

## In James Baldwin's Sonny's Blues, Baldwin's use of Allusion

### Things to take note of in Sonny's Blues

- The use of Darkness and Lightness in the novel
- Darkness of Harlem, darkness of their childhood, dark futures
- Darkness: people can die from drug abuse, murder, bad decisions, Sonny's drug abuse, Sonny's time in jail, housing projects in Harlem
- Darkness can represent: Trapped in
- Lightness can represent: Escaping
- Lightness when Sonny plays jazz, plays his music to escape and

Thesis Statement: Baldwin's use of the symbol of darkness represents how one can be trapped in Harlem.

### Theme Development (More than just saying subject + message)

- Not just ISOLATION, but what is the message, phrase?
- Isolation can be overcome? Isolation leads to self destruction? Needed intervention?
- What about isolation?
- Characterization, Symbolism, dialog (How it can be organized)
- Do you have enough to narrow it down for one thing?
- Dialog —> Part of indirect characterization
- Symbolisms showing through characterization (how to organize paper around them?)
- Development of theme
  
- Significant moments in the text? Were there changes to develop theme?
- Arrange essay to show development of theme: you can go chronologically
- Narrow —> Deep Analysis
- Narrowing is key!
- Let theme development lead the way
- In beginning ——— In middle use of characterization ——— In the end
- Let's look at how it changes, to develop theme, or something about the protagonist
- One symbol can be developed over time
- Discover something new on a reread —> new thing saw can be developed on a paper
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Flies are associated with dead things, evil, insignificance?

How Joyce Carol Oates uses music

The music was always in the background, like a church

She couldn't hear the music at this distance

Her sister going out allows her to go out

Going off with Eddie

What happened with Eddie?

What happens in 3 hours?

Connie is into boys and in to herself

- Gossip about other girls, doing things that are naughty
- Small towns → Everybody knows everybody's business
- They live in a small town
- Word spreads around fast
- Approving tone: Sister June
- Disapproving tone: Connie
- Fly buzzing around

Story transitions to a particular day

- Flies
- Music XYZ record Jamboree
- Connie played close attention to herself
- Wondering how bad she looked
- Dating ... Cars Honks...
- Both boys wore sunglasses
- Chasing flies away from the door
- Connie began to hear the music
- 33,19,17
- Music in the car
- Song about rushing in to boyfriend's arms
- Girl Being Kidnapped by Monster
- Her vanity gets her in to trouble!

Shared Inquiry

- What do you think the "X" Means?
- What can Arnold Represent? He is the devil? Vampires, ch. Stuffed in to his boots,
- Connie finds Arnold attractive, like in other boys, but somehow she doesn't accept it because the age,

Thesis: Joyce Carol Oate's use of music symbolizes how Connie desires to escape and be free from her family.

In her short story "Where are you Going, Where Have you Been," Joyce Carol Oates explores the theme of a young girl's desire to grow up and have independence and freedom. In a flowing third person's narration together with dialogue, the author describes the protagonist Connie's desire for independence. The theme is of a teenage girl's desire to grow up quickly and gain her independence to live her own life. In order to convey this theme, Oates employs the use of symbolism and motifs.

The protagonist Connie, is a pretty 15 years old teenage girl, longing for something better in her life. Connie is described "as her mind was all filled with trashy daydreams." She lived a mundane teenager's life of a middle-class family from small rural town. Connie constantly argued with her mother. Her father was not much of a father figure. And her elder sister June was the good favorite daughter in the family. Connie therefore felt unwanted and rebellious. Perhaps, due to her upbringing in an unstable family environment, she seemed to have a dual personality. She was described as "Everything about her had two sides to it. One for home and one for anywhere that was not home." Connie's favorite past time during her summer vacation was going out with her friends. As she was still an innocent young girl, her mother would only allow Connie to go outside only together with her elder sister June. However, when the sisters went out, Connie would leave June at the shopping mall to sometimes escape with her friends to a drive-in restaurant to listen to music and meet boys. It made Connie so happy, "listening to the music that made everything so good." She would even have a date with a boy named Eddie which would make her daydream all day about her date. In Connie's mind; music, cars and boys symbolised her desire for independence and freedom to do what she wanted in her life. Music, cars and boys made her happy and free. It made everything so good.

