A Lesson in the Art of Spelunking

"Life is 10% situation and 90% perception. You have to create your own happiness." I stared into the faces of 300 soon-to-be high school graduates. My speech was coming to an end. Only a few more sentences and a final farewell before we would all go our separate ways. I had practiced countless times, but I never expected what came next. Tears, regret, longing. Where had the last four years gone? Why were so many faces in the crowd still complete strangers? How could I say goodbye when I never said hello? I felt my throat well as a sob threatened to escape into the microphone and across the auditorium. I took a breath and continued, my voice like a dew drop hanging from a leaf, quivering and threatening to break away at any moment. “So, class of 2014, thank you for everything. I wish you so much more than luck.”

My name is Lauren Rich. University of Georgia freshman, humankind aficionado, and avid spelunker. These are two truths and a sort-of lie. I don’t “spelunk” in the strictest terms. In fact, I have never been in a literal cave. Instead, I spend many of my days exploring the vast grotto called introversion. I enjoy examining the stalactites of missed opportunities and the deep crevices of unrealized potential. Along the way, I sometimes see vast waterfalls of would-be friendships and the occasional “maybe tomorrow” stalagmite. Although these sites are certainly beautiful in their own way, I have been circling in the dark for too long, and what I crave now more than anything is sunlight.

Following the aforementioned graduation speech when I realized how much of my high school years were wasted on nervousness and procrastination, I vowed to change. No longer would I be the timid, quiet one who stuttered her name and only found solace surrounded by the lined paper of a journal. In Athens, I would be more forward, more involved, more amiable. I
certainly did not expect to stand out among the other 34,999 students, but I did expect to find a
niche in which I would spread my wings and flourish like never before. But, the heat of the
summer brought with it complacency. By the time I arrived at the University of Georgia, I was
just as withdrawn and future-oriented as ever. I kept to myself and my high school
acquaintances, giving hardly a thought to the enormous amount of opportunity that surrounded
me. There I was, trudging away through introversion, trying to find the smallest promise of an
exit. My new beginning quickly turned into a continuation of the life I swore against just six
months before.

But, I will admit that this is a very negative view of a very positive situation. I am only
four months into the best years of my life thus far. Though I have traveled deep into the recesses
of quiet acceptance and dissatisfaction, I have with me both flashlight
and map. Self-improvement has no deadline, and August 12, 2014 was
certainly not my final opportunity to escape this introversion rut. So,
now that you have an idea of who I am, allow me to say who I strive to
be. The unparalleled scholar Dr. Seuss once wrote, “Today I will
behave as if this is the day I will be remembered.” Today, I will strive
to escape this formidable cave of isolation, to bask in the sunlight, to
brave the untouched waters of sociability, to be remembered.
Caving How-To

Finding the Right Location

When I first entered this English 1102 class, I could not help but feel a tinge of resentment. Despite all of my hard work in high school and my love for literature, I still could not manage a “5” on either AP Literature or AP Language exams. So there I sat, hearing that illusory “5” laughing in the distance as I scowled at the coming semester. At the first mention of a portfolio, a documented chronology of my “composition journey,” I felt uneasy. I already felt well-established in my composition skills and did not expect this course to offer much help.

Now at the conclusion of this semester, I am happy to retract my previous sentiments and denounce the conceited attitude that brought me to them in the first place. As a result of this course, I have improved in both composition and character. I no longer struggle to accept constructive peer criticism, and I now view English 1102 not as a punishment for my inability to score a “5,” but as a valuable means to improvement.

Gathering Equipment

For my first essay, I chose to analyze one of my favorite short stories, Joyce Carol Oates’s “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?” I knew that I wanted to explore Oates’s comments on childhood expectations versus the realities of adulthood. However, my first draft showed only simple character analyses of Connie and Arnold Friend and a lack of a contentious thesis. I stated that Connie represents “the stereotypical rebellious teen who longs for an idealized sense of independence, yet does not understand what true independence entails” and Arnold Friend is “everything Connie hopes to attain” (Paper 1). Though the text supports both characterizations, my first draft does not offer a substantial analysis of the short story or Oates’s
controversial assertions, and in the conclusion, I introduced an entirely new topic of obedience and Oates’s “warning of the dangers of hedonism” (Paper 1). Even in my second draft, I held tight to this flimsy assertion. Thankfully, I revisited my conclusion in my final draft. Instead of considering “Where Are You Going” as just a cautionary tale, I asserted that Oates “relay[s] a time-worn lesson concerning the tragic permanence of lost innocence” (Paper 1). Though my final draft was far from perfect, I could already see improvement in my thought process.

Wandering the Cave

After completing Paper 1, I realized the greatest need for Paper 2 was a debatable, and perhaps even contentious, thesis. I wanted to challenge myself with a truly factious argument. Therefore, I decided to focus on John Updike’s criticism of 1950s America in his short story “A&P.” I asserted that the author uses his narrator’s escape from the monotonous A&P as a means to support the emerging counterculture youth movement, particularly the Beat Generation.

