

Nick, Ella, Noa, Damien

THESIS : The stifling and oppressive environment women in the showcased in “You’re Ugly, too” result in rebels and feminists often lashing out in nihilistic and unusual ways.

Rubric:

Argumentative not informative

NICK, ELLA, NOA

Video Layout:

- 1) Intro (Nick)
- 2) Heidi (Nick) “ what women where expected to be (Metaphor/Analogy)
- 3) Surrounding perceptions (ELLA) tangent stilling attitudes
- 4) Perception from men POV (Noa)
- 5) Humor - Irony (Damien)
- 6) Ending

Stuff/literary devices we need to incorporate

- 1) Usage of 3rd person POV
- 2) Imagery
- 3) Dialogue
- 4) metaphor/analogy
- 5)

- **Heidi & Time Period & Intro NICK**

- Thesis: Ideal woman at the time (1989)
- Lorrie Moore relies on the description of a “Heidi” to make a point about gender roles in the Midwest. Zoe complains about how every woman is expected to be a “Heidi”, who will “not think twice” and never complain.

“You’re Ugly, Too” by Lorrie Moore, is a short story about the life of a woman named Zoë, who lives in the American Midwest. Lorrie Moore uses Zoë, as a medium to help illustrate the social value of women that are often embodied in the American Midwest, represented by the town of “Paris”. Through Zoë, a character seemingly disconnected from society, whether it be by looks (the only brunette in a town dominated by blondes) or personality (never being able to keep a date, trying too hard on her makeup, etc).

This is because Zoë is always contrasted against this mysterious “Heidi”, a representation of the ideal American woman at the time. The metaphor “Heidi” is a woman with “cleavage”, “outfits”, and would be willing to “lug goat milk up the hills and not think twice.” On the other hand, Zoë is the perfect rebel, wearing “a lot of grey-green corduroy”, and possessing independent thought as a well-read college professor. While Zoë seems to be fine being lonely, it is on the surface level. In fact, when looking deeper at Zoë’s circumstances, you see her dissatisfaction in life; the mirror that she returned, the constant barrage of cynical remarks, and the fabrication of her non-existent love life to Earl.

- **Her students ELLA**

- "You're Ugly, too" takes place in the American Midwest, and Lorrie Moore (the author) uses characterization and plot to expose this location's values. Throughout the story, there is a general sense of ignorance, which is highlighted through how the main character, Zoe, is different from her peers. Her students complain about her criticizing Illinois and also are just generally unaware about the world, or what it is like to be without privilege. In fact, the students at her first job in Minnesota where so homogeneously blond, they presumed that "brunettes were often presumed to be from foreign countries." This is the antithesis of Zoe, who is well read and well traveled. As a teacher she is passionate and critical, both which cause her to clash with her student body.

ELLA: Through the interactions with her peers, we learn that Zoe is far from the ideal 'Heidi' caricature that was desired in the late 20th century. We learn that Zoe is not very highly rated as a professor by the students at the university she teaches at. The story is structured such that the student's previous feedback is interspersed in italics throughout the story. Through this technique, we get a glimpse into the way students in Illinois view the world. Students complained when she criticised America, highlighting a patriotic, unquestioning worldview typical of the time. In general, this story highlights a theme general ignorance of Midwest students in this time period. This commentary is furthered when we learn that the students at her first job in Minnesota where so homogeneously blond that "brunettes were often presumed to be from foreign countries." This is the antithesis of Zoe, who is well read and well traveled. As a teacher she is curious and critical, traits which both offset the typical attitudes of society. The author uses Zoe, and her quiriness, to offer a strong contrast to the societal norms of the time. In turn, the reader experiences the stifling attitude of the time, one of excessive patriotism and general ignorance. Overall, her differences cause her to be isolated from society, another theme of the story.. She sums this up quite succinctly on one phone call with her sister: "Illinois. It makes me sarcastic to be here," she said.

