

An Analysis of The Road

In his novel “The Road,” Cormac McCarthy creates a world of desolation. An unknown calamity came upon the world, and plunged it into anarchy. Most people who survived this quickly degenerated into looters and cannibals. Others, who are far less in numbers, attempted to keep the light of humanity alive, by preventing themselves from falling back entirely on their primal instincts. Two such people are known only as The Man and The Boy. Through their father-son relationship and care for other survivors, these two are able to keep the concept of compassion alive in this post-apocalyptic wasteland.

Not much is known about The Man and The Boy by the reader. What is known, however, is that The Man is The Boy’s father, and the relationship that comes with this is used to convey the theme of compassion constantly throughout the novel. The Man devotes his life to keeping The Boy safe, and actually uses this as his only way of keeping himself alive. If the Man did not have The Boy with him, it is likely that he would have given up on life quite quickly.

Along with caring for each other, The Man and The Boy show compassion towards other people. When they find a stash of food, The Boy questions whether or not they should take it. He is unsure of whether or not the person who owned that food would be alright with them taking it. The Man tells him that the owner is likely dead, and would have wanted them to take the food. Another example comes when the two come across a group of survivors who are being kept in a basement, as livestock. While The Boy and The Man are not able to help these people, the effect of meeting these people is quite apparent within the conversations following this event.

Through kind acts such as these, The Man and The Boy are able to keep human kindness from completely withering away. Even though The Man eventually dies, leaving his son to fend for himself, they seem to be rewarded in a way. Shortly after The Man’s death, a group of survivors find The Boy, who are willing to take him with them. These people appear to The Boy almost as a gift from god, like a reward for showing compassion to the survivors he met.