In my first draft, the entirety of my research seemed to lie in the introductory paragraph, which made for an overwhelming introduction. There, I described the ideals of the “Fabulous Fifties,” the dissatisfaction of many youths, and the basic pillars of the Beats. By doing this, I made it difficult for my readers to truly understand what the counterculture movement entailed, which would impede the clarity of my argument. So, I added a paragraph to my second draft describing the Beats and giving examples of Beat literature to further illustrate their “separation from the norm” (Paper 2). However, this paragraph did not thoroughly relate back to my thesis.

My main focus for both my third and final drafts was explicitly stating the relationship between the details I chose to include and my thesis. For example, in my second body paragraph of the final draft, I cited Allen Ginsberg’s poem “America” to illustrate the Beat condition. Instead of simply including quotes or sparse analysis of the poem itself, as I did in previous
drafts, I explained what the poem revealed about Beat culture and how Updike expounds on these characteristics in “A&P.” I would like to believe that this Paper 2 is my best writing and my most effective argument of the semester.

Relying on Other Explorers

Perhaps my greatest struggle in this course was the peer review process. As I stated before, I was initially skeptical of peer criticism. It would concern me to see how many comments a reviewer might have for parts of my essay I thought were well constructed. It was not until Paper 2 that I truly saw the merits of peer review.

My review partners for Paper 2 were more than helpful with their suggestions. For example, one reviewer suggested that my analysis of Ginsberg’s poetry was interesting, but it was “unclear what these pieces [had] to do with Updike’s statement” (Review 2). Similarly, the same reviewer challenged me to strengthen my analysis and connections in certain paragraphs by stating that “[they lack] the depth that you need. Think about asking why a little bit more. Why [do] these quotes matter? And what [do] they do for the piece and the point you are trying to make?” (Review 2).

I can definitely see notable changes in my view of criticism. Instead of an unwelcome nuisance, I now view peer review as a valuable way to gain insight into my composition style. This review process has illuminated shortcomings and strategies for improvement, and I am thankful for both.

Exploring on My Own

For my Wild Card, I wanted to show my thoughts at their most basic. I included several unedited monologues that I wrote while employing a creative “blind writing” exercise. The first
describes an ongoing internal “video” that played through my head of a malleable ball rolling
down a large staircase, the second expresses a longing for childish play, and the third portrays
my thoughts on dissatisfaction and passion. There is no central theme for these writing samples.
Instead, they are like fragments of my internal monologue on different days, always changing
and always strange.
Lauren Rich
Raffaela Wilson
ENGL 1102
18 September 2014

"Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?": Delusions versus Reality

Joyce Carol Oates’s short story “Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?” offers a sinister look at an egotistic adolescent’s search for freedom and its aversive consequences. Teenaged Connie spends her nights pursuing the fruits of independence while giving no thought to its labors until the illusory Arnold Friend offers her that which she desires most. The luxurious and carefree lifestyle she expects to accompany adulthood lies in stark contrast to the mysterious and frightening world Friend propositions. Through extensive symbolism and characterizations, Oates explores the age-old topic of independence and presents a vivid illustration of childish delusions versus the realities of adulthood.

Connie serves as the stereotypical rebellious teen who longs for an idealized sense of freedom, yet she fails to realize that her desire for independence is rooted in fantasy. She is a young and immature fifteen and yet presents herself as an experienced adult. To mask her childishness, she nurtures two personas: a disinterested teen for family and a glimmering sensualist for friends and strangers. Her nights “across the highway” suggest that Connie frequently escapes the tedium of home and deviates into hedonism, where she entertains herself with older friends, strange boys, and “what haven and what blessing [she] yearned for” (1409). On these nights, Connie flaunts her sexualized self, symbolized by her “pullover jersey blouse that looked one way when she was at home and another way when she was away from home” (1408). Her unwillingness to establish a permanent “self” shows no she was

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shows not only confusion, but also a childish obstinacy that betrays the mask she wears “anywhere that was not home” (1408).

As Oates describes her, Connie appears to be entirely fixated on the superficial and convinced that an adult semblance is equitable to maturity. She admits that “she was pretty, and that was everything,” and even suspects that the strength of her mother’s love is contingent upon beauty, remarking that her mother “preferred [Connie] to [sister] June, because she was prettier” (1408, 1410). By including this fixation, Oates presents Connie as a flippant child who mistakes the face for the mind. If nothing else, her ideals concerning beauty prove that Connie is plagued by the immaturity she so desperately tries to hide. Connie’s ignorance cannot remain hidden under her thin veil of deception. The reader finds that, despite her objections, Connie has yet to establish an appreciation for true autonomy. Oates implies that Connie’s nightly excursions are short-lived (she only spends three hours with a boy on the particular night Oates describes) and her family has remained a beacon of safety. No matter how far away she ventures, home always waits for her at the end of whatever alley sheexplores. Though she would never admit it, Connie is still totally dependent on the safety her family provides.

