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# INTRODUCTION

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1

Before you begin your study of *I'm the King of the Castle* it is important that you have read the text through carefully at least once. On your first reading it can be useful to jot down notes on any points that occur to you as you read so that you won't forget them. When you come to study the novel in more detail later, a log of these initial responses can be very useful.

The sections that follow examine the key aspects of the novel that you will need to be aware of in order to answer questions in the GCSE exam. All the tasks are designed to help you look carefully at the novel and come to an understanding. In addition to working through the tasks in the sections that follow it is also recommended that you keep your own notes on the various areas of study, noting down things that you find particularly interesting or effective and making a note of quotations or references to support your ideas.

At the end of this work book you will find a number of specimen questions of the kind that you might find on a GCSE English Literature exam paper. It would be very useful in terms of preparing yourself for the exam if you practised on some of these. As you get closer to the exam date it would be helpful to you to try doing one or two of them under timed conditions too. In most exams you would have about 40 minutes to answer one of these questions.

# PLOT AND STRUCTURE

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## 2

When we talk about the PLOT of a story we are really talking about its storyline - in other words what happens in the story. The plot of a story usually consists of the series of events and experiences that occur throughout the story.

The STRUCTURE, on the other hand, involves how these events are put together and linked by the writer. Very often the structure of stories is chronological - where events follow on from each other in a normal time sequence. Sometimes, though, writers use other structures too - perhaps there are flashbacks to things that happen earlier in time or glimpses of what might happen in the future. The structure of the novel is closely linked to the idea of how the events are put together to create the impact on the reader that the writer wants.

The following nine pages look at the plot and structure of the whole novel, taken chapter by chapter.

# PLOT AND STRUCTURE - CH 1 AND 2

# 3

## CHAPTER ONE

At the start of the novel we see Hooper taken by his father to see his dying grandfather. Hooper does not seem upset by this experience though. We see him as a boy who prefers his own company and doesn't want anyone to invade his private world. We also learn something about the background of the Hooper family.

## CHAPTER TWO

We learn that Joseph Hooper has had a reply to an advertisement that he had placed and that his son is to have a new 'friend'. Rather than being pleased, though, Hooper is resentful at the thought of someone else coming to live with them.

When Helena and Charles Kingshaw arrive Hooper makes it clear that he does not want him there and he locks himself away in his room. Later, when Hooper shows Kingshaw around the house he begins to exert his dominance over him.

### REVIEW ACTIVITIES ON CHAPTERS ONE AND TWO

1. Write down the comments that Hooper makes at his grandfather's deathbed. What is your response to these comments?
2. Make a list of the things you have found out about the Hooper family from Chapter One.
3. Look carefully at how Hill describes the Red Room in Chapter One. What kind of images does she use?
4. How does Hill show us Hooper's resentment at the arrival of Kingshaw?
5. What kind of relationship does Joseph Hooper seem to have with his son?

## CHAPTER THREE

Kingshaw and his mother have been at Warings a week now. Kingshaw feels oppressed by the claustrophobic atmosphere and decides to escape to explore the surrounding countryside. Away from Warings though he is unsettled by an encounter with a crow. Hooper sees this incident and mocks Kingshaw about it. The following morning at breakfast everything seems normal but there is an underlying tension which is brought out through the submarine incident.

## CHAPTER FOUR

A week later Kingshaw finds a secluded room at the top of the house which provides him with a haven away from Hooper. It is here that he comes up with the idea of running away from Warings and Hooper. We also see a little more of the kind of relationship that Joseph Hooper and Helena Kingshaw have with their respective children. Later we see that Hooper has discovered Kingshaw's secret room and his plan to run away. Even so he is still determined to go ahead with his plan. At the end of the chapter we see a developing relationship between Helena and Joseph.

### REVIEW ACTIVITIES ON CHAPTERS THREE AND FOUR

1. What kind of impression does Hill create through her description of the gardens and surrounding countryside of Warings?
2. What effect does the incident involving the crow have on you?
3. How is the idea of the 'big wood' introduced and how does Kingshaw respond to it?
4. What is the significance of the submarine incident at the end of the chapter?
5. Although Kingshaw's plans to escape are ruined when Hooper discovers what he intends to do he still is determined to continue. Why?
6. How are the adults portrayed in Chapters Three and Four?

