

Sample text: Compare and contrast a written and film narrative

Storm Boy – From book to film

A lone pelican soars above a stormy coastline and below him a young boy wanders along a seemingly endless beach. Who is the boy? What is his story? This scene begins the film version of the book *Storm Boy* by Colin Thiele. The basic plot of the book and the film are the same. Both tell the story of a boy who lives with his father among the sand hills on the windswept coast of South Australia and how he befriends an orphaned pelican. However, there are noticeable differences in the way the book and the film deal with elements of the setting, plot and characters.

Colin Thiele's book begins with a passage that includes many expressive words and phrases to create images of the area known as the Coorong. This use of literary description continues throughout the book, slowly building the atmosphere and mood of the story. The film begins by using long, wide shots of the landscape that zoom in giving a closer and closer view of the boy and his surroundings. In contrast to the slow approach of the book, this technique quickly shows the area and reveals its remoteness and sense of loneliness.

The main characters (Storm Boy, his father Hideaway Tom and a local Aboriginal man called Fingerbone Bill) appear in both the book and the film. While some new characters (the school teacher and the ranger) are included in the film, it is the portrayal of the main characters and their relationships that represent the main difference between the film and the book. In the book, Fingerbone Bill lives nearby and is well known to Storm Boy and his father. He is described as old and jolly, but there is very little development of his character – his inclusion in the book largely supports the development of the other two main characters. In contrast, Fingerbone Bill makes a dramatic entrance in the film. The scene shows a close-up of a frightened Storm Boy looking out from his hiding place, then a long, low-angle shot shows Fingerbone Bill as he strides gracefully through the reeds towards him. These techniques establish an air of power and mystery and introduce Fingerbone as a character of importance. Fingerbone's character develops much more in the film than it does in the book as his relationship with the boy changes from stranger to friend and teacher. Likewise, the character of Hideaway Tom is different in the film. In the book, the father and son seem comfortable and happy with each other right from the start,

while in the film the father seems cold and distant. This is evident at the beginning of the film when an excited Storm Boy brings home a radio he found and his father tells him, 'Throw that in the rubbish!'

The book *Storm Boy*, as mentioned previously, contains a lot of literary description, but is still a relatively short story. On the other hand, the film, as well as introducing new characters and changing the existing characters, has added new incidents to develop and extend the plot. There is the night scene where Storm Boy is alone and dune buggies roar over the hills and begin to wreck his humpy. The camera work in this scene makes it exciting, but also helps the audience to identify with Storm Boy and feel his fear during the attack. One of the most obvious differences in the plot is the death of Storm Boy's closest friend, Mr Percival the pelican. The book contains a detailed description of how the pelican dies in Storm Boy's arms. In contrast, the film only shows the pelican missing and the boy searching for him before Fingerbone eventually tells him he is dead and shows him the grave.

Compared to the book, the film has better created the remoteness and changing atmosphere of the area. Being a feature film, it had the time to add and develop the characters as well as extend the plot of the book. However, both the book and the film have stood the test of time and are still delighting their audiences and will no doubt continue to do so for many years to come.