In her search for carte blanche, Connie attracts the strange Arnold Friend, who comes to represent everything Connie hopes to attain in adulthood. As his name foreshadows, Friend treats his and Connie’s young relationship with unwarranted intimacy. His first comment to her is an alarming “Gonna get you, baby,” and when he later arrives at her home unannounced, he offers to drive her away before even revealing his name (1409). This audacity coupled with an aura of mystery establishes Arnold Friend as the embodiment of Connie’s desires, namely freedom. Friend’s ostentatious “convertible jalopy painted gold,” complete with his name
inscribed on the side, and a crude portrait of himself, symbolizes Friend’s enticing independence (1409). Unlike Connie, Arnold Friend is not bound by watchful family members or adult chauffeurs. Connie notes this nomadic spirit when she remarks that “he had driven up the driveway all right but had come from nowhere before that and belonged nowhere” (1415). It is this characteristic that entrances Connie, leading her unknowingly to her ruination.

In addition to his freedom (of which Connie is certainly envious), Friend portrays himself as the perfect and normal rebellious youth. He dresses stylishly (“the way all of them dressed”) and appears to have all of the desirable attributes of the time (1412). However, under the guise of the stereotype lies something sinister. Connie recognizes the familiarity of Friend’s motions, such as his “sleepy, dreamy smile . . . the singsong way he talked . . . the way he tapped one fist against the other,” yet she admits that “these things did not come together” (1414). She remarks that “his whole face was a mask” and suggests several times that his hair resembled a wig (1416). Following these accusations, Connie observes Friend’s difficulty walking, noting that “his feet did not go all the way down; his boots must have been stuffed with something” (1417). Along with physical dissonance, Friend layers outdated colloquialisms, as though he is “no longer sure which one of them was in style” (1418). He claims that he “[knows] everybody” and tells Connie that she has been marked with his sign: “an X in the air” (1413, 1414). This observation in particular suggests that Arnold Friend not only represents a beastly immorality, he represents the literal “Beast” himself. Friend’s difficulty walking implies cloven hooves and his misuse of youthful phrases characterizes him as a calculating predator versed in aggressive mimicry. Like a mockingjay, he uses familiar calls to trick and ensnare his victims.

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victims. He wears an attractive mask to exploit Connie’s ignorance, and, once the mask is removed, escape is impossible.

Just as Connie fails to see any of the negative aspects of adulthood, she is slow to realize Friend’s devious intentions. Friend is the embodiment of carnality and presents Connie with everything she desires: freedom, sex, and adventure. It is not until Friend loses his charming facade that Connie understands the danger that confronts her. When he tells Connie, “I’m your lover” and promises her, “I’ll hold you so tight you won’t think you have to try to get away . . . because you’ll know you can’t,” Connie finally recognizes Friend as an enemy (1416). In her desperation, she reaches out to figures of authority. Realizing that she has lost control, Connie threatens to call the police and insists that her father will soon come home (1416). These cries for help mark the beginning of Connie’s regression into infancy. Severed from the familiarity of family and home, Connie abandons her glossy veneer and, at the climax of her transformation, “[cries] for her mother” over the telephone (1418). Despite Connie’s anguish, Friend still forces upon her the life she once desired, thus uprooting Connie from youth and propelling her into the alien lands of adulthood.

“Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?” reveals the schism between dreams and the waking world. The daunting realm Arnold Friend presents to young Connie destroys her tragically rosy view of adulthood. Without her family as a safety net, Connie reconsiders her search for independence and, in her struggle against the evil personified by Arnold Friend, realizes the precious transience of youth. When Connie remarks that she “did not recognize [any land] except to know that she was going to it,” Oates uses this detail to relay a time-worn lesson concerning the tragic permanence of lost innocence.
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“A&P” and the Beat Generation

1960s America presented the country with a myriad of social and economic changes. Within a short decade, the Civil Rights Movement gained momentum, Cold War tensions remained heated, and leaders continued to push a war steadily losing public approval. With a change in culture and attitude came a change in people. Perhaps most notable was the rise of the Beat Generation, which spawned the counterculture revolution. In his short story “A&P,” John Updike uses an allegorical tale to support the “beatniks” and to challenge the social confinement so prevalent following World War II. To illustrate the author’s progressive opinion of the new youth movement, Updike’s narrator escapes the banal A&P, a journey symbolizing his transition from the “Lost Generation” of World War II to a movement raw and unparalleled.

The Beats found their beginnings in the 1950s, during which the economy boomed and the nation enjoyed a brief period of peace epitomized by the stereotypical Fabulous Fifties. However, not everyone was content with this new age of consumerism and the facade of the Leave It to Beaver household. As Clark Dougan and Samuel Lipsman explain in A Nation Divided, many Americans found fault in this new wave of collective mindset. They believed the country valued social norms over individuality and financial gain over spiritual enlightenment (Dougan and Lipsman 34). An unrivaled youth subculture bloomed in the 1960s, rooted in nonconformity
and watered with rock-n-roll beats and the bop of new, energizing literature (Dougan and Lipsman 35). The aptly-named Silent Generation of the previous decades quietly withered away to make room for its much more colorful counterparts who would eventually become known as the “Beats” (Dougan and Lipsman 34).

