

# The heroism in hoppie



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

In *The Power of One* by Bryce Courtenay, Hoppie Groenewald is a train guard, conductor and star welter-weight boxer. While reading the book, the reader will notice Hoppie does not have as extensive of a role as some other characters but is undoubtedly the strongest male presence in Peekay's life. So far, a male figure is something Peekay needs: someone to be a good role model for him, someone that will inspire him forever. As the first male figure to look after Peekay, being a good role model and having a good first impression is very important. Courtenay creates Hoppie as a caring and determined individual whose traits allow him to inspire many others, including Peekay.

Peekay is in need of someone to look up to and care for him, someone who sincerely cares about him because he feels a deep loneliness. Courtenay deploys Hoppie specifically to do so, to fill the hole in Peekay's empty pit of loneliness. Hoppie is a very caring individual; he feeds Peekay and makes sure he's properly dressed and comfortable at all times. When Peekay first meets Hoppie, he embarrasses himself by stumbling while going up a steep flight of steps. After this happens Hoppie says, "No worries, little brother, I too have fallen up those verdome steps many a time"(63). Hoppie says this because he knows Peekay feels embarrassed that he's going to be on a train with these people for the next two days. They now know him as "the boy who fell up the steps." This shows Hoppie cares about people, mainly Peekay, in many of ways. One way is he goes out of his way to notice Peekay is embarrassed and he tries to fix it. Also, Hoppie uses the term of endearment, "little brother," to make Peekay feel cared for. This is a key moment for their relationship. Peekay feels a connection with Hoppie

because they both share the same embarrassment of falling up the stairs. It is also a key moment because it is one of the first times he's not called a "rooinek," a derogatory term for people from the English descent. Later on in the story, after they have acquainted and gotten closer, Peekay begins to cry. Hoppie says, " Sometimes it is good to cry, sometimes you fight better when you've had a good cry. Now tell old Hoppie whats the matter"(69). This shows that Hoppie deeply cares about Peekay. He makes Peekay feel comfortable while he's crying. He could have told Peekay not to cry, but instead He asks Peekay whats wrong and tells him it's okay to cry. This shows his deep affection and liking for young Peekay. Who he has just met and barely knows. Even though he has just met him, he wants to get to know him on a deeper level. While befriending Peekay, Hoppie unwillingly becomes his first role model.

As an essential personal quality, determination is something Peekay is going to need if he wants to survive the rest of his life. Hoppie, as Peekay's role model, will be able to teach him this trait. He is the most determined individual Peekay has ever met and being determined is an important character trait to have during this time in South Africa. Hoppie introduces himself to Peekay as, " I who am a guard and soon too be a conductor"(63). Hoppie knows he has been working very hard at his job and is determined to get a promotion because he wants to be the conductor. He is great at his job and even goes out of his way to make sure Peekay is well taken care of by taking him to get food and to get new tackies. This is that extra step his determination gives him to be the best possible worker he can be. He tells Peekay he is the " railways boxing champion of the Transvaal"(66). The sport

of boxing takes much determination and courage. Between the stamina , strength and skill needed, he had put in so much time and effort to get to where he is today. In chapter 6, Hoppie is boxing in a match against a bigger and stronger opponent. He comes out with the victory despite his opponents slick move head-butting him in the head while the referee is not looking. This shows a lot of determination. Hoppie could have very easily ended the match with a win by default, but he chose not to. This shows the amount of heart he has. He wanted to prove to people that he had what it takes to beat an opponent even though the odds were against him. Not winning by default shows Peekay that it is never okay to quit even if guaranteed a victory. Hoppie teaches Peekay to do something all the way or don't do it at all.

Hoppie is a determined boxer, hard worker, and caring friend. This is the type of person that will have a long lasting impact on Peekay, considering he is the strongest male presence in Peekay's life. This is a very crucial point and it will impact the story tremendously. He gives Peekay the " equalizers" that give him determination to make things right. The way Peekay will act in the future will mock Hoppie's characteristics. If he wasn't a persistent worker, then he wouldn't have gone out of his way to make Peekay feel safe and comfortable. Once he gets to know Peekay, he begins to care for him and open up to him. This gives Peekay someone to look up to. Hoppie will have an everlasting effect on Peekay because of his specific character traits that appeal to him. Once Hoppie leaves Peekay, he has leaves behind an impact as big as The Power of One: " He had given me the power of one - one idea, one heart, one plan, one determination"(103).