# PLOT AND STRUCTURE- CH 5 AND 6

# 5

## CHAPTER FIVE

Helena Kingshaw and Joseph Hooper plan to go to London for the day and Kingshaw sees this as the chance he has been waiting for to run away from Warings. We can see in this chapter the developing relationship between Helena Kingshaw and Joseph Hooper - it has ceased to be one of housekeeper and employer. Kingshaw runs away early in the morning and in a while reaches Hang Wood. He overcomes his fear and enters the wood.

## CHAPTER SIX

Inside Hang Wood Kingshaw feels isolated but free from the tensions of Warings. His escape is short-lived though as Hooper arrives having followed him from Warings. Hooper adopts his usual rude and aggressive manner towards Kingshaw although Kingshaw feels him less of a threat here, a neutral ground, than he did at Warings. They go deeper into the wood and eventually realise that they are lost. When Hooper realises this he begins to go to pieces. His fear is increased by the approaching storm and for the first time Kingshaw begins to take the upper hand.

### REVIEW ACTIVITIES ON CHAPTERS FIVE AND SIX

1. What evidence can you find in Chapter Five to illustrate the developing relationship between Helena Kingshaw and Joseph Hooper?
2. Describe the preparations Kingshaw makes as he gets ready to run away.
3. How does Hill create a change in atmosphere as Kingshaw reaches Hang Wood?
4. How does Hill create the impression that Kingshaw feels safe in Hang Wood?
5. Look at the section involving the deer in Chapter Six. How does this episode illustrate the difference in the nature of the two boys?

# PLOT AND STRUCTURE- CH 7, 8 AND 9

6

## CHAPTER SEVEN

The Hang Wood episode continues and we see right away that Hooper is terrified of thunder storms and at this point Kingshaw is the more dominant character. After the storm has passed though Hooper re-establishes his dominance over Kingshaw. As they go deeper into the wood they discover a large pool. Kingshaw finds bathing in the pool a hugely pleasurable experience and this provides a temporary escape from Hooper's hostility. When they leave the water, Hooper resumes his unpleasantness and tells Kingshaw of the big moths that are to be found in the wood knowing that he hates them. However, before long Hooper becomes hysterical again, this time because he is frightened of being lost in the woods. Once again Kingshaw is in control and goes off to explore alone. He is tempted to run away and leave Hooper but in the end he feels he cannot desert Hooper much though he wants to get away from him. When he returns he finds Hooper lying face down and Kingshaw adopts a mature attitude in his efforts to revive him.

## CHAPTER

As darkness begins to fall the two boys get ready to spend the night in the wood. Even though they are lost together the antagonism between them continues. Although Kingshaw adopts a mature attitude in the end Hooper's constant whining criticism finally causes him to lose control and he threatens Hooper. Temporarily this subdues Hooper but in the end Kingshaw apologises.

## CHAPTER NINE

A brief period of peace follows and the following morning Hooper does not seem his usual antagonistic self. The boys both relax in their own ways. The peace is short-lived though as the 'rescuers' arrive to take them back to Warings.

### REVIEW ACTIVITIES ON CHAPTERS SEVEN, EIGHT AND NINE

1. How do the boys react to the storm and how do they behave afterwards?
2. Look at the description of the boys bathing, in Chapter Nine. What is the special significance of this experience for Kingshaw?
3. Make a list of the things that Kingshaw does in Chapters Seven and Eight that shows his mature and sensible attitude.
4. Look at the first part of Chapter Eight. What do the boys have to say about mothers and fathers and what bearing does this conversation have on the plot?
5. What strikes you about the description of the 'rescue' at the end of Chapter Nine?
6. Now look back over Chapters Seven to Nine and draw a graph or a diagram to show how the balance of power shifts between Kingshaw and Hooper in this part of the novel.