The short story is spruced such that w

- **Men's perception of her vs her perception of men NOA**

Zoe is deeply cynical and often says what is on her mind without filter. When Earl said, "Live and learn," Zoe replied "Live and get dumb." (200) Thus, she is a bit ostracised from society. The only men that she likes in her life is the postman and the cab driver, both of whom represented her method of escaping heart small town. Her society's view of women is further developed by Zoe's university department having a gender inequality lawsuit. This, she suspects, is why she hasn't been fired. Clearly there are diversity issues at the university, highlighting the sexist attitudes Zoe faces throughout the short story. Her sister's perception of Zoe seems to be the opposite in terms of her love life. On page 195, Zoe talks about the best and the worst of both worlds. Her sister and her successful marriage and wealth has been inseparable and selling When she interacts with Earl, we start to really see Zoe's character of how she treats men. His perception to Zoe is very nosy and

"Tell me, Earl. Does the word fag mean anything to you?" He stepped back, away from her. He shook his head in disbelief. "You know, I just shouldn't try to go out with career women.

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You're all stricken. A guy can really tell what life has done to you. I do better with women who have part-time jobs." (199)

- Sister vs her (best/worst of both worlds) (additional stuff)
 - Inseparable (successful marriage + wealth) = selling out
- Irony (self-deprecating + accepted by men) DAMIEN
- Nihilism - root of her humour (on the plane she convinced herself she had nothing to live for)
 - Never buy discount tickets, she suggests, and "tell yourself you [have] nothing to live for anyway, so that when the plane crashed it was no big deal." And if the plane doesn't crash, by the time the cab arrives to take you and your baggage away, you will have had time to "come up with a persuasive reason to go on living."

"If there were a lake, the moonlight would dance across it in conniptions."

SCRIPT:

Nick:

"You're Ugly, Too" by Lorrie Moore, is a short story written in 1989 following the life of a woman named Zoe living in the American Midwest. Zoe lives in the town of Paris, working at a local university in Illinois.

As the story progresses, following Zoe's life, it can be seen that Lorrie Moore uses Zoe as a medium to help illustrate the social value of women often embodied in the American Midwest and by proxy, America, at the time. In fact, the stifling and oppressive environment women encounter in "You're Ugly, too" result in rebels and feminists often lashing out in nihilistic and unusual ways.

This is due to the fact that Zoe is a character seemingly disconnected from society, whether it be self-inflicted or imposed on her by others. However, Zoe seems to believe that her isolation is mainly the result of the latter, where people contrast her against the ideal woman, "a Heidi".

The metaphorical "Heidi" is a woman with "cleavage", "outfits", and would be willing to "lug goat milk up the hills and not think twice." On the other hand, Zoë is the perfect rebel, wearing "a lot of grey-green corduroy", and possessing independent thought as a well-read college professor. This can be seen when Zoe meets Earl for the first time, where he was "he was dressed as a naked woman, steel wool glued strategically to a body stocking, and large rubber breasts protruding like hams." Obviously, this indicates his "ideal woman",

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further serving to isolate Zoe from society. While Zoë seems to be fine being lonely, it is on the surface level. In fact, when looking deeper at Zoë's circumstances, you see her dissatisfaction in life; the mirror that she returned, the constant barrage of cynical remarks, and the fabrication of her non-existent love life to Earl.

This manifests itself in many ways in the story, leading to her own self imposed isolation that she is seemingly unaware of. Zoe's mortality is often used as both a self-defense and coping mechanism to help deal with things as they come. For example, Zoe often jokes of her demise, especially after learning of the ultrasound.

ELLA: Through the interactions with her peers, we learn that Zoe is far from the ideal ' Heidi' caricature, mentioned by Nick, that was desired in the late 20th century. We learn that Zoe is not very highly rated as a professor by the students at the university she teaches at. The story is structured such that the student's previous feedback is interspersed in italics throughout the story. Through this technique, we get a glimpse into the way students in Illinois view the world. Students complained when she criticised America, highlighting a patriotic, unquestioning worldview typical of the time.

Noa: What theme does this showcase in the story?

