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“A Clockwork Orange” by Anthony Burgess

Dear Mr. Burgess,

I recently read *A Clockwork Orange* and to say it changed my life immensely is an understatement. When reading it I was hoping to have a better understanding of dystopian novels for speech and debate but instead I found a kinship with this book. When reading I found myself asking the same question, “Who was wrong?” See, I’ve always thought of the world in black and white. When I was 8 I knew stealing was wrong and if you stole you should be punished. When I was 12 I thought if I cheated I would be punished because it’s wrong. This book showed me that “right” and “wrong” are an illusion. A hope based on one’s inner morality.

When reading *A Clockwork Orange*, you know Alex is a bad person. A killer and a serial rapist, but that doesn’t make the people who “cured” him good people. After undergoing the forced conversion therapy he becomes “good” for a while and then reverts back into who he was. Finally, he decides to be a good person because he wants a family. In the beginning, he and his friends gang-rape a woman, “Plunging, I could slooshy cries of agony...Then after me it was right old Dim should have his turn...and Pete and Georgie had theirs” (pg. 30) so we know he’s bad but after undergoing the forced therapy, “then I began to feel sick. I had like pains all over and felt I could sick up and at the same time not sick up, and I began to feel like in distress” (pg. 101), he started to become “good.” we feel justified in thinking this is okay but they are forcing a “sick” like reaction from him for the conversion therapy. They are forcing sickness and psychological terror on him. Is that morally correct? Well, it depends on who you ask.

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If you were to ask a cynic, they'd say yes. He terrorized the streets of London, raped and hurt people, all up to the age of 14 and continued on, but if you asked an optometrist, they'd say no. Two wrongs don't make a right, it goes against every single ethic in the book and in the end, it didn't work. The therapy was shoved out of him around the same time he was shoved out of a window. He may have hurt people but that doesn't give the government the right to hurt him back, even if their intentions are moral. So what is the correct answer?

Truthfully, I think it was justified. He ruined people's lives in ways most people can't imagine. Being brutally raped in front of your husband, watching your wife get raped by 14 year olds does something to your mind. He hurt people in ways that can't recuperate. What the government did to him was wrong, I'm not denying that, but it was justified. All actions have consequences and he met his, while it was unethical so was he. Imagine if they didn't, he would've lived the rest of his life as a rapist beater who served "ultra-violence" until someone or something killed him. It was immoral and unethical, but necessary. The effect this book has on readers is astounding, people struggle with their own sense of personal morality so when the protagonist is an antagonist, we feel conflicted. We know it's wrong but how wrong is too wrong? That is the question we need to be asking.

I've always grappled with right and wrong, but I don't think that's the issue. Instead, it should be justified, or not. This book showed me that just because an action is bad doesn't mean we shouldn't do it, they should've put him under conversion therapy to

help make the world a better place, no matter how unethical. There's no excuse for hurting people, and he got his just desserts.

Thank you,

Tamara