## CHAPTER TEN

We are abruptly returned to Warings and Kingshaw has to face the repercussions of his attempt to escape. Hooper resumes his hostile behaviour and he blames Kingshaw for all that has happened and the adults are taken in by this.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

At breakfast Hooper, Kingshaw and their parents are together and it seems as if they are becoming one 'family'. It is becoming clear to Kingshaw that his mother will marry Mr. Hooper. Kingshaw's hopes are further shattered when he is told that he will not be returning to his own school at the end of the holiday but instead will join Hooper at his school, Drummonds. To get away from them Kingshaw takes refuge in an old shed in the garden but this only gives Hooper another opportunity to inflict psychological torture on Kingshaw. In the end Kingshaw falls into a fitful sleep and has disturbing dreams.

### REVIEW ACTIVITIES ON CHAPTERS

#### TEN AND ELEVEN

1. Look carefully at how the adults handle the situation in Chapter Ten. What bearing does the adult/child relationship have on the situation? Do you notice any similarity between the two adults at this point?
2. What is the significance of Kingshaw's thoughts of the wood and stream in Chapter Eleven?
3. Make a list of the ways in which Hooper inflicts psychological pressure on Kingshaw in Chapter Eleven.
4. What do you think is the significance of Kingshaw's nightmare about the Punch and Judy show?
5. Why do you think that Mr. Hooper has taken over responsibility for Kingshaw's education and what do you think about the way the adults have handled this situation?

## PLOT AND STRUCTURE- CH 12 AND 13



### CHAPTER TWELVE

The Hoopers and the Kingshaws go on a 'family' outing to Leydell Castle. It is clear though that Mr. Hooper and Mrs. Kingshaw are only really interested in their own developing relationship and the boys go off to amuse themselves. For a brief moment Kingshaw again gains the upper hand during the climbing incident. However, his advantage is short-lived as Hooper falls from the wall.

### CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The Chapter begins with a view of Hooper's accident as seen through the eyes of Kingshaw. Mr. Hooper goes to the hospital with his son while Kingshaw returns to Warings with his mother. Later we see that Kingshaw has been shocked by the experience and feels a mixture of both relief and guilt in his belief that Hooper is dead.

### REVIEW ACTIVITIES ON CHAPTERS TWELVE AND THIRTEEN

1. Make notes on the climbing incident in Chapter Twelve and on its significance in terms of the development of the plot.
2. What do you think is significant in Kingshaw's thought 'I'm the King of the Castle. I can do anything. He knew that he would not'?
3. What do you think is the purpose of Kingshaw's recollection of Lesage in Chapter Thirteen?
4. What thoughts struck you when you read about Kingshaw's nightmare at the end of Chapter Thirteen?

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

While Hooper is in hospital Kingshaw gains temporary respite from the animosity he has had to put up with. During this time he makes friends with Anthony Fielding who is a normal, ordinary boy as opposed to Hooper. Unlike Kingshaw he is confident and self-assured but he does not mock Kingshaw's fears. Kingshaw visits Fielding's home and meets his mother and sees a 'normal' family.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Hooper returns from hospital and resumes his dominant position over Kingshaw. The glimmers of hope that Kingshaw had felt in the previous chapters disappear and once again the conflicts begin. Kingshaw is taken to London to buy his new school uniform for Drummonds. In the end it all becomes too much for Kingshaw and he has an angry outburst which is abruptly stopped when Mr. Hooper hits him.

### REVIEW ACTIVITIES ON CHAPTERS FOURTEEN AND FIFTEEN

1. Look at the conversation between Helena Kingshaw and her son at the beginning of Chapter Fourteen. What does this exchange tell you about their relationship?
2. Why do you think Kingshaw compares himself with Fenwick?
3. How do Fielding and his family contrast with Kingshaw, Hooper and their parents?
4. How do you think Kingshaw feels after the London trip?
5. What do you think is the symbolic importance of Mr. Hooper hitting Kingshaw?

