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Research Question: To what extent is the theme of bullying in the novel “I am the King of Castle” written by Susan Hill realistically portrayed?

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Abstract

Bullying is the abuse of power towards the weak individual, it can both physical and mental. It has different types, it can be in family, in school or in work place. There is even a bullying type called cyber bullying so it varies widely. Bullying is the instinctive attitude among humans, not only in humans but it can be found in animals too. For example dogs chases cats, there isn't a particular reason for this chase cats aren't in the food chain of dogs .It's an instinctive attitude of dogs, he chases because he is bigger and stronger. This extended essay has the same subject. In this essay, bullying in family will be vividly explored. The novel called "*I am the King of the Castle*" by Susan Hill is the perfect novel for the investment of the bullying concept. The research question of this extended essay is "How realistically did Susan Hill portrayed the bullying in the novel "I am the King of the castle"?"

The novel has two general characters, first one is Hooper, he is an aggressive, spoiled and a selfish boy who lives with his father after his grandparent died. Second character is Kingshaw, he is a submissive boy who lives in the house of Hooper's because his mother works for the Hooper's family. The bully in the novel is Hooper, he bullies Kingshaw.

The essay consists six parts, these parts are divided for a better analysis of the novel. These parts are: Introduction, Bullies Properties, Victims Properties, Relation between the bully and the victim, consequences of bullying and conclusion.

Introduction

The theme of bullying is processed in popular culture, for example “*The Karate Kid*” movie, “*Diary of a Wimpy Kid*” and in various television series but these works have an instructional aim. They have solicitude of being instructive. For example in the movie “*The Karate Kid*” the aim was to teach the viewer to never give up and to always get up and fight back. Another example in the book series named “*Diary of a Wimpy Kid*” the aim is to teach us to follow our dreams through the life and to never give up. These examples can be replicated but the main doctrine in these bullying themed works is to never give up. But well, the book named “*I am the King of the Castle*” written by Susan Hill is different. This book has the same theme “*bullying*” but it differs from the other works with the same theme by the way of presentation of the theme. While other works have the anxiety of teaching lessons or encouraging the victim of bullying, “*I am the king of the castle*” doesn’t have an explicit purpose of giving any lessons. As it is mentioned before the other works with the same theme, teaches us to never give up.

At this point, it should be asked how realistic is this portrait of Susan’s? This question will be answered by giving official research articles about bullying. These researches will determine whether the image is logical and sensible or exaggerated and absurd. These articles contents will be about various studies in different regions. While investing the realism of this event of bullying in the book, the narrative techniques that have been used in the book will be given to express the emotional states of Kingshaw and the emotional balance and emotional conflicts between Hooper and Kingshaw. The other characters behaviors’ will also be used to look at the bullying image from a wider angle.

Bullies Properties

The novel starts with the death of Hooper's grandfather, this event introduces characters to us. These characters are Edmund Hooper and his father Joseph Hooper, the novel continues with the dialogs between these two characters, in these dialogs the readers can see characters personalities. Instead of feeling sorry, Endmund mocks with the death of his grandfather, his spoiled character shows itself from the very beginning. *"'All he looks like' Endmund Hooper said, 'is one of his dead old moths'."* (1,Hill) Also Mr. Hooper is introduced to the readers at this point, the father is excessively fond to his child and the logical reason is because he is the only close family to him since his wife died 6 years ago. However the interest of Mr. Hooper to his child is superficial, he tries to be helpful to his child by finding a new friend (Charles Kingshaw), but Endmund Hooper is extremely self-centered and he doesn't want to share the house with another kid. At this point we can see that the father doesn't really know or recognize his son.

"Joseph Hooper was master in his own house. He said 'I shall be away in London a good deal. I cannot live here the whole time, even in your holidays.'

'That won't be anything new, will it?'

He looked away from his son's gaze irritated. I do my best, he thought; it is not the easiest task, without a woman beside me." (2,Hill)

From this quote, the distance between them can be understood better and this distance is the general image of this family, the mother is gone and the father is busy with his job, so we can even say that this kid is raising himself. There is a lack of bonding and they do not know personalities of the other. The Hooper's are always ignore each other the ignorance between them is explicitly developed in the novel. They pretend to be interested in each other's lives but all they do is to brazen each other.

