

# [How the story progresses](https://assignbuster.com/how-the-story-progresses/)

[Literature](https://assignbuster.com/essay-subjects/literature/)

During the course of the book we witness the main character, Michele confront fears, as he is forced to mature rapidly. This is exemplified when Michele initially thinks only monsters possess evil qualities, but as his father once said " Stop all this talk about monsters. . . . Monsters don't exist. It's men you should be afraid of, not monsters" [p. 170] Michele soon realizes that this is true. This is down to the fact that he is quickly discovering the harsh reality of the world he lives in. which previously he had been protected from.

This links back to the title, as the reality of the world is uncovered many fears are uncovered for which Michele must face. Another example of Michele showing bravery can be found in the first scene during the race up the hill. In this scene Michele chooses to sacrifice winning the race in order to backtrack and assist his injured sister Maria. This action of compassion illustrates that Michele is not scared of risking to do the forfeit awarded to the loser of the race up the hill.

Another way in which Michele's bravery is shown is the way in which he handles his relationship with unfairly treated gang member Barbara. Firstly his decision to receive the forfeit that Barbara was initially awarded shows Michele becoming more conscious to what is injustice to and what is virtuous in the world and in general showing that he is becoming morally stronger. Nevertheless when young Michele is confronted by the intimidating and aggressive gang leader Skull about his friendly relations with Barbara, he quickly retreats from showing any more generosity towards her.

This is a sign that Michele, even though developing a braver personality than his peers, he still finds himself susceptible to being " scared" by certain situations, such as this one with gang leader Skull. Reasons for why Michele feels threatened by gang leader Skull is firstly because Skull isn't afraid of imposing his great physical strength on the other gang members.. As well as this Michele fears opposing Skull would result in rejection (Because Acqua Traverse is so isolated, there are no children in the village apart from those in Skull's gang).

Michele is faced with few fears prior to the pivotal moment of the book, which is that of Michele's discovery of the kidnapped Fillipo. From this point onwards the innocence of Michele is hastily lost, forcing Michele to mature both physically and mentally if he is to cope in his surroundings. When Michele first meets Fillipo he is terrified of Fillipo and quickly departs yet he does show some bravery when telling himself " I'm not scared of anything"(p47 ) , in order to hearten himself to go down the hole.

Michele becomes more and more courageous with respects to communicating with Fillipo. He soon feels connected to him to a point that he is given the impression that may have been his brother. This is supported when he is recalled saying Fillipo " was mine and that they had taken him away from me" [p. 169]. This attachment to Fillipo could be down to the fact that they both have been hidden from the truth about the world they live in and consequently Michele feels that it is his responsibility to aid Fillipo as well as himself through the terrible predicament they find themselves in.

Michele and Fillipo progressively show more and more signs of good communication to a point that Michele starts bringing him out of the hole as they learn more and more about each other. Michele is seen to develop in to a braver person from the beginning to the end of the book, this is backed up by the idea that he sets Fillipo free in the final parts of the book against the warnings of his father as well as those regarding Melichetti pigs who Michele had heard that; " Rumor had it old Melichetti trained them to savage hens, and sometimes rabbits and cats can be found by the roadside" p7.

Michele has been brought up in a society that has caused him to develop an incredible imagination, as during 1970s rural Italy children were expected to seek entertainment themselves. Therefore in order to entertain one another Michele and his gang base their imaginary adventures around books and stories they have read. Michele in the book seems to gain an inner-strength through the heroes featured in these comic-books, in particular Tiger-Jack who aids Michele through difficult and worrying situations such as when sneaking off to meet Fillipo he tells himself " I must be brave. Tiger Jack.

Think of Tiger Jack. The Indian would help me. Before making any move, I must think what the Indian would do in my place. That was the secret" [p. 183]. Tiger Jack is used by Michele as a way to confront his fears as well as allowing himself to be braver. Michele also discovers inner strength through his strong religious beliefs. As shown when he is about to jump out a window " I stood up on the window sill, crossed myself" (p26) This links to Michele being a product of southern Italian culture, as southern regions in Italy are noted for their strong following of the catholic faith.

