

Gothic



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Oates short stories usually follow young characters through their struggles in life. There are many family imperfections in Oates stories that mostly tend to have a disturbing image in the readers head. While it seemed that Joyce Carol Oates experienced dark childhood experiences, she seems to explore her thoughts according to similar events that had happened in her life.

Written by Joyce Carol Oates, " Spider Boy" is an example that highly defines gothic horror. Many of her works deal with violence, rape, death, or a character that has gone completely mad. " Naked" has many dark and nightmare like scenes, Oates writes on how a normal day can be your worst; it is that Oates puts a woman in a scene that would be worse than an average nightmare by stripping the character of who they were. Joyce Carol Oates tests our minds by infusing strange actions within her stories that trigger psychological awareness in the human mind. " Spider Boy" is another well-written story by Joyce Carol Oates that underlines gothic horror, by giving a scenario of a young boy luring his father's victims, so that his father rapes and then kills the victims.

The short story has characters that seem to be insane. First, we have a pedophile father that takes advantage of smaller teens; he uses his son Philip to do so by interacting with them and them reeling them in as the father uses friendly words and gestures to trap the victim. The mother seems to be happy to be married to the husband; a little too happy. The mother seems to live in her own little world where everything around her is perfect, she ignores all bad from the father and pretends it's a normal thing.

Blinded by what it really is, Philip's mother tries to keep a positive and perfect image on their families' life. Philip's sister is a shadowy character; not

much is known about her. And finally there's Philip; a young boy who only seeks the attention of his father by doing what he is commanded to do. Obedient as is, Philip does not want to disappoint, and does as he is told; not realizing that what he is doing is wrong. Oates writes a series of events on how the father of the young boy is completely out of his mind, seeking his mad desires.

Oates writes, " There are places in the world where people vanish. His father had said this" (Oates 3). The mystery behind the dark events on what happens to people when they go to certain places. This quote is the beginning of something bad that is going to happen; it gives the presence of horror. " Philips father explained that the hitch-hikers were a secret between him and Philip that no one must ever know" (Oates 12). This is the dark secret that lures in the background of the story, hoping that Philip would help keep the " skeletons' in the closet.

Putting too much trust in the hands of someone that could easily bring you down to your knees is a big risk, which is why the father bends the truth a little to sidetrack Philip into believing what his father is doing is ok. Joyce Carol Oates performs a twisting of events that end up as the story began; Philip finds himself as Spider Boy once did. Oates writes, " He saw the boy on the creek bank glance up at him and wave ...impulsively he raised his arm to wave back. Maybe they would call him? Maybe they would invite him to join them? " (Oates 22).

This passage is closely related to when Philip met spider boy and presented himself as friendly, Philip then used that to lure spider boy in to his father's web. It could possibly be that the boy in in the end was being used by his

father to lure in Philip. This makes me think, it is very strange that there would only be a son and a father on the top of a mountain with nobody around. As Philip's father used him for nothing more than to be used as bait, Philip felt unloved. In the bottom of Philip's heart, he felt that maybe, just maybe he would fit in and be happy with strangers just as his father was with Spider Boy.

The ending relates to the beginning of the story. Philip's father tells him that people vanish in the world in certain places is where Philip finds himself on the top of "Mountain Meadow", where he could possibly disappear. The final short story that I liked written by Joyce Carol Oates, "Naked" is about a woman that is attacked by a group of kids and stripped from her clothes, as she is left to walk to her house bruised from her body. In the story Oates demonstrates and highlights gothic horror by adding suspense from the very beginning, as she was hiking in a wildlife preserve and felt as if someone was watching her.

Oates writes, "They're only children, she told herself even as, instinctively, as she took a step back...and the next instant they were upon her... as the children swarmed over her, pummeling her with their fists, pounding, kicking, tearing" (Oates 1). She underestimated the size of the children, for it was not the size but the numbers that they came in. This passage underlines the horror and the violence that is occurring to her, as if it was something that you would see in the movies. As she is left naked and helpless, she tries to find a way back home without being seen.

Oates writes, "But her clothes had been taken from her. And her car keys...A car pulled into the graveled parking lot not far away. She heard car doors

slamming and men's voices. In panic she plunged into the shrubs to hide" (Oates 4). She was ashamed to be discovered naked by the men, she did not want to be seen, she was embarrassed and afraid to be the talk of the town. This passage is describing on what a nightmare might be like, bringing a horrific experience to the character. As she reaches her destination, she stays outside the house from where she could see her family, like that of being a stocker.

As Oates writes, " She had never seen her house from such a position of course and would not perhaps have identified it. She saw movement by one of the windows—a figure that must have been that of her husband, though not quite so tall as she would have imagined her husband—and shortly there came another figure to join him, male or female she could not determine" (Oates 8). As she saw what appeared to be her family, she waited on the outside, not wanting to be seen by them. Her behavior toward the whole incident was too unbearable that she decided not to show her face, as she was too embarrassed to be seen by her own husband.

Many of Joyce Carol Oates books deal with the horror that a certain character have to go through. The stories that I have chosen all complement each other, they are alike in a sense that they all hold something dark and mysterious deep within the stories themselves. Good gothic horror stories always has a cliffhanger, Violence is another key that Oates includes in her works, it underlines the characters personality, and as the story progresses, the characters mentality starts to change as they see life in another way. Naked" is the story that defines changes in a person who goes through changes the way the character thinks of herself and her surroundings. Gothic

horror is the hairy spider that one would find in the most unexpected of places. It also plays around with the readers mind, making it think of the worst possible thing that could happen. In the story, we see that the woman who is lost between herself with the set of thought that she is now alone with no help to save her from the stage she is in. Being said, she now needs to return back to her home without being seen to eep from being ashamed of herself because she is naked, and being married to the man she is with, it would mean great devastation to her family. Along the journey home, the woman seems to be changing about her feelings towards people/ In a sense of saying that she not wish to live the lifef she is living now. As soon as she gets home, she decides to change her life around, with the feeling that she knows now what is right. Gothic horror also contains deep dark secrets, like that of “ Spider Boy”. Philip tries to keep his father’s secret as his jealousy overruns him, making him feel left out by his father.

The psychopath of his father only uses Philip as bate, almost like that of fishing, in which he later finds himself in the same position as spider boy. Joyce Carol Oates writes good gothic stories, but tend to be repetitive as the characters in her stories seem to be in a similar position. Oates work always seem to have an element of surprise to the reader, as her stories give an ending, but for the reader to find out on their own in which trigger a psychological awareness, and makes the reader finish the story, giving them the element of ending the story either good or bad.