Coming of Age & Loss of Innocence

English 11 Honors
Devine
Coming of Age/Loss of Innocence

The character grows up and loses his or her childlike ways of seeing things. This may mean taking on new responsibilities or realizing that something isn’t as important as it once was. It often involves entering a new phase of understanding and learning new skills, so as to claim new powers.
Coming of Age/Loss of Innocence

It often involves a new understanding of the nature of humanity and its potential for good or evil. The loss of innocence theme has a more negative view of this transformation while a coming of age story focuses more on the positive aspects – what is gained.
**Innocence defined**

a. Freedom from sin, moral wrong, or guilt through **lack of knowledge of evil**.

b. Freedom from deceit and harmfulness.

c. Simplicity

d. Lack of knowledge or understanding

Adapted from: [http://www.yourdictionary.com/innocence](http://www.yourdictionary.com/innocence)
Essential Characteristics of this time of change

• Character begins as a young person
• Character clashes with authority figure or an overpowering situation
• Character goes through a conflict (external) or struggle (internal) which changes their point of view on an essential question
• Character understands the point of view of the authority
• Character understands their own values better and gains better sense of own identity.

Adapted from: http://www.byrdseed.com/patterns-in-writing-iii-themes/
Coming of Age

• Focus on what is GAINED
• Often a Group Action
• Usually has a POSITIVE CONNOTATION
  - even if what is gained is negative, like getting addicted to cigarettes or booze
EXAMPLES of Coming of Age

- Hunting License
- Driver’s License
- R-Rated Movie
- Entering High School
- First legal drink
- Tobacco
- Make your own decisions
- Romantic relationship
- Buy your own things
- Have your own job
- Own your own car
- Bank account
- Credit card
- Going to Clubs
- High School Graduation
- College
- Rent/Own your own space
- Start career
- Marriage
- Starting a Family/Parenthood
Loss of Innocence

- Focus is on what is LOST
- Often an Individual Action
- Usually has a NEGATIVE CONNOTATION even if what is gained is positive, which usually includes gaining wisdom, because of losing one’s naïveté about the true nature of others, older people and oneself.

 naïveté n. - The state or quality of being inexperienced or unsophisticated, lacking in sophistication and critical judgment

Adapted from http://www.thefreedictionary.com/naivet%C3%A9
Examples of Loss of Innocence

COMING FROM INSIDE - THE SELF

• Getting in trouble/misbehaving (because young people always take the blame on themselves)
• First time you ever …
  ➢ Stole something
  ➢ Lied about something
  ➢ Hurt someone on purpose
  ➢ Broke something
  ➢ Made someone feel bad just to see them experience it
  ➢ Betrayed your own values
Examples of Loss of Innocence COMING FROM OUTSIDE - OTHERS

- Getting spanked/physical pain
- Parents, teachers, police or other authority figures mistreat you
- Role model screws up
- Mentor betrays you
- Friends betray you
Essential Questions

• Who am I?
• What are my values?
• What is important to me?
• How much will I put up with before I say “No!”
• What am I willing to give up in order to get power in the world?