

Violence in sleep rough tonight



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Sleep Rough Tonight, written by Australian author Ian Bone, addresses the idea of cultural violence and the effect it has among teens. The novel follows Alex, a young and troubled teenager who learns some tough lessons about life and growing up. As a challenge Alex ends up sleeping rough in the city and has to overcome the dangers that go with it. Bone develops ideas and themes through a range of narrative techniques. Bone's characterisation of Alex allows us to follow his personal development. The vivid description of the settings in the novel is another significant aspect. Marta is another character that plays a considerable role in the story. Similarly, the characterisation of 'The Jockey' and the development of him throughout the novel is highly influential in the novel.

In the novel, Bone effectively develops a theme of violence. The characterisation of the protagonist helps a reader relate to his decisions in tough situations. Throughout the novel, Alex is developed as an outsider which causes him to be bullied at school, "He was back in the toilet again. Dragged into the red-brick building by a giant with acne and bum fluff. Another dunking." (Page 1) In the beginning he is arrogant and thoughtless, trying to be the class clown, "'What would happen if the hunter farted?' It seemed like a fair enough question, but Mrs Fulton didn't see it that way." (Page 12). As the story continues, Alex gradually learns to take advice and begins to find himself, learning what he stands for, "You want me to rob my own father's store?" (Page 249). Through this character we learn that we all need help, no matter how tough you are.

Bone uses the settings in the novel to show the effects of a violent culture. Bone uses a wide range of adjectives to describe the city. This creates

mystery and allows the reader to become attached and have a connection to Alex which build readers interest in the novel, "...dilapidated and neglected. The windows were broken, and a wobbly wire fence ran around its perimeter...." (Page 210). Bone also describes violent street gangs when Alex is in the city at night. They are added to reinforce the constant idea that the city streets are deadly, "...He'd just managed to catch sight of them standing, and knew that they weren't stretching their legs." (Page 189). The opening scene is the school, which has been overrun by the seniors who rule the playground. They control the younger students through violent techniques, like toilet dunkings and violent bashings. This causes the teachers to avoid conflict with them, "...How assured they looked. How tall. There was a confident air about them, a stillness that was crying out to be challenged." (Page 5). The setting is used to teach us that violence is taking over our world and is affecting all areas of a city.

Marta plays an important role in the novel as the only anti-violent character. She has symbolic attributes in the novel, she seems to always know the right thing to do and is always ready to help Alex in his time of need. She acts almost like a guardian angel for Alex, ".... He racked his brain for a plan or an idea, but the only image that came to him was of a happy face, warm, friendly, offering him biscuits, laughing along with him. Marta." (Page 167). When the reader first meets Marta she is being tormented by some seniors on the bus and shown to be an easy target for bullies, " The girl reached for her ponytail and yanked a bulldog clip from it, ripping several strands of hair out in the process." (Page 19). By the end of the novel she has been " corrupted" from the christian ways after spending time in the city trying to

help Alex, she stands up to the seniors and has “woken up” to the real world. “...they just wanted everything to return to the way it has always been. In the end I threw their silly ball in the air and then kicked it as hard as I could.” (Page 256)

The novel uses ‘The Jockey’ to create secrecy through his violent past. In the beginning very little is known about the main antagonist. This allows him to be portrayed as ominous, and cause chaos for Alex, “The Jockey. Was he really there? It must of been a mistake. A crazy Vision.” (Page 10). The Jockey is developed as being feared by everyone in the school. He is idolised because of his violent ways, “The senior shook his head. ‘I wouldn’t be so disrespectful if I was you,’ he said. ‘Haven’t you heard? Darren is back...” (Page 18) As the story progresses, you learn more about ‘The Jockey’ and how dangerous he really is, “You can’t. He’s horrible. He hurt a man. You can’t let him talk you into anything...” (Page 62). Through the development of this character we learn that society idolises violent people, despite these people not deserving it.

In the novel Sleep Rough Tonight we learn that we idolise violent people in society who are not “good” people and we begin to understand that we live in a violence-based culture that enjoy violent movies and sporting events. Through the book we begin to realise that violence is a bad thing and that we should be looking at different forms of entertainment than just violent activities. By the end of the book, Alex realises that he does not want to be a violent person that is constantly causing trouble, but instead more like Marta.