



## THE ROLE OF STORYTELLING IN SHAPING IDENTITY AND SOCIAL BONDS IN STEPHEN KING'S "IT"

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### ABSTRACT

This article examines the novel "IT" by one of the famous American writers Stephen King. Stephen King's novel "IT" is one of his popular works that analyses fear and childhood trauma. The plot centres on a group of children living in the town of Derry. They fight against a mysterious and evil creature – a clown named "Pennywise". The work explores human fear and its nature, while also highlighting themes of friendship and courage. Stephen King with his unique style and psychological depth, both frightens and amazes the reader. In conclusion it is mentioned that this novel is one of the most prominent examples of the horror genre and is also widely known to the public through film and TV series adaptations.

**Keywords:** Horror, Pennywise, losers club, Stephen King, IT, red balloon, fear, trauma, friendship

This novel is one of Stephen King's largest novels, consisting of 5 parts, 23 chapters and 1,138 pages. The author wrote this novel over a period of approximately 4 years from 1981 to 1985. The novel is in English and was published by Viking Press on September 15, 1986. Stephen King was inspired by stories about the town of Derry in Maine, USA. This town appears not only in this novel by Stephen King, but also in his works "Bag of Bones" "Dreamcatcher". Obviously, this book is terrible when it comes to its genre. At the present time, this is not seen as surprising or new, as the number of frightening and terrifying centuries that can compete with it has increased in the current era. However, in the 1980s, this work was not taken lightly. This novel pioneered new ways of experiencing horror because it had several remarkable characteristics:

- 1) The story is very long and complex, focusing on one character and one family at a time.
- 2) The plot is non-linear and changes over time, which means that the reader has to pay close attention to the timeline of the story. At the same time, there is a big difference between the book and the film adaptation. The work seems to be written in a chaotic manner in the book, because in the book their childhood and adulthood are brought together. The past and present are compared. This requires the reader to be attentive and perceptive to the time and events, as well as it is like a puzzle. Nevertheless,

<sup>1</sup> Pennywise - Pennywise is a villain and terrifying clown from Stephen King's novel "IT" (1986) but is actually a terrifying shapeshifting character.

in the film, these events are divided into parts, that is, the first part is filmed based on the events of childhood and the second part is filmed based on the events of adulthood.

3) All the main characters are children. The book takes place in two parallel time periods: 1. 1957-1958s when the Losers club members encounter Pennywise as children. 2. 1984-1985s when they grow up and learn that Pennywise has returned, they team up to destroy him again.

4) As this terrifying character, he introduces a new costume, meaning that no one has attempted to make a terrifying and scary character out of a clown before this century.

This novel is also one of his longest works. Most of Stephen King's works last from two hundred to four hundred to a thousand pages. He dedicated this book to his wife Naomi Rachel King and two children – Owen Phillip King and Joseph Hillstrom King. He also dedicated many of his books to his family. King always uses clear and simple language in his works and often affirms the English language. He never uses vulgar language in his works and all the places cities in his works are based on reality (real cities, streets or real-life examples) The book has a lot of direct speech. Here are some examples of the language King uses:

"Stanley? Stanley? St —"

She looked at the tub with its blue shower curtain bunched at the far end of the stainless steel rod and forgot how to finish her husband's name. She simply stared at the tub, her face as solemn as the face of a child on her first day at school.

(Stephen King, 1986, 57)

Here, in line three, is one example of King's indirect style of language. Instead of saying "she forgot his name" the author expresses it in more curious manner. In forth line, he uses a simile, which is original one instead of using a cliché such as:

"She was white as a sheet."

"Who was it, Don?" Harold Gardener asked softly.

"It was Derry," Don Hagarty said. "It was this town."

"And what did you do then?"

"I ran, you dumb shit," Hagarty said, and burst into tears.

(Stephen King, 1986, 38)

Here is example of two contrasting languages. First and third direct speeches here are spoken by policemen and therefore their language is formal. The second and the last direct speech is said by a man with record of criminal activity and it is displayed by his use of profanities.

