

The Road

Notes

Genre

It is a Bildungsroman

As the boy grows up he slowly comes to accept reality and that he cannot always do the right thing in such a harsh world.

Themes

The main themes are growing up, relationship between father and son, and the non binary nature of morality and how this is learnt as people grow up.

In a way the road is a metaphor for growing up as the boy is being pushed by his father to always be moving on towards a distant goal. When he starts to stray off the road this shows how he has in effect matured and is now not reliant on his father to provide directions for what he should be doing.

The relationship between the father and son is quite an important theme and in many ways the novel is showing the reader how important this relationship is. This is partially shown to the reader by how the two main characters are nameless and are often just described in their relation to the other as shown by how the boy is often known as "the son", which demonstrates how people's relationships with close family members shapes and defines who they are. This relationship is also implied to not just end when a father dies as when the father dies the boy stays with him for a while and has shaped his morality on his father.

The novel also shows how children think of morality as being black and white and separate actions into good and bad, and people similarly. This is shown by the son to begin with wanting to help everyone they meet on the road such as the boy, the dog and the old man. The father however, stops the boy from doing this as he understands that if they do they will probably end up dead and so slowly the boy learns that even if you are good you sometimes have to do bad things. There is also a bit where the boy has to come to terms with his father, who he sees as being a good person, doing something bad, shooting someone, but for a good reason, to save the son. This shows the boy that things are not in themselves intrinsically bad and it is more to do with the intentions behind actions. The boy also near the end of the novel learns that in many ways justice has nothing to do with being kind and can often be almost vindictive. As when they are on the beach and their stuff gets stolen by someone the father, having caught the guy who stole the stuff, then takes all of the persons stuff and so the person will most likely now die. This can be seen to be totally just as the person stole from them but at the same time and be seen to be a morally bad thing to do.

Characters

The father

The father is much more of a realist than the son. He is focused on keeping his son alive and continuing society, "carrying the fire", and upholding his morals in the face of adversary and as such never resorts to cannibalism unlike most of the people they meet on the road. However, his determination to keep his son alive and safe means he has to do things which are not always right in a black and white moral sense. He realises that he is slowly dying and I think he has accepted this and is mainly worried about how his son will cope without him, he is also slightly resentful of the mother who killed herself as the world was so bad and thus left the boy without a mother.

The son

The son starts off a moral idealist slowly he accepts his fathers morals which are more realistic and