

THE KINGZ

My father was in a gang when he was around my age. That's how he and Ma first met. She was working in a picture theatre when his gang came in and sat up the back. They started acting up – throwing popcorn and laughing real loud at the movie. People were leaving the theatre, too scared to say anything in case they got beat up.

But Ma marched right up there to the back row and shone her torch in their faces.

"You dorks better behave," she hissed, "or I'll call the cops."

It cracks me up when she tells that story. But Ma is staunch, so I reckon it's true.

language feature:

Simile/Metaphor/
Personification/Colloquialism
What literary device has the author used here? What was the purpose for using this device? How did it help your understanding of the situation?

staunch
clarify:

issue: What issues surround the formation of gangs in society? Should gangs be banned? What is your stance on this?

You don't act up when Ma's around, simple as that. If she knew I was meeting Nelson, she'd have a fit. She says if it wasn't for that gang my father was running with back then, he'd never have taken off. She says my father became a different person when he was with his gang. She hates gangs like a snake hates a mongoose.



beyond the text:

What connections can you make to the fact that Joad is hiding his meeting with Nelson from his mum?

setting:

Is Joad being unwise meeting with the Kingz in this setting?

Why/why not? What elements in the setting do you think represent danger?

"Let's take a walk," says Nelson.

We leave the bridge behind and walk along the towpath. It's dark, but every now and then a streetlight shows the way. Our boots sound loud on the gravel, and the water on our right is oily black.

I try not to think about how I could end up in that stinking river, and Ma would never see me again. Kids tell stories about the Kingz – about how they vanish people they don't like. Snuff you out like a candle.

There was a guy a while back, his body turned up in the river. Maybe he'd got on the wrong side of somebody. People say it was the Kingz who did it.

question:

What strategies are used by Nelson to sell gang membership to Joad?

In the dark space between two streetlights, Nelson stops and lights a cigarette. His eyes are black when he looks at me. "Here's the deal," he says. "Not just anybody can be in the Kingz."

This is the moment I've been waiting for. He is going to set me the test. I hold my breath and shove my hands in my jacket pockets so Nelson won't see them shaking. I'm scared about the test, though I'd never show it. Whatever Nelson tells me to do, I'll do it. I may be skinny, but I can be tough, just like the Kingz.

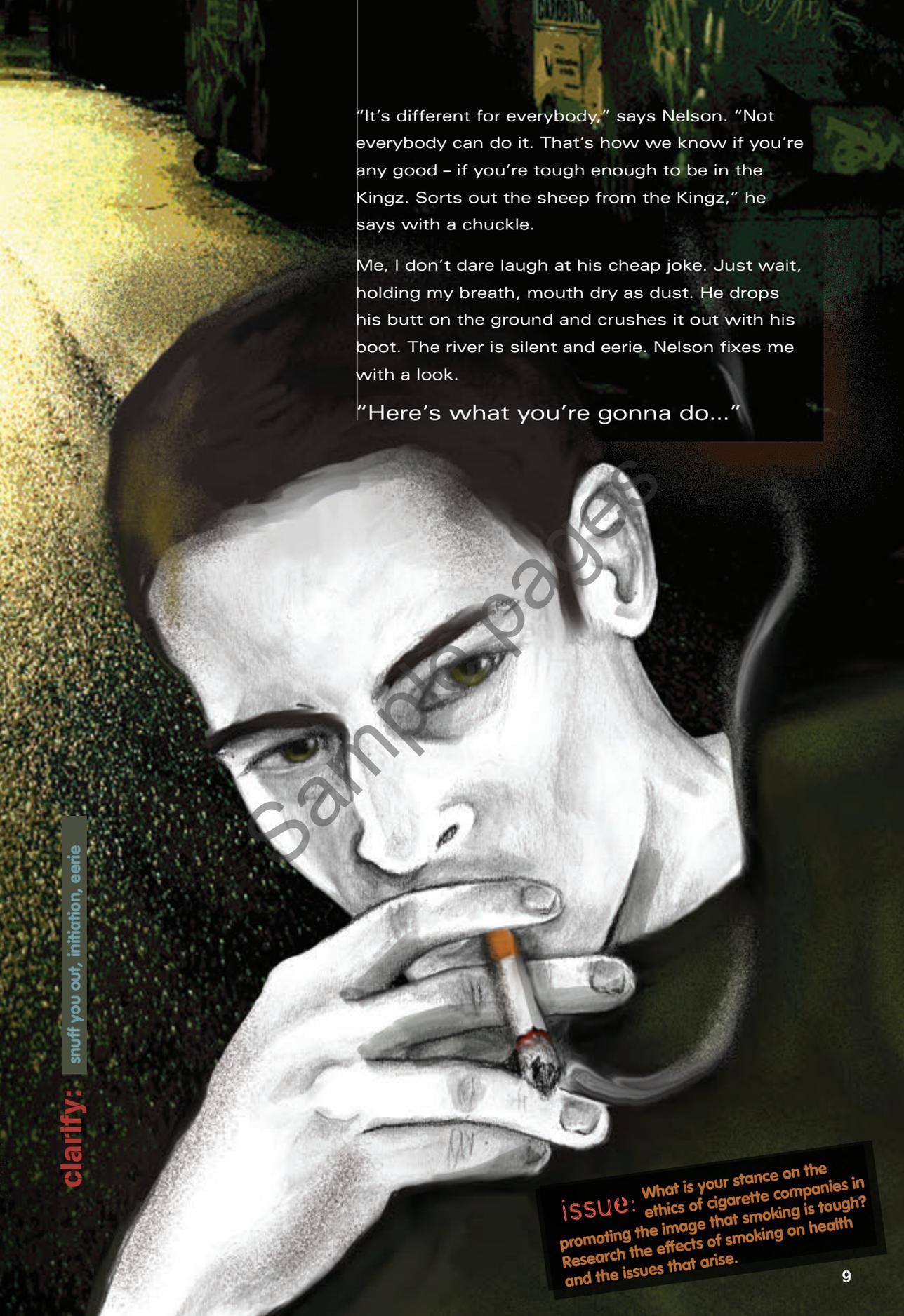
"We've got this..." He smiles then – a thin smile. "This initiation." Smoke coils around his head.

"I've heard," I say.

language feature:

SYMBOLISM

What symbolism did the author use here? How did it help your understanding? What did the author want to convey to the reader?



"It's different for everybody," says Nelson. "Not everybody can do it. That's how we know if you're any good - if you're tough enough to be in the Kingz. Sorts out the sheep from the Kingz," he says with a chuckle.

Me, I don't dare laugh at his cheap joke. Just wait, holding my breath, mouth dry as dust. He drops his butt on the ground and crushes it out with his boot. The river is silent and eerie. Nelson fixes me with a look.

"Here's what you're gonna do..."

clarify: snuff you out, initiation, eerie

issue: What is your stance on the ethics of cigarette companies in promoting the image that smoking is tough? Research the effects of smoking on health and the issues that arise.