

The intruder essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In Andre Dubus's short story "The Intruder", Dubus tells a story of a young boy losing his innocence to protect his sister's, while struggling to find his place between boyhood and manhood. The young boy, who is named Kenneth, can be associated with many biblical allusions concerning the scenarios he is put in. In "The Intruder", Kenneth's relationship with Connie is being intruded on and he must protect it with his gun, the only symbol of manliness and power he has. In some ways, Kenneth can be portrayed as a Christ figure because of his sacrifice for his sister like Jesus did for the world. Kenneth can be seen as many things, but all he wants to be is a manly hero. Even though he commits a sin, Kenneth does many things that can be associated with biblical figures when he defends against the intruder. In "The Intruder", Kenneth's sister Connie, whose boyfriend is coming over and intruding on Kenneth's life and Kenneth feels like he should defend it in some way. Kenneth can be described as a boy who is small for his age, lacking confidence, and intimidated by other guys more outgoing and confident than him, especially football players: The football players made him more uncomfortable than the others.

They walked into the living room and firmly shook his father's hand, then his hand, beginning to talk as soon as they entered, and they sat and waited for Connie, their talking never ceasing, their big chests and shoulders leaned forward, their faces slowly turning as they looked at each furniture on the wall, at the designs on the rug, at the furniture, passing Kenneth over as if he were another chair. (Dubus 223) The way Kenneth feels toward Douglas is like the story of David and Goliath; David and Goliath are both fighting over

something they want, the same with Kenneth and Douglas, even though Douglas doesn't know he is in a fight.

David defends Israel because he loves it in the same way Kenneth loves Connie. Goliath and Douglas only want to ransack, conquer and plunder their target, they do not love it as David and Kenneth do. Kenneth is also an underdog like David was, carrying his small rifle like David's sling, both of them being expert marksmen standing up to someone bigger. Douglas does not find Kenneth threatening in any way – even when Kenneth shows him his gun: “ Whatcha got there? “. “ Twenty-two. ” “ Let's see. ” “ Better dry it. ” He briskly wiped it with a dry cloth and handed it to Douglas.

Quickly Douglas worked the bolt, aimed at the ceiling, and pulled the trigger. “ Nice trigger,” he said. He held in front of his waist and looked at it then gave it to Kenneth. (Dubus 223-224) Douglas is accepted by the family and Kenneth is the only one left between Douglas and Connie, like David was the only one brave enough to fight Goliath. Kenneth can also be portrayed as Moses leading people to safety because he does with Connie when he kills the intruder. Kenneth's experience can also be compared to the story of Adam and Eve.

“ Another way of saying “ loss of innocence,” of course is ‘ the Fall. ‘ Adam and Eve, the garden, the serpent, the forbidden fruit. Every story about the loss of innocence is really about someone's private reenactment of the fall from grace”. (Foster 49) Kenneth and Connie both lose some form of innocence in this story and their introduction to real death and violence is the forbidden fruit – Kenneth loses the most innocence because he commits

a sin of murder. While defending against the intruder, Kenneth acts on what he thinks is right, just like the biblical characters he has been compared to did.

Kenneth feels he must protect his sister's innocence from Douglas, and he can only do this with his gun, the only powerful and manly symbolic object he owns that can successfully defend against the intruder. Kenneth is kind of odd, he is always alone in the woods or with his sister. He has been highly influenced by World War Two movies and imitates them by himself in the woods behind his house: Occasionally, he lifted his twenty-two-caliber rifle and fired at a rusty tin can across the creek, the can becoming a Nazi face in a window as he squeezed the trigger and the voices filled him You got him Captain.

You got him. For half an hour he fired at the tin can, and anyone who might have seen him could never know that he was doing anything else, that he had been wounded in the shoulder and lost half his men but he had captured the farmhouse (Dubus 220). Because of the war movies he has seen, Kenneth wants to be manly and strong, maybe even a soldier. He wants to be taller, stronger and manlier and have broader shoulders than his father. " His father was not tall either, but his shoulders were broad.

Kenneth wondered if his would be like that when he grew older" (Dubus 221). At age thirteen though, none of these things are true and the only thing he has is his gun. The gun is a symbol that can be perceived in many ways – it can mean a hunter's tool, a person's toy or a weapon. " Even in a fairly clear-cut case we can't pin down a single meaning, although they're

pretty close. So some symbols do have a relatively limited range of meanings, but in general a symbol can't be reduced to standing for only one thing" (Foster 98).

In Kenneth's case, the gun represents a young adult toy intended for recreation, that is also used for power, confidence, manliness and security. Symbols cannot be reduced to one thing and the gun in "The Intruder" can represent many things, but mostly as a symbol of power, manliness and security for an insecure boy. Kenneth's gun helps him sin by killing the intruder, but his actions make him the hero he wanted to be. Even though Kenneth sins, some of his actions can be interpreted as Christ-like, especially when he redeems his own sin by protecting Connie's innocence.

Kenneth cannot be identified as a Christ Figure as easily as others because there are only three obvious similarities between Jesus and Kenneth in 'The Intruder' "You might be a Christ Figure If You Are... 33 years old, unmarried, preferably celibate, wounded or marked in the head, side, hands or feet, sacrificing yourself for others, in some sort of wilderness, tempted there accosted by the devil." (Foster 123). As Thomas Foster said, being in the wilderness is a Christ-like description; Kenneth spends a lot of time in the woods outside his house by himself.

"Kenneth looked up through the trees, which were darker green now. While he had been watching his battle, the earth, too, had become darker, shadowed, with patches of late sun on the grass and fallen pine needles. He stood up, then looked down at the creek and across it, at the hill on the other side" (Dubus 220). As this quote depicts, Kenneth spends a lot of his time

out in the wilderness by himself, just like Christ did. Kenneth primarily spends his time with his sister Connie, who is the only person he feels comfortable around.

Kenneth knows he must find a way to protect Connie's innocence from Douglas – and he is willing to sacrifice his own for hers. “ He heard his own breathing and the bed springs as his body tensed; then he heard it again, somewhere in front of the house: a cracking twig, a rustle of dried leaves, a foot on hard earth. Slowly, he rolled on his left side and looked out the window. He waited to be sure, but he did not have to be; then he waited to decide what he would do, and he did not have to wait for that either, because he already knew, and he looked at the far corner of the room where his rifle was, though he could not see it...” (Dubus 226).

Kenneth already knows what he is going to do, whether it is Douglas or some prowler he does not know, he looks to his rifle in order to sacrifice his own innocence for Connie's, like Jesus sacrificed his life for the lives for all of those on earth. He is willing to be responsible for a death and to face the guilt and consequences for it just to protect his sister's innocence from Douglas or an actual prowler. Another similarity to Jesus is when Kenneth's Dad tells him he did right, like God must have said to Jesus after his ascension.

“ It was a prowler. You did right. There's no telling what he might have done. ” (Dubus 227) Coming out of the wilderness, Kenneth did what he thought was right and was told his actions were by his Father, and sacrificed his own innocence to do it; all of these resemble Christ. In “ The Intruder”, Kenneth

wants to be a hero and at the end of the story, he thinks of himself as an angel that has saved his sister like the hero he always wanted to be.

In his actions Kenneth sins, but he does so with biblical characteristics to protect his sister's innocence. Kenneth becomes a hero by using his gun , which is the only symbol of power and manliness he has, to kill the intruder and protect his sister. As a Christ figure, Kenneth redeems his sin by sacrificing his own innocence for his sister's, like Jesus sacrificed his life for all people. Kenneth can be observed as many things, but most of all he becomes a hero that he always wanted to be.