

Choose a novel in which the main character faces a dilemma

Set In Darkness – Ian Rankin

The dilemma which the character faces begins when a long-dead body is discovered in a Queensbury House fireplace, a homeless man throws himself off a bridge - leaving behind a suitcase full of cash - and an up-and-coming politician is found murdered. Under mounting pressure from above to solve the murder of Grieve as quickly as possible, Rebus is not surprised to find there are people willing to do anything to capitalise on Scottish independence, especially when it comes to profiting from Edinburgh's booming land values. The links between the three deaths lead Rebus to a confrontation with one of Edinburgh's most notorious criminals, a man he thought he had put in jail for life.

The aspects of the text that I shall include in my essay are, theme, structure, setting, and powerful characterisation, all of which helped me to have a deeper understanding of this novel.

The theme of “Set In Darkness” is deception of the most deadly kind. There is corruption in high places, among the directors and politicians, always trying to further their careers, not caring who is in their way. Many witnesses to the murders lie to protect themselves and others around them so it becomes a large mess of files and paper, dating back over twenty years that Rebus has to untangle.

The structure of the book is very complicated with flash backs incorporating the ongoing story of Rebus's tortured past--a bitter divorce, a daughter still recovering from a terrible accident, and a drinking problem. As the story is built up, layer-by-layer, other parts are revealed and shocking revelations are made, ending in an unexpected conclusion.

The novel also incorporates the different viewpoints from each of the characters. Rankin adds a stalker who happens to be one of Rebus's colleagues, a couple of toughs who hang out in singles clubs and finish their evenings with a rape or two.

The story is set in the criminal underworld of Edinburgh; the first part is set around the new Scottish parliament building at Queensberry House. Throughout the novel, the atmosphere was vividly detailed and it almost makes the reader feel as though they are a bystander to the action rather than reading it. As the deep dark mystery unfolds, more settings that are new are introduced; and I feel as though the apparent differences between reality and fiction become intertwined.

There are many characters in this novel, far too many to name, but the main two are: D I Rebus, a hard drinking, hard smoking, divorced Edinburgh cop with a disabled daughter, and likes to do things his way. He is 53, I do not know what he looks like, as his face is never described, but I do know what goes on inside his head.

His job is the only sustenance he has in his life. He is a very good detective for the same reasons that make him a very bad social human being. He peers into other peoples' lives as a way of deferring dealing with his own problems.

The second main character being Rebus's arch nemesis, Morris Gerald Cafferty (Big Ger), the criminal who runs the city plays a major part in his underlying character. Whilst he and Rebus are natural enemies, underneath they have a lot in common, a fact that they both tacitly recognize.

Rankin's ability of delivering convincing dialogue makes these characters, and the others, come alive for me.

Police façade stripped down to its skeleton deep dark mystery
sophisticated well paced thriller fierce realism criminal
underclass crime writing of the highest order contemporary
complex criminal underworld

To conclude, this book is excellently constructed, with many unpredicted twists, and turns. The author's use of theme, structure, setting, and powerful characterisation, is at consistent level of excellence throughout the novel. It is an imaginative and absorbing book, which builds up the story layer by layer, making it highly enjoyable and exciting from the start until it reaches a gripping climax.