Completely disenchanted with American society, the Beats initially emerged as a low-profile movement that encouraged “rebellion against prevailing cultural standards” (Dougan and Lipsman 34). The Beats pursued this separation from convention mainly through subversive literature. Poet Allen Ginsberg, one of the Beat movement’s most prominent figures, offered a testimony of the Beat condition in his 1956 poem “America.” In “America,” Ginsberg denounces the country’s hypocrisy and advocates subversion and rebellion, characteristics of the Beats that Updike promotes in “A&P.” Using direct, sometimes explicit statements, such as “Go fuck yourself with your atom bomb,” and “America I am the Scottsboro boys,” Ginsberg reveals his desire to disconnect from the country he so fervently condemns (5, 33). As John Clellon Holmes reveals in his editorial “This Is The Beat Generation,” the Beats sought more than anything a separation from bravado and “a sort of nakedness of mind, and, ultimately, of soul” (10). At the core of almost all Beat literature lies this search for rebellion. Blatant discussions of dissatisfaction and sedition rocked the foundation of American society. Perhaps incited by the Beats, John Updike includes characters in “A&P” that show a similar desire to escape the authoritarianism and stagnation of tradition.

To illustrate the growing battle between the conventional and the avant-garde, John Updike uses his setting and characters as symbols of the developing social unrest. The A&P supermarket, with its structured atmosphere of 1950s communality, thus serves as a foil to the characters’ desire to leave these dreary, oppressive cultural landscapes, or, with whom they have evil store, or,
atmosphere and knack for conformity, represents the suburban psyche of 1950s America. A supermarket of any kind serves as the heart of a community—the place into which every citizen must inevitably venture. Therefore, this hub is representative of the people who frequently visit. Updike’s observant narrator Sammy is quick to establish his local A&P as one of hopeless tedium and structure. He characterizes his customers as “sheep,” “houseslaves in pin curlers,” and “scared pigs in a chute” (616, 618). Each of these derisive terms evokes a sense of conformity and captivity. The A&P-ers have evidently become lost in suburbia as they amble through the familiar store, or, if taken symbolically, the tedium of Americana. The scathing tone with which Sammy describes his environment both foreshadows his decision to leave and illustrates Updike’s opposition to traditional American society.

Just as the A&P represents the cookie-cutter 1950s America, the three bikini-clad girls who upset the status quo represent the counter-culture Beats that gained popularity in the following decade. As early as the first line, Updike draws parallels between the trio and this new social insurrection. “A&P” begins with an abrupt fragment, as though the narrator was busy telling his story and the reader only started listening during the most interesting part. “In walk three girls in nothing but bathing suits,” he reminisces (614). This brusque introduction describes both the girls’ surprising entrance and that of the counterculture movement, which seemed to emerge as a colorful splash against a plain white canvas. When Sammy describes the leader of the girls, affectionately dubbed “Queenie,” he dwells on her bare shoulders, neck, and wrists (617). He gawks at the idea that “there was nothing between the top of the suit and the top of her head except just her” and that her empty hands were “bare as God made them” (615, 617). This exposure is not just one of the body, but one of the spirit—the girls have
sloughed away any excess, leaving only their natural selves. Updike perhaps incorporates this detail to draw further similarities between the Beats and the girls. With her exposed shoulders and stomach, Queenie exhibits the nakedness and bohemianism that became synonymous with “Beat.”

Updike further explores the innate differences between Queenie and the other characters when he comments on their socioeconomic disparities. The narrator points to Queenie’s purchase of “Kingfish Fancy Herring Snacks in Pure Sour Cream: 49¢” as an indication of her financial superiority (617). He then imagines her glamorous family gatherings and compares her “drinks the color of water with olives and sprigs of mint in them” with his much less sophisticated “Schlitz in tall glasses with ‘They’ll Do It Every Time’ stenciled on” (617). Perhaps Updike incorporates this schism not to bring attention to the characters’ socioeconomic inequality, but rather as a symbol of their differences in states of being. Queenie seems to be in a much different, much more ideal place than the narrator. She is unencumbered by social customs or the demoralizing stares of the sheep. It is for this reason that Sammy decides to follow her out of the harsh fluorescence of the A&P into Queenie’s world where “sunshine is skating around on the asphalt” (619). The positive way in which Updike portrays Sammy’s escape from the A&P illustrates the author’s liberal view of nonconformity. Ignoring Lengel’s reproof, the narrator continues his denial of the establishment and solidifies his desire to join the trio and thus the new youth movement.

