

Crank



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Crank by Ellen Hopkins is written specifically to make the reader think, feel, and understand. Crank is a novel about infatuation, addiction, and going to great lengths to feed the needs of the two. Loosely based on Hopkins former meth addict daughter, the story follows Kristina Georgia Snow, a shy, 16 year old girl from Reno, Nevada. However, by the end of the story, she is her alter ego Bree; rebellious, drug addicted, and spiraling downward at an increasingly faster rate.

Her downfall begins with a three week visit her to absentee, known drug abusing father and a chance meeting with the bad boy next door. The reader follows Kristina through her choices that lead her from being a gifted straight A student, to a meth addicted junkie whose only goal in life is to get another fix. Like Hopkins other novels, Crank is written in free verse. Every page is a different poem, describing the life of Kristina and detailing her addiction. At times, these poems will be in the shape of particular object that trigger emotions and provide powerful messages. For example, in the poem “Changed”, a part in the story where Kristina was facing troubles with her addiction and is trying to get healthy again, the text is written in the shape of a Cross. Not only does this make a stronger impact of the idea of praying and keeping your faith during hard times, but it also makes the actual reading of the novel much smoother, keeping the reader interested. Also, in this poem, the longest line is the horizontal line crossing the Cross, which says “ If You do still care, Lord, please keep me safe” (Hopkins 207).

Because of the shape of the Cross, this line is the most visible of the poem – providing the reader with a powerful quote from Kristina that shows her inner turmoil because of the drug she is addicted to. The free verse in the novel is

also often separated so that strong words and sentences in the poems appear to the side of it, making the story much more powerful, and the writing much more creative. For example, on the pages containing the poem "To Speed or Not to Speed", the words that are secluded from the story put together make the sentence "anywhere anytime anyway I could. the monster and I had become- best friends" (174-175). This one sentence explains everything happening in Kristina's life at that moment in the story.

Drugs had become her life, and the fact that this one sentence is secluded from the rest of the story lets the reader see just how strong this addiction was and how although she's telling a story, the secluded sentence is always in the back of her mind. The free verse style of this book also creates a closer relationship between Kristina and the reader through the way the story is told. The poetry is from Kristina's point of view., and most of her conversations are with no one but herself, and her alter ego, Bree. The way the narration is portrayed takes the reader inside Kristina's head, to read what she is thinking, feel as she does, and eventually be able to understand completely what it is like to be an addict. Throughout Crank, Kristina refers to her drug of choice, crystal meth, as the monster. This accurate metaphor shows that Kristina understands what the drug is and what it is truly doing to her. She knows that her drug use is a horrible thing and is demolishing her life but she can't seem to stay away from it.

Just like a child afraid of the monster they believe to be living under their bed, Kristina can't help but to test the waters and see if the monster will really get her or if it is just a hoax. As she soon learns, the crystal meth monster is real and very dangerous thing to mess with. At first glance,

Kristina seems like a cliché character at best. She starts out as a good girl looking for more to life, meets a bad boy, and gets hooked on drugs. But what readers don't see until they really delve in to the novel is the validity and realism of these issues that many young people face. C. J.

Listro of Sarcasm and Lemons Blog says that " I could believe this exact story had happened, somewhere. There's no moralistic tragic ending; no perfect fairy tale redemption. The consequences are real; the happenings are severe, but you can feel them building for so long that they don't feel cheap." While Hopkins could have just made this another typical teen novel, she tackles issues that other authors won't go near such as addiction, rape, suicide, drugs use during pregnancy, etc with such brutal raw emotion and vulnerability that readers can experience the fear and anguish of them without having to personally make the mistake of going through it. Hopkins writes Kristina in such a personal way that she makes readers feel what she feels. When Kristina is heartbroken, the readers feel it with her; likewise, when she feels the desperation of needing more crystal meth, readers feel her desperation as well as their own for her to realize what she is doing and come to her senses. Knowing that Crank's main character Kristina is based on a real person makes her all the more relatable. Knowing that she is a real flesh and blood person like us is what makes the reader drawn to her and her downward spiral.

Readers yearn for her to recover because they feel like they know Kristina or even are her in a sense. She is a real life warning that life can get bad fairly quick. The most striking part about this novel is the fact that it is based on Hopkins daughter's life. Her story makes people realize that things like this

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can happen to anyone and that the choices you make can and will affect the rest of your life and the people around you.

Hopkins stated on her website that “Crank began as a personal exploration of the “whys” behind my daughters decisions, and what part I might have played in them. By writing the story from “my daughters” perspective, I learned a lot, both about her, and about myself. But I also learned a lot about the nature of addiction.

” This novel wasn't meant to be another public service announcement (PSA) commercial that is ignored; it is meant to be a warning to others and open their eyes to danger and accessibility of drugs and the eternal damage it can inflict.