

The main characters
connie and arnold in
"where are you going,
where have you
bee...



“ In the short story, “” Where are you going, Where have you been,”” Connie and Arnold Friend are the main characters who portray the struggles of differentiating fantasy and reality. Connie is a typical fifteen-year-old teenage girl that is rebellious towards her family and mainly cares about her appearance. Along with her appearance, she listens to a lot of pop music that talks about love and romance which gives her a skewed idea of what love is supposed to be.

When she’s out with her friends or around the presence of boys, she acts and dresses more maturely in order to lure boys in to explore her sexuality and the idea of what love is supposed to feel like as it is said in the music she listens to. At home, she acts childish and wanders off into her day dreams. Arnold Friend is a mysterious character that isn’t really clarified as a real human being or a source of Connie’s imagination. From the brief descriptions throughout the story, he is found to be an older man in his late 30 or 40s, who tries to pull himself off as a teenager by dressing up, wearing a wig, and sunglasses that makes it hard to see his eyes, and talking in a nonchalant and careless way that a regular teenage boy would. Although he is insecure and unsure of his own identity, he is intrigued by Connie and comes to her home, which is also her “” safe space,”” and tries to break down her mature persona in order to lure her outside and face the harsh reality of a “” mature”” adult.

Oates describes Connie’s identities by saying, “” Everything about her had two sides to it, one for home and one for anywhere not home, her walk that could be childlike and bobbing, or languid enough to make anyone think she was hearing music in her head smirking her laugh which was cynical and

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drawling at home but high pitched and nervous everywhere else, (Oates, 370)"" which gives off the impression that she feels the most comfortable and safe at home, while she is a unsure, sexy, and mature everywhere else. Her transition from teenager to adult is almost effortless because she uses location as an indication for how she should and shouldn't behave. She is the most confident of who she is and how she should act when she's at home, but when she is out and about with her best friend or around boys, she's a bit more hesitant and trying to figure out what's the best way to get the attention of the boys around her. Connie portraying a double personality instead of one stable is a sign of confusion and struggle to find the balance between the two. This sense of confusion is common amongst adolescents as they still have the mindset of a child, but society is pushing them to continuously mature, hence having different identities. It's normal to have multiple personalities with different people, but Connie takes it a huge extreme. This is where Arnold Friend comes in to exploit her confusion and leads her to the harsh truth.

One way that Arnold breaks down her adult-like identity is through music. Music plays a huge role in Connie's double personality and her escape from reality. When she is listening to music, ""...her mind is slipped over onto thoughts of the boy she had been with the night before, how sweet it was... the way it was in movies and promised in songs,"" (Oates, 373) showing her skewed idea of what love really is. She uses lyrics to determine that love is portrayed through sex and physical attraction and is often daydreaming when she's listening. When Arnold first comes to the house, he knew to play music that happens to be "" the same program that was playing inside the

house,"" (Oates, 374) in order to get her intrigued and comfortable enough to let him stay. As they continue to talk and get to know each other, Connie starts to become suspicious of Arnold's character and, ""...she had the idea that he had driven up the driveway all right but had come from nowhere before that and belonged nowhere and that everything about him and even about the music that was so familiar to her was only half real,"" (Oates, 379) which is an indication that she's finally coming to her senses that there's more to love than sexual attraction and the fantasy she once knew isn't the same anymore. Arnold Friend does everything that would usually attract her, which is why she references the song being so familiar but knows that this situation is not the same as her time with Eddie or any other boy she's been with.

With Connie's want to act more mature, comes the want of independence from her authoritative figures. She doesn't have a close relationship with her father because, "" Their father was away at work most of the time, and when he came home He didn't bother talking much to them,"" (Oates, 370).

Connie pays more attention to her appearance which makes "" Connie's mother [pick] at her until Connie wished her mother was dead,"" (Oates, 370) showing that their relationship consists of hostile interactions. And June, her sister that she seems to hate the most because her mother would compare the two and say, "" June did this, June did that and Connie couldn't do a thing, her mind was all filled with trashy daydreams,"" (Oates, 369).

Although she wants to be independent and want nothing to do with her family, she relies on them for a roof over her head, food, ride to school, and etc. She also relies on her best friend's father for rides to the movies or diner

where they both have their sexual explorations with boys. With her nonchalant and careless mindset, it's easy to believe that she would only do things that would benefit herself. This perception is broken once Arnold gives her the incentive, "" you come out here nice like a lady and give me your hand, and nobody else gets hurt,"" (Oates, 382) which wasn't a hard decision for her to make. Something clicked in her mind, changing from child to mature adolescent to think about the lives of her family over her own is impactful in her character development. Although she gives them the idea that she doesn't care or love them, she ultimately shows her true colors and appreciates all that she had when she is making her decision to leave the house into the uncertain future or reality.

Arnold Friend's character remains a mystery – unsure of his true motives and why he wanted to target Connie specifically. Whether he's in her imagination or reality, he acted as the confusion and uncertainty that Connie seems to have with her life. Breaking down one of things she enjoyed most, music. He broke down the fantasy that she escaped to at home by doing and saying everything she would like but at the same time, she knows that there's no sincerity or passion that she once hoped for. Coming to her home, which is her time to act her age. Inflicting fear into her mind and giving Connie the idea that "" inside your daddy's house – is nothing but a cardboard box I can knock down at any time,"" (Oates, 383) making her unfamiliar of the life she has. Connie has a skewed idea of what independence is, as there is more to exploring her sexuality and trying to rebel against her family even though she loves and cares for them dearly. At the end, as she is walking out of the screen door into her yard, there was "" so much land that Connie had never

seen before and did not recognize except to know that she was going to it,”” (Oates, 384) showing that her conception of life has changed. This could be interpreted as her transition from adolescent to adult or to her death.

Connie’s struggle to balancing her double personality is common in all adolescents in this society as we all put on a different face, attitude, and identity towards different people.