

Stop-time' by frank conroy: an overview

[Government](#), [Corruption](#)



In Frank Conroy's memoir, *Stop-Time*, he encounters many situations throughout his childhood that allow him to mature and gain knowledge of the world he lives in. As Frank grows older, he understands fear, hatred, and unfairness. He first encounters corruption when a police officer approaches him and Jean on the streets of New York and accepts a bribe from Jean. As Frank watches the police officer casually leave after taking the bribe, he feels disillusionment towards the police officer. By passively observing the officer, rather than aggressively interfering in the situation, Frank matures.

Frank's encounter with the police officer allows him to comprehend that anyone, regardless their level of authority, is capable of setting their morals aside and cheating. Frank and Jean meet with an Italian who shows them how to bribe the cop in order to avoid a citation. In this scene the phrase "son of a bitch" is used ambiguously, since it is hard to tell who might of said this (133). By not specifying who said the phrase "son of a bitch," it leads to the assumption that that either Frank or the Italian or both, are expressing their anger towards the police officer.

Frank and the Italian feel resignation towards the police officer. The police officer abuses his power of authority; he possesses the power to control many of the fruit vendors by forcing them to pay a small fine. The police officer is playing a game with all the fruit vendors in which only he is victorious. The ambiguity of this phrase can also stand as a representation of all the fruit vendors, they all feel that they have lost to the cop's game and end up giving him what he wants. As the police officer approaches Jean and Frank's fruit stand, Jean orders Frank not to watch the cop.

However Frank's curiosity takes over and he ignores Jean and waits to see whether or not the cop accepts the bribe. Frank describes the cop's actions and attitude as calm. The police officer was "slapping [the baton] neatly into his palm every few seconds like the piston of an engine." Frank compares the cop's actions to a piston of an engine to signify his calm and repetitive actions of corruption. A piston of an engine repeatedly goes up and down with no other movement and continues until the engine is shut off. Frank's comparison of the cop to a piston signifies that the cop routinely breaks the law.

The cop's breaking law routine ends when he no longer wears the uniform and is off duty. This shows that the cop is like any other person; once his shift is over he loses all power of authority, just like a piston loses its power when the engine is stalled. The police officer's act of corruption consumes Frank's attention. Frank's passive observance and curiosity allows him to describe the police officer with great detail. When the officer came within touching distance, Frank becomes shocked as the police officer reaches over to take the money.

Frank's focus allows him to describe the cop's, "big arm, covered with thick, curly, ginger-colored hair," in great detail. The great detail he describes is due to Frank's astonishment that a police officer, who is supposed to uphold the law, would break the law. Frank's passive observance allows him to become more mature: Frank had many opportunities to speak up and take action to stop the cop from taking the bribe, but he remained silent and still.

Before the police officer took the bribe, Frank respected the police officer, but after he took it, he was nobody.

After Frank witness the police officer take the bribe and walk away, he transforms the way he thinks of authority and regards those who break the law as nobodies. Frank strips away the Police officers power by saying, “ approaching, he’d been a policeman, and now, retreating, he was just a man dressed in blue. ” (133). As Frank is experiencing this, he begins to understand that police officers who gain authority by dressing a certain way with a badge, does not necessarily mean that they will enforce the law and do the right things.

Frank takes the power away from the cop by describing him “ as a man just dressed in blue,” with no special significance, as if he were just any other person rather than an authoritative policeman. Frank “ couldn’t have been more astonished if [the police officer] disappeared in thin air. ” (133) Air is a representation of nothing. Frank’s reference of the cop to air signifies that the cop has no authority: the cop is just like any ordinary person. When you think of a police officer, you imagine peace and order.

When Frank encounters a police officer, he gets exposed to corruption. Being exposed to corruption helps Frank realize that the world he lives in is not perfect. Conroy learns that individuals should respect authority and not rebel when an authoritative figure performs an act of corruption. However you should question corruption rather than be oppressed by it. Frank matured by not interfering with the police officer, but he could of gain more knowledge by revolting the cop’s action and standing up for what he thinks is right.