Jasper Jones

Study Guide



Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Contents:

Synopsis p2

About the author p2

Literary techniques p3

Themes and issues p3

Motifs p3

Allusions/ intertextuality p3

Research tasks p4

Comprehension questions p5-

Quotes

**Synopsis**

*Jasper Jones* is set in the small, fictional mining town of Corrigan in regional Western Australia. It is 1965 and the innocence and isolation of the state is threatened by the draft sending young men to Vietnam and by a serial killer named Eric Edgar Cooke.

Against this backdrop, thirteen year old Charlie Buktin’s reading is interrupted one suffocatingly hot night by a tapping on his window. It is Jasper Jones, the town’s mixed race ‘bad boy’ and all purpose scapegoat, who has come to ask for Charlie’s help. Together Charlie and Jasper attempt to unravel the mystery of what has happened to Laura Wishart, the Shire President’s missing daughter.

In this coming of stage story, Charlie must question his conventional notions of what is right and wrong as he navigates small-town morality, racism and hypocrisy.

**About the Author**

Craig Silvey is a Western Australian author who was raised on an orchard in Dwellingup, WA. His first novel *Rhubarb* was released to considerable critical acclaim and was selected as the ‘one book’ by the Perth International Arts Festival in 2005. It has sold more than 18,000 copies to date. Silvey released an illustrated book telling the story of Warren, the guide dog from *Rhubarb*, in *The World According to Warren.*

*Jasper Jones* has been longlisted for the Miles Franklin Award and won the Indie Book Award in 2009. Silvey is currently adapting the story for a script.

For interviews with Silvey regarding *Jasper Jones* see:

<http://blog.booktopia.com.au/2010/04/12/feature-craig-silvey-answers-ten-terrifying-questions/?blogsub=confirming>

Literary techniques: Themes and Issues

Consider the following themes and issues as you are reading the novel. Define any unfamiliar terms following terms and give an example of how they relate to the novel.

Fear

Morality versus Ethics:

Responsibility and culpability

Moral Duality or appearances versus secrets

Racism, ethnicity and Scapegoats

Guilt, innocence and atonement

Law versus justice

Motifs

A **motif** is a recurring idea or concept throughout a text. A symbol is an object that represents something it is not. A common **example** is that a heart is a symbol for love. A writer may use a symbol to reinforce **motif**. As you re-read and analyse the text make note (you can use stickynotes) of the following motifs when you see them and consider what they symbolise.

Superheroes

Sorry

Insects

Writing/ novelists/ novels/ characters

Novel allusions/ intertextuality

An allusion is a reference to another text, person, place or event. E.g. “He’s a real Scrooge” refers to the Charles Dickens novel, suggesting that the person is tight-fisted with money. Intertextuality is similar and is used in novels liberally when characters refer to other texts. It adds a further layer of meaning to the reader and can associate the characters with the characteristics of the character referred to. Silvey makes significant reference to several authors and characters throughout the novel, particularly Harper Lee’s *To Kill a Mockingbird* and the character, Atticus, who is a lawyer representing a black man wrongfully accused of rape in the American South during the 1930s depression. Consider why Silvey uses certain allusions and look them up when you see them. They are always used for a purpose.

Record allusions in your notes as you see them olr use sticknotes. Don’t forget to note the page number.

# Research Activity:

To help your understanding of the context in which the novel was set, choose one of the following issues to research. Begin with the site listed.

**Instructions:**

* Make a presentation, or timeline where appropriate
* make relevant dot point notes about your issue, recording your reputable sources.
* Find suitable pictures,
* Finally, write a paragraph about your findings, suggesting why they are relevant to the novel.
* Save your work in your Onedrive for me to check.

About the author Craig Silvey – age, where he lives, education, other works, relevant information about the novel

<http://blog.booktopia.com.au/2010/04/12/feature-craig-silvey-answers-ten-terrifying-questions/?blogsub=confirming>

Indigenous Rights timeline

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-07-06/indigenous-recognition-timeline-of-australian-history/6586176>

Black deaths in custody

<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/aug/23/indigenous-deaths-in-custody-worsen-over-year-of-tracking-by-deaths-inside-project>

Australian involvement in the Vietnam War – include government policies, numbers, dates and protests

<https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/event/vietnam>

Vietnamese immigration to Australia

<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/the-vietnamese-refugees-who-changed-white-australia>

Australia in the 60s – society, politics, culture and popular culture, attitudes

Include government, sports stars, tv shows/ stars, women’s rights, government policies Indigenous rights

<https://myplace.edu.au/decades_timeline/1960/decade_landing_4.html?tabRank=1>

*To Kill a Mockingbird* research novel plot, characters, settings, themes, links to Jasper Jones

Violence against women and children – research UN conventions on Human Rights of children <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/childrens-rights/about-childrens-rights> and women

<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/end-violence-against-women/2014/rights>

True Crime – Nedlands Monster, Sylvia Likens case

Consider facts, dates, convictions, attitudes towards the crimes

# Comprehension Questions

Write you answers in full sentences using part of the question in your answer unless otherwise instructed.

