

The lovely bones by alice sebold



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

An examination of the character Susie in “ The Lovely Bones” by Alice Sebold and how the author engages my sympathy for her and her family members. The horrific tragedy described in “ The Lovely Bones” by Alice Sebold makes the novel fascinating. The book appealed to me because it was based on an experience the author had when she was in university. The book is Sebold expressing her feelings about what happened to her and expanding them. The story is detailed with interesting characterisation and themes.

Sebold makes the story thought-provoking and engages my sympathy for Susie and also her family. The story is based around fourteen year old Susie Salmon who was raped and brutally murdered one day by a man in her neighbourhood. Susie acts as narrator as she watches over her loved ones from her new seat in heaven. She looks on as her family falls apart and how each character deals with her death in their own way. As time goes on, Susie watches her younger sister Lindsey grow up and starts to feel jealous that she gets to act out the life Susie can never lead.

The use of first person narration is prominent throughout. Through the duration of the story, Susie expresses enormous pain and hurt about what has happened to her. “ At fourteen, my sister sailed away from me into a place I’d never been. In the walls of my sex there was horror and blood, in the walls of hers there were windows. ” The “ horror and blood” mentioned is Susie’s rape and murder. She is saying that this is her view of sex and what it was like for her. She then goes on and implies her feelings of jealousy towards Lindsey.

What Susie is trying to tell the reader is that she is jealous Lindsey got to fall in love and have sex without being pressured into it or being scarred and not being able to make that decision on her own. The word “ windows” indicated jealousy due to the link to Lindsey having new opportunities. This quote reflects one reason Susie just cannot seem to let go of earth: she has died with her life unfulfilled. This makes the reader feel hugely sympathetic towards Susie because she wants to live life like her sister has and she is not able to.

We also feel pity for Susie as her true feelings shine through in her narration. Susie is an outstanding character in the novel as we follow her acceptance of her death. She presents her own analyses about her family and friends and through this we see her compassion and love for them and we see she misses them dreadfully and wants to be back with them. Susie’s subconscious cannot pull her away from earth. She has a passionate desire to know what her loved ones actions are after her death. This is a sign she is grieving about her murder.

Gradually she accepts her death and starts to leave her family and friends to themselves on earth. “ Stones and Bones; Snow and frost; Seeds, beans and polliwogs. Paths and twigs, assorted kisses, We all know who Susie misses... ” This is a point in the novel where Susie recites a poem Jack, her father, always said to her when she was small. This comforts her now that she has accepted her death and knows soon she will be able to let go of earth and everything on it, now that she has realised she can’t change what has happened or the lives of people still alive.

The main themes are significant in the novel to show how the characters Jack, Abigail and Lindsey deal with the loss of their family member. Each person deals with their loss in very different ways. Jack is Susie's father. He suffers a lot in the novel with his wife leaving him, his daughter being murdered and also the obsession that starts to overtake his life. A growing vengeance seems to take over in the first year after Susie's death as he tries to find the slaughterer. This is how he reacts to grief. " Suddenly he could not stop seeing my face. "

This was when Jack's vengeance first became known to the reader. He does not have any proof that Mr Harvey is the killer but he just has a feeling. Of course he was right but the police thought he was just trying to find a person to blame because he needed answers to why this happened to his little girl. This makes me feel sympathetic towards him because he isn't able to get any answers and just has to accept that this happened to a member of his family with no support from his wife. Abigail, Susie's mother, takes another route to dealing with grief.

Before Susie's death and before her youngest sibling Buckley was born, Susie remembers her mother being a different person. Susie recalls a time when she was younger when she first seen this changed individual. " She had a stare that stretched to infinity. She was, in that moment, not my mother but something separate from me. " This shows what kind of woman Abigail Salmon really is and how that will later have an impact on her decision to leave her family. Abigail doesn't just grieve the loss of her oldest daughter but also the collapse of her family and the loss of the life she never had the opportunity to live because Buckley was born.

She has many hurdles to overcome in the story. When she commits adultery, Abigail makes the decision to leave her family and take care of herself for a while. In the end, she realises what she has done wrong and tries to rectify them and put the family she abandoned back together. We feel a great sadness for Abigail in many points in the story because her life was put on hold due to the birth of Buckley. The first time in her life she does something for herself and she ends up losing her family over it.

The death of Susie was the last straw for Abigail and she couldn't cope anymore so she had to leave and sort out things for herself for once and not for everyone else. Susie's sister Lindsey bottles up all her emotions and uses it to her advantage, to make her stronger in life. She has to deal with the rumours and gossip in her school as well as accepting her sister was killed about ten feet away from her school. When the elbow was found by a neighbour's dog, Lindsey had all the proof she needed that Susie was dead.

“ He held her hand and then she threw up, as she had promised, into the shiny silver bowl. Lindsey was more realistic about her sister's death than some other characters. She realised that this could be her sister's elbow and would mean she is really gone. This was Lindsey's way of accepting her sister's murder. Disappearance She feels she has to be strong for her whole family and suffers in silence. She bears many burdens: because she looks like Susie, people see a bloody body whenever they look at her; her mother shuts her out, lies to her then leaves her; she has to be a mother figure to her six year old brother.

Lindsey feels a certain bond with her dead sister because she gets to live the life Susie cannot. We feel hugely sympathetic towards Lindsey because of all these reasons and we also feel pity for her having to grow up with this weight on her shoulders. In conclusion, the story "The Lovely Bones" by Alice Sebold highlights the grief of losing a loved one through her use of the character Susie herself. With the narration being told from Susie's perspective and her feelings shining through, it engages my sympathy for her.