

INSIDE THE BONE BOX

BY ANTHONY FERNER

- Why do you think the author chose 'Inside the Bone Box' as the title of the novella?

- 'Inside the Bone Box' has as its main character an overweight neurosurgeon. Do you sympathise with him? Do you identify him as a hero or an anti-hero? Why?

- The novella also tackles the problems of a married couple and is written both from the perspective of the husband and the wife. How did Alyson's narrative influence your perception of Nick Anderton?

- Alyson is shown to the reader at her lowest point in life. Do Anderton's actions justify Alyson's behaviour? Find two passages in the book to support your point.

- 'What could he now aspire to, or hope for, other than to become heavier, slower, less good at what he did?' (p. 6) Do you think the novella has a pessimistic and fatalistic tone? Could Nick and Alyson ever get better?

- The novella has an open ending - no real resolution is presented for Nick and Alyson and the reader is made unaware of the results of Nick's recovery or Alyson's path to sobriety. Would you agree? How does that make you feel? Would the characters deserve a happy ending?

- During the novella we see Anderton interact with many different characters all in different ways (for example, his registrar, his daughter, Gianluca at Le Frattaglie, etc.). Pick one of these and explore their relationship.

- 'Free will is an illusion. [...] Thinking you chose to do something, and that your choice leads to an action is just a trick of the brain.' (p. 84) Do you agree with Anderton? Or is he using his belief in the absence of free will to justify his actions?