

PART A

'By not helping Filippo to escape much earlier, Michele becomes an accessory to the kidnapping.'

Do you agree with this statement?

Niccolo Ammaniti's *I'm Not Scared* centers around the protagonist, Michele discovering a lifeless body of a boy in a hole whilst undertaking a childhood dare. Michele keeps his discovery a secret from his friends and begins to regularly visit the boy as he learns that his name is Filippo and that he is a kidnap victim.

Despite constantly visiting Filippo, Michele does not attempt to help Filippo escape until the final stages of the novel. By this stage it becomes apparent that Michele's father, Pino along with a few other men from the town are involved with Filippo's kidnapping. Michele's failure to help Filippo escape does not make him an accessory to the kidnapping, moreover he is portrayed as a scared boy who does not understand the magnitude of the situation he has fallen into.

Over time Michele develops a friendship with Filippo, providing him with food and emotional support. Michele does not seem to consider helping Filippo to escape as he considers Filippo to be his secret find. 'He wasn't Skull's. He wasn't Barbara's either. He wasn't Salvatore's. He was mine. He was my secret discovery.' (p30)

Filippo seems to be more afraid of the outside world than Michele, as he begins to lose his sight, physical and mental health. Filippo considers Michele to be his 'guardian angel' as he attempts to care for him and is the only visitor which Filippo trusts. 'The little bears talk, but sometimes they tell lies. The angel always tells the truth. You're the guardian angel.' (p75)

It is not until the final stages of their friendship when Michele realises the bleakness of Filippo's that he attempts to rescue him, resulting in Michele being shot by mistake.

For Michele, deciding to help Filippo escape was a courageous act as it took him a long time to overcome his fear. Michele is a very cautious and scared boy, often imagining that he is a Navajo Indian, as a means of overcoming his fear, when he finds himself in frightening situations. 'And Tiger Jack would go up that hill even if an international conference of all the witches, bandits and ogres on the planet was taking place there, because he was a Navajo Indian, and he was fearless.' (p44)

Michele was also deterred after being confronted by Felice who threatened him into such a state that he urinated his pants. Another deterrent was Michele's father who demanded that he stop visiting Filippo unless he wanted Filippo to be killed. "Listen to me carefully. If you go back there they'll kill him. They've sworn it. You mustn't go back there again if you don't want them to shoot him and if you want us to go and live in the city. And you must never talk about him. Do you understand?" (p158) Michele subsequently promised his father that he would no longer visit Filippo.

Despite this, it does not implicate that Michele is an accessory to kidnapping as he is only a boy following his father's orders.

After toying with his own moral values, Michele soon decides that he can no longer stay away from Filippo as he feels that he has let him down by not visiting him. 'I wouldn't set him free, I would just talk to him. I wouldn't be doing anything wrong.' (p161) Michele's initial intentions were not to release Filippo, he was more concerned for his welfare and checking that he was all right. Michele's motives soon change after he learns that the intentions are to kill Filippo.

At this point Michele is unable to stay away from Filippo any longer and builds up the courage to try and free him. Michele imagines that he is Tiger Jack as a means of overcoming his fear. '...I must think what the Indian would do in my place.' (p197) Michele succeeds in freeing Filippo and is subsequently shot by his father who mistook him for Filippo.

Michele's bravery in attempting to free Filippo and knowingly putting himself in danger demonstrates the magnitude of fear he had to overcome, an act he was incapable of performing earlier.

Arguably, Michele could have or should have attempted to help Filippo escape earlier, but he was only a young boy who was not only scared of the situation he was in but also torn between his father's forbidding him to continue visiting Filippo and his own moral values.

In the end Michele does attempt to rescue Filippo once he realises that Filippo is in a fatal position. Michele is only a young boy, who cannot be perceived as an accessory to kidnapping, merely a child who is unluckily involved in a situation that is out of his depth.

PART B

Discuss the significance of the novel's title, I'm Not Scared.

As the title of Niccolò Ammaniti's *I'm Not Scared* suggests, the novel is based on one's struggle to overcome their fear. More specifically the novel contemplates the protagonist, Michele's struggle to overcome his fear as he attempts to act in line with the morals that he deems to be important.

Michele's innocence sees him consider fictitious villains as a reference point as he negotiates and overcomes his fears.

Michele imagines monsters, witches and ogres as a major source of his fear. As a result he uses the possible existence of these creatures as a reference point for his fear. In conjunction with his imagining monsters, Michele also imagines that he is Tiger Jack, a Navajo Indian as a means of attaining the courage to overcome his fears. 'And Tiger Jack would go up that hill even if an international conference of all the witches, bandits and ogres on the planet was taking place there, because he was a Navajo Indian, and he was fearless.' (p44) Michele attempts on several occasions to be as fearless as Tiger Jack with some degree of success.

Michele consistently struggles with his morals as they form the basis of a lot of his decision making. Michele is very astute about his moral values and is conflicted at times with what he is being forced to do or be involved in and what he knows is right and wrong.

One of the first examples of this is when he finally stands up to Skull when Skull demands that Barbara expose herself as her 'forfeit'. 'There was something dirty, something... I don't know. Something nasty, that's all.' (p19)

Eventually Michele speaks out suggesting that he take the forfeit for her. Michele had previously mentioned that he did not particularly like Barbara, yet he knew that what Skull was demanding of her was wrong and gained the courage to speak out against him for the first time.

The most definable moment when Michele overcomes his fear is when he initially finds Filippo. He was required to go and explore the mountain alone as a part of his forfeit. In the meantime he discovered Filippo's lifeless body in a hole.

In fact, Michele kept his discovery a secret as he continued to visit and support Filippo. Eventually, Michele learnt that his father, Pino, was involved in Filippo's kidnapping, again challenging his values.

Soon after, Michele is exposed and his father forbids him to continue visiting Filippo. Michele agrees, however he is divided between betraying his father and betraying his friend. Michele decides to help Filippo to escape.

During this scene Michele calls on Tiger Jack to give him the courage to perform the task he has set out to do. '...I must think what the Indian would do in my place.' (p197) Michele is unquestionable brave, successfully freeing Filippo and being shot himself in the process.

The experiences Michele has are indicative of the title, *I'm Not Scared* as he continually attempts to overcome his fear as a means of achieving what he sets out to do with his life.

He overcomes his fear of haunting, imaginary characters. He overcomes his fear of his bullying, untrustworthy peers and ultimately his fear of his father's threats. Michele is steadfast and moralistic, often torn between what he knows is right and the expectations of others.

Regardless, for a nine year old boy Michele proves that he's not scared by his defiance of what he considers to be the actions of unmoralistic people, especially proving that he is not scared.