

How and how
effectively does
dannie abse end ash
on a young man's
sleeve essay



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BUSTER**

The first area that is to be assessed is the tone that Dannie Abse decides to use in this ending. Rather than adopting the same tone throughout this final chapter, it changes gradually yet quite significantly from the start to finish.

To begin with, we can see that his tone is casual and typical of an adolescent character. Dannie has reached a crucial stage in his life where he has no choice but to acknowledge the change that awaits him. He is no longer the child who he used to be - no longer '10 years high' (p11) but the 'emperor of his 18 years... king of the tall trees.

.. and big boss of the grass'. By the final lines of the ending, the tone has become far more solemn and intense.

At the opening of his ending, Abse possesses a casual and almost suppressed tone; and he acts as if the events that have passed by are no big deal. He's reached the point where he is now independent and can no longer be as reliant on his parents as he once was. Even in random streams of semi-consciousness he resents what they say and wishes to continue his life on his own. Yet somehow, despite his resentment on the surface, deep down he still longs for the loving nagging of his parents:" I didn't go home...

my parents would be saying the same things all over again."" I sat on a wooden bench... thought for a moment what my mother would have said."

The ironic thing is that even though he was trying to escape the embrace of his parents by going to the park, unconsciously, he was unable to let go of their nurture that has been with him for the past 18 years.

At the area where he speaks about his birthday, his tone has been almost reduced to sarcasm. Like a typically pseudo-depressed 18 year old, he feels like the misery that he has absorbed has driven him to the point where he has almost no care for whatever happens in his life." Perhaps it wasn't a nun, but a German spy." "I laughed until I stopped laughing" The idea that he is trying to amuse himself through a passing nun reflects the deep sadness and emptiness that is residing within him. He knows what he is doing is pathetic but due to his boisterously false carelessness, he pretends to be completely oblivious to his own actions and state of mind.

"It had been raining, but now the sun, aware that it was my birthday, rubbed its way through the clouds transforming their edges into a silver splendour." From this quote, we can see even more irony in his attitude. Considering the situation he's in at the moment, it's hardly the appropriate time to be poetic. He is almost telling himself: "Wow, good fortune - oh the irony; now wouldn't it have been fantastic if I'd had some of that in the past!" From a realistic point of view, we can all tell there is no way he could possibly feel that way about the sun, unless he'd taken an overdose of cannabis and forgotten about the miserable fact that - his best friend is dead; both of his brothers have gone away to war and may never return; he's have a troubled time with his girlfriend; and he's sitting on a park bench, by himself, on his 18th birthday, eating a slice of cake! As the episode progresses, Abse intertwines his use of setting with his tone to produce a more tragic and depressing atmosphere. He realises he is no longer able to upkeep his false optimism and simply pours out all of his negative emotions.

All of his thoughts and beliefs on the outside world that has broken into his childhood were released in a cluster of metaphors, symbolising aspects of war, death and various other negativities that enclose him." A concrete turret camouflaged with autumn colours stood convalescent in the weak sunlight."" Some branches already leaned nakedly into the scant oxygen - grim, wintry and dead looking...

This was the death of leaves, their falling was their dying... without protestation..

. a quick, easy, silent journey to death everlasting." The escape to the park from his home and the nagging of his mother also illustrates the change that he is now undergoing. The park is a representation of the wider world that awaits Dannie on the journey he is about to take, it is a mere glimpse of the real world that from now on shall rest on the shoulders of this young man. This effect is created by contrasting the new image of the park to the old picture that was painted earlier in his childhood:" I ran out of school with my arms horizontal (for I was an aero-plane) into the summer evening.

.. I kicked the notices over." (p16)The change is an emphasis of the change in Dannie's view towards the real world.

While he was a child, he viewed it as a place of innocence and freedom. Now that he has grown up, it has transformed into the new stage on which he will perform the next episode of his life. He now sees the ' park' from a different perspective:" It seemed less like a park since they had taken down the iron railings..."" Not one lingering cry of a child playing in the park.

