

How effectively does Gary Kilworth convey his Ideas on law and justice in his story Murderers Walk?

In the story murderers walk, Gary Kilworth conveys his ideas on law and justice very effectively by using narrative voice, narrative structure, setting, use of language, plot and characterisation. The central premise of this story is that natural justice should and will always prevail.

The plot of this story is a game. You are introduced in the exposition to murderers walk, a free city state with no law. Kilworth explains about the elated feelings of criminals that have escaped the law, which leads on to an explanation of the game they play in the inns. Groups of nine murderers play a card game to decide their own death sentences. The loser, the player receiving the ace of spades must commit suicide within 24 hours. We are introduced to our main character that remains nameless throughout. He is a newcomer, who begins to play the game to feel that rush of adrenaline at escaping death again. We reach the climax as he loses. 24 hours of pure hell, thinking about death, before his life is over. Then denouement, just before death another player enters with two jokers and the game is declared void. The resolution being you are dragged kicking and screaming to play another game and relive the torture.

The narrative voice of the story is quite unconventional. It is told in second person, and in the present tense, which makes it direct and involves the reader which is very effective as it makes the reader want to continue reading the story. The unconventional way in which the story is told conveys how unconventional the justice system is in Murderers walk. There are no laid out laws but justice is still carried out by nature.

Narrative structure in Murderers Walk is in the style of the rules of a game which is ironic because in the story there are no rules, this suggests that Gary Kilworth believes rules are needed in society. If there are no rules then humanity will simply create some showing the power of imagination and that natural justice will prevail eventually.

The story usurps the readers expectations. At the beginning of the story, in the first paragraph, the last line says "it is not unusual to see a man or woman being dragged, or driven, or forcibly carried. Sometimes they are screaming; sometimes they are stiff with fear." This reader automatically assumes that the character in question is being taken to their death but this is wrong and only as you reach the end of the story do you discover this. The last paragraph says "They have stolen your death from you... That is when they drag you along the street kicking and screaming, like a man being led to his execution." This clearly conveys Kilworths opinion on law and justice. Natural justice will always prevail, even though the criminals can escape death they go through a worse torture having their deaths stolen from them as they were ready to die. Now they have to play the game again and undergo all the stress and tension again. During the whole of Murderers Walk there is no mention of dates or times. There is a mention of cobbled streets and old houses that overhang the alleys which suggests it may be set in Tudor or Stuart times but then there are still many streets now that have Tudor/Stuart buildings in them so it is quite possible it could be set anytime. It is like the place has been frozen in time. Because it's a lawless place it doesn't keep up with everyone else's time, it's a law unto itself. This emphasises the eeriness and the feelings of terror and fear. This shows Kilworths view of the law and its failings. It can't control everything, and it never will, nature will always be a law unto itself eventually.

Kilworths uses powerful language to great effect. He uses strong words to create powerful images, for example "the pallor of your distended face: purple perhaps? Your eyes, huge balls easing out of their sockets? Your tongue hanging long between blue lips? You weep. Your head is full of a thousand active thoughts, each one a nightmare." These words create a powerful atmosphere of fear. Showing how natural justice can be just as bad, worse even than human laws.

Gary Kilworth uses numerous words relating to law and justice, like "refuge, justice, law, escaped, rules, execution, guilt, fear, sanctuary, victims, and innocent." These words are repeated all through the story hinting at the theme of the story and continuously suggesting Kilworths views on law and justice.

It is ironic how Murderers walk is described as a sanctuary. "...Leave the city-state and the sanctuary of Murderers Walk to take..." Sanctuary means safe and holy whereas Murderers walk is perhaps the exact opposite, it is a haven for criminals and its quite dangerous considering the games they play. This adds to the dark atmosphere Kilworth is trying to create.

The setting he creates is dark and sinister. "It's cobbles, slick even on dry days, tread the malefactors who have run to its shadows to escape the rope" He tries and succeeds to put across a hostile setting to show that natural justice can be just as effective and worse than normal justice.

No attention is given to character details in this story. We aren't even given names. This adds mystery to the plot. Only one character is mentioned singly, the main character. All we are told about him is that he is a murderer that has escaped the law, we don't know who he murdered or how. All the other characters in the story are only mentioned collectively. During the story the characters don't interact at all except through the game. Its as though they've become nothing, they live only for the adrenaline rush of the game and they're all just waiting to die. Kilworth lets the reader get to know the character through his emotions rather than letting the reader know all the details of the characters life and the reader immediately stereotyping him. It's a very effective way of writing. It emotionally involves the reader rather than them just learning about the characters, he tries to bring the reader into the story. The place is empty of emotions yet at the same time full of them. The limited usage of characterisation makes the place seem hostile and uncaring which simply re-emphasises that natural justice is just as bad as human law and that justice will always prevail.

Gary Kilworth conveys his ideas on law and justice effectively from the beginning to the end of the story. He uses many words throughout Murderers Walk relating to law and justice, such as execution, guilt and death. He uses narrative voice in an unconventional way. He directly involves the reader by using second person, drawing them into the dark, dank, terrifying underworld of criminals. He structures the story like the rules of game, like societies rules, except they've created their own. He creates a hostile setting which is very effective in proving his point that natural justice can be worse than government law. He effectively puts across that natural justice will prevail. He blends a mix of menacing pictures and dark meanings to show everything resolves itself in the end. Although the justice is very unconventional, the criminals in the story get what they really deserve in many ways. Their torment forces them to try and cheat death until they are released by death. So in Murderers walk, Kilworth shows an innovative and effective way to show that justice finds its own way in the end.