

Role models: the relationship between david and wesley



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

In the novel *Montana 1948*, the relationship between David and his father is complex and distant, and leads us to better understand the struggles that they both face, and their development throughout the novel. Their relationship also helps the reader to understand the importance of positive role models for young children, and the conflict between justice and family loyalty, both of which are difficult themes that they face. Though, as the reader we don't see into Wesley's thoughts and emotions, (like we do David's) through their relationship and the manner at which David views his father, we can develop a good understanding of both characters throughout the novel.

Although David and his father love each other, their relationship in the novel is generally tense and distant as they struggle to relate with one another, and fail to recognise the trials that the other faces during *Montana 1948*. One of the most notable difficulties that impedes on their relationship is Wesley's profession as a sheriff. Frank's crimes and Wesley's inaction to them, drives a wedge into his father-son relationship, as David fails to appreciate the moral dilemmas that come with Wesley's job, and can't understand why his father doesn't enjoy being a sheriff. He expresses his disappointment at the beginning of the novel, " My father was...a sheriff, a position with so much potential for excitement, danger, and bravery, why couldn't some of that promise be fulfilled?" This puts a strain on their relationship, as not only does Wesley physically and aesthetically fail to compete with David's opinion of a county sheriff, but also morally he doesn't either. Wesley's struggle between family loyalty and the law is one that David doesn't ever fully appreciate. Though as the novel progresses, he

begins to better understand how difficult it was for Wesley to grow up under Julian and Frank, “ I suddenly felt sorry for my father... what must it have been like to have a father capable of speaking to you like that?” David never truly understands his father’s struggles. From Wesley’s side of the relationship, his failure to realise that his son knows about Frank’s crimes, also makes it difficult for them to connect. This is one of the main reasons behind their tense relationship, as Wesley is too preoccupied with his job and the choices that he is being forced to make, to notice his son or realise the guidance that David needs. As David struggles to make sense of the adult themes surrounding him, he doesn’t have the aid of his father. Again this makes it difficult for them to be close.

The relationship between David and his father helps the reader to understand the importance of positive male role models for a child’s development, and more importantly the need for a solid father/son relationship. A major theme for this novel is the difficult journey from innocence to adulthood. For David, he struggles through most of this journey alone, without the guidance of his father as he explores unmapped territory such as sexual urges, mortality and suicide. An example of David’s struggle to process all of these new emotions and feelings can be seen in the magpie scene. As he tries to sift through these complexities of adulthood, (by shooting things), he kills a magpie. “ I realised that these strange, unthought-of connections – sex and death, lust and violence, desire and degradation – are there, deep in even a good heart’s chambers”. With the recent events that have occurred, he struggles to process them, without the aid of his father, he can’t navigate these new thoughts. As his father is

unaware of his sons recent awareness towards sex and death. As a reader we can understand how being left out and his fathers refusal to explain the situation to him leaves him feeling frustrated. The experience also links David's sexuality to violence at a subconscious level that demonstrates even further his inability to understand these new urges. It also helps us to understand that without his father's guidance, David is only able to associate his normal sexual attraction, with Frank's perverse actions, forcing David into seeing sex and himself as evil and disgusting. When David is put it in a situation where he is aroused by a girl, he quotes that he felt " At once dizzy and ashamed and sick" with himself. This reinforces the idea that though David is thrust into many situations where he is forced to make adult situations, that he is still just a young boy, and struggling to shift through all of these emotions. He is not only facing the normal difficulties of adolescence, but also very serious themes like rape, murder and suicide. Concluding that David's journey from innocence to adulthood is problematic, but it is even harder with a lack of positive role models.

Another way that this relationship helps me to understand the characters is through the conflict of family loyalty verses justice, which is the main struggle, that Wesley's faces during this novel. Though we never see Wesley's point of view in Montana 1948, we can come to understand him through the eyes of his son David. As David develops in the novel, he comes to better understand the trials that his father faces, and the implications that arresting Frank would have on his family. " Grief...I hadn't realised until that moment how large a part of my father's job this was" We come to understand how growing up under power hungry Julian made Wesley quite a

weak and pliable man. He spent his life abiding to his father. Even when he is forced to make a decision between justice and family loyalty, he chooses his family. " He could not sufficiently fear, love, trust obey and honour God... because he had nothing left for his Heavenly Father after declaring absolute fealty to his earthly one" At the end of the novel, Wesley interactions with David give us insight into how difficult pursuing justice, had been for Wesley, with the golf ball scene. It shows how even though Wesley knew his brother was a bad man who had done some terrible things, he was still his brother, whom he admired and up loved for most of his life. The relationship between David and his father gives us insight into Wesley's character and his emotions throughout the novel.

Montana 1948 explores the difficult relationship between Wesley and his son, to help us understand them better and mark their development throughout the novel. Their relationship brings up complex themes such as family loyalty verse justice, and the importance of good role models for children going through difficult times. Through their relationship we gain insight into both characters, their emotions and struggles. Without this, the readers would miss out on important lessons and themes.