"'No, no you had really much better be playing cricket in the sun. (...)

'There's nobody to play cricket with.'

'Ah, well now. I shall soon be doing something about that, you shall have your friend.'

'Anyway, I don't like cricket.' " (3,Hill)

The lack of interest in the family is obviously showing itself, the family image is deeply analyzed because it has a strong connection with the bullying theme. The bullying theme is the strongest theme in the novel, the two characters that takes part as the two poles of bullying is Endmund Hooper and the Kingshaw. Bully is Hooper and the victim is Kingshaw.

Parenting and the family life are the most important facts on a child development, a child can be aggressive or he or she can have low self-esteem, these specialties are mostly developed in the family life. So being a bully is also has serious relation with the family life but of course the genetic material of a person is indeed important but parenting is more important. A quote from an article will be given to justify my concept.

“ (...) where adolescents report that either one or both their parents are constructively involved in their lives, they are significantly less likely to engage in bullying.” (Flouri & Buchanan ,2003)

Hooper’s spoiled nature is connected to his family life but as it is said before genetic material is important too. His cruelty in the novel comes from his self, even his father said him that the moth collection of Hooper’s grandfather is very important he destroy some pieces of it without ignoring, he breaks the moths which is dead many years ago into pieces.

“He stretched out his hand, put his finger under the head of the pin and slid it up out of the thick, striped body. At once, the whole moth, already years dead, disintegrated, collapsing into a soft, formless heap of dark dust.” (8,Hill)

His cruelty against animals continues with the deer incident in the following parts of the book, Hooper and the Kingshaw sees a deer in the deep forest and Hooper decided to follow it. We cannot know what he would do, if he could catch the deer but we can predict some atrocious things. Also his cruelty shows itself when he delivers his thoughts about dead animals and even humans. Moreover than cruelty it is being cold blooded, a property that he shouldn’t have at that age. Furthermore when they were lost in forest Hooper was preparing a fish for meal but he was torturing it while he was doing it.

“ ‘You can’t just leave a fish and let it suffocate, that’s like murder as well, that’s awful.’

“Why is it? It’s not any different from stabbing it with a penknife.’

‘It is, anybody could tell you that. It’s crueler. You are a bully.’ “ (95,Hill)

Cruelty against animals is very dangerous according to the articles and it is accepted as the sign of potential violence against humans.

“Recent studies have offered compelling evidence supporting a relationship between childhood cruelty to animals and later violence against humans.” (Linda Merz-Perez, Kathleen M.

Heide, and Ira J. Silverman,2001)

Also one of the reasons for him to grow poor relationship between the others is connected to his spoiled character. His father pampers Hooper in his life and his spoiled character contributes to bad manners. Also biased attitude of Hooper’s shouldn’t be forgotten too, even if he didn’t know Kingshaw, he automatically behaves very badly and rude to him before they even met.

“‘Nobody’s father would buy them a watch that cost fifty pounds.’

‘My father would, because I’m the most important thing he’s got in his whole life, he said. So he’d buy me anything I wanted.’ “ (93,Hill)

Spoiled character of kids affects their relationship, they think that they can have everything they want but they can’t always find what they are looking for in relationships. For example Hooper wants dominance in every relationship of his. He is extremely competitive, for more vividly explaining how waywardness effects a person’s relationship to others a quote is given from an article

“ Spoiled children may have difficulty coping with situations such as (...) failure with personal relationships” (Leslie D. Weatherhead (2007), Michael Osit (2008))

Hooper is an authority maniac he tries to be in charge everywhere and he wants things to be under his control every time, when he lose control of stuff he instantly panics also he is a fearful person he fears when he panics so this can be considered as a chain reaction he fears because he panics and he panics

because he lose control. This feature of his takes a great role in the novel and it's the general subject about my theory about Hooper's actions, this theory of mine that I will explain can appears to be a bit delirious but it's make sense, the reason of Hooper's behaviors against Kingshaw is because of panic, He panics because when the new kid had come to the house, there appears a potential for him to lose control over the house, he panics to lose authority. He acts Kingshaw worthless so that, he could force him to leave and he could destroy the potential of loosing authority.