The connection with Catholicism and " I'm not Scared" is also epitomized in the fact that the majority of the characters have Catholic influenced names such as Michele, Fillipo, Sergio, Felice, Maria, Salvatore and Teresa.. Overall Michele has grown up a lot as well as becoming a braver person during the course of " I'm not scared", as he is tested by many emotions, but especially that of fear. Fillipo is also a character who becomes braver, as like Michele he is also forced to grow up and overcome his fears due to unfortunate circumstances, which he finds himself in.

The unfortunate circumstance being that he has recently been kidnapped. The main contrast between him and Michele are their highly contrasting upbringings. Michele is raised in Acqua Traverse. This fictional village typifies the situation of the majority of southern agricultural villages in 1970s Italy at the time, who suffered financially due to their failure to develop their industry, in which the north had much success. Due to instability in the southern regions (known as Mezzogiorno) many fled to the north in search of opportunities for wealth.

Meanwhile Fillipo originate from the North of Italy, where rapid industrial growth since the 1950s led to an increase in wealth and opportunity. This is illustrated in Fillipo being brought up into a comfortably off family living the city lifestyle that the North of Italy provides, while Michele on the other hand is stuck in an underdeveloped rural village suffering from the failure of a number of governmental economical schemes. Kidnappings such as the one involving Fellipo occurred regularly in Italy due to the economic imbalance between the South and North.

Due to their desperate financial situation southern dwellers such as Sergio would hold rich Northern children to ransom in hope of selling them off for large sums of money. Fillipo being brought up in a Northern society also has meant he has been subjected to a better education which has led to him being described as a knowledgeable boy. This is apparent when he is discussing a flying species with Michele. " Flying foxes fly even in the daytime and they chirp like birds. And they weigh more than a kilo.

If they catch hold of the small branches they fall to the ground. I think these are flying foxes"(p146) This kind of elaborate knowledge that Fillipo exhibits emphasizes educational differences between himself and Michele, as economic failure in the Southern regions of Italy in 1970s would of meant children such as Michele would have been given a poor standard of education. As a consequence Michele would have poorer job prospects than say Fillipo. Like Michele, Fillipo also has to withstand several fears throughout the book.

Mostly these fears are caused mainly by the fact that the place of his whereabouts is unexplained to him. Fillipo plucks courage to confront these fears through the " wash bears", in which he uses to comfort himself from the terrifying reality by creating a relationship with them. This is proven by the fact that he talks of the " wash bears", as if they are good friends such as when he says " the little bears told me you're not scared of the lord of the worms" p77. The lord of the worms being Fillipo's kidnappers.

Another way in which Fillipo successfully confronts his fears is through simply Michele. Michele is shown throughout to inspire Fillipo to fight back against the kidnappers and escape and to show more fearlessness. An example of this can be seen in the final stages of the thrilling novel during which Fillipo admits he is " scared" of trying to flee from his kidnappers. Michele responds by saying " No you're not scared, There's nothing to be scared of. Hide" p223 These words of inspiration cause Fillipo to overcome his fears and obey Michele instantly and hide.

Michele assists him on other occasions also, most notably his conquering of his fear of sunlight, subjecting pain on his rather sensitive eyes. In conclusion Fillipo like Michele has also grown up considerably over the course of book, down to his pre-mature " loss of innocence", he has become a lot braver and has overcome many of his fears in different ways. The theme of fear and bravery is also closely associated with the dominant female characters present in the novel, Theresa (Michele's mother) and Barbara..

