

A false father figure: charlie and squizzy's situation in runner



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In the novel *Runner* by Robert Newton, it becomes highly noticeable that Charlie Feehan had strong faith in Squizzy Taylor as a possible mentor, as Charlie had lost his father at a very young age. However, Charlie promptly came to the realisation that he was inaccurate in his assumption. Firstly, we are introduced to the state that Charlie's father had passed away and the family were confronting a difficult financial period, living in the slums of Richmond with no income. The protagonist gains excellent fortune, when he receives a job working for Squizzy Taylor. Charlie assumed that he would be a new father figure for him and lead him to a better life for his family, as Charlie was still a young boy who wanted to try and be a man. Charlie admired Squizzy for always being there to protect him and he also gave him power, when Charlie knew that he had his back. Nevertheless, Squizzy grasped that he was misguided in thinking that Squizzy was loyal and compassionate, through hardships, where his true colours unfolded and his nasty side came out. This novel shows the hope Charlie keeps hold of, which helps him persist on performing wise actions, with a mentor he had strong faith in and the discovery of Squizzy's true identity, which he was blind to throughout the novel.

Charlie loses his father at a very young age. This impacts the protagonist both emotionally and physically, as he had to now take the role of man in the house, in order to support and provide money for his family. Charlie has to step into the long pants of adulthood at a young age, where he was unlike most kids mucking around and taking life easily. Charlie had no idea what he was meant to do or how to act, but he tried to stay strong '...When the undertakers came to wheel my father's lifeless body... it was as if they took

my childhood with the,' (p28) As Charlie was now responsible for his family, he knew that the best thing he could do to help his family survive, was to keep them warm, by collecting pieces of wood and provide money, by getting a job. He becomes employed by the notorious gangster leader Squizzy Taylor against the wishes of his mother, ' I was not proud to be going behind her back like this...but our circumstances were far from normal now. This was our chance for something better and I would not let it slip for anyone' (p46) Despite the fact that Charlie knows his mother would not want him to do what he knows would untangle his family living in poverty. Ultimately, the protagonist pushes his conscience aside and works for Squizzy, who he believes will lead him to a better life for his family.

Charlie showed admiration to Squizzy, as he was recognised as a father figure to him. This opinion improved when Squizzy cheats in the race, so Charlie wins and gets the job. Squizzy was able to fix Charlie's absence from school when working for him and he clarified Charlie's problem with Mr Peacock, by threatening him, which got Charlie out of deep trouble ' Right then Squizzy reminded me of my father' (p75) Charlie was able to come across pleasure when he was around Squizzy, having the courage and confidence to always know there was a way out of the darkness, as Squizzy was able to make things right for Charlie. Furthermore, Charlie believes that Squizzy is the key to a better life for his family. ' I was under no illusion as to who was responsible for my family's good fortune. It was Squizzy Taylor... I owed him a great deal' (p125) Charlie's determination was recognised by Squizzy, who supported him and showed that he had faith in him. Thus, Charlie found comfort when he knew Squizzy was there for him.

It is prominently seen in the novel, that Charlie eventually comprehends how mistaken he was about Squizzy being a role model for him. This is shown when Nostrils, Charlie's best friend gets beaten up in the middle of the night, when Charlie and Nostrils were working for him. Squizzy has no compassion and tells Charlie that he couldn't care less about his friend, being beaten up. Squizzy's nasty side emerged and Charlie realised that he was not a good father figure for him. As he was frequently drunk and short tempered, he very nearly shoots Charlie in anger. ' Suddenly, as quick as someone flicking a switch, Squizzy turned nasty' (p168) Charlie was no longer blindsided to Squizzy's violent side. Therefore, he did ' something good' and quit his job running for Squizzy, as he was now able to grasp that morals and values are more imperative in life. When Charlie struggles to be the man of the house, Mr Redmond was there to train him for the Ballarat Mile Race and it triggered Charlie, which made him become more conscience that Mr Redmond was a good mentor for Charlie, as he treated him like his own son. With the help and support of Mr Redmond, Charlie won the Ballarat Mile and made him proud. ' I put my arms around his neck and hugged him tight... ' we won the mile. I couldn't have done it without ya' (p207) Mr Redmond is an amazing role model for Charlie, as they have the same morals and they love each other deeply. It is seen, that overtime peoples true colours unfold and their real self comes out. The more time Charlie spent with Mr Redmond the more he realised how amazing of a mentor he was, in comparison to Squizzy who protected Charlie, but could turn nasty quickly and did not have the same principles as Charlie.

Hence, this novel shows the hope Charlie entailed and the admiration of Squizzy being a role model to him, which led to the wrong path for Charlie, when he realised Squizzy's true colours. It became very clear that the right mentor for him was Mr Redmond, who treated him like his very own son. Charlie is now able to follow in Mr Redmond's path and have a father-like person in his life, who is able to provide guidance, support, love and morality, just like Charlie's actual father perhaps could have.