Each character uses different languages and children use simple English, unlike adults. The author also attached great importance to these points in his works.

The main plot of the book is about a group of seven children who call themselves the "Losers club"<sup>2</sup>. The main theme of the work is fear and its power, the advantages of friendship and unity in such a situation, as well as various traumas and their healing. Three quotes that verify the theme:

1) "We've learned that fear is a thing that cannot be defeated but only mastered."  
(Fear and its Power)

<sup>2</sup> Losers Club – Stephen King's "IT" (1986) In the story, a group of children refer to themselves by this name.

- 2) "You are the Losers. You are the ones who can fight it." (Friendship and Unity)
- 3) "We're all gonna die, but some of us are gonna die trying." (Trauma and Healing).

We can also see the similarities and differences between the two characters in the novel at the same time.

| How are they alike?  | How are they different?  |
|--|--|
| Both Bill and Ben struggle with self-doubt.                      | Bill is a natural leader, while Ben is more reserved.  |
| Beverly and Eddie both come from abusive households.             | Beverly fights back against her abuser, while Eddie remains passive.                         |
| Richie and Eddie rely on humor as a defense mechanism.           | Richie is loud and extroverted, while Eddie is nervous and anxious.                          |
| Bill and Mike are both deeply curious about Derry's history.     | Mike stays in Derry as the town historian, while Bill leaves to become a writer.             |
| Pennywise manipulates both Henry Bowers and Beverly's father.    | Henry is directly controlled by Pennywise, while Beverly's father is influenced more subtly. |
| Both Stan and Eddie fear germs and contamination.                | Stan is logical and skeptical, while Eddie is deeply superstitious.                          |
| The Losers Club members all experience intense childhood trauma. | They each cope differently—some repress, while others confront their fears.                  |
| Both Bill and Pennywise understand the power of belief.          | Bill uses belief to empower himself and others, while Pennywise uses it to instill fear.     |

Figure 1. Similarities and differences between the characters.

However the plot of the story in movie and TV-series adaptations<sup>3</sup> is shown dramatically different. The novel has a broad scope, covering events that took place in the 1950s and 1980s in detail. It deeply explores children's lives, Pennywise (the main antagonist), and the psychological analysis of fear. While the 2017 and 2019 IT movies (Chapter one and Chapter two) maintain the novel's main storyline, they shorten or alter many details. For example, some plot lines were removed and modernised in the films. The story spans two time periods – 1958 and 1985. The children's and adult's versions are portrayed in parallel. The 2017 movie focuses on the childhood part, shifting the events to 1989, while the 2019 IT Chapter two is dedicated to the adult section. In the novel, each character's personality, background and inner struggles are deeply explored, detailing their lives and fears. In the film, however, some character stories are shortened and changed. For instance, in the novel, Mike Hanlon serves as the historian, but in the movie, some of his responsibilities are given to Ben Hanscom. The novel explores themes such as the impact of fear and childhood trauma on adulthood, the power of friendship and unity and the persistent nature of evil in great depth. While the movie includes these themes, they are simplified and often replaced with visual effects.

<sup>3</sup> Adaptation - a film, television drama, or stage play that has been adapted from a written work.

Additionally, the novel contains many brutal and controversial scenes, such as Beverly's "ritual scene" with the group, the violence between Mike and Henry Bowers and other acts of cruelty. In the film, these aspects are softened. The main difference between the book and the movie is that the novel conveys fear primarily through psychological and philosophical aspects, whereas the film relies more on visual and atmospheric horror.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion Stephen King's novel "IT" is not only a horror story, but also a complex work that explores the darkest corners of the human psyche. The image of IT in it is not a simple evil, but a symbol of fear itself, its infinite forms and the impact it has on the human mind. The work deeply explores the themes of the gap between childhood and adulthood, trauma and overcoming them.

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