In addition to the A&P itself, the store authority, Lengel, also embodies the atmosphere of the Fabulous Fifties. He serves as the voice of normalcy and tradition when he reprimands the three scantily-clad girls. This admonition reveals a character trait most representative of the era: an aversion to change. When faced with opposition from the trio of girls,
the store’s patrons succumb to fear, much like the proponents of tradition confronted by the Beats. Once the girls upset the natural order of the store, the other customers gathered together to avoid the scene like livestock herded by dogs. Lengel gives a voice to the petrified sheep when he cites decent dress and store policy to discourage the store’s invaders (618). Following this argumentative scene, Sammy abruptly quits his job and chases after the girls, indicating his decision to abandon the conventions of the era and pursue uncharted territory. By recognizing the pitiful state of the A&P and subsequently deciding to quit his job, Sammy actually acknowledges the store and Lengel as representations of a weary and jaded country.

In “A&P,” John Updike illustrates the birth of the Beat Generation and its effects on the traditional views of the decade. The author expresses his approval of this culture shift through symbolism that helps him to challenge the pervasive conformity of the 1950s. By leading his narrator out of the doldrums of A&P into the tumultuous and unfamiliar world of Queenie, Updike suggests the merits of disobedience and bohemianism and encourages the new generation of rebels.
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Practice Makes Perfect

As I stated previously, revision was one of the most arduous tasks for me throughout this course. I tend to become attached to anything I write, which makes it challenging to revise or “scrap” any material. Of course, revision is an integral component of successful composition. If I want a decent essay, I must learn to accept when my writing is unsatisfactory. The following part of Paper 1 is an excellent illustration of how I overcame these challenges.

Key

Inadequate support
Ineffective grammar/syntax
Inadequate relation to thesis
Added/changed

Thesis

Through extensive symbolism and characterizations, Oates explores the age-old theme of independence and presents a vivid illustration of childish delusions versus the realities of adulthood.

Pre-write

Arnold Friend represents the maturity that Connie so fervently seeks. He serves as the embodiment of sensuality, offering Connie everything she desires: freedom (symbolized by the ostentatious golden jalopy), sex, and adventure. However, severed from the familiarity of family and home, Connie reverts back into a childlike state. As is the nature of the Beast, Connie’s change in character is meaningless. She is thus uprooted from youth and forced into the alien lands of adulthood.
Process: I chose to include my pre-write with no color-coding to show the initial formation of my ideas. For this section of my essay, I wanted to show how Arnold Friend represents the allure that Connie mistakes for true independence. His mystery and audacity attract young Connie, and this attraction precipitates her downfall. I also wanted to explore the possibility of Friend being a biblical demon. To relate back to my thesis about the disparities between childish expectations and the realities of adulthood, I would include a description of Connie’s attempt to return to childhood and her inability to escape Friend.

Draft 1

In her search for carte blanche, Connie attracts the strange Arnold Friend, who comes to represent everything Connie hopes to attain. As his name foreshadows, Friend treats his and Connie’s young relationship with unwarranted intimacy. His first comment to her was an alarming “Gonna get you, baby” (1409), and when he later arrives unannounced, he asks her to “come for a ride” before even revealing his name (1411). This audacity coupled with an aura of mystery establishes Arnold Friend as the embodiment of Connie’s desires. Arnold Friend represents the sensual and mysterious maturity that Connie so fervently seeks. He serves as the embodiment of carnality, offering Connie everything she desires: freedom (symbolized by the ostentatious golden jalopy), sex, and adventure. However, severed from the familiarity of family and home, Connie reverts back into a childlike state (the transformation complete when she “cried for her mother” (1418) over the telephone). As is the nature of the beast (Arnold Friend perhaps being the “Beast” himself), once Connie delved into depravity, she is uprooted from youth and forced into the alien lands of adulthood.
**Process:** This draft includes all of the ideas that I wanted to explore, but it was not as substantive as it should have been. I repeat several times that Friend is “the embodiment” of Connie’s desires, but I do not specifically state the details that led me to this assertion. I needed to add more textual evidence to characterize Friend, specifically his other-worldliness. These details would act as a segue into my argument about Friend as a literal demon. I also briefly describe Connie’s transition “back into a childlike state.” However, I do not explicitly state the specifics of this transformation or how it relates to my thesis. Likewise, my concluding sentence indicates that Connie succumbed to Friend and must now face a dark unknown, but I do not mention how this relates to Oates’s assertion concerning expectations versus the realities of adulthood.

