

Brighton rock and a clockwork orange essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

“ Why, this is hell; nor are we out of it”. Brighton seems to be a town of suffering and reflects it through the inhabitants that are the characters of Brighton Rock. These main characters all suffer in one way or another, whether it's by the emerged issues of their repressed childhood or by the struggles forced upon them by the people around them.

Pinkie largely suffers from the mental scars he suffered watching his parents have sex as a child and the generally poor upbringing he had, which subsequently creates a fear in him that makes it nearly impossible for him go back to ' Nelson place', as well as making sex seem “ more like death than when Spicer and Hale had died. ” Pinkie carries this torment around with him, which in turn has severely damaged his ability to comprehend his emotions, leaving him a cold and ruthless killer whose principles based on his repressed childhood, are pivotal to him.

As Rose comes around and ignites some of these feelings, they confuse him and cause him to abandon his principles. This, along with his general inability to lead, in turn frustrates him. He suffers under this and is in the end brought to the brink of sanity, where he then following meets his demise. Hale, an early yet doomed potential protagonist is suffering within his brief moment in the book. “ Hale knew... that they meant to murder him”. Hale constantly suffers under the knowledge of the gang wanting to kill him and despite of his admirable attempt at surviving, he inevitably meets his fate.

Furthermore, it's implied by his inability to pick up women that the romantic aspects of his life are not thriving, which could cause any man to suffer. But on top of the suffering, the pity he obtains from this and his admirable

attempt to cling to his life and to fulfil his duty for his newspaper, leads us see some sort of honour in him and the potential to be a protagonist. Ida more or less has a role without any suffering. Anything that would remotely cause her to suffer, is dismissed by herself as being caused simply by “ human nature. As a result, she’s a fairly boring character, who loses or gains nothing - she merely “ acts for the best. ”

Alex potentially has more suffering than any character in the two novels - not only from the physical agony that he sustains from his “ vecks” on two occasions as well as the general violence imposed upon him, but also the mental anguish that he suffers from knowing that he cannot listen to “ Ludwig Van and G. F. Handel and the others” without being ill, claiming that “ it’s a sin”. Within Brighton Rock, what perhaps proves the greatest task is deciding who is the protagonist(’ s).

In his own and certainly in Rose’s eyes, Pinkie is the protagonist who fights against the unjust villain Colleoni who intends to conquer his territory. But by this definition, Pinkie is perhaps better linked to that of a cornered and desperate cat, and not so much a protagonist. Ida is perhaps the closest to a protagonist among the main characters, as she wants to avenge the death of her two-minute friend by catching his killer and putting him in jail, but even then she mainly does so because she has very little else to do and not so much out of the goodness of her heart.

Rose is perhaps the only main character who isn’t actually a protagonist. She mostly serves the function of “ damsel in distress” to the “ protagonist” (Pinkie) - but even so, she’s perhaps more the “ distressing damsel” than “

damsel in distress”. Either way, she doesn’t particularly fit the function of protagonist, despite the fact that she is evidently a nice person – albeit an idiotic one. Hale is essentially different. He could well be interpreted as a ‘false protagonist’, in that he’s the main character of the first chapter and then one who we follow around but is then suddenly found dead by Ida.

However, being a false protagonist entices that the shift of focus comes as a shock or surprise, which it doesn’t in the case of Hale, as he knew that Pinkie and his gang “meant to murder him”. But he still retains the qualities of a false protagonist, so essentially becomes a false-false protagonist – and perhaps in that sense the falseness cancels out and leaves him as just a protagonist. What does complicate the assumption that he’s the protagonist is what we don’t know about him. It’s implied that he betrayed Kite in some way and that he knows “how Kite was killed”.

By his involvement with Pinkie’s and Colleoni’s respective gangs, we can assume that he’s involved with their criminal affairs, but we don’t know to what extent. This lack of information both gains and hinders the perception of Hale’s morality, as we don’t know whether he’s involved by his own doing and for what reasons. All that is given to judge Hale on is presented largely in the first (as described in the first paragraph) and this to some extent biased towards Hale himself, but as it’s not contradicted or disproven by any other characters, we can only assume that it’s largely truthful.

As a result, he’s shown as a man with the potential for being a protagonist, even though we don’t know a lot about him – only that “they meant to kill him”. It’s hard to determine whether or not any of the characters within

Brighton Rock are actually protagonists. The main characters all have their own chapters wherein they narrate and where it's seen from their perspective. This could identify them as protagonists, but they inevitably fail to fulfil the criteria of protagonists, in that they are generally dislikeable characters to whom we are not very empathetic, perhaps with the exception of Hale.

While we generally want our protagonists to be likeable, it's perhaps more ideal to define our desired protagonists as someone we are empathetic towards. For example, in the case of Alex, who is by most means a dislikeable character, yet he is still able to turn a lot of empathy towards him, not only by the characters around him, but also by the reader themselves and he is as a result, easier to call a protagonist - despite being an anti-heroic one. As a result of the empathy Alex receives, he is consequently a better protagonist than any of the characters in Brighton Rock (perhaps with the exception of Hale who does garner some empathy).

One thing that makes Alex a more compelling protagonist than those "candidates" found in Brighton Rock, is perhaps his charisma. While a cruel and violent person, he is far more sophisticated than those characters found in Brighton Rock and likes listening to classical music, as well as being capable of fooling those around him by changing his nadsat dialect, "any more pretty polly to tolchock some old veck", to a more 'normal' dialect: "Thank you very much, sir. I've done my best here".

Regardless, the sinister intellect of Alex seems to give him a greater appeal to the reader, as he's able Alex is by no means the typical kind of

protagonist - in fact, he's an awful person who likes " a bit of twenty-to-one" and the odd " ultra violence" and seen from the perspective of any other characters within the book, he would be the antagonist. He is however the book's only narrator and to some extent a kind of Byronic hero. Furthermore, since no other character within the book is given a significantly big part, he is perhaps by default the protagonist.

What further strengthens Alex's role as the protagonist is the generally antagonistic behaviour of the other characters in the book, such as that of F. Alexander and his colleagues who torture Alex for their political gain. With Alex's opposition being antagonistic in nature, we're compelled to empathise more with Alex due to him being presented as the victim (thus prompting the empathy), despite him victimising old ' ptitsas' and whoever else proves unlucky enough.

The protagonists in Brighton Rock do suffer. It's questionable who the protagonists actually are, but the characters that do suffer are the ones more likely to be protagonists, than those who don't. As such, it is in the case of Brighton Rock the lesser characters that are more likely to be protagonists than the main characters - as the main characters simply don't suffer in any sense that prompts empathy.