# Chapter 1:

1. Compare Jasper and Charlie in in a Venn diagram considering their home life, personality and physical description (5 – 15).
2. Why did Charlie go with Jasper, even though he only knew bad things about him?
3. What is the purpose of the use of short sentences on page 17?
4. Two figures well known for their wisdom are the biblical Solomon and the protagonist of *‘To Kill a Mockingbird’*, Atticus Finch. Why are they mentioned on page 23?
5. ‘*We owe her the truth.’* (25) Is Jasper going to find a murderer for Laura’s sake or his own?
6. Comment on some of the imagery used by Silvey on page 30 to explain the turmoil that Charlie is now experiencing.

Creative writing:

In the opening chapters of the novel Silvey describes Corrigan and Charlie’s best friend Jeffrey Lu. Describe in detail either your hometown or your best friend. You should use a variety of language features such as simile, metaphor, personification, symbols, appeal to the senses, well-chosen vocabulary – nouns, adjectives, active verbs and adverbs, or an anecdote (a brief narrative with a point), dialogue.

# Chapter 2:

1. What do we learn of Charlie’s parents between pages 55 and 59? How would you describe the different relationships in this family? What evidence do you have for you assertions?
2. Jeffrey and Charlie discuss the differences between Superman and Batman extensively. (66-71) a. What qualities do each superhero have?
   1. How might these qualities reflect the personalities of Charlie and Jeffrey?
   2. What is the purpose of such an allusion in the text?
3. Charlie ponders the inconsistencies of racism (77 – 80). How would you explain the different attitudes that people have towards Jeffrey and Jasper?
4. A feature of Silvey’s narrative style is his use of similes. Find three from this chapter and comment of the impact and effectiveness of each.

Creative Writing

Individually write a paragraph about your favourite superhero. Who they are, why they are super, the attributes and values that make them your favourite. In pairs write a dialogue arguing that your candidate is the best superhero.

# Chapter 3:

1. The author mentions many figures that he assumes the audience know. Write a short description of them: Errol Flynn (101), Jack Dempsey (107), Audrey Hepburn (114, 117), Norman Mailer (123), Atticus Finch (136)

Why would the author include these people? How does this help the audience understand Charlie and the historical context of the story?

1. What is the narrative purpose of the stories about Eric Edgar Cooke and Sylvia Likens (105 –

113) in the story?

1. ‘He should have been a lawyer like Atticus Finch. But he’d have to stand up for something then.’ (136) What does this statement reveal about Charlie’s attitude towards his father? What is Silvey’s purpose in using this intertextual reference?
2. Why does Charlie’s mother ask him to dig a hole? What do you think of her method of discipline?

Longer response: How does Silvey position the reader to view Charlie’s mother? Find evidence to support your answer.

# Chapter 4 & 5:

1. The Vietnam War is in its early stages (historically). How does the war become a reality for Corrigan? Give at least three examples from the text.
2. Jasper is mercilessly beaten by both the police sergeant and Laura’s father, the Shire

president, much to Charlie’s shock (179) What does this reveal to Charlie about the world of adults? How does it contribute to the readers understanding of his character?

# Chapter 6:

1. How appropriate is the simile used for Charlie’s mother ‘who looked like a snake poised to strike’? (211) What impression does the reader have of Ruth Bucktin by now?
2. How does the author create a sense of tension during Jeffrey’s first cricket match, even when readers might not know or understand the game?
3. What are some of the ways in which the author creates humour immediately after the cricket match and during the car ride home?
4. The attack on An Lu’s garden, and on him raises some issues:
   1. Why did the men call him a ‘red rat’? (267)
   2. Why did the attack occur, just after Jeffrey’s success on the cricket field? What effect does this have on the audience?
   3. How do you account for some townsmen attacking but other neighbours intervening to help An Lu?