**Draft 2**

In her search for *carte blanche*, Connie attracts the strange Arnold Friend, who comes to represent everything Connie hopes to attain. As his name foreshadows, Friend treats his and Connie’s young relationship with unwarranted intimacy. His first comment to her is an alarming “Gonna get you, baby” (1409), and when he later arrives unannounced, he asks her to “come for a ride” before even revealing his name (1411). This audacity coupled with an aura of mystery establishes Arnold Friend as the embodiment of Connie’s desires, namely freedom. Friend’s ostentatious “convertible jalopy painted gold” (1409), complete with his name inscribed on the side, and a crude portrait of himself (1412), symbolizes Friend’s enticing independence. In addition to his ability to traverse, Friend portrays himself as the perfect and normal rebellious youth. He dresses stylishly (“the way all of them dressed” (1412)) and appears to have all of the desirable attributes of
the time. However, under the guise of the stereotype lies something sinister. Connie recognizes the familiarity of Friend’s motions (his “sleepy, dreamy smile . . . the singsong way he talked . . . the way he tapped one fist against the other” (1414)), yet admits that these things did not come together” (1414). She remarks that “his whole face was a mask” (1416) and suggests several times that his hair is a wig. Following these accusations, Connie notes Friend’s difficulty walking (“his feet did not go all the way down; his boots must have been stuffed with something” (1417)). Along with physical dissonance, Friend employs outdated colloquialisms, as though he was “no longer sure which one of them was in style” (1418). This observation in particular along with his difficulty walking suggest that Arnold Friend not only represents a beastly immorality, he represents the Beast himself. He preys on Connie and wears an attractive mask to engage her. He becomes the sensual and mysterious maturity that Connie so fervently seeks. He serves as the embodiment of carnality, offering Connie everything she desires: freedom, sex, and adventure. However, severed from the familiarity of family and home, Connie reverts back into a childlike state (the transformation complete when she “cried for her mother” (1418) over the telephone). As is the nature of the Beast, once Connie delved into depravity, she is uprooted from youth and forced into the alien lands of adulthood.

Process: In this draft, I focused on adding much more textual evidence. I knew I needed to provide more support for the assertions I made, such as Arnold Friend representing Connie’s desires and the possibility of him being a literal demon. However, I still did not explicate the importance of Connie’s reversion into infancy or how her forced departure from innocence contributed to my thesis.
Final Draft

In her search for autonomy, Connie attracts the strange Arnold Friend, who comes to represent everything Connie hopes to attain in adulthood. As his name foreshadows, Friend treats his and Connie's young relationship with unwarranted intimacy. His first comment to her is an alarming "Gonna get you, baby," and when he later arrives at her home unannounced, he offers to drive her away before even revealing his name (1409). This audacity coupled with an aura of mystery establishes Arnold Friend as the embodiment of Connie's desires, namely freedom. Friend's ostentatious "convertible jalopy painted gold," complete with his name inscribed on the side, and a crude portrait of himself, symbolizes Friend's enticing independence (1409). Unlike Connie, Arnold Friend is free to traverse without the boundaries of watchful family members or adult chauffeurs. Connie notes this nomadic spirit when she remarks that "he had driven up the driveway all right but had come from nowhere before that and belonged nowhere" (1415). It is this characteristic that enraptures Connie, leading her unknowingly to her ruination.

In addition to his freedom, of which Connie is certainly envious, Friend portrays himself as the perfect and normal rebellious youth. He dresses stylishly, notably "the way all of them dressed," and appears to have all of the desirable attributes of the time (1412). However, under the guise of the stereotype lies something sinister. Connie recognizes the familiarity of Friend's motions, such as his "sleepy, dreamy smile... the singsong way he talked... the way he tapped one fist against the other," yet she admits that "these things did not come together" (1414). She remarks that "his whole face was a mask" and suggests several times that his hair resembled a wig (1416). Following these accusations, Connie observes Friend's difficulty walking, noting "his feet did not go all the way down; his boots must have
been stuffed with something” (1417). Along with physical dissonance, Friend layers outdated colloquialisms, as though he was “no longer sure which one of them was in style” (1418). He claims that he “[knows] everybody” and tells Connie that she has been marked with his sign—“an X in the air” (1413, 1414). This observation in particular suggests that Arnold Friend not only represents a beastly immorality, he represents the biblical Beast himself.

Friend’s difficulty walking implicates cleft hooves, and his misuse of youthful phrases characterizes him as a calculating predator versed in aggressive mimicry. Like a mockingjay, he uses familiar calls to trick and ensnare his victims. He wears an attractive mask to exploit Connie’s ignorance, and, once the mask is removed, escape is impossible.

Just as Connie fails to see of the negative aspects of adulthood, she is slow to realize Friend’s devious intentions. Friend is the embodiment of carnality and presents Connie with everything she desires: freedom, sex, and adventure. It is not until Friend loses his charming facade that Connie understands the danger that confronts her. When he tells Connie “I’m your lover” and promises her that he will “hold you so tight you won’t think you have to try to get away . . . because you know you can’t,” Connie finally recognizes Friend as an enemy (1416). In her desperation, she reaches out to figures of authority. Realizing that she has lost control, Connie threatens to call the police and insists that her father will soon come home (1416). These cries for help mark the beginning of Connie’s regression into infancy.

