

How does Swindells create, and maintain, tension in his novel *Stone Cold*?

Below are some points to consider when answering this question. They are not in any particular order, nor are they a complete list of 'what to include': it is up to you to consider the best order of points for your essay, to find appropriate quotations, to link ideas together, to ensure your essay is fluent and, most importantly, to ensure it answers the question set.

In your **introduction**, give a **brief summary** of the novel. This **should not** be a biography of Swindells or include pally references to 'Robert'. **Don't** copy the blurb down off the back of the book or download a summary from Wikipedia, Amazon or anywhere you happen to find one on the internet – It's your writing we're interested in. Remember the introduction should introduce your essay: **summarise** how Swindells creates and maintains tension in the story. You might start your introduction with something like, 'Written by Swindells in 1993, *Stone Cold* tells the story of (then write a brief summary). Throughout the novel the reader feels (again a brief summary of what we might feel, related to tension, when reading the book) because (why do we feel this? How does Swindells make us have these feelings?)

**Dual Narrative:** a story told by two people. The narratives of Link and Shelter often over-lap in that they recount similar events from two different perspectives.

**Short diary-style chapters:** We feel as if we're gaining glimpses of what these characters do and feel but before we become too engrossed in what these two are doing, the narrative jumps back to the other one.

**Pseudonyms/Nicknames:** We don't know the real names of most of the characters so there is a sense throughout the novel of never really knowing the truth.

**Prediction:** Because of Shelter's murderous intentions and his description of Link and Ginger ('laughing boys') we know that he intends to kill them both. Once he murders Ginger we know it is quite possible he'll kill Link too.

**Style:** Link's narrative has a lot of short sentences which make it seem hurried and anxious and as if he doesn't trust anyone. Shelter's narrative reads like an army diary: the style is ordered, abrupt and without much feeling.

**Language:** Link seems to confide in the reader – his opening line is, 'You can call me Link' so although he doesn't tell us his real name there is a sense of friendship because he introduces himself. Shelter, on the other hand, tells us the name he is going to give himself when he meets 'the street people': he's not actually introducing himself to us; we are onlookers to his murderous operation. Link's style of language is the same throughout the novel – he often swears and he seems quite at ease in the company of the reader – whether he is speaking to his friends or to us. Shelter, in contrast, changes the way he speaks to each of his murder victims – his chosen language is part of his act. The way he re-tells his crimes to the reader is cold and shows how calculated the murders are. He asks quite a few rhetorical questions which he answers himself: he has thought it all through.

**Structure:** The diary entries are inter-linked so through most of the book we hear alternately from Link and then Shelter. Towards the end of the novel we lose Shelter's direct voice as Link narrates the ending, so the last, very ominous, words we hear from Shelter are, 'Ha, ha, ha. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!'

**The beginning and the ending:** From the outset we know Link is still on the streets as he starts the novel by saying he's sitting in a doorway. This means throughout the story we know his situation is not resolved – he is still homeless. At the end, he re-iterates this and seems to metaphorically walk away from us.

**Gail:** at first, we might feel pleased that Link has formed a relationship whilst homeless but then he drops hints that all is not right and we begin to feel uneasy about her role in the story.

**Anything else?** Think of some more points of your own to include.