 Concept: The nature of reality

Below you will find many quotes from Jasper Jones that relate to the idea of reality, the truth, and characters representing themselves contrary to these things. As Charlie discovers throughout the narrative, reality can be a very complicated concept. Both he and Jasper talk at great length about discovering the truth of Laura Wishart’s death. Charlie wonders about the possibility of constructing a narrative that can truthfully represent Laura’s story. Perhaps even more problematic is the idea that people in Corrigan choose to believe lies because it’s easier, or that they present themselves in ways that are completely at odds with their true nature. Three strong cases of this are:

* Charlie’s mother, who tries to present herself as an upstanding citizen of the town – socialising as a part of the CWA (Country Women’s Association) and imagining herself as a good mother. However, at home she demands obedience from Charlie and becomes almost hysterical as a result, and Charlie later discovers that she has been having a secret affair with an unnamed man.
* The Sergeant, who acts paternally (fatherly) towards Charlie but later brutalises Jasper Jones in a jail cell.
* Peter Wishart, the Shire President and the town’s most public figure, a symbol of decency and the law, eventually revealed to be the most vile of monsters in his treatment of his daughters.

In your book, rule up the following table, and sort 8 quotes of your choice into the columns. One column has been left blank for you to come up with your own category. You may need to check your copy of Jasper Jones to understand the context of each quote.

Truth

| Importance of Appearances | Making sense of the ‘truth’ | Truth as a basis for conflict |       |
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Quotes

Like when you first realise that there is no such thing as magic. Or that nothing actually answers your prayers, or really ever listens Page 14

(Charlie) “This make no sense: to cover this with lies to uncover the truth”.

(Jasper Jones) “All that matters is how this looks” Page 20

(Jasper Jones) “See, everyone here’s afraid of something and nuthin. This town, that’s how they live , and they don’t even know it. They stick to what they know, what they bin told. They don’t unnerstand that it’s just a choice you make” Page 23

(Jasper Jones) “They don’t know shit about what it is to be me. They never ask why” Page 35

(Charlie, on Jasper Jones) I think he’s the most honest person in this town. He has no reason to lie. He has no reputation to protect” Page 44

See, most people you meet, they’ll talk to you through fifty layers of gauze and tinting… They lie about things that don’t even matter Page 44

It’s like I’ve started to read a tragic book from the last page, and I need to try to fill in the gaps, to write what came before. But I can’t. Not without Jasper Jones. Not without the truth Page 72

Truth is stranger than fiction. Listen: people are willing to swallow any old tripe as long as you say it without flinching. Page 75

(Charlie’s Father) “It’s a little like when people are afraid of the dark. Often it’s not the darkness they’re afraid of, it’s the fact that they don’t know what’s in it. And because they can’t see, because they’re not sure, they start to imagine there are more sinister things afloat than there ordinarily would be” Page 109-110

(Jasper Jones) “They’re either lying on purpose, or they’re fucken stupid” Page 140

(Charlie, on Jasper Jones) Maybe that’s how Jasper Jones navigates this world and comes out on top, in spite of the shitty hands he gets dealt with over and over. That poker glaze, like a superhero mask. Hiding his suspicion, giving nothing away. But it is still a lie, isn’t it? It’s just a deflection. That’s his trick. That shrug is just a big act. A myth. It’s his way of hiding his rubbish cards. Page 143

I’m always a step removed. Eliza, Jasper, my father. I can wade through the dark, but I can only see as far as the guttering candle allows me. All I know is the end, the part when I walked in Page 149

(Jasper Jones) “Too many hole and gaps and slippery bits that I can’t get past” Page 151

People just kind of used what they saw around them, and made it up from there. Page 152

I remember thinking that if I hadn’t seen the cuts and bruises on Jasper’s face for myself, I wouldn’t have thought for a second that this burly paternal copper was capable of locking up an innocent boy without charge and beating him. If Jasper Jones hadn’t shown me the cigarette burns on his shoulders just hours before, if I hadn’t touched their ugly pink pucker with my fingertips, I wouldn’t have suspected this man to be the monster he was’ Page 166

Nobody ever mentioned Rosie’s ruptured side. It seemed consigned to some other history. And the lies and suppositions were just heaped upon the stack. The story became truth. It became stone. And Jack Lionel’s portrait was smudged with ink and smeared in shit, and he made no effort to wipe it clean. And so he became the monster and the killer that they all said he was. Page 248

Lionel expected Jasper Jones to have been poisoned by the lie. Planted by his father and fertilised by the town Page 248

I’m not sure where to look. The water, Eliza, the glade. There are lies everywhere. Page 356

And there’s always more to know. Always. The mystery just gets covered in history. Or is it the other way around? It gets wrested and wrapped in some other riddle. Page 309

Once you’re done, pick three of the quotes you chose and analyse them. How has Silvey constructed these particular quotes and what literary techniques did he use?

Now, pick one quote. Look at your analysis of it and the way it links to the theme (truth and the nature of reality). Write one paragraph that answers this question: In what way does Silvey explore the concept of truth?