Severed from the familiarity of family and home, Connie abandons her glossy veneer and, at the climax of her transformation, “[cries] for her mother” over the telephone (1418). Despite Connie’s anguish, Friend still forces upon her the life she once desired, thus uprooting Connie from youth and propelling her into the alien lands of adulthood.
Process: In this final draft, I realized that each detail I wanted to explore about Arnold Friend and Connie’s relationship could easily become three separate paragraphs. The first describes Friend’s allure and how he parallels Connie’s desire for idealized independence. The second comments on Friend’s other-worldliness and how these idiosyncrasies contribute to his status as a devil. The third paragraph chronicles how Connie abandons her search for independence and becomes a child in the face of danger. In addition to a change in structure, I included more specific details to further support each idea. I also replaced ineffective diction, changed all parenthetical statements to clauses separated by commas, and added transitional phrases to introduce each idea, which helped the paragraphs’ “flow.” Overall, my final draft became much more detailed. I wanted to ensure that my writing and support were clear enough to adequately express my thesis.
Reaching Out in the Dark

If nothing else, English 1102 has taught me the importance of peer review. As I stated in “Caving How-To,” I was skeptical when I first entered the course. It was difficult for me to accept criticism from someone sitting in the same desk as me. Likewise, I could not see why anyone would care about my comments either. Despite my reluctance, I still made a marked effort to supply substantive criticism for my review partners’ Paper 1. Not surprisingly, it helped. In order to provide worthwhile comments, I had to understand the goals of my partner’s essay as well as what our instructor expected of us. I tried to contribute constructive assessments that would bridge the gap between the student’s and the instructor’s goals.

I chose to present the following peer review because I believe it represents my most substantial critique. The author wanted to explore the unattainable nature of the American Dream in Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman*. To accomplish this, she provided character profiles for each member of the Loman family and explained how their current circumstances support the impracticality of traditional American “success.” Though she had a solid argument and plan of action, her analysis could have been more substantial in some areas, and her diction was sometimes too colloquial. My comments aimed to improve both the content of her essay and its aesthetic quality.
The American Dream or the American Nightmare? I love this! So catchy!

The American Dream: it is an idea that has been rooted in this great nation since the beginning of its creation. This may be a bit redundant. You could probably just say “its beginning” or “its creation.” European men and women ventured here in flee of religious persecution and governmental oppression while Asian and Hispanic people came in pursuit of economic opportunity. The common notion is that as soon as one gets here life becomes simple—that he or she will “get rich quick.” However, many quickly learn that the American Dream is not all it is cracked up to be. Arthur Miller’s Death of a Salesman tells the story of a dysfunctional family whose father, Willy Loman, holds an unreasonable belief that his son Biff will one day “end up big” (Miller 98). However, Biff and Happy, the other, younger son, accomplish nothing, failing to live up to Willy’s enormous expectations. Through Miller’s characterization of the Loman family, he critiques the reality of the American Dream by suggesting that no matter how hard one works there is a chance that one can still fail. Ultimately, true success is not determined by one’s job, money, or standard or living, but rather it is determined by how content one is with the life he or she is living.

There are many words that can be used to describe Willy Loman: troubled, hard-working, stubborn, and unstable. Maybe you could add a bit
Key
Ineffective/Awkward Diction
Unsupported Claim
Thesis
My comments

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There are many words that can be used to describe Willy Loman: troubled, hard-working, stubborn, and unstable. Maybe you could add a bit
of analysis at the end of this statement. You describe him, then add a phrase to explain what this description means. “Willy is self-deluded, believing wholeheartedly in the American Dream of success and wealth” (Sickels 84). Maybe add some of your own words around this quote so it does not stand alone. His entire world revolves around Biff because he relies on the belief that his son is too great of a man to be considered a failure. To him, “the man who makes an appearance in the business world” holds the key to success; therefore, as long as Biff looks and acts the part he will be “the man who gets ahead” (Miller 33). All the while throughout This sounds a bit redundant. You could probably just say “Thoughout” or “During his son’s...” his son’s trials in various jobs, Willy continues to believe that Biff is too good—too important for an average, low-income lifestyle. Willy’s “feeling of entitlement, that if [he] plays by the rules [he] will in time reap his... just rewards, [has] led [him]... astray” from the realities of life (Samuel 7). This quote sounds a bit awkward. Maybe you could quote the important parts, then paraphrase the rest. This illusion of the American Dream tricks Willy into thinking that a life in sales, like his own, will provide his sons with substantial and happy lives, but in actuality he is only fooling himself. The irony lies in the fact that Willy, who works like a dog? Maybe include specific details to support this? to provide for his family and must also go to excruciating ends for them, ultimately causes Biff to neglect him by acting as an overbearing father. Willy’s suicide goes to show that no matter how hard one works throughout the course of his or her life, he or she is not guaranteed happiness. In the end, Willy dies believing in the American Dream, although he nor his sons never have nor will live it.