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

In this chapter we see the situation from a different perspective. The chapter begins with Helena Kingshaw taking a call from an old friend and this reveals her thoughts about her relationship with Joseph Hooper. We also see Mr. Hooper's view of the situation. Although in himself Kingshaw knows that his mother and Mr. Hooper will marry, it is Hooper who is the first to know officially and he uses this information to further taunt Kingshaw. The adults plan to take the boys to the circus. Helena Kingshaw knows that her son hates circuses but as usual she ignores his wishes. Mrs. Kingshaw also goes to see Mrs. Fielding and invites Anthony to tea. Hooper goes off with Fielding to see Fielding's farm and Kingshaw is left alone. Kingshaw goes to Hooper's room and destroys the lists of regiments and battle plans that Hooper has meticulously prepared.

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The final chapter begins with preparations being made for the boys to leave for Drummonds while Mr. Hooper and Mrs. Kingshaw pack, ready for their honeymoon. Hooper knows that Kingshaw is frightened of what might happen when they get to Drummonds and he exploits this fear to the full using devious techniques such as pushing a note under his door. That night Kingshaw goes to sleep and his nightmares begin. He awakens at dawn and sets out for Hang Wood, the only place he has found peace and comfort since arriving at Warings. At the close of the novel we see that Kingshaw has killed himself and as his body is discovered Hooper feels a 'spirit of triumph' as his victory over Kingshaw is complete.

### REVIEW ACTIVITIES ON CHAPTERS SIXTEEN AND SEVENTEEN

1. Make notes on the visit to the circus. How do Charles and Mr. Hooper respond to it?
2. Why is Kingshaw disappointed when he learns that his mother has invited Anthony to tea?
3. Look at the description of Fielding's visit. What is the significance of this episode to the plot?
4. What state of mind do you think Kingshaw is in at the end of Chapter Sixteen?
5. Make notes on the way in which Hill describes the suicide.
6. Write an account of the discovery of Kingshaw's body from the point of view of either Mr. Hooper or Helena Kingshaw.

# CHARACTERISATION

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*I'm The King Of The Castle* is like most stories in that the characters are the focal point. In this particular novel Hill focuses almost exclusively on two characters - Edmund Hooper and Charles Kingshaw. These two are the MAIN characters in the novel and the story centres completely around the conflict between them. The other characters are SECONDARY characters and have a much smaller role to play in the story (although each has an important contribution to make to the development of the plot.)

We can learn things about the characters in novels in many different ways. Here are some of them:

What they look like (physical characteristics),

The way they speak,

The things they say,

What other people say to them/about them,

How they behave,

How they relate to other people.

Think about all these aspects of each of the characters in *I'm The King Of The Castle*. Now draw up a chart for each of the characters listing as many character points as you can and back each one up with evidence from the text. For example:

CHARACTER	CHARACTER POINT	EVIDENCE
Edmund Hooper	cold and unfeeling	compares his dying grandfather to a dead moth

# LOOKING AT DIALOGUE

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In looking at characters you will find out more about them by looking at what they say - looking at their speech or dialogue.

For example, look at the extract from the novel where Helena Kingshaw speaks to Charles after the Hang Wood incident:

‘Pull up the bedcovers, Charles.’

‘I’m too hot.’

‘Well you cannot sleep like that, it would be very silly.’

‘Why would it?’

‘Because you would catch a chill, dear, wouldn’t you? The temperature drops in the middle of the night, when you are asleep.’

‘Last night I slept outside without any sheets and blankets or anything, I didn’t even have a jumper. I was alright then.’

‘I think we shall have to wait and see about that. I have been very worried in case that nasty cough of yours comes back.’

She was sitting right up to him on the bed. He could feel her weight, the shape of her thighs, if he stretched his foot out. He moved away a little.

‘Was it very frightening, darling?’

‘No, it wasn’t frightening at all. It was great.’

‘Oh, I’m sure that you were a little bit afraid, all alone in that wood!’

‘Hooper was. He kept on blubbing.’

‘That is a nasty word.’

He looked away from her, out of the window.

What do you learn about the character from the dialogue in this extract? Here are some ideas:

Kingshaw’s mother fusses,  
She doesn’t understand how he feels,  
She doesn’t really listen to him,  
He feels frustrated by her lack of understanding.