ELLA: In general, this story highlights a theme general ignorance of Midwest students in this time period. This commentary is furthered when we learn that the students at her first job in Minnesota were so homogeneously blond that "brunettes were often presumed to be from foreign countries." This is the antithesis of Zoe, who is well read and well traveled. As a teacher she is curious and critical, traits which both offset the typical attitudes of society. The author uses Zoe, and her quirkiness, to offer a strong contrast to the societal norms of the time. In turn, the reader experiences her town's stifling attitude, one of excessive patriotism and general ignorance. Overall, her differences cause her to be isolated from society, another theme of the story. She sums this up quite succinctly on one phone call with her sister: "Illinois. It makes me sarcastic to be here," she said.

Noa: Zoe is deeply cynical and often says what is on her mind without filter, furthering the theme of isolation in the story. When Earl said, "Live and learn," Zoe replied "Live and get dumb." (200) Thus, she is ostracised from society due to her inability to fit into smoothly. The only men that she has been able to get along with in her life is the postman and the cab driver, both of who represented her need to escape the small town she lives in. Her society's view of women is further developed by Zoe's university department having a gender inequality lawsuit. This is why she hasn't been fired. Clearly there are diversity issues at the university, highlighting the sexist attitudes Zoe faces throughout the short story.

Damien: How do her other interactions with men show the societal values of the time?

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Noa: Besides her life at the University, her relationship with her sister has also made her go out of the ordinary when thinking about the men in her life. Evan's life has been perfect. She is wealthy and has a successful marriage while Zoe hasn't had a committed relationship since college. At one of her sisters parties, Evan attempts to set Zoe up with Earl. When she first interacts with Earl, we see how she refuses to engage in any conversation related to love. She says, "Tell me, Earl. Does the word fag mean anything to you?" He stepped back, away from her. He shook his head in disbelief. "You know, I just shouldn't try to go out with career women. You're all stricken. A guy can really tell what life has done to you. I do better with women who have part-time jobs." (199). This represents both her strange humor and how society at large wants women to leave the workforce.

Damien: As Ella mentioned earlier her humor less than traditional. However, I have a slightly different take on the source of it. So to tie it all together, I believe that upon further examination, the dark humor is actually rooted in nihilism -- the belief that life is meaningless. In fact that is a defining characteristic of Lorrie Moore's writing style with the ironic and satirical tone. Noa gives a good example of when Zoe kills the mood with Earl by bringing up fags and this dynamic continually plays out in the narrative as Zoe maintains this consistent edge - showcasing her dissatisfaction with the the one-dimensional homogeneous midwest culture. Just like when when about to fly to New York, Zoe says to "never buy discount tickets" and to "tell yourself you [have] nothing to live for anyway, so that when the plane crashed it was no big deal." And if the plane doesn't crash, by the time the cab arrives to take you and your baggage away, you will have had time to "come up with a persuasive reason to go on living." This morbid style goes hand in hand with death when she jokes about the tumor she might have and then dying in six weeks. In some ways this actually allows Zoe to experience life to the fullest because as ironic as it is, we often do not recognize the value of things till it is gone.

As a result of this mentality, Zoe seems to speak without filter or thought to the ramifications of her actions. She often takes jokes too far spontaneously such as when she pushes earl on the balcony, raining beer twenty stories down to the street. She is individual and fiercely honest. Staying true to her character despite the obvious feedback from society.

~~Of the episode when while earl is trying to get closer to zoe, she suddenly swats away his hand and asks tell me earl. Does the word fag mean anything to you? Now that's certainly a buzzkill if I've ever seen one.~~

~~Joke that goes to far: Pushing earl on the balcony, Bruce Springsteen on the rug
spontaneous~~

GROUP NOTES:

Theme

Hard work does not always pay off

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Appearances matter vs personality

Alienation/Loneliness and Isolation:

- Lives alone and has no luck meeting men since moving
- Not respected or understood by her students or her colleagues
- Only connected with Postman and cab driver (large tips)
- Cynicism and snide remarks without much care to the consequences.
- Calls sister on Tuesday and TV in bedroom (self admitted bad sign)