In the opposite part is T (Sickels transform Miller’s the story as an eag means “I as the stc involen school b Willy the schoo calls him strong, w be destin fact that How doe is somew does not so grove story Ha “I’m get
In response to everything Willy Loman wants him to be, Biff is the opposite. He is seen by Wily “as an underachiever,” but what sets him apart is his “refus[al] to be self-deceived by his father’s unrealistic dreams (Sickels 85). Unlike the other characters in the story, Biff undergoes a unique transformation that sets him apart. How specifically is he different? Through Miller’s use of flashbacks, we see Biff’s former self several times throughout the story through Willy’s flashbacks. In these scenes, the audience sees Biff as an eager young man who would do anything to please his father, even if it means “break[ing] through for a touchdown” for him (Miller 32). However, as the story progresses the reader learns of the cheating scandal and Biff’s involvement in it, and things are never the same. Biff flunks out of high school because he is too disgusted by father. He has lost so much respect for Willy that he refuses to let him do the simplest of things for him, even calling the school to get him passed. From here on out, Biff rejects his father and calls him a “phony dream[er]” (Miller 133). Biff, who is characterized as a strong, well-built young man, has many things going for him and supposed to be destined for success, but ironically ends up as a bum. This illustrates the fact that the American Dream is not destined for everyone.

Happy is a combination of his father and Biff’s characteristics. How does this characterization relate to your argument? Like Biff, he too is somewhat of a failure, for he is an attention-seeking compulsive liar who does not have much of a job either. Miller uses repetition to show how Happy so grovels for Willy’s attention. For example, several times throughout the story Happy repeats the phrases “I’m losing weight, you notice, Pop?” and “I’m getting married, Pop” (Miller 29, 133). Because he takes after his father
so much, Happy “deludes [himself]” into believing that Biff and he have a
real shot in the business world (Sickels 85). Like Willy, Happy completely
believes in the American Dream and refuses to accept the fact that he and Biff
are utter failures.

Finally, the last member of the family is Willy’s wife, Linda. Maybe
here you could go ahead and introduce how her characterization supports
your thesis?. In essence, she is Willy’s only true support system because she
do whatever he tells her. She, too, “believes in the American Dream, but she
is more grounded than her husband “ and glues the family together by
serving as “the emotional core” (Sickels 85).

It goes without saying Willy Loman wanted the best for his sons. Was
it so wrong for him to force his hopes and dreams upon them? Is that not what
all fathers and mothers do to their children anyway? Tragically, his goals for
his sons were far-fetched—hidden in a “jungle... full of diamonds,” Try
adding some explanation here. What exactly is this jungle? Willy continued to
believe in the American Dream even in his death, refusing to accept the fact
that his sons were simply average just like he. This sounds a bit odd. I’m not
sure, but I think “he” should be “him.” I would check!. By having Biff reach
the conclusion that he is meant for the farmland lifestyle, Miller suggests that
one. Since you follow this pronoun with others like “his” and “he,” maybe
consider changing “one” to “a person” or “a man.” should follow his passions
rather than trying to be something he is not. Willy’s downfall lies in the fact
that he cannot accept this idea.

Strengths: Good topic! Lots of potential support. Also, I like the way you
divided the paper into individual characterizations.
Weaknesses: Your characterizations and analysis seem to dwindle with each body paragraph. Try adding more support especially for Happy and Linda.
Unexpected Rises and Drops

During high school, I was lucky to have wonderful English and literature teachers. Though creative writing was not a large part of the standards for any course, many teachers sought to improve our writing skills and thought processes through entertaining and low-stakes techniques. One year, our instructor introduced us to a creative writing technique she called “blind writing.” She told us to sit at a computer, open a Word document, and turn off the monitor. As the name suggests, blind writing is done blindly. Along with the monitor, she also told us to turn off our “internal editors.” Write exactly what you think. There are no mistakes, no proper formats, nothing. There are only thoughts.

For my Wild Card, I chose to revisit this technique. Over the course of one week, I dedicated ten to fifteen minutes each night to blind writing. What follows are some of the resulting unedited monologues. While writing, I did not give much thought to grammar or syntax, and when there was a lull in my thoughts, I immediately started a new line. I believe this technique allowed me to truly showcase both personality and thought process.

November 14, 2014

A ball ticks ticks ticks
Down down down
The ceaseless stairs staring straight
Into infinity
It slows and softens
Thunk thunk
It sinks and stretches  
Pretty and primordial  
Until  
Slam Squashed Sandwiched  
There goes the ball  
There goes the block  
Sailing sailing sailing  
Innards jumble  
And shift and stand, screaming  
For their mother

**November 17, 2014**

I eat salads because they taste like dirt  
And nine-year-old faces on the concrete, the lower-lip sting, the teeth indent  
feet for days,  
The pink knees that hiss under hydrogen peroxide and bites that whither  
der under alcohol  
I eat salads because they remind me that I am still a child, that the pink knees  
ever really healed and the pavement still beckons for a tender mouth to  
make tough

**November 19, 2014**

I want to stand on top of a mountain and scream my name to the sun until its  
rays stop for a moment and think “who is this that disrupts Our majesty?”
*I will announce to the world that I am here in all my ugly beauty.* says my
wishful brain today, but tomorrow I am content balancing on a white picket fence.
I should have more to say, I should have an implacable fire inside of me, both quelled and ignited by blick pens run dry.
But here I sit wondering what my next words will be, surprised by my proverbial pen strokes, my brain quiet like the night.