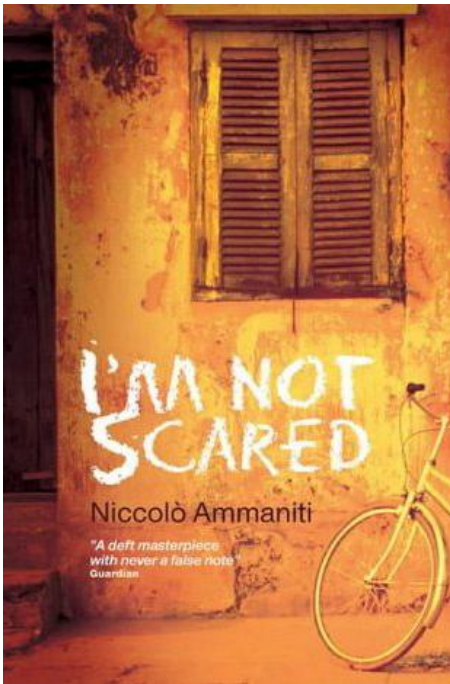


Year 11 2010

English Holiday Homework



Niccola Ammaniti's *I'm Not Scared*, narrated by the 31 year old adult Michele Amitrano, is a coming of age story. This genre of story explores a child's (9 year old Michele) sudden or traumatic progression from innocence to the adult world. Michele discovers a terrible secret which is devastating and life altering and his innocence gives way to knowledge of the real world when the unquestioning worship of a parent is replaced by recognition of their wickedness and human frailty.

The Author

Niccola Ammaniti was born in Rome in 1966. *I'm Not Scared* was published in 2001 and was an instant success, translated into 20 languages and adapted for a major feature film. Ammaniti's father, a psychologist, helped Ammaniti understand how the adolescent males make sense of their world.

Historical and Cultural Context

In the early 1800's Italy was comprised of eight separate states characterised by hostility and jealousy but by 1870 Italy was unified. However unification did not lead to stability as there was much

illiteracy and poverty and Italy was poor in terms of natural resources.

There was traditional conflict between the north and south- the north was seen to have the wealth, power and influence whereas the south was seen to be hostile and primitive, jealous of the north.

Italy struggled with war debt and social and political unrest in the first half of the 20th century. At the end of the Second World War, Italy had inherited terrible poverty, inefficiency and entrenched corruption.

However an opportunity to join NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) and the European Community provided Italy with a means to transform from a largely backward agricultural society into a modern industrialised society.

In the post war years, the industrialised north of Italy made progress and enjoyed a higher standard of living than the agricultural south. Italy experienced stability and growth but the economy slowed in the late 1960's and by 1978 Italy was in its 10th year of social, economic and political crisis. There was high unemployment, high inflation, spiralling labour costs and low investment. Society was torn by strikes, student protests, political violence, kidnappings and murder.

By 1978, kidnapping was epidemic- about 300 cases a year. Children were seen to be the most profitable targets.

Aldo Moro was kidnapped in 1978- a former Italian Prime Minister. A policy of non-negotiation had been adopted and Aldo Moro was murdered by his captors.

John Paul Getty III of USA was kidnapped in 1973 and had an ear cut off; the kidnappers in *I'm Not Scared* threatened to cut off Filippo's ears.

I'm Not Scared is set in the summer of 1978 in Southern Italy. The narrator, Michele, loses his childhood as he discovers the actions of those he thought he knew and he is initiated into a world of greed and cruelty.

I'm Not Scared – Holiday Homework

Students are expected to all questions. Write the question then the answer in point form. The teacher will check completion of the reading log before class study of the text commences.

Note: While the text does not have formally declared chapters, there are a series of major breaks in the text that suggest a chapter like structure.

CHAPTER BY CHAPTER

Chapter 1 (pp1-41)

Playing forfeit games and discovery of the hill. Background to the village and discovery of the boy in the hole.

1. Give details about each of the six children- Michele, Maria, Antonio/Skull, Salvatore, Remo and Barbara.
2. Describe Acqua Traversa.
3. Michele is worried that Melichetti might be the sort of person who would poison small children. What does this show you about his fears? Is this a reasonable concern?
4. Why are there different forfeits for Michele and Barbara?
5. Why do you think Michele keeps the body a secret?
6. What does the request for an arm wrestle with Michele show you about Pino and his values?
7. What does Michele's dream mean?

