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Term Paper Proposal: Identity in *The Price of Salt*

In my term paper, I will be discussing the role of identity in Patricia Highsmith's *The Price of Salt*. *The Price of Salt* deals with a queer, age-gap relationship between Therese and Carol, the novel's main characters, and the implications that their sexual, gender, class, racial, and familial identities have on the formation and the perpetuation of their relationship, as well as how their identities are viewed by the outside world. I aim for this paper to focus largely around the notions of queer relationships as well as age-gap relationships, with the other identities as bolsters for their informing of the aforementioned gendered and sexual identities. My paper will also take into account the cultural context and time period in which the novel takes place.

Therese, a nineteen year old girl with no relationship with her mother, falls for thirty-something-year-old Carol, who is a mother to a young girl and is currently going through a harsh divorce with her husband. I believe that their meeting and subsequent falling in love is chiefly psychological in that their relationship not only fulfills a romantic love that they both lack, but also other types of love which stem from Therese's not having a mother to Carol's willingness to give up her role as mother in order to pursue a relationship with Therese. Most evidently, Freud's theories of psychoanalytics—namely, his formation of the ideas of the Oedipus and Electra complexes—pervade the novel given the time period in which the novel takes place. Psychoanalysis and Freud's theories were extremely popular in the 1950's, and thus

can explain much about the dynamics within Therese and Carol's relationship. In addition, I will also discuss other psychological theories and claims which inform our conceptions of queer relationships, as well as how queer relationships, especially between two women, were regarded by the collective consciousness during this time period.