Individualism - doing her own thing without much care to the consequences

Stifiling attitude of the midwest

- Students complain about her criticizing Illinois and also are just generally unaware about the world, or what it is like to be without privilege
- The students at her first college in New Geneva, Minnesota, or the "Land of the Dying Shopping Mall" where everyone was "so blond . . . that brunettes were often presumed to be from foreign countries,". There everyone was expected to be a "Heidi" who would "lug goat milk up the hills and not think twice" and who would never complain. These Midwestern characteristics are the antithesis of Hendricks's personality; they lead her to tell her sister, "Illinois. It makes me sarcastic to be here," and they contribute to her alienation.
- Sexist attitudes
 - Her department is facing a gender discrimination charge

Mental illness

- Potential mental instability? Suicide stories at the end, she doesn't recognise herself in the mirror
- Joke that goes to far: Pushing earl on the balcony, Bruce Springsteen on the rug
- Nihilism - root of her humour (on the plane she convinced herself she had nothing to live for)
 - Never buy discount tickets, she suggests, and "tell yourself you [have] nothing to live for anyway, so that when the plane crashed it was no big deal." And if the plane doesn't crash, by the time the cab arrives to take you and your baggage away, you will have had time to "come up with a persuasive reason to go on living."

Role of Women:

- She either refuses or is unable to to be a "good date" for ppl
- Interaction with Earl (Shouldn't try to get with career women - go for part-time women)
- Cynical about traditional roles + still brings feminine touch to environment

Tone and style

Little plot but rather character development

Humor that is self-deprecating serves as constant

Cynical view of life - sarcasm - morbid

Hospital visit when she might have life-threatening tumor

Witty + glib

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Flashbacks

Irony - situational?

Her life is revealed through anecdotes and jokes

Cynical and morbid view

3rd person POV - understanding of her life and personality -> Disconnect through her cynical and morbid view

Result of style is that Zoe is a relatable character who is realistic and not perfect like many others. The imperfections of Zoe and the way that she awkwardly addresses them serve to remind us of human qualities and condition.

Character development:

Starts off genuinely interested in her job and her students, who she "allows to call her at home". She also attempts to date and seems fairly optimistic about life. Throughout the story, however, she grows increasingly cynical and without a filter.

In spite of all of her efforts, Zoë remains isolated from virtually everyone—the academic community, the men whom she dates, and even most women, who somehow seem to find satisfaction in their lives.

Symbols of Society:

Earl - who wants a part-time working woman who isn't ambitious

Discussion Posts:

Ella:

What social and/or historical values you see being reflected by or embodied by the short story? "You're Ugly, too" takes place in the American Midwest, and Lorrie Moore (the author) uses characterization and plot to expose this location's values. Throughout the story, there is a general sense of ignorance, which is highlighted through how the main character, Zoe, is different from her peers. Her students complain about her criticizing Illinois and also are just generally unaware about the world, or what it is like to be without privilege. In fact, the students at her first job in Minnesota where so homogeneously blond, they presumed that "brunettes were often presumed to be from foreign countries." This is the antithesis of Zoe, who is well read and well traveled. As a teacher she is passionate and critical, both which cause her to clash with her student body. Additionally, Lorrie Moore relies on the description of a "Heidi" to make a point about gender roles in the Midwest. Zoe complains about how every woman is expected to be a "Heidi", who will "not think twice" and never complain. Again, Zoe is deeply cynical and often says what is on her mind without filter. Thus, she is a bit ostracised from society. The only men in her life that she likes is the postman and the cab driver - both with represent her method of escaping heart small town. Her society's view of women is further developed by Zoe's university department having a gender inequality lawsuit. This, she suspects, is why she hasn't been fired. Clearly there are diversity issues at the university, highlighting the sexist attitudes Zoe faces throughout the short story. Overall, "You're Ugly, Too" provides sharp, cynical commentary of a stifling Illinois town.

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Damien:

"You're Ugly, too" by Lorrie Moore explores the complicated role of females in society. The individualism and "gender-defying" actions by the protagonist, Zoe, serve to illustrate the consequences: not completely adhering to society.

