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### Maxi Essay

There's a wise quote by Lao Tuz that says, "Life and Death are one thread, the same line viewed from different sides." I love this quote because it really connects two short stories that go hand in hand together. One story is *Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?* By Joyce Carol Oates and *The Moths* by Helena Maria Viramontes. Connie and the narrator from *The Moths* view a terrible situation from two different perspectives. Connie, in the *Where Are you Going, Where Have You Been?*, is faced with a situation where she is met with exploring her sexuality and her teenage years but ends up being faced with a horrific situation from a older man named Arnold Friend, that involves her basically disappearing because of this man that desires her and won't let her go. The narrator from *The Moths* deals with the death of her beloved grandmother and is faced to deal with that the one person who understood her more than anyone else in her family is gone. Her grandmother was the narrator's safe space in a sense that she felt the most comfortable with her. The literary focus area that connects these two stories best is the characters and their personalities. They are both alike in the sense that they both are independent throughout the story then at the end they both realize that they can't be self absorbed at their age due to their circumstances. I can connect to both of these pieces, more to the narrator of the *Moths* than to Connie in *Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?*, because I have been affected by a death. My grandfather died of cancer when I was in high school which led me to a dark depression, along with other factors, I was angry for a while because he was so young. I realized that I can't be angry at the fact that everyone dies - no matter how much they mean to me or how much it hurts, because life happens, and it moves on whether you're ready or not for it.

I can connect to Connie in Joyce Carol Oates' *Where Are You Going? Where Have You Been?* by in the beginning of the story, Connie was always caring about her looks and how she was perceived by others. There was a time in my life right before I graduated high school that I was just self absorbed by how I looked of myself. I wanted to make people think I was different than I actually was. So I can fit in with the rest of my peers. Connie tries to make herself older so she is desired by older men but it turns out badly because the guy Arnold Friend invades her personal space by coming to her house, it made her feel like she was a child. A quote showing this was on page 617, "But my father's coming back. He's coming to get me. I had to wash my hair first -" She spoke in a dry, rapid voice, hardly raising it for him to hear. "No, your daddy is not coming and yes, you had to wash your hair and you washed it for me. It's nice and shining

and all for me, I thank you, sweetheart,” he said...” The narrator of the Moths has a similar situation because she has insecurity issues as well at the beginning of the story. She explains that her sisters make fun of her often because the narrator can't do what her other sisters can. This gives her a complex which makes her distant from her family except for her grandmother. On page 860, the narrator says this in the story, “I wasn't even pretty or nice like my older sisters and I just couldn't do the girl things they could do.” I can connect to the narrator also because my grandfather did die, as I mentioned earlier, and I was deeply affected by it. My grandfather was the source for anything you needed to know, the glue that held my family together, and the soul that made the world better. I can tell the narrator was deeply affected as well when her grandmother had passed. On page 865, the narrator shares “... for the first time in a long time I cried, rocking us, crying for her, for me, for Ama, the sobs emerging from the depths of anguish, the misery of feeling half-born, sobbing until finally, the sobs rippled into circles and circles of sadness and relief.” I thought this was a heavy quote because you can physically feel her sobbing - we all know how it feels to sob so you can almost feel that through the text. The narrator mentions in the story that even though she has spent lots of time with her grandmother, she'll always miss her and her death makes her relationship with her mom stronger. Which I can relate to as well, when you go through something as serious as a traumatic experience with someone - you both can bond over that and make your relationship stronger.

Every situation can affect a person greatly if put in a bad position, but they can learn from this and become stronger mentally. Granted, we don't know what happens to Connie because Joyce Carol Oates wants the reader to imagine the ending but if she does survive then she can overcome this and realize that there's more to her life than sexual attention from men. The narrator can learn from this, that maybe it's okay to let your guard down and just sometimes feel whatever you're feeling. These are two strong messages I took away while reading these short stories. From the wise words of Lao Tuz, life and death are one thread but that one thread can be perceived by many different sides.