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Mother and Daughter Relationship Exposed in Joyce Carol Oates' Short Story, Shopping

The relationship between a mother and a daughter is one of complications, heartaches, and sweet rewards. This is no exception between Nola and Mrs. Dietrich, characters in "Shopping" by Joyce [Carol Oates](#). The tribulations of their [relationship](#) are shown during their annual shopping trip. In the time spent together, Nola is obviously trying to break free from her mother and become her own woman. This coming-of-age path is expressed by her "private thoughts" and "answers in monosyllables" (Oates 834). As Nola desperately tries to acquire her own self, her Mrs. Dietrich desperately tries to hang onto the child in Nola. She tries to stay in her daughter's life by wanting to know "why are you so quiet" and "what are you thinking?" (Oates 834). In Oates short story, she develops Mrs. Dietrich's and Nola's relationship by showing the conflicting needs of mothers and daughters.

The shopping trip allows Mrs. Dietrich to try to penetrate her daughter's new adult life and surface the child. She is also simple trying to be a part of her daughter's life. As a divorced woman, Mrs. Dietrich finds Nola as her only source of love-her outlet to give and to receive

love. Mrs. Dietrich even finds herself thinking "she is in love with her daughter" (Oates 834). These strong emotions are most likely why Mrs. Dietrich needs Nola to such an extent. Mrs. Dietrich wants to feel needed; she wants to be a mother. The betrayal of Mr. Dietrich causes Mrs. Dietrich to cling even more. However, she finds that Nola no longer needs her. Nola is becoming an adult. Mrs. Dietrich's memories of Nola as a child are now replaced with the images of her dau...

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...ong in her actions and her words. At the end Nola loses strength and becomes weak.

[Joyce](#) Carol Oates short story "Shopping" gives an excellent example of the trials a mother and daughter experiences. She shows that each a mother and daughter can have wants and needs in the relationship. These things can only be understood if the two communicate to each other. The story also presents the problem of how a mother wants her little girl, while the daughter wants to

be a young woman. Most importantly Oates shows the human tendency to be independent at times and at others dependent. Each character won and lost a battle, expressing the human complexity of sometimes being able to be strong but then at other times weak. This shows that in a mother and daughter relationship each is needed for the other person because each person needs someone to be strong.

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