# Chapter 7:

* + 1. The author continues to make use of similes, clichés, metaphors and puns. Find two examples of each in the pages (278 – 290) and explain how effective they are.
    2. How did the myth of Jack Lionel being a ‘madman’ begin? Why does the audience only just find out?
    3. Charlie catches his mother in a car with a strange man (322). Where there hints in the lead up to this? How does it affect Charlie? How does it contribute to his increasingly mature understanding of adults and their motives?
    4. What secrets are revealed when Eliza and Charlie visit the glade?
    5. Explain why the author has joined the words ‘Thisiswhathappened’, ‘Whathadjusthappened’ and ‘That’swhathappened’ (229 – 341)

# Chapter 8 and 9:

1. How does Charlie’s relationship with his father improve after his mother leaves?
2. What is the purpose of the bet with Warwick Trent?

# Quotes:

“I can’t. I can’t, mate. But I can trust you, Charlie. I reckon I can trust you” (1,9) “We got to bury her. Hide her. Here. Ourselves.” (1,21)

“Are we okay to do this? Aren’t they patrolling” (5, 135)

“It won’t be for a while, anyway, I don’t reckon. Not until we can get enough on Mad Jack Lionel.” (5,144)

“Listen, I’ll come round soon. Remember: don’t say nothing G’luck, mate.” (5, 160) “Because I would have waited. All day. Until they closed” (6, 179)

“Charlie, I know it were him. I can prove it.” (6, 200)

“I knew you’d come, Charlie, I knew you’d do the right thing.” (7, 233)

“Jasper, listen to me, I know you’re upset. I know it. You know, though, I always thought youd’ve found out before now, I thought that’s why you never come to see me. Who finally told you” “Your dad? Or have you known all this time?” (7, 238)

“Charlie, I know where Laura is.” (7, 250)

“It was you who carved that word.” (7, 269) “*Sorry.*

*Sorry* means you feel the pulse of other people's pain as well as your own, and saying it means you take a share of it. And so it binds us together, makes us trodden and sodden as one another. *Sorry* is

a lot of things. It's a hole refilled. A debt repaid. *Sorry* is the wake of misdeed. It's the crippling ripple of consequence.*Sorry* is sadness, just as knowing is sadness. *Sorry* is sometimes self-pity. But*Sorry*, really, is not about you. It's theirs to take or leave.

*Sorry* means you leave yourself open, to embrace or to ridicule or to revenge.*Sorry* is a question that begs forgiveness, because the metronome of a good heart won't settle until things are set right and true. *Sorry* doesn't take things back, but it pushes things forward. It bridges the gap. *Sorry* is a sacrament. It's an offering. A gift.”

“I don't understand a thing about this world: about people, and why they do the things they do. The more I find out, the more I uncover, the more I know, the less I understand.”

“I never understood why you would ever feel the need to shoot the fish in the barrel. I mean, they're in a barrel, you've already caught them. The hard work's done, they can't escape. So if you want them dead, just drain the water out. Why bring guns into it?”

“Batman doesn't have any superpowers. He's not superhuman. He's not super. So therefore he can't be a superhero.”

“You need to understand that truth is stranger than fiction. Listen: people are willing to swallow any old tripe as long as you say it without flinching. They want to be told stuff. And they don't want to doubt you either. It's too hard.”

“Life might be easier if you give in a little, but it's better if you hold onto something so hard you can't give it up.”

“Well, see, I think it's that most people don't like that lonely feeling. People don't like looking up and feeling small or lost. That's what I think prayer is all about. It doesn't matter which stories they believe in, they're all doing the same thing, kind of casting a line out to outer space, like there's something out there to connect to. It's like people make themselves part of something bigger that

way, and maybe it makes them less afraid.”

“What I'm feeling, I think, is joy. And it's been some time since I've felt that blinkered rush of happiness, This might be one of those rare events that lasts, one that'll be remembered and recalled as months and years wind and ravel. One of those sweet, significant moments that leaves a footprint in your mind. A photograph couldn't ever tell its story. It's like something you have to live to understand. One of those freak collisions of fizzing meteors and looming celestial bodies and floating debris and one single beautiful red ball that bursts into your life and through your body like an enormous firework. Where things shift into focus for a moment, and everything makes sense. And it becomes one of those things inside you, a pearl among sludge, one of those big exaggerated memories you can invoke at any moment to peel away a little layer of how you felt, like a lick of ice

cream. The flavor of grace.”

“See, Batman is different. He's mortal. He's got a real life to risk. Superman just has to avoid Kryptonite. Big deal. Superman fears nothing because outside a few very specific circumstances where he might encounter some stupid rock, nothing can possibly do him in. Batman has the same vulnerabilities as the rest of us, so he has the same fears as us. That's why he's the most courageous: because he can put those aside and fight on regardless. My point is this: the more you have to lose, the braver you re for standing up. That's why Batman is superior to Superman, and that's why I am infinitely smarter then you.'

