

A long way down by matthew simpson song analysis

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Nick Hornby is a modern British classic author, having won many awards, most of his books have climbed to the top of the bestsellers chart. Most of his books are fictional and tend to be written about unemployed characters or characters who are now quite far down the social ladder, for whatever reason. His books have done well enough for three films to be made out of them.

'A Long Way Down' is about four characters who want to commit suicide, but meet and decide not to, instead opting to help each other. It was very successful because of its narrative and the characters which we like to read about in order to make ourselves feel better. People would also buy it because of his previous success.

There are many reasons for its success, including the fact that it is about suicide. We are intrigued by this narrative because it is something we do not really know about. The theme of social wealth is also very important because it is something we are involved with on a day to day basis.

Character introductions are very important because it sets the standard for the rest of the novel and also needs to hook the reader. 'Emma' By Jane Austin is a good example as it hooks us by talking immediately about social wealth, "with very little to distress or vex her", this intrigues us because we want to learn about her luxurious lifestyle.

As I have previously discussed, Hornby is a bestselling author who has become a modern classic author. This reputation must have helped 'A Long Way Down' to sell well, as it did become a bestseller.

Exploration of character introductions

All four characters start the narrative and the variety in social wealth of the characters adds to interest. By having these four contradicting characters, we are guaranteed conflict. Jess is a young, party-going loudmouth, but is without many friends, " and not have anywhere to go on New Year's Eve." We as readers wonder what her life is like, but once we find out that she has a political father, and a comfortable home, we feel little sympathy for her.

Jess likes to argue with and annoy the other characters, which can excite us, because we like to see characters fall out in order to make us feel better about ourselves. Maureen is the other female, who is extremely introverted with a disabled son. Her transformation from this character into a more relaxed, open and friendly character after hitting Jess' ex, shows us that even the most reclusive people can change and be happy, making us as readers happy as well.

By adding a supposed rising American rock star, who has unfortunately fallen on hard times, we feel sorry that he was not able to achieve his ambitions. JJ's constant use of swear words livens up the story, " Oh OK, your band was fucked up... the only reason you were in this fuckin' country", as we don't see it as being pretentious, or something that we can't read. The icing on the cake has to be the law-breaking child molester, " screwing a fifteen-year-old", who rocketed into the public eye for things which he would rather have not been' being bombarded by the press with headlines such as " SLEAZEBAG!" We want to know how on earth he could possibly live with

himself, and perhaps understand that he's not the murderous villain that we might typically stereotype him as. Although, for sure, we are not meant to like him all that much. Having these four different suicidal characters also means that we can see that suicidal people aren't necessarily as selfish as we might think they are, and that they are just normal people like you and me, except grossly stereotyped and with supposedly big problems.

Each character interests us in a different way, and obviously one of the novels greatest pulls is its modern style, with frequent use of colloquialism and so on, as I have explained below. However, some other interesting factors are the fact that Jess doesn't use speech marks because she apparently doesn't understand how to use them. By varying the syntax like this, it makes the sentence structure less common and so more interesting to read, and perhaps a bit more of a challenge to read. Another key factor is how one character thinks of the other characters, for example Martin thinks that he is too cool to "hang around" with the other three, when he clearly isn't. This difference in attitudes towards each other that they don't all necessarily know about, has the effect of making the reader think they have an advantaged view on things and so want to find out how things change.

Hornby releases information slowly in order to add intrigue. This is evident in the first chapter which Maureen "writes", where she talks about a "He" and "His" without telling us who this is. We wonder if she is in a dysfunctional relationship, until we find out a few lines later that it is actually her son, and later still a sick child, which perhaps makes her seem selfish when she says, "but you can see that nothing goes in."

It is vastly important that Hornby uses a split narrative so that we can see the central plot told or portrayed from several different angles, and see what effects it has on Martin's family or what he has left of it as a result, for example, " You know Martin left us? We didn't leave him?" It also gives us, as readers, variety so that if we get bored of one character's way of writing, we are safe in the knowledge that another character will be along in a minute that has a different outlook on things, and a different style of writing, inspiring us to keep reading. Moreover, if we had just one narrative then we wouldn't learn anything about suicide that would give us a " well-rounded" opinion if you like, it would also get terribly boring unless that character had split personalities, for example.

