Notes on “Journey” by Joyce Carol Oates

Literary Terminology:

- **narrative**—a story or tale with elements of plot, characters, themes...
- **plot**—the series of things that happen (events) within a narrative (initial exposition, conflict, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution)
- **setting**—the time, place, and atmosphere (mood) in a narrative
- **point of view**—the perspective from which the story is told (usually first- or third-person; degrees of omniscience include limited, limited-omniscient, and omniscient)
- **allegory**—a narrative that has two levels of meaning: a literal one and a figurative or symbolic one
- **symbol (symbolism)**—something that is itself but also represents something else or something deeper (in “Journey” the map, the highways, the roads, the forest, the night, the journey itself)
- **protagonist**—the central character in a narrative
- **antagonist**—someone or something in opposition to the protagonist
- **conflict**—external = character vs. another character, force of nature, or society as a whole; internal = character struggles to resolve a personal conflict that is emotional or psychological in nature

“Journey” as Allegory:
“Journey” by Joyce Carol Oates is a narrative that includes allegorical elements which correspond to the central theme of the course and *The Alchemist*, i.e., the hero’s journey.

Assignment:
Respond in writing to these questions:
1. What elements of the story support the interpretation of it as an allegory? In other words, how does the reader know the story can be understood to have an element of universal human experience in addition to the story of “you” in the narrative? What clues do you find that signal this? Consider elements in the story such as the allegorical details (the map, the highway, the roads, the journey, etc.) What does each of these details symbolize beyond its literal meaning?

2. How does “Journey” relate to the model of the hero’s journey? Where does the protagonist begin and end his/her journey? What happens along the way? How does the protagonist react to things? How does he/she feel about the journey?