

Australian culture and jasper jones



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Australian Culture and Jasper Jones – Essay' Jasper Jones' by Craig Silvey is a semi-realistic representation of the social commentary and culture of Australian society in the 1960s. The distinct novel demonstrates the harsh climate of xenophobia, cultural stereotyping, and destructive racism that existed, as well as the fictional, patriarchal town of Corrigan. Against the social turmoil of the Vietnam War and the Aboriginal Rights Movement, Silvey explores themes of community, conformity, and discrimination, which remain true throughout, and are personified, by the multi-faceted characters of 'Jasper Jones'. 'The Australian Temperament' introduction by Peter Goldsworthy, and similarly Tony Birch's summary of Jasper Jones, accounts of the core ideas in the novel and Australian society both presently and in the past.

The cultural elements and ideas in Jasper Jones are heavily influenced by the majority of Australians' opinion in the '60s, which are discussed heavily in Peter Goldsworthy's introduction. In Silvey's text, several accounts of racism are incorporated, such as Jeffery Lu and Jasper Jones. Jeffery Lu is an Australian-born Vietnamese boy and Charlie's only friend, who 'one-ups' his intellect, which, because of the Vietnam War, would've been extremely rare and controversial at the time. Jeffery is bullied and harassed at school constantly for being Vietnamese, and no matter how much he perseveres to fit in with the other children, the only time he is cheered on or admired is when he is covered with gear and clothing to the point of anonymity – on the cricket pitch. When playing sport, Jeffery feels like he belongs, but when he removes his helmet, he's bombarded with insults, threats, and physical bullying. Jasper shares this attribute of minority with Jeffery, being an

Aboriginal-Australian. Jasper is the town's scapegoat – portrayed as “ A thief, a thug, a liar, and a truant”, and is horribly mistreated by almost everyone because of his falsely-rumoured reputation in Corrigan. His status in the town is so low that Jasper is actually used as an example to children of how they'd end up with poor attitude and aptitude, which Silvey excellently uses in order to demonstrate how extremely discriminatory some Australian communities were in the 1960s. Charlie is depicted physically as a typical Australian boy, although he is still an outcast, because of his intellect. Abnormally, he doesn't like to play sport as his schoolmates do, he instead reads books for entertainment, which is looked down upon by everyone because sport is the social capitol, not intellect.

The major global-scale events that occur in Jasper Jones, such as the Vietnam War, mostly accurately co-inside with the actual dates. Silvey uses these events to perpetuate the realism of the fictional town of Corrigan, as it is based off his childhood town. They provide the narrative with an additional ' layer', for example, Silvey includes conscription – as the war is raging, three men from Corrigan are drafted into the army. The 1960s were also the era of Aboriginal rights activity, which included the Aboriginal Rights Movement of 1965. The co-incidence with the Vietnam War further explains why Jeffery Lu is bullied so extensively, as a Vietnamese-Australian would've been extremely rare in Australia, and he could've possibly been considered a spy, or was just despised for ' supporting' Australia's opposition in the war, when in fact he isn't actually on anyone's side. This theme is perpetuated further by the White Australia Policy which was still in place until 1965, and Silvey

harnesses it to create depth for the characters Jasper and Jeffery, who are certainly not part of 'White Australia'.

Craig Silvey utilizes dialogue of the characters, mainly Jasper, to indicate the lack of individual education for Aboriginal children, and the deficiency in intellect that comes from it. Jasper practices a form of 'Aboriginal-English' which consists of abbreviations, mispronunciations, and abridgements. For example, 'been' becomes "bin" (p181), and 'nothing' becomes "nuthin" (p190). Jasper views Charlie as a clever boy, much like Atticus Finch from 'The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn', and selects him to help because he thinks Charlie is quite "wise". Conversely, Charlie enjoys using complex words, but is denied by Warwick Trent – the school bully – which in turn hinders his education, and is further tormented by Warwick and others if he uses a complicated word in class. Silvey creates vast and descriptive imagery with an impressive use of metaphor, simile, and symbolism – such as "my head circling and cycling dizzily through too many avenues of thought" (p113). These techniques, as described in Tony Birch's summary, enhance his writing and the story itself because it draws the audience in, and provides additional material to create a scene in their minds.

'Jasper Jones' by Craig Silvey is a contextually-shaped novel that employs the use of several multi-faceted characters to carry out a narrative. The use of language techniques further emphasises the underlying tone of the novel, and creates a vast imagery for the audience's enjoyment. It marks a point in time when egalitarianism was not in place, and Australia was still filled with xenophobia and racism. Silvey brilliantly establishes and continues these

themes throughout, consequently delivering a compelling narrative that almost all audiences can relate with and enjoy.

Bibliography

Jasper Jones by Craig Silvey Introduction (The Australian Temperament) by Peter Goldsworthy Jasper Jones – In Summary by Tony Birch© Max Cullen Feng 2016