

# Themes of prejudice in jasper jones



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The recently famous novel *Jasper Jones*, written by Craig Silvey tells a tale of a young boy named Charlie Bucktin and his friend Jasper Jones finding the killer of a girl named Laura Wishart. As Charlie searches for his identity, he faces racism and ignorance in the narrow-minded country town Corrigan, Australia. Throughout the text our beliefs are challenged by racism, we are disturbed by ignorance, and discover identities. Craig Silvey explores multiple themes in his writing to bring the story to life and confront his audience.

The white dominated town of Corrigan emphasized the theme of racism and prejudice the townspeople hold for Jasper and the Lu family. Jasper Jones faces persecution for his Indigenous background and blamed for the issues that arise, Charlie narrates, “ In families throughout Corrigan, he’s the first name to be blamed for all manner of trouble.” Through this description, the audience begins to perceive Jasper Jones as a questionable individual who could possibly be leading the protagonist, Charlie, into unnecessary trouble. After finding Laura’s body, we are first confused at why he did not approach the police and instead asked Charlie for help causing the audience to distrust Jasper. It is when Charlie says, “ Of course Corrigan is going to accuse him of this,” that we see we were prejudiced against Jasper and see how racist Corrigan really is. Through the progression of the story, we begin to understand Jasper is misunderstood and wrongly judged for actions he needs to do to survive. As well as Jasper, the Lu family also face hatred due to their Vietnam heritage. Due to the time-period, the town pins the blame of the ongoing war on them and Sue goes as far to spill hot tea on Mrs Lu blaming her for her husband’s death. After Jeffrey’s success in the cricket game, men

destroy their front garden, which was a symbol of hope and beauty. Thus showing they did not agree with the idea of a non-white succeeding over them. Silvey displays that the town of Corrigan did not value those who were different, and as a result, Jasper and the Lu family were discriminated.

The problems that Charlie face throughout the novel forces him to step out of his comfort zone and take on intense obstacles along the way. Before Charlie came to know Jack Lionel, he believed the rumors of Corrigan claiming Lionel to be a murderer and a psychopath to be true. Jasper gives in to these speculations too and draws his own conclusions of Jack being the one to kill Laura. When Charlie and Jasper confront Lionel, they hear the truth. “ They just feared the myth of Mad Jack Lionel”, we begin to understand that everything the town and audience believed about Lionel was simply fear and ignorance clouding our vision. Another demonstration of fear and courage is when Charlie steals peaches from Jack Lionel’s front yard to prove a point to his tormentor. When he gets to the peach tree, he finds “ a lumpy carpet of decaying peaches” instead of fresh peaches hanging on the tree. As Charlie looks at the peaches he finds himself in a nightmare, “ I look down my breath is short. There’s a teeming metropolis of insects down there” yet despite his crippling fear, he bends down and scoops up the peaches. Charlie finds an inner strength within him when overcoming his fears to face an assumed murder with Jasper and grabbed peaches despite the bugs in the way.

With the challenging issues Charlie faces, he is forced to make mature decisions and grow up much faster than he should. Charlie is forced to look at himself, understand who he is and whom he needs to be in order to deal

with his challenges. An example of this is when he finds his mother cheating on his father with a strange man. He calmly stands up to the woman who has exerted her power over him for his whole life, showing his adult-like qualities. Contrastingly, Jasper grew up too quickly, unlike Charlie, and he was not fully aware of who he was or where he came from. Upon meeting Jack Lionel, not only did Jasper learn he was his grandfather, but that “ he was driving the car that killed Jasper’s mother”. Overall, Jasper came to find what happened to his mother and who his grandfather was, and Charlie stopped being the naïve child who believed adults knew everything. In the novel Jasper Jones, we are shown that Charlie transforms from a young naïve child to a mature teenager, and that Jasper grew up far too quickly due to the lack of parental care from his father.

Racism, fear, ignorance and identity helped to build the narration of Charlie Bucktin and his unfortunate yet life changing events. The racism in Corrigan stopped Jasper and Charlie from going to the public with Laura’s death due to fear of persecution. Fear and ignorance was prominent in the town, as they feared a man who had done no wrong. In addition, Charlie and Jasper had to come to terms with their identity. Craig Silvey captured the attention of the audience with his intense and intimate storytelling from beginning to end. We walk away from this tale of hardships knowing that Charlie and Jasper were on a road to a better life.