“Hooper’s face was ashy white. ‘They will never find us,’ he said, his voice rising, ‘even if they knew where we were, even if they sent a hundred people, they might never find us.’

Kingshaw didn’t answer. Suddenly, Hooper threw himself forwards, and began to beat his fists into the ground, tearing convulsively at he leaves and soil with his nails, and making a hoarse, screaming sound, low down in his throat. He drummed his legs harder and harder.” (84,Hill)

Hooper's characteristic properties are the reasons of his bad manners of course, and it is realistically portrayed in the novel because the boy image that Susan Hill has created as a bully, carries all the bully properties and it is verified by the article facts.

Victims Properties

Hooper's bad manners is mostly connected to his family life but Kingshaw's low self-esteem and dork behaviors comes from his genetic material, because from the very beginning of the novel his appearance and answers were feeble. From the dialogs between Hooper and Kinshaw the inconfidence of Kingshaw's can be seen in every part of the book, for example when the first time they have met Hooper humiliated Kingshaw, and Kingshaw couldn't answer properly.

“ Where did you live before?”

‘In a flat.’

‘where?’

‘London.’

‘Your own flat?’

‘Yes – no. Well, it was in somebody’s house.’

‘You were only tenants, then.’

‘Yes.’

‘It wasn’t really yours.’

‘No.’” (12,Hill)

Low characteristic properties like not having self – confident and fear can make you as the aim of the bullies and in the novel reason for Kingshaw's low self – esteem is supposed to be connected to his own nature and to his genetic material because no clue is ever found in the novel that clearly revealing the reason of Kingshaw's low self-esteem. Kingshaw doesn't really struggle for his independence and existence in the house and in his new life. Also he falls into despair quiet easily which shows us his dork nature. Instead of struggling for himself he runaway and become isolated.

“He was not much interested in where he was going, but he must get away from that house, and from Hooper. And he must prove to himself that he could get by.” (20,Hill)

His despair nature let's himself into isolation from this causality we can come up with the theme of isolation. This theme is very powerful and vividly portrayed in the novel. The deep analyze of this isolation will be analyzed in the consequences part of the essay.

Throughout the novel, the withdrawn nature of Kingshaw's is quiet observable.

"He liked being alone, because he was used to it, he was safe with himself. Other people were unpredictable." (34,Hill)

He prefers to be alone, his withdrawn nature is also promote the theme of isolation. Moreover he is pretty naïve too he can't see the truths behind the incidents or he doesn't want to see because all the truths are not in favor of him.

"It isn't your place, you've got to do what I say because your mother works for us.'

'No, it isn't like that, you shut your face, Hooper.'

'She's a servant, that's all, she gets paid, and she had to do what my father says. (...)' (60,Hill)

Furthermore he is submissive, when the two kids have lost in the forest Kinshaw has helped Hooper. It is a normal act, but in the novel Hooper throated Kingshaw as worthless so it's a bit naive and submissive to help Hooper in that way.

The general image of Kingshaw that created by Susan Hill is realistically portrayed in the novel because his characteristic properties are commonly problems of all victims of bullying. A quote from 2003's article will be given for giving information of a victim but the sentence was fairly long so irrelevant parts are cut. This article is the proof of Susan Hill's realistic creation.

"Victims tend to share Low self-confidence (...) Submissiveness (...) Social withdrawal and isolation (...) Feelings of helplessness." (van der Wal, M. F., de Wit, C. A. M., & Hirasing, R. A. (2003)

Relationship between the Bully and the Victim

Despite the family relationships jealousy can be the reasons for someone to become a bully. In the novel it can be clearly seen that there is a relation of hate and jealousy between two poles of bullying act. The jealousy is a powerful sensation among humans and is inside of all of us but for Hooper, things are more different. We can observe the jealousy of Endmund Hooper's towards Kingshaw because of Kingshaw's mother. He is not jealous of the good relationship between them he is just jealous about the fact of having a mother. Hooper lost his mother six years ago and the jealousy became a reason for his attitudes towards Kingshaw.

