

45 and 47 stella
street and everything
that happened essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The children's novel '45 and 47 Stella Street and everything that happened' (Honey, 1995) written by Elizabeth Honey is a novel aimed at pre-adolescent girls. However in saying that boys around the same age would also find this book enjoyable. The story is told from the perspective of Hinni who is an 11 year old girl. It is about her and her 'Gang', which includes her best friend Zev, Her sister Danielle and Frank, Zev's 6-year-old next-door neighbour who resides at 47 Stella Street. The book tells of their efforts to expose the "Phonies" and their secret life. It is evident through analysis of the book that there are sly implications toward enforcing the concepts of masculinity and femininity on young readers using the strategies of narrative theory.

Narrative theory consists of three key strategies, the point of view/focalisation, reader positioning and closure. The point of view or focalisation is always biased. When watching a film or reading a book you are always watching or reading it from someone or something's perspective. In Stella Street it is Henni who is telling us what is happening, you only see things from her perspective and therefore you tend to side with her. Reader positioning is very important and very similar to that of point of view and focalisation. Readers or viewers are positioned so that they have a positive response toward some characters and a negative response toward others even though both parties may be both in the wrong on some occasions. The readers of 45 and 47 Stella Street are positioned so that they hope for the Stella Street's gang to succeed over the Phonies. Closure is how the story concludes, who ends up succeeding in the end and who doesn't. Once again in 45 and 47 Stella Street it is the Stella Street gang who triumph over the Phonies.

It is evident that the men in 45 and 47 Stella Street hold masculine qualities whilst the women hold feminine traits. In terms of power it is the men that hold this control as decision making is all about power and throughout the book it is apparent that the men make majority of the decisions. For example it is Zev's father that makes the initial decision to move to New Zealand. When Rob and Donna are having trouble with Briquette escaping from the yard it is Rob who decides that they will do "nothing" and when the gang are coming up with ideas on how to tackle a problem it seems as though at the end of the deliberation all members of the gang seek Zev's agreement or approval. The male figures also seem to come up with the good ideas or ask relevant questions more so than the female characters. Throughout the book there are a number of characters that come and go that hold a form of power. For instance the lawyers, Robert Smeeton, Mr J. D Perry, the Ombudsman Robert Cooper and Detective Sergeant Dave Watson are all very powerful in the positions they hold within society. From this you can see that a female represents none of these highly powerful characters.

The book is focalised through Henni, she explains to readers what it is she likes and what she doesn't like. Everything that she sees happening she interprets and it is all told from her perspective. In one particular part of the novel Henni is explaining how Donna has put up with numerous changes with the building, design and cost of the new fence that is to be erected between 45 and 47 Stella Street. Henni makes the statement that, "Donna never lost her temper. That's probably how she got the job she has. She never loses her temper. Rob would have told the Phonies to take a long walk off a short pier. Mum would have gone quiet. She just buttons up. Dad would have lost

his temper, for sure, and called them inconsiderate pea brains. But not Donna. She just keeps on keeping on.”

The way in which the characters mentioned compose themselves is interesting. Traditional gender roles cast men as rational, strong, protective and decisive, whilst on the other hand women are cast as emotional, irrational, weak, nurturing and submissive. Within the statement that Henni makes it is evident that parts of the traditional gender roles exist. For example the way in which Henni’s mum would have gone quiet illustrates a form of submissiveness.

In Stella Street there is not a particularly strong sense of patriarchy. However there is some evidence of Patriarchy in some sections of the book for example when they are building the fence between 45 and 47 Stella Street Mr Nic and Zev carry the old posts to Henni’s dad who is on the footpath cutting them up with a chainsaw. Danielle and Frank do the running around and fetching of stuff and there is no mention as to what the others are doing. The males are very affirmative and this is shown by Henni’s dad and the way in which he says “ right” she knows by the way in which he says it that something is going to happen there’s no questioning or buts. The females show their more conservative side especially Donna with the way in which she potters around her gardens before she has to go to work.

Elizabeth Honey has used strategies of narrative theory throughout her book 45 and 47 Stella Street. Many young readers would not be aware of the ideologies implied through this book. What the children are reading may come across as a fun and exciting book there is much evidence to suggest

that this book enforces the concepts of masculinity and femininity on young readers using the strategies of narrative theory. It is evident that the males hold a sense of power over the females in that their decision making exemplifies their power. All evidence provided above comes directly from the novel.