

English

'Heroes' – a novel by Robert Cormier

Robert Cormier

Robert Edmund Cormier (January 17, 1925–November 2, 2000) was an American author, columnist and reporter, known for his pessimistic, downbeat literature. His most popular works include *I Am the Cheese*, *After the First Death*, *Heroes* and *The Chocolate War*, all of which have won awards. His books often are concerned with themes such as abuse, mental illness, violence, revenge, betrayal and conspiracy. In most of his novels, the protagonists do not win.

Key Words for this Half Term

- **Noble:** adjective - having or showing good personal qualities
- **Duplicitous:** adjective - to have two sides to you, normally for evil purposes
- **Traumatise:** verb - to go through a terrible event and not truly recover
- **Innocent:** adjective - to be totally guilt free or not understand the evil things in society
- **Regretful:** adjective - to be remorseful over the bad things you have done in your past

Why was it written?

Robert Cormier wrote *Heroes* based on his memories of the terrible fallout from World War Two. He saw many young men of his own age return from the war, having fought in either Europe or the Pacific. Many of them had dreadful physical injuries, but all of them were mentally affected as a result of their experiences.

Of course, there were also numerous young men who were killed in action and never returned to the United States. Cormier felt that he should present war realistically, which is why he did not pretend that the characters' injuries were minor ones - Francis himself has horrific injuries to his face; Enrico Rucelli, Francis' friend, has lost both legs and his left arm; Arthur Rivier is a mental wreck. However, Cormier also wanted to convey the message that even in the darkest situations there is always hope for people who are sorry for what they have done wrong.

Major Characters

- Francis Cassavant – a young boy who has just returned from fighting for the USA in WWII. He has significant injuries to his face and hiding his true identity in his hometown of Frenchtown
- Larry La Salle – A youth worker with a mysterious past. He is loved by the teenagers of the town and turns Francis from an unassuming child to a confident youngster.
- Nicole Renard – Francis' love interest. She moves into town and Francis becomes obsessed with her. He becomes close and eventually they start dating.
- Arthur Rivier – an older soldier who takes Francis under his wing. One of the few people who knows who Francis is.

CONTEXT: The attack on Pearl Harbour was a surprise military strike by the Imperial Japanese Navy Air Service upon the United States against the naval base at Pearl Harbour in Honolulu, Territory of Hawaii, just before 08:00, on Sunday morning, December 7, 1941. This incident stopped the USA's isolationist attitude and brought them in on the side of the Allies (Britain, France etc) in World War 2.



Dulce Et Decorum Est

Remains

Exposure

War Photographer

Kamikaze

Bayonet Charge