As Connie wanted independence, her rebellious streak caused conflicts with her family. One Sunday, Connie's family decided to visit her aunt's home for barbeque. However, Connie refused and ended up staying at home all by herself. Then out of nowhere, a boy with the shaggy black hair who Connie

had seen before appeared with his friend Ellie riding in a convertible jalopy painted in gold. He introduced himself as ARNOLD FRIEND.

From this point onwards, the short story turns mostly to dialogue between Connie and ARNOLD. It's a strange and uneasy passages of dialogue as ARNOLD knows everthing about Connie and her family while Connie has no idea who ARNOLD is. Connie is frightened of ARNOLD and yet carries on conversing with him. ARNOLD is not whom Connie thought he would be, a teenage boy of her age. ARNOLD and Ellie seemed like adults. They acted drunk, misbehaved and used bad language. ARNOLD kept persuading and even coercing Connie to come out of her house and go on a ride with him and Ellie. ARNOLD's continous persuasion reminded Connie of the "echo of a song from last year, about a girl rushing into her boy friend's arms and coming home again-." Connie was terribly frightened and tried to call for help. Then she had a violent trauma where "ARNOLD was stabbing her with again and again with no tenderness." Connie had felt being hypnotized by ARNOLD as "she felt hollow with what had been fear but what was now just an emptiness." ARNOLD had finally persuaded Connie to come out of her house. Connie felt, "for the first time in her life that it was nothing that was hers, that belonged to her, but just a pounding, living thing inside this body that wasn't really hers either." As Connie came outside, "she watched herself push the door slowly open as she was back safe somewhere in the other doorway, watching this body and this head of long hair moving out into the sunlight where ARNOLD waited." ARNOLD then sang in a half-sung sigh of "My sweet little blue-eyed girl." Connie then saw, "the land behind him and on all sides of him - so much land that Connie had never seen before and did not recognize except to know that she was going to it."

The theme of Connie's desire for independence and freedom is expressed throughout the dialogue between Connie and ARNOLD and narration of their interactions. Symbolism of musics such as Bob Dylan's "My sweet little blue-eyed girl," and other songs Connie remembers are littered throughout the short story. Even symbolism of cars seem to be an expression of independence and freedom as

they can travel anywhere riding the car. Symbolism of boys are expressed as innocent boys such as Eddie and corrupt and dishonest boy/man such as ARNOLD and Ellie. It's ironic that Connie's desire for growing up and gaining independence and freedom took a cynical turn in the short story. Connie was an innocent teenager who wanted to be happy by finding a nice young boy with a car. She just wanted to have dates with boys riding their cars and listening to music. That was her meaning of independence and freedom. However, Connie ends up obtaining an illusory freedom and independence by being coerced by a man who she doesn't know and goes on a car ride with this unknown person into an unknown destination not knowing what would happen to her.

After listening to Bob Dylans, "\_\_\_\_\_ " inspired to write a short story, Joyce Carol Oates wrote "Where are you going, Where have you been?" Throughout the short story, Oates develops a theme of desire for independence within the young protagonist,

- Throughout the story, music is used to transition Connie's from hearing and taking in the background music, and then to being entranced by the music.

She is always compared to her sister, June, and lives a rather dull life with her family. As Connie is 15, her freedom and independence is pretty limited which results in her being confined to either being accompanied by her sister when going out, or staying at home. However, the music in the background in the short story serves as a symbol for Connie's feelings of involving herself temporary/false happiness outside of home but also her longing for escape from her family and to not be confined by her family.

- 1960s music

Oates's use of music throughout the story is to develop the theme of freedom and sexuality, but also insight into Connie's thought process, feelings, and decisions. Connie is allowed to go out, but only with her sister June. Although Connie may be supervised by June, this is a relief for Connie as she gets to experience and be free from a world that is not her home. This sense of freedom is important for Connie and makes her extremely happy. Outside of her house, Connie presents a different persona, one that is more "adult-like," promiscuous even. "Everything about her had two sides to it, one for home and one for everywhere that was not home..." Her persona outside of home is where she feels more free as she is not told off by her mom, or told how to act. Connie experiences happiness and feelings of pleasure when she's entranced by the music, but music also in background also serves as a backdrop for all the feelings Connie has of being young and meeting and fantasizing about boys.

For Connie, music is also her way of escaping from her mundane life.