Explore Hornby's writing style

I think that Hornby's writing style is fabulous. The way we get the impression that he has written nothing, and that it was the work of these completely believable characters is astounding. As above, he frequently uses colloquialism, presumably to bring the novel down to earth and to make people believe that these could be real people. He uses very subtle language techniques such as brackets to make Maureen seem un-confident and Jess' lack of speech marks to indicate stupidity. Practically the whole book is written like a conversation and flows like one as well. Pretty much the whole book could be put on a stage without too much re-writing, and this, I suppose, helps to lift it out of the weighting of " a book" where complicated language and dull paragraphs are used into something that you could believe to be happening in your street.

Exploration of themes and narratives

We are interested in a group of people who want to kill themselves because it is not something we would normally think of doing, and neither is it something that we know about. The fact that suicide is so taboo in modern society makes the narrative of this book even more narrative, because it is somewhere where we can find out a little more about suicide, without all the opinions of other people etc. We are ultimately intrigued by this.

Social wealth is extremely important in the novel, because if the characters had been successful people with lots of money, and lots of friends then we as readers would not be interested. When we pick up a book, most of us like to escape to another world, and find out about that world. Furthermore, we like to feel good about ourselves at the same time, so the characters have to be the complete opposite to the above so that we can compare it to our own lives and be happy that we are doing fairly well.

A lot of people are obsessed with celebrity in today's society, so the fact that this is a key component for Martin in the novel is a big pull. Celebrity magazines usually focus on relationships, and rarely do we see celebrities with such vivid problems as Martin. We as readers want to see what this fame-torn star does with his life and also to observe his downfall. They want to know how someone with such a reputable job could get into such a bad state, which is something a lot of people like finding out about. We perhaps also feel sympathy for him because of the way he is treated by the media,

which draws parallels with how real-life celebrities are treated and how we now think of them as a result of reading the novel.

For those people who read 'A Long Way Down' and are religious, a big part of the narrative for them must be Maureen's struggle with her religion's stance on what she so desperately wants to do and the pain she is suffering. People may wonder how on earth a Catholic could possibly consider one of the biggest sins, as the obvious thing to say is that it is not an option for her, but she clearly thinks it is. Readers will want to find out, specifically in these days of high religious tension, how and if she manages to turn her back on her religion's beliefs. Suicide and religious guilt tie in very tightly with each other here.

Some people may argue that the ending of the novel was a bit of an anti-climax, because they were expecting at least one of the four to commit suicide. However, I would argue that it wasn't, because we never really root for any of the characters to kill themselves, instead we want to see them resolve their problems. The fact that we get an ending where they talk about helping someone else who is in their situation, shows that they have learnt something and moved on, and this makes us happy.

In Martin's last chapter, he seems to write a bit like an offender doing community service, as he tries to gain back his "self-respect." This shows us that his arrogance from the start of the novel had perhaps started to die, until we read that he didn't like the child and blamed him for not getting his self-respect back quickly, "I blamed him, partly."

And again, perhaps the "partly" shows that he is starting to see the error of his ways. He also uses a circular narrative; the story begins with him stating, "Suicide was my Sydney", and ends by saying, "self-respect is in, say, Sydney." This shows us that he has moved on, but more so that he was back at the start, as were the others, and all the guilt and problems they had were very much still there.

Throughout the book I never really cared for any of the characters and perhaps this is because I saw hope for them, there was always an alternate path; Maureen could have sent Matty to a care home, so I didn't think they needed caring for. I think that they were designed to intrigue and interest the reader, but were too vulgar or out of the ordinary to care for. I think that a reader would be more likely to care for a character if they were in a similar situation and so could empathize with them.

In conclusion, I think that the social relevance of the novel outweighs that of the character introductions, because it is such a big issue in modern society, and this is where the initial spark of intrigue comes from, from us wanting to know so much about the topic of suicide.

However, because the character introductions are so good, they are also responsible for hooking the reader and keeping them reading, perhaps more so than the social relevance. Had this book been released in the 1920s then the social relevance in relation to partying and suicide etc, would have perhaps of been less than it is now, and the introductions would have been

such a contrast to writing of that time that they would not hook many people. So after reflection, it must be a combination of the two.