“And another boy was coming, after all, with his mother, so that there would be always be someone about the house to notice him. (...) Once, recently, he had wondered if he ought to feel his own mother's absence, to want things that only she might provide. But he had been unable to imagine what these things might be. He remembered nothing at all about her.” (9,Hill)

The effect of envy to their relationship is realistically portrayed in the novel. Mother is a really important figure in a person's life, so mother issues can be a reason for becoming a bully. The readers can see the Hooper's envy against Kingshaw's mother in every part of the book. Moreover the mother subject is used by Hooper while he is mocking with Kingshaw. Hooper is acting as if he doesn't need a mother in his life but this is just an escape way from his emotions.

“ ‘Kiss, kiss, kiss. Oh, there, my little darling, dear little baby-boy, Mummy loves her little baby-boy, Mummy goes cuddle, cuddle, cuddle, every night, little diddums boy – that's what.’

‘Just because you haven't got a mother at all.’

But Hooper was unmoved. ‘I wouldn't want one.’

‘That's a stupid thing to say.’

‘Fathers are better. Anybody who hasn't got a father is useless.’ “ (96,Hill)

Jealousy of Hooper's creates resentment between them and this resentment shows itself as bullying in the novel,

“Child’s jealousy will cause resentment, hurt, anxiety, guilt and shame, or curiosity, compassion, confrontation.” (Gerlach, 2008).

As the article says jealousy will cause confrontation, and we can see assaultive confrontation in the novel quite often. Kingshaw often confronts facts by assaultive words of Hooper. Susan Hill realistically portrayed the envy in their relation because it is an often thing in the stepfamilies like this, and they are holding a grudge to each other.

Power difference between the two kids is again a strong reason for bullying, the power of Hooper is significantly greater from Kingshaw’s. The house that they are living in is Hooper’s father’s. So that issue contributes to the class difference between them. Kingshaw comes from middle class and Hooper comes from higher economic class, we can see the difference from their schools. Hooper’s father is a rich man and Kingshaw’s mother is indeed aware of that so in a matter of saying she is gone after Hooper’s father. Hooper’s mother’s desire to provide a better life prevents her from protecting his son against Hooper’s acts because if she opposes Hooper’s acts, her lower class could end their relationship. So Hooper’s father, Hooper and Kingshaw’s mother is on one side and Kingshaw is on the other side.

“ ‘That’s why you came here. You didn’t think it was for anything else, did you? She wants to be married to my father. He’s rich.’

(...) ‘Look it’s all right, Kingshaw, it’s only what ladies do. If she hasn’t got a husband, she’s got to find one.’

Why has she?’

‘Well because he’d give her money and a house and things, that’s what always happens.’ (97, Hill)

The power difference between two kids is specified in every step of the book, Hooper often reminds Kingshaw that the house they are living in and the tools that they are using all belong to him and this power difference creates a rivalry between them.

“‘And anyway, as well, you made it in our house, it’s our cardboard and our paint, so it isn’t yours at all, it’s mine, you don’t own anything that’s in this house.’” (174, Hill)

Rivalry between them is again a serious theme of the book and it is accepted as a usual thing between siblings and step siblings but in the novel the rivalry between them is more harshly. Since the two kids have completely different quantities they can't cope with each other, they are competing each other for the dominance on each other. Hooper is always a step ahead from Kingshaw because of his competitive nature and selfishness. He doesn't want to share the house with another boy. As the author refers he wants to be "*The King of the Castle*". But also Kingshaw is better at the athletics stuff like rock climbing and hiking. They are competing each other and offer dares to each other even deadly ones. This rivalry theme is so big that the story is based on winning or losing the competition between them.

"If I shout and shout they'll come for me. But he knew that he would not shout, he would not do anything to make Hooper that he had won." (31, Hill)

Most of their time is passing with daring each other to do things, they are showing their selves to each other for proofing that they are better.

*"Right, I can hear it, it's over there. I'll go first because I'm leader.'
Dumbly, Kingshaw followed."* (72, Hill)

From this quote we can understand the general position between these two kids, Hooper holds the power in his hands and he apparently wins the rivalry.

