy character, as they call him, and the whole lake is surrounded by death and decay. This can be an immediate connection to death. Another way to show discovery is how at the end of the story it reads as this, when the boys are ready to drive home: I

just looked at her. I thought I was going to cry. (403) I believe at this point the narrator realizes that there will always be someone out there that will be tougher than you, and that will get you in the end. He realizes that sure, they were big and bad to themselves, until they met their match. This shows change in the characters which is a big indication of theme. Another indication would be the title, because greasy is generally something that is used in a bad way, so it doesn't in any way reflect life.

Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been? is also, like stated before, about teenage perception and how it can or will get you into trouble. There is a girl, named Connie, who thinks that she is so pretty and is a completely vain character. She believes that she can get any guy she wants, and wants any guy she can get, until she attracts unwanted attention. This is a story in part created through a serial killer. Being about a serial killer alone shows darkness and death, but there are other examples of this theme. One would be how Connie would always sneak out with her friends to the burger joint across the street. This is an act of defying parents. She defies her parents because they treat her as if they don't care about her at all. This is also something that is negative and could relate to death. Connie ends up being so naive about who she may be showing off too, that she becomes trapped, alone, in her own home with a man outside, coming to kidnap her. This is another similarity to Boyles story, because there is a change in the character here as well.

Connie changes because she goes from getting any guy she wants, and thinking that she's invincible, to be completely vulnerable in her own home. An example of how full of herself she is, is right in the first couple of

sentences: She was fifteen and she had a quick nervous giggling habit of craning her neck to look into mirrors, or checking other peoples faces to make sure her own was alright. (427) This alone shows how all she cares about are looks. An example of confidence and then vulnerability comes when the kidnapper, Arnold Friend, comes to her house to get her. At first she is excited and plays it cool, thinking she can handle any situation. The feeling quickly changes though, when she realizes this is one situation she cant get herself out of, becoming vulnerable.

Therefore, both Greasy Lake and Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been? have a shared theme, being that how you perceive yourself can get you into trouble. The boys from Greasy Lake met their match and learned that they really werent bad characters and Connie from Where Are You Going had a more unfortunate demise when she realized being too confident can get you into a bad situation. The stories also had recurring instances of death, from the decaying lake to Arnold Friend being a dark and scary character to Connie. All in all, even though the plots may have been different, the theme of death and teenage self exploration are present in these works.