Now choose THREE sections from the novel in which dialogue is important. For each one make a list of the things that you learn about the characters from what they say and how they say it.

## EDMUND HOOPER

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Hooper is one of the central characters in the novel and he does little to make us feel sympathetic towards him. In many ways he seems a nasty, malicious character who revels in tormenting Kingshaw. However, unpleasant though he may be this is perhaps too simple a way of looking at him. A closer examination of the character reveals an altogether more complex character.

Think carefully about all the information that Hill gives us about Hooper and his background and then make a list of the key points you have noted.

Do you think any of the details of his background and upbringing could help to account for his character and behaviour?

Although it is possible to find reasons why Hooper behaves as he does the sheer maliciousness and intensity of his campaign against Kingshaw makes it difficult to feel any sympathy for him.

Now make a list (with page references) of the worst of Hooper's hostile acts against Kingshaw. Choose two incidents from your list and make detailed notes on how Hooper sets about intimidating Kingshaw each time and note how successfully he does it.

Even though Hooper has the upper hand for most of the novel there are moments where Kingshaw temporarily gains the advantage.

Make a list of Hooper's weaknesses and the times when Kingshaw gains the upper hand. What do these moments reveal to you about Hooper's character?

Now write a character study of Hooper summing up what you see as the key features of his personality.

# CHARLES KINGSHAW

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Kingshaw is also a complex character but in nature very different to Hooper. However, in terms of his background Kingshaw does have some things in common with Hooper.

Make a list of the ways in which Kingshaw and Hooper differ and another list of the things that are similar about them.

Kingshaw is not naturally aggressive and seems a sensitive and imaginative boy. We see that he is the kind of boy who is quite retiring and does not like to stand out. We also see that he has some irrational fears which are magnified through his imagination. Hooper very quickly assesses the character of Kingshaw and becomes aware of these fears which he exploits to the full.

List all the things, both real and imaginary that frighten Kingshaw and make notes on how Hooper exploits them.

Another problem area for Kingshaw is his relationship with his mother.

How do you assess this relationship and how does the nature of this relationship contribute to Kingshaw's problems and final tragedy?

There are some points in the novel, though, where Kingshaw shows confidence and fearlessness and fleetingly achieves a kind of dominance over Hooper. Also there are times when, despite his childish fears he shows a very 'adult' and responsible attitude.

What effect do you think these moments have on the overall impact of the novel?

Now write a character study of Charles Kingshaw focusing on the key features of his personality. Support your ideas with quotations or references drawn from the text.

# HELENA KINGSHAW AND JOSEPH HOOPER

15

The adults in the novel are very much secondary characters and as such they are rather two-dimensional. However, they do perform an important function in the novel because it is their lack of understanding and ability to relate to their children that allows Hooper's persecution to thrive.

Start by thinking about Helena Kingshaw. Write down as much information as you can about her and make notes on her relationship with Charles.

Now choose three specific examples which show the kind of relationship Helena Kingshaw has with her son.

Like Helena Kingshaw, Joseph Hooper also shows little understanding of his own son. However, like Edmund, Joseph Hooper can also be seen as a victim of his own background and upbringing.

Make a list of the features of his background which help to make him the kind of character he is.

Choose three extracts from the novel where Joseph Hooper talks to his son. Make notes on how each exchange is presented and what it reveals about the relationship between the two characters.

Another aspect of Joseph Hooper's behaviour that becomes increasingly important, especially towards the end of the novel, is the way that he treats Charles.

What do you notice about his treatment of Charles and the way that Charles responds to him?

Make notes (supported by textual references) on the contribution that Helena Kingshaw and Joseph Hooper make to the scheme of the novel overall.

## ANTHONY FIELDING

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Although very much a minor character Anthony Fielding does have an important role to play in the novel. He is about the same age as Hooper and Kingshaw and is an open and friendly boy. He is a 'normal' kind of boy, even-tempered and untroubled by the kinds of fears that Charles suffers from. He is sensitive to Charles's fears, though, and shows some concern for him.

Look again at the parts of the novel where Fielding appears. Why do you think Susan Hill has included him in the story?

