

Following your study of English for Junior Cycle, you have been asked to give a talk to a group of young readers about:

Oisín Argaud

The Art of Good Storytelling.

Write the text of the talk you would deliver, discussing at least three aspects of the art of good storytelling in the novel that you have studied. (35 marks)

Name of novel: The Outsiders

Author: S.E. Hinton

Hello young readers. Over the next few minutes I will be delivering a speech on the art of good storytelling and the aspects of it seen in "The Outsiders" by S.E. Hinton.

One aspect of the art of good storytelling in the book is relatability. To truly understand this point, one has to go back to when the book was written and who it was written for. S.E. Hinton lived in Tulsa at the time that the novel was set, and she and her peers would have had these experiences first hand or heard about them as they unfolded. Hinton wrote the book keeping in mind the many different groups in Tulsa, the rich, the poor, and everyone in between. She humanises everyone, making no one truly evil (as we will get back to later). This can be seen when Cherry, a Soc girl who we as the reader are quick to stereotype as snobby and disconnected, tells Ponyboy "just don't forget that some of us watch the sunset too", which shows us and Ponyboy that people are still people no matter where you go, and that we all see the same sunset. Even now, 60 years on, we are still divided, and many people would benefit from reading this novel and truly understanding it.

Very many literary techniques are used throughout the novel which shape and improve the overall experience of the reader. Novels and story telling are their own form of art - and just like artists use pencils and paintbrushes, authors use literary techniques. One such literary technique is the use of a circular narrative,

which means the story ends right back at the beginning. The way Platon does this is ingenious as we turn the page he writes a seemingly unrelated tangent about an English essay become a penny drop moment where we realize that the essay was the novel we had just finished with the last line of the book, "when I stepped out into the bright sunlight from the darkness of the movie house I had only two things on my mind: Paul Newman and a ride home" being the same as the first, putting every inconsistency so far into context as the failure of memory. Along with the failure of memory comes another literary technique as an unreliable narrator. An unreliable narrator means things in the book can't be fully trusted, as the narrator could misrepresent or even purposely alter events to change our view of the story. An example of this is when he says "Johnny is not dead" even though he confirms before and after that Johnny is in fact dead. It leaves us wondering what other things Ponyboy stated that simply weren't true. Do we know anything for sure?

Another aspect of the art of good storytelling is the muckiness of morality within the novel and the lack of basic rules of good and bad which exemplify the complexity of the story. Going back to our artist simile, this lack of moral guidelines is like the shading and blending of the artwork, it may seem unimportant or useless, but it's quite hard to achieve and separates the mediocre from the truly distinguished. Ponyboy views the Soz as bad people at the start of the novel, but as it goes on he sees that Cherry Valance is bad, and he admits that Dallas Winston is ~~bad~~ morally bankrupt. These concessions, along with later testimony from Randall, calling Robert a relapsed Soz, "a reckless hot tempered boy cocky and scared stiff" at the same time, ~~which~~ leave it

up to us to place the characters on gradients of morality in our minds, ranging from good to bad, innocent to evil, or even willing or unwilling in their actions. Even this, though is very hard, and it forces us to confront the question, do good and bad even exist? Because even in the most extreme cases - like Dallas for instance, who is described as "tougher, colder, meaner", there are justification for their actions and reasons for their crimes.

The last aspect of the art of good storytelling I will be talking about is the development of the characters that die and the emotional impacts of their deaths. Johnny is originally just a flat character with his entire personality being based off his attack by the Socs a few weeks prior and his parents being abusive. As we progress through the story however, especially in the church in Windmill, we see who Johnny really is. Johnny is a deep boy who could have thrived in the world had it not been for his surroundings and an increasingly unfortunate series of events. When Johnny dies, we are left shocked and dumbfounded, with his last words being "Stay gold, Ponyboy, stay gold", and our understanding of what he means being split between a thousand different theories. Dallas, on the other hand is the fallen angel to Johnny's heavenly spirit, the night to his day. Throughout the novel, Ponyboy goes from having a

generally negative view of Dallas to wanting to understand and help him. As readers, we have a similar experience, going from viewing ~~Dallas~~ him as a misfit, maker to a lost boy abandoned by society whose only guiding light has been snuffed out, ironically enough, by a fire. This makes his suicide much more traumatising, and leaves a lasting impact.

I hope you all learnt something new about the Outsiders and the art of good storytelling. I hope you thought more deeply about the characters and context of the novel. I hope this speech has helped you view the beautiful artwork of storytelling through a more vibrant lens. Thank you for listening, and goodbye.