Hello Mum

As Jerome tells his life in a letter to his mother, all of the secrets opinions he has ever had, comes out on the surface. All of his thoughts on his family, his friends, the times he did illegal actions and all of the questions his mother might have had, get answered. In the book, Hello Mum, which Bernardine Evaristo published in 2010, she tells us a heart-breaking story in 81 pages about a boy who lives like many other poor people do, and becomes friend with the wrong people.

Jerome is a boy who lives in a poor side of London. He has a small room in a flat with his mother and younger sister. His whole life, he has tried to impress the boys "who are cool" in his end. He has a friend called Adrian, and together they have done many things, but the dumbest thing they ever did was to go on a party in South London. His cousin was holding a party, when someone started attacking them. They fled, but in the town, the men attacked them again. Jerome and Adrian got away, but they never forgot, and Jerome did of course tell it to Delmar, the coolest kid in his end, to try to impress him. Later, Jerome's effort of impressing Delmar paid off, and he got invited to Delmar's brother, Dexter. There, they asked if he wanted to join them in their drug dealing business. Jerome said yes without thinking, but when he was send out to do his first job, he regretted it at ones. The job got done without problems, but when he went to get his payment, they came in, dressed as a gang of angry boys.

Jerome is the protagonist of the story. He is a 14 year old boy who lives in London in the 21st century. He is a very social boy, who sets his friends higher than anything. His best friend from school is Adrian. He is not very proud of how childish Adrian can act from time to time, but his is still his friend so they stick together. He acts like he hates everything with his mother and his family. The house, the food and his mother’s constant demands of him becoming a proper boy, but in the end this is what he longs for and wants back. He acts like he has control of everything and that he is a cool guy, but inside himself, he knows that there is trouble behind every corner, and if it is silent, that is just because something is about to happen.

Delmar is another main character in the text. He is the leader of the Kamikaze Kru, the “cool boys” living in Jerome’s end. He is about 16, but he looks like a he is 18 years old. His bigger brother, Dexter, is the leader of a drug empire, and Delmar is a part of that gang. Delmar has a mother and a father, but he has only known his mother. His father was sent to prison, and could never be a manly role model for him. This is the reason for Delmar not caring for his father at all. Delmar is also Jerome’s biggest model. He is cool and in charge of the situation wherever they go.

The book is written in a very weird way. It is a letter, and because of that, it is written in the language of Jerome. Jerome is a 14 year old boy who has a language filled with so much slang and abbreviation as possible. Had he spoken proper, he would have got beaten every morning at school. The content of the letter switches between times, form long ago to near past. The author has also lent us a hint on what will happen, as early as the first page, when Jerome says “I knew some madness was going to kick off that day.”(Hello Mum, 2010 ,page 1)

The theme is children's life, life in general, unfairness and who all of this is made even worse when you are born in a poor family. Children today are under a lot of press coming from parents, teachers and friends. Everyone demands something and children have to satisfy them all. Life is an unfair lottery and those who don’t draw the golden ticket, has to live with it and do the best out of it. Sometimes they manage, most times unfortunately, they don’t.

The author uses very a lot of dialogue, which is because the booklet is written as a letter, telling a story from the "I" person's perspective. Most of the story is driven either by Jerome telling what happens or him talking to others. The story focuses on the thoughts of Jerome, and his view of the world. We are also introduced to Jerome's ability to make poems. Poems are used as a way of foreshadow what will happen to Jerome. Even though he doesn't know it himself, he in is in a way describing what will happen with himself. The book is divided in to chapters every time he starts telling a new story or a new major them is discussed. The vocabulary is the same way as Jerome speaks. He has a very slang filled language with lots of abbreviations, which he has to, unless he wants to get beaten up. “When I complained about the heat that morning you said you was going to buy me shorts and sandals from Primark, which made me crack up. Mum, shorts and sandals? What planet are you on? Yeah, if I was like, five, yeah? I’d get beaten up before I even reached the high street.” (Hello Mum, 2010 , page 1)

This makes the text a bit hard to read in the beginning but it also makes the text more realistic, because you feel like it is actually Jerome who could have written it.

I liked the book because the story feels reel and it feels like it is actually Jerome that has written it the letter. It was also exiting all the way until the end. The story gives you the pauses in the excitement, but it still hangs in the air so that you don’t get bored and want to stop reading it. The ending is a little too expected. Still, I liked it, because it had to end like it did, to be a story that you don’t forget.

The book is very small, so it is quickly read, but it is strong and gives you something to think about. I would recommend it to people who are more than 16 years old, but I think those under that age, can like it too.

Sources

Bernardine Evaristo. (2010) Hello Mum. Penguin Group