Theresa acts in a manner that was expected of women in a typical Italian male-dominated society, described by Michele as " She spoke little and stayed on her feet. Cooking, washing and ironing. If she wasn't on her feet she was asleep"(p54) This description of Theresa is associated with the ideas of Machismo that were extremely popular throughout Italy in the 1970s. " Machismo" being a popular attitude revolved around the men of the community showing excessive masculinity and being the commanders of society.

In contrast the women such as Theresa were expected to take a more subtle background role involving household chores and taking care of young children. Theresa's is silent in the early stages of the novel, but she soon reveals her true colours when she discovers that Felice had abused Michele, but more disturbing to her personally is the news that Michele has lost his " innocence" that she had put so much effort into preserving . Her immediate reaction to the news is described as " The veins on her neck swelled and her voice shook: " How dare you, eh? You hit my son, you bastard! ' And she flung herself at Felice" p155

The fears which this particular villager are troubled by are those in respect to the intense kidnapping saga which she finds herself engulfed in, but more importantly to her the " loss of innocence" of her son. She overcomes her fears by acting as naturally as possible in front of her children in order to give them a sense of security. Two men who show similar sorts of fears are Sergio and Felice. Sergio possesses much authority within the village down to mostly the physical fear which he imposes on those around him. A fear in which we witness Sergio facing is in reference to the kidnapping of Felice.

The stress and strain that is inflicted on Sergio because of the kidnapping causes Sergio to be regularly witnessed by Michele in to drinking from a " flask of stock 84", as well as continuously smoking. These habits can be perceived as a way to overcome his fears regarding the kidnapping of Fillipo. Another fear to which Sergio encounters is to do with his dead son " Francesco". Francesco was said to have committed suicide due to relationship troubles with what Sergio describes as a " tart". Committing suicide over a girl is regarded as very unmanly by Sergio, and therefore he is " scared" to believe any truth in the story.

In order to triumph over this fear Sergio convinces himself that Francesco was very manly and that in fact he was " Murdered" as the " tart pushed him off". This shows Sergio is a classic product of the culture and society the book is set in. This is because he epitomizes " Machismo" in the way he believes that men are superior to women. Felice is very similar to Sergio in regards to maintaining a very manly image around fellow villagers. This is attitude is because of the " Machismo" culture that Acqua Traverse captures. Sergio manages to embody Felice in a few sentences by saying He pretends to be tough and acts more dangerous than he actually is. Beneath the fai?? ade, his strength is no more tangible than the rumors circulating the community about Melichetti's pigs" Felice Natale is a complicated yet daunting figure in the book described as " a thousand times worse" than his younger brother the gang leader Skull Felice is twenty and doesn't really fit into the group of children or adults, he has grown up in a town without friends, he became isolated and as a defense mechanism to overcome his fears he becomes aggressive and narrow-minded, Felice in Acqua Traverse was like a tiger in a cage. " Although he looks as if he should fit in with the adults he has the simplistic mind of a child. He like his brother resolves all his problems and fears with violence. First impressions show Felice to be a brutal bully, who has no reasons to act so harshly towards his home town, but as the story progresses we gain a deeper understanding of some of his motivations and the style of upbringing he had.

Even though Felice is a terrifying character, he is pushed around by the adults, he is made to do their dirty work just like Barbra is made to do the dirty work for Skull's 'gang', although Felice does keep and eye on Filippo and does the job with minimal effort or care, he shows his compassionate side when he refuses to kill the boy.

Felice overcomes his fears of the adults of Acqua Traverse judging him by standing up for his rights in the final phases of the novel when he is recalled saying " I'm not doing it! Why should I have to do it, why? (p201) , and in typical Felice fashion snaps due to his insecurities and physically attacks Sergio. In conclusion the events that occur in I'm not scared" cause many characters to face new challenges and fears they have never experienced previously. In other words the novel embodies the themes of fear and bravery. This theme is strongly linked with the title of the book. Furthermore there is strong evidence in the book that the behavior, attitudes and personalities of the main characters are influenced strongly by the culture and society in which the book is set.