

"Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" Essay Topics

1. There are many compelling themes in Joyce Carol Oates's short story. Choose one of these themes (coming of age, sexuality, violence, loss of innocence, family, freedom and confinement, creative liberation, etc.) and discuss its importance to the short story.
2. There is much symbolism in "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?". Choose the strongest symbols in the narrative and explain their importance to the overall story. Be sure to have one unifying element that connects all the symbols.
3. In the end, do you think Connie is a passive victim or a noble heroine? If neither option is satisfactory, come up with your view and argue your point using three strong points of interest.
4. The setting of "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" is 1960s America. We've (hopefully) come a long way in terms of women's equality and our attitudes toward sexuality. What elements of the 1960s views on women still relevant today?
5. Oates has specifically mentioned the "Death and the Maiden" folktales as one inspiration for this story (see "Death and the Maiden" under "[Symbolism](#), [Imagery](#), [Allegory](#)"). What similarity does "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?" share with common fairy tales such as *Snow White*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *The Three Little Pigs*, etc.?
6. Many critics view Arnold Friend as a horrifically evil character. He's considered a satanic construct and his goal is to lure Connie away from a life of innocence. Give an argument that refutes this idea and projects Arnold Friend as a savior figure. Make sure you have strong points of interest.