Chapter 2 (pp42-56)

Michele returns to the hill and discovers that the boy is not dead. Suspicion that others have been there. Pino only responds to Michele's lateness and does not want to hear what he has to say about his discovery.

1. Look at Michele's theories about why the boy is in the hole. What do they show you about his age and his innocence?
2. Explain what this chapter showed you about Michele's relationship with his father?
3. Explain what Michele's mother is like. What kind of relationship does she have with her husband and her children?

Chapter 3 (pp57-67)

Life in the village continues. Michele feeds and talks to Filippo. The news that a visitor is arriving is broken.

1. What is stopping Michele from telling his father?
2. Why do you think Michele is helping the boy? What else could he do for him?
3. How feasible is the theory that Pino might be involved with the kidnapped boy?

Chapter 4 (pp68- 91)

Discovery that Felice is involved in tending to Filippo. Discussions about death with Filippo and Salvatore. Angry meeting of the conspirators and revelation about the identity and origins of Filippo.

1. Why do you think Filippo has decided that he must be dead?
2. Who is Sergio and what role do you think he has in the kidnapping?
3. Why does Michele urinate on his father's truck?
4. What is the significance of the unhappy ending of Michele's story?

Chapter 5 (pp92-118)

Sergio staying with the Armitranos and tensions are rife in the village and in the family. More talks with Filippo. Nightmares visit Michele at night and Sergio tells Michele about his children.

1. Michele thinks Barbara is hurting the dog when she is actually trying to act like a mother and take care of it. What does this show about his new perception of parental figures?
2. Why does Michele cry when he hugs his father? What does Pino's reaction to this reveal about his character?
3. Describe the scene that occurs between Michele and Filippo. How has their relationship developed?
4. What is the significance of Sergio interrupting Michele when he is trying to protect himself from monsters?

Chapter 6 (pp119-158)

Visit to Salvatore's villa and Michele tells him about Filippo in return for a team of plastic soccer players. Michele gets Filippo out of the hole. Felice springs Michele helping Filippo, on a tip off from Salvatore. There is a fight between Teresa and Felice and discussion with Pino about not visiting Filippo again.

1. How have both Michele and Salvatore betrayed their friends?
2. What does Michele learn from this chapter?
3. What mistakes does Felice make when he finds Michele? What does this show you about the sort of soldier he would be?
4. How has the violence of kidnapping started to threaten Pino's whole family?
5. What is the significance of the dream Michele has in this chapter where monsters are trapped and drowning? How does it relate to the fact that his father has rescued him and his mother?

Chapter 7 (pp159-167)

Michele ponders his promises to Filippo and his father. He is given a brand new bike.

1. Why is it significant that Michele's mother is cleaning the house so there is no sign of arguments and actions of the visitors?
2. Is Pino trying to buy Michele's silence and approval? Explain your answer.

Chapter 8 (pp168-173)

Summer doldrums. Children play and Michele tells Salvatore that they will be leaving Acqua Traverse.

1. Why is Michele riding closer to the farmhouse every day? What does it show you about the moral dilemma he is facing?
2. Why does Michele take his old bike, the Crock, when he wants to visit the abandoned farmhouse?
3. Why does Michele tell Salvatore that they'll be moving away?

Chapter 9 (pp174-187)

Summer storm. Children ride back to the hill and Michele finds that Filippo has been moved when he shows the others the house. Salvatore tells Michele that Filippo has been taken to the gravina. Carabinieri helicopters are seen and the adult conspirators meet at Salvatore's villa.

1. What does Michele realise about his father in this chapter?
2. How has the kidnapping completely disrupted the families of Acqua Traverse?
3. What are the adults talking about all night?

Chapter 10 (pp188-215)

Angry meeting at the Armitranos' house and Michele hears the decision made to kill Filippo. He releases him but is mistakenly shot by his father. The Carabinieri arrive.

1. What do Mama's actions show about her state of mind? Explain what she is thinking when she puts pillows over their faces.
2. Why doesn't Michele let Maria watch the argument?
3. Why is it chilling that Pino suggests using the soldier's draw to decide their argument?
4. Why does Michele go to the gravina? What decision is he making when he does this?
5. What fears does Michele have to face to save Filippo? Which of these are legitimate fears?
6. How does Michele ultimately prove that he is as heroic as the comic book heroes that he faces?
7. What is the significance of the blood on Pino's hands?
8. Does Pino redeem himself in this final scene? Explain your opinion with evidence from the text.
9. If this is a moral tale, what moral lessons is the ending trying to teach you?