Now pick two pieces of description of Fielding or his home and make notes on these showing what they add to the novel.

# SETTING AND ATMOSPHERE

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The SETTING of the novel has an important role to play in its overall effect and impact. Although basically set at Warings there are several different aspects to consider. Here are some for you to think about:

The house itself, as seen from outside,

The grounds of the house,

The interior of the house,

The description of the Red Room,

Hang Wood - the stream and the pool,

The environment surrounding Warings.

Make brief notes on the way that Hill describes each of these aspects.

Now think carefully about how Hill describes Warings and its grounds. What kind of atmosphere does it seem to you that she creates? How does she create this kind of atmosphere?

Compare this atmosphere with that created through her descriptions of Kingshaw's experiences in Hang Wood.

Choose three different settings from the novel and make notes on the kind of atmosphere she creates for each and how she creates it.

When we talk of the STYLE of a work of literature we are really talking about the ways in which writers use language to create the particular effects that they want. This can cover a whole range of features. Here are some to think about in relation to *I'm The King Of The Castle*.

Hill's use of:

simple, straightforward prose,

vivid descriptions,

suspense,

dialogue,

imagery.

Now let's look a little more closely at each of these.

The basic thing about Hill's PROSE STYLE in the novel is that it is simple and straightforward. She does not use complicated or difficult words and her sentences tend to be short and straightforward too. However, although on the surface Hill's use of language is simple she writes in such a way as to let our own imaginations build up the picture in our minds.

Write down three or four examples from the novel where Hill describes something simply and lets our own imaginations take over and do the rest.

DIALOGUE plays an important part in the novel both in developing the plot and our views of the characters. Like the general prose the language of the conversations is also simple and straightforward. It is worth noting, though, that she does vary her style to suit whichever character is speaking. For example, Mr. Hooper's speech is often stilted and awkwardly formal, even when speaking to his son, which reflects his own difficulty in relating to people on a genuine level. Similarly Hooper's child-like maliciousness comes through in much of his speech.

Choose two examples from the novel where Hill uses dialogue. Make notes on the ways in which Hill creates the dialogue and the effects that she achieves through it.

IMAGERY is part of the use of descriptive language overall. It can refer to any use of language which creates a picture or an image in the mind of the reader in order to make the description more vivid. Very often it involves the use of similes and metaphors. Hill uses both of these a good deal in the novel to add impact to her description or sometimes to help create a particular atmosphere or impression.

Pick five or six metaphors and/or similes that you have found particularly effective and explain how each works and the kind of effects that they create.

Some of the images also work in a symbolic way. For example, many of the images associated with Warings are to do with, or suggestive of, death. On the other hand some of the images used to describe Hang Wood are to do with life and living things.

Find three examples of images that have a symbolic importance in the novel and make notes on how they are used and the effects they create.

# REVISION QUESTIONS

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1. Compare and contrast the characters of Hooper and Kingshaw. You should refer to specific details from the novel to support your ideas.
2. Is it possible to feel any sympathy at all for Edmund Hooper or do you see him as a totally evil character?
3. 'Both Joseph Hooper and Helena Kingshaw are complete failures as parents.' How far do you agree with this view?
4. Re-read the episode where Kingshaw runs away to Hang Wood. What is the significance of this episode in terms of the overall development of the plot?
5. Do you agree with the view that it is far easier to understand the character of Hooper than that of Kingshaw?
6. How effective do you find Hill's use of imagery in *I'm The King Of The Castle*?
7. Choose one episode from the novel where the setting adds to the effect of what is happening. Write about your chosen episode, commenting on what has impressed you in the description of place and atmosphere.
8. Examine two episodes from the novel where you have found dialogue effectively used to increase your understanding of plot and/or character. Comment on how Hill achieves this in your chosen episodes.
9. Why do you think Susan Hill chooses to introduce a new character, Anthony Fielding, so late in the novel? Discuss the contribution that you think he makes to the novel overall.
10. How does Susan Hill create suspense in the novel? Refer to two examples from the novel to illustrate your ideas.