 Synopsis of Jasper Jones

Underline/highlight 10 things from the text below and then add some details of your own. These can be characters, places, events, new words, ideas, etc. An example has already been done for you.

Charlie Bucktin is a 13 year old boy living in the Western Australian country town of Corrigan during the mid-1960s. His story begins when an acquaintance, Jasper Jones1, knocks on his window in the middle of the night.

Jasper has come to Charlie for help because he knows that Charlie is intelligent and booksmart. The two of them travel to a secluded spot in the bush where Jasper’s girlfriend, Laura Wishart, is dead and hanging from a tree. Jasper is worried that he will be blamed for her death and, with Charlie’s help, he hides Laura’s body at the bottom of a lake so that the two of them have time to investigate and find the real killer.

Knowing that he is now culpable for covering up a murder, Charlie wrestles with his conscience while the town begins to search for Laura’s body. Things are made worse by the fact that Charlie has a crush on Laura’s sister Eliza, and he finds himself fighting his urge to confide in her.

Meanwhile, the reader gains a greater understanding of Charlie’s life – the troubled and combative relationship he has with his mother, his friendship with the cricket-mad Jeffrey Lu (a Vietnamese refugee), and the love for reading that he shares with his father. Jasper Jones also reappears in the narrative at this point to share his theory with Charlie that the town enigma, ‘Mad Jack Lionel’, is the culprit behind Laura’s murder.

Tension in the town reaches a boiling point while Laura’s body remains missing. Jeffrey Lu’s family is victimised for being Vietnamese, Jasper Jones is harassed by the town cop, and families begin to fear further disappearances.

Your Thoughts

1. Jasper Jones Half-indigenous, and looked down upon by almost everyone in the town. Intellectual/model child Charlie seems attracted to the idea of being friends with a ‘bad boy’ like Jasper.

Jasper and Charlie break into Jack Lionel’s house and challenge him about Laura Wishart, accusing him of killing the teenage girl. Reclusive ‘Mad Jack’ is confused and convinces them that he had nothing to do with Laura’s death. He does, however, reveal that he is Jasper’s grandfather and that he was driving the car in the accident that killed Jasper’s mother. Jasper is shocked by this revelation; nonetheless, it explains why Jack has become housebound and shunned.

Eliza comes to Charlie’s window in the night and takes him to the site of Laura’s death, by the lake, and reveals that she was there the night that Laura died. Eliza was watching from the bushes when Laura hung herself, and she reveals Laura’s suicide note to Charlie.

In this note, Laura discloses that she was sexually abused by her father (a highly respected figure within the town). It is also implied that her father had gotten her pregnant and that Laura’s mother refused to believe what had happened. Eliza tells Jasper about this well and Jasper decides to leave Corrigan forever.

Eliza tells her mother about the nature of Laura’s disappearance but won’t give her the location of the body while her father remains unpunished. The police are never told what happened, however, some form of justice is served when Eliza’s house is burnt down in mysterious circumstances. Charlie confesses his feelings to Eliza as the book comes to an end.

Your Thoughts