I am a genius. I have won.

'Pffft! Whatever. I'll bet Batman won't be too loud about his superiority when Superman is belting seven shades of shit out of him.”

“My point is this: the more you have to lose, the braver you are for standing up.”

“Every instance in my life, I've felt like the exact opposite of Superman. Except this time, this moment right now. I don't care. I don't feel like a weak, insipid sissy. Because right now I know I would save the girl. I know that I would rather risk the planet than let harm befall Eliza Wishart. I would save her in a second. Because I can imagine her and me huddled safe together while the earth falls under evil designs, but I can't imagine the world without her in it.”

“I feel as though I should say something profound, or enact some rite, or trade something to make it official. I want to transfer some trinket which would allow me to say that she's my girl, some kind of currency that proves to people that she likes me back. Something that would permit me to think about her all the time without feeling guilty or helpless or hopelessly far away. I guess I'm just so excited, I want to cage this thing like a tiny red bird so if can't fly away, so it stays the same, so it's still there the next time. For keeps, like a coin in your pocket. Like a peach pit from Mad Jack Lionel's tree. Like scribbled words in a locked suitcase. A bright balloon to tie to your bedpost. And you want to hug it close, hold it, but not so tight it bursts.”

“How strange and abandoned and unsettled I am. Like a snowdome paper weight that's been shaken. There's a blizzard in my bubble. Everything in my world that was steady and sure and sturdy has been shaken out of place, and it's now drifting and swirling back down in a confetti of debris. (p30)”

“There’s no such thing as God, Charlie, at least not how they say. Just like there’s no such thing as Zeus or Apollo or bloody unicorns. You’re on your own. And that can make you feel either lonely or powerful. When you’re born, you wither luck out or you don’t. It’s a lottery. Tough shit or good on yer. But from there, it’s all up to you… soon as you can walk and talk, you start makin your own luck.

And I don’t need some spirit in the sky to help me do that. I can do it on me own. But see, that’s

what I reckon God really is, Charlie. It’s that part inside me that’s stronger and harder than anything else. And I reckon prayer is just trusting in it, having faith in it, just asking meself to be tough. And

that’s all you can do. I don’t need a bunch of bullshit stories about towers and boats and floods or

rules about sin. It’s all just a complicated way to get to that place in you, and it’s not honest either. I don’t need to trick meself into thinking anyone else is listenin’, or even cares. Because it doesn’t matter. I matter. And I know I’ll be alright. Because I got a good heart, and fuck this town for making me try and believe otherwise. It’s what you come with and what you leave with. And that’s all I got.”

“I'm excited but afraid. I long to turn and wedge myself through the horse's arse from which I've just fallen, to sit safe in the hot womb of my room. But this is Jasper Jones, and *he* and come to *me*.”

“Holding something doesn't make it yours. You realize at some point you're just keeping it back for yourself, because it's pulling away with equal force. You've got to cut the string from your finger and leave that wispy thread, like a baby spider on the breeze.”

“With things like this, when people don't really understand what has happened, they'll assume the worst long before they have to. It's a little like when people are afraid of the dark. Often it's not the darkness they're afraid of, it's the fact that they don't know what's in it. And because they can't see, because they're not sure, they start to imagine there are more sinister things afoot than there

ordinarily would be.”

“And I realize I've been betrayed by the two vices that fiction promised me I'd adore. Sal Paradise held up bottles of booze like a housewife in a detergent commercial. Holden Caulfield reached for his cigarettes like an act of faith. Even Huckleberry Finn tapped on his pipe with relief and satisfaction. If sex turns out to be this bad, I'm never reading again.”

“I force a smile and hold up my hand, which must end up looking like some sort of strange, leery wince, like I've just swallowed a glass of somebody's urine and I'm recommending it.”

“My exit from the window is a little like a foal being born. It's a graceless and gangly drop, directly onto my mother's gerbera bed. I emerge quickly and pretend it didn't hurt.”

“What I'm feeling, I think, is joy. And it's been some time since I've felt that blinkered rush of happiness. This might be one of those rare events that lasts, one that'll be remembered and recalled as months and years wind and ravel. One of those sweet, significant moments that leaves a footprint in your mind.”

“See, most people you meet, they'll talk to you through fifty layers of gauze and tinting. Sometimes you know they're lying even before they've started speaking. And it seems the older they get, the more brazen and desperate folks become, and they lie about things that don't even matter... I don't know. Maybe they just get so used to it they don't even notice. Maybe it's like a creeping curse and the more you do it, the easier it gets. What's amazing is that they think they're fooling anybody. “