“ What is so intriguing about the style Dannie Abse uses in these last two pages is the powerful effect that he manages to achieve through a rather solemn style. The vivid description of the atmosphere not only provides the reader with a distinct image of the present, the subtle contrasts that Abse uses also gives echoing flashbacks that are reminiscent of Dannie’s past. The various deep meanings that are held within these last two pages entice and make the reader want to read the whole book all over again. This entire story is about Dannie’s childhood and all of the changes that have occurred since his young years. At the beginning of the story, we can see by the expressions of innocence in his writing that Dannie has not yet tasted the hardship of what awaits him beyond his safe shell. As the tale progresses, we can see that the outside world is slowly etching itself into the Dannie’s life.

The first glimpse of the outside world occurs on page 28. This is a typical example of how unconscious he is to what is going on around him.

Throughout the chapter the adult consciousness that speaks constantly refers to the words ‘ Saturday... 1934’, while the childish consciousness is playfully calling people bastards.

1934 was of course the year when Hitler had started his campaign against Jews in Germany, by the declaration of the kristallnacht, prosecuting and killing millions. Dannie, being a Jew himself, however, actually had no idea what was going on elsewhere. The year of 1934 is once again referred to on page 57:” Do you remember Uncle Bertie..

. back in 1934 when you fought Jake Williams?" "That was a long time ago... back in 1934." This is perhaps a deliberate use of irony earlier in the book that was once again repeated in the last two pages of the book.

It is another example of where Dannie's world is being infiltrated by events from the outside. But once again, he had no clue as to the significance of these events. The adult consciousness calls out to him, but he is once again unable to heed its call. Rather than seeing the year of 1934 as a horrific and distressing time for the Jewish community, he distinguished the year as the year where his Uncle Bertie had a bar fight with Jake Williams. As the story unfolds in the book, Dannie begins to slowly acknowledge what's happening around him.

The first time where we can see some progress is in page 87, where he starts to notice events that are happening in the real world. Yet even at this stage, he doesn't realise the life changing effects that these incidents would eventually have on him." A cold wind blew through the streets of Europe...

It was November 1938..." (p87)" Decrees have taken away the last possibility of economic existence from the German Jews.

.." (p88) This constant climatic build-up is what makes the ending so subtle yet so effective. What is particularly clever is that throughout the book, there is always a childish consciousness and an adult consciousness. The childish consciousness portrays the ideas that Dannie had believed in at that specific time, the one who evolves and learns over time; while the adult

consciousness plays the role that looks back on the events that have

occurred and evaluates them. As the story reaches its end, Dannie becomes
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more mature and we can see the childish consciousness slowly fading away while the dominant adult consciousness grows stronger.

By the very end of the book, Dannie, although not yet fully matured, has begun to obtain a taste of what is to come in the real world. Blemished by these scars of his tainted childhood, there is no doubt that Dannie is at a crucial stage in his life whereby he must either resist this change or embrace it. His worries and concerns about his future are dancing among the lines towards the final paragraph of this ending. By the very last line, the writer shows a shade of averse optimism.

The time has come for him to repent from his previously nostalgic figure and look forward to the future and look for a new home, even as he “ strolled home that was never to be home again.”” They fought against falling, even as some of us might...

falling in our most vivid dreams... Their descent was a cry of longing; they looked up yearningly at the braches from which they fell - not wishing to go.

“ This quotation metaphorically describes leaves as a symbol of humans dying while fighting for their country in the war. In his typical poetic, double-meaning and subtly contrasting style, Dannie Abse vividly illustrated his transition from child to adult as well as many other things associated with this change. What was once a juvenile and innocent child has come of age, and he has reluctantly yet bravely departed from his segregated shell into the vast plains of the wide world that now lies ahead in front of him. There are many other examples like this throughout the entire book.

“ Like hands they dropped, yellow khaki hands, cold red hands sinking in the air... waving goodbye, to the branches that, already in our war weather ached with their absence.

“ The ending has not only strongly reiterated Dannie’s significant events of the past but also emphasised just how much he has changed since the beginning of the book. Dannie’s more subtle form of speech and enrichment of his poetic style is an epitome of his development. This episode of his 18th birthday paints the final picture of his childhood and concludes the book in a very successful manner. This is a terrific ending to a very unique book that has managed to attain the ideal portrayal of adolescence and infancy rounded off in a very intense but open-ended manner. I really don’t think even the writer himself could have ended the story in a better manner than the way he did.