

s2 Extended Writing Task - A Kestrel for a Knave/Kes (Barry Hines/Ken Loach)

Write about some of the different ways adults treat Billy in Kes.

You should aim to write no less than 750 words.

An essay **MUST** include an introduction, a main body and a conclusion.

Introduction

Main body

Conclusion

Use the following information to help you.

The novel and film look at how life for one boy is dictated by where he lives and the attitudes of those he lives with. All aspects of **Billy Casper's** life (other than with **Kes**) are sad and difficult. Others have a very low expectancy of what Billy can achieve in his life.

Humour is used to present aspects of life as a way of lightening the mood and showing that all is not bleak, we can learn from this. The **Kestrel (Kes)** is Billy's only source of hope in the novel, an outlet from the rest of his life.

Jud

- **Jud** is Billy's half brother.
- He is **aggressive, violent** both **physically** and **verbally** not only to Billy, but his mother. He bullies Billy - beginning his day by thumping Billy, who is smaller and younger than him, before pulling the blankets off him.
- He uses **bad language** to Billy and calls him many unpleasant names, threatening him with murder amongst other unpleasant things.
- He is **arrogant**, thinking he is 'God's gift to women'.
- His natural response to most situations seems to be swearing or violence.
- His **killing of Kes** at the end of the novel/film seems to destroy all hope.
- When we first see Jud he is **fighting** and **kicking Billy** in their bedroom, which shows their **poor relationship**.
- He hates his job, down in the **mine**, but that is where most of the men are expected to work.
- Jud **makes fun** of Billy for getting a book from the library.
- He treats Billy as his slave, expecting his underage brother to put bets on for him, and only communicates with him by hitting and abusing him verbally.
- He treats his mother almost as badly as he treats Billy. He makes disrespectful remarks about her boyfriends, taunting her about her behaviour when drunk, and refusing to do anything he is asked to around the house. He appears to treat her like a slave too.

- His attitude to women seems generally disrespectful. He anticipates his night out as one where he will get drunk and see how far he can go with the nearest available woman.
- Perhaps he feels as deprived as Billy does by his mother's attitude, and perhaps he, too, has always missed his own father and that has helped to make him into the unsympathetic person he is.
- He is understandably furious when Billy keeps the money and the bet wins. What he says about having a week off work, had he been able to collect the money, is the nearest we get to an insight into Jud's mind: maybe he did not want to be a miner any more than Billy does.

Mrs Casper

- **Mrs Casper** (Billy's mother) is presented as a **pathetic** figure.
- She is **not much of a mother** as the state of the house proves; it is cold, unwelcoming and there is no food.
- She is a **coward** and doesn't stand up to her own son Jud.
- She treats Billy **badly**, getting him to run errands for her.
- She uses **bad language** around Billy
- She spends ages getting ready for the **pub**, showing her **vain** side.
- She is more concerned about this than she is about Billy.

Mr Sugden (PE Teacher)

- **Mr Sugden** - The PE teacher
- A **comic figure** who is a **bully** and just a big kid.
- He appears in the **comic centrepiece** of the novel, the **games lesson**.
- He is **unfit** and a **cheat**, a **figure of ridicule** amongst the boys.

Mr Gryce (Headmaster)

- **Mr Gryce** - The headmaster of the school
- He is presented as a **comic figure**.
- In the assembly his behaviour is **vindictive** and **indiscriminate**.
- He is made to seem **foolish** with the description of the papers falling off his lectern at the end of the assembly.
- In his study he is **boring** and **does not listen** to the boys, including the one who is just there to pass on a message, punishing them all indiscriminately.
- He is **totally disinterested in caring** for the youth of his day.
- His **violence** is shown fully with the **caning of the boys** in this scene and the seeming **pleasure** he gets from it.

Mr Farthing (English Teacher)

- **Mr Farthing** - Billy's English teacher
- He **understands Billy** the most and is interested in him. This is because he is a more sympathetic person, with a more humane approach to others, than any adult Billy encounters.
- He has the **respect of the class**, unlike the other teachers we meet. From the start of the lesson where he is described, Mr Farthing is shown as empathising with the boys who have been caned, suggesting that he does not really approve of physical punishment.
- He can **joke with the class**, but has **firm discipline** when required. He uses talk and the boys' own experience as a way into the lessons rather than looking for errors.
- Mr Farthing shows a **genuine interest in Billy's kestrel** and comes to see it at lunchtime. He does become impatient with Billy when he is not listening, but is willing to listen to Billy's point of view after the fight at break when they talk. Though Billy is amongst the least able academically, Mr Farthing learns something from him when he talks about Kes.
- He asks intelligent questions, **allowing Billy to show his knowledge** about kestrels.
- When he breaks the fight up in the yard he shows he is **not to be taken lightly**. Mr Farthing is strict and will stand no nonsense: when he calls for quiet and moves towards the boys they are silent. He can break up a fight in a way which suggests that he can easily exert his authority over the toughest of the boys. He is also fair. He will not tolerate MacDowall bullying Billy because he is smaller and more vulnerable. He is forceful in making his point, and showing MacDowall what it is like to be bullied by picking on him physically.