Published in 1989, the short story must be read in the context of the era. The 90's was the cusp of globalisation, just after the Cold War ended, and the world was beginning to open up and become more interconnected. This can be seen in how Zoe does not think much of travelling to New York City. Air travel was the norm; inconceivable less than a generation earlier. However, while society was evolving, the traditional stereotypes for women remained much the same, despite the suffrage movement in the 1920's. They are expected to be the homemaker and caretaker instead of the bread earner.

Through an emphasis on character development, rather than plot advances, the short story follows Zoe, a lonely, quixotic, single professor in the middle-of-nowhere Minnesota. Lorrie Moore explores how women were expected to be a "Heidi" who would "lug goat milk up the hills and not think twice," all the while not complaining. However, in contrast, Zoe through sheer individuality, refuses to fit the mould. Yet this often backfires on her with the disastrous dates that she goes on, including one where on a double-date, the person she is paired with leaves with the other couple's wife. She often is seen as a person who is trying too hard; who has the potential but never quite reaches it.

Nick:

"You're Ugly, Too" by Lorrie Moore, is a short story about the life of a woman named Zoë, who lives in the American Midwest. Lorrie Moore uses Zoë, as a medium to help illustrate the social value of women that are often embodied in the American Midwest, represented by the town of "Paris". Through Zoë, a character seemingly disconnected from society, whether it be by looks (the only brunette in a town dominated by blondes) or personality (never being able to keep a date, trying too hard on her makeup, etc), Lorrie conveys the message that sexism is a problem that is prevalent in society, especially considering the only reason she hasn't been fired is because of a gender inequality lawsuit.

At the same time, Zoë is always contrasted against this mysterious "Heidi", a representation of the ideal American woman. "Heidi" is a woman with "cleavage", "outfits", and would be willing to "lug goat milk up the hills and not think twice." On the other hand, Zoë is the perfect rebel, wearing "a lot of grey-green corduroy", and possessing independent thought as a well-read college professor. While Zoë seems to be fine being lonely, it is on the surface level. In fact, when looking deeper at Zoë's circumstances, you see her dissatisfaction in life; the mirror that she returned, the constant barrage of cynical remarks, and the fabrication of her non-existent love life to Earl.

This, coupled with the general ignorance of the students, who make assumptions about the states in the East and wearing ridiculous outfits, seems to suggest that Zoe is an outlier. She is not a run of the mill gal, as she seems to stick out like a sore thumb no matter the situation she is

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placed in. Despite her vacation to New York, back to "civilization", she still does things out of the norm, like almost pushing Earl of the balcony as a "joke", or pulling off her hair with tweezers.

Clearly, this story is providing sharp and cynical social commentary that seems to be saying that strong independent women don't have much of a place in this world, no matter where they try to go.

Noa:

The short story "You're Ugly, Too" by Lorrie Moore takes place in the American Midwest talking about the social norms that women are defined in society. We see the protagonist, Zoe, gives off a weird impression to the reader from the way she acts and talks to others. Zoe has been teaching American History at a University and with her attitudes and immoral values, her lessons and the way she talks to her students refuse the true acts of how to be a respectable woman. There is also a place where women in society are supposed to be dressed a certain way. Her values attack this view that everyone needs to be like "Heidi." "You were never to say you weren't fine thank you and yourself. You were supposed to be Heidi. You were supposed to lug goat milk up the hills and not think twice." (192) Her passive voice and tone faults Zoe into becoming this so-called "Heidi" in not only the way she speaks but the way she looks too. "But soon she came to realize that all men, deep down, wanted Heidi. Heidi with cleavage. Heidi with outfits." (193) Men's lack of interest in her takes Zoe's beauty away from her since she doesn't dress a certain way. Her sister, Evan, has got a perfect lifestyle in her wealth and her upcoming marriage. She invites Zoe to one of her parties, and it seems that with her unamused interest in the men she has been with, she gave no respect when she was paired with Earl. Her extended sarcasm and irony in her dialog portrayed a message that society had only one view about how women are being portrayed, and if they weren't following these norms, men's power can ostracize women's moral values.