"Believes that parents who ignore their children's reaction to sibling rivalry or think that this is beneficial to their growth is "training" them to give in to bullying". (Susanne Posel, 2013)

If we would simply count these two stepsiblings as siblings, this quote from article simply would tell the dangerous effects of sibling rivalry. Susan Hill creates a huge mass of power difference between the two kids and that charges a rivalry between them, and Susan Hill explore and explain the rivalry between them realistically in the novel because as the article says it ends up becoming bullying.

Consequences of Bullying

The hatred, resentment and the violence in the novel are the visible consequences of bullying, after the behaviors of the Hooper and behaviors of his mother, the rage of Kingshaw's raises. Hooper's acts are disturbing and humiliating, his words are making Kingshaw furious.

"Kingshaw felt the blood coming up into his face. He seemed to be going hotter and hotter. Right inside himself. He thought, I was stupid, I could have bashed him with that stick, bashed his head in". (97, Hill)

Kingshaw's mind is blended because of the Hooper, he thinks pretty violent things but he never applies these thoughts of him.

"I could kill him; I could make him fall off just by looking at him. (...) I am the king, I am the king, there is nothing I can't ask him for." (134, Hill)

Also his anger has serious relation with his mother. He is angry to his mother because she can't see the problems of Kingshaw's. His anger to his mother is originated from the lack of communication between them. As it was mentioned before, his mother isn't supporting Kingshaw but instead she is supporting Hooper.

"Then why ever should Edmund say you did? I am quite sure he would have no reason to tell an untruth." (110, Hill)

Also she is so ignorant, she forgets his child and focuses on building a family with four members. She tries not to make any distinction but moreover from that she totally ignore his child and be a slave of her desires, even if these thoughts of her is a good thing in long term, the Kingsaw needs a short term treatment immediately

“Kingshaw almost wept. There seemed no point at all in trying to talk to her, no way that he could make her understand the truth of things, or what was going on his mind.” (139,Hill)

Another great consequence of bullying in the novel is the isolation and eventual death of Kingshaw’s. As it is mentioned before, Kingshaw doesn’t confront with the difficulties in his life and he runaway often, his withdrawn nature is also sustains his isolation. Isolation is a powerful theme in the novel and it is appeared because Kingshaw falls into despair so easily and he was just looking for a place to run and get away.

“A room that Hooper did not know had become Kingshaw’s fortress.” (37,Hill)

Isolation and invasion are acceptable as a typical behavior s of a kid to give after long torture of bullying.

“Children who are bullied by their peers often develop a number of psychological difficulties including social isolation and loneliness” (Boulton, 1992)

The last evasion of his is ended badly, the last consequence of the bullying has become the death of Kingshaws. After Hooper had found the body of Kingshaw’s, his reaction to the incident had summed up all the properties of Hooper’s and also we can see that Hooper had won the rivalry against each other.

“Suddenly, it was because of me, I did that, it was because of me, and a spurt of triumph went through him.” (195,Hill)

Suicide in fact a common consequence of bullying but it’s really rare

“Children as young as nine may think about suicide as a way to escape their bullies” (van der Wal,

M. F., de Wit, C. A. M., & Hirasig, R. A. (2003)

Also his mother had fastened the death of his child by not showing any emotional support.

“Suicidal ideation is significantly lessened among children who receive social and emotional support. A study conducted in Italy revealed that psychological distress accompanying bullying is significantly less among children who have positive relations with their parents (Baldry, 2004; Davidson & Demaray, 2007; Rigby, 2000).”

So isolation and the death of Hooper's is also realistically portrayed in the novel because it's proven by some professional work. The part that weren't realistically portrayed in this part was his mother's reaction instead of crying or suffering from pain she tries to relief Hooper

Conclusion

This 70's novel of Susan Hill's main theme is bullying, she creates an image of bullying without adding or extracting anything out of it. She effectively portrayed the characters identities, their relationship and also consequences of their relationship. The symptoms of bullying can be seen in every part of the novel and the reasons of bullying in the novel is developed very well through the novel, the reasons of Hooper's acts sustain on realistic events.

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