Anil by Ridjal Noor

Themes
Dreams of the future
Relationships/ Family – the role of each member of the family
Culture
Childhood
Violence
Guilt
Repression
Fear
Love
Shame
Superstitions: Lack of Education?
Morality – what is right/wrong
Treatment of women
Justice

Plot
A boy, Anil, lives in Malaysia with his mother & father, who is a bully to his family, but timid & respectful to his employer, the Headman. It is night-time and he is asleep in a hut with his parents. He needs the toilet but doesn’t want to wake his father & suffer a beating. However, he sees people outside and discovers the Headman’s brother, Marimuthu hanging a woman, at which he is traumatised. The next day, the body has been taken down and we learn that it is Marimuthu’s wife. However, Marimuthu is pretending that his wife has commited suicide. Anil tells the village & the Headman that he saw Marimuthu kill the woman and the Headman goes off to talk to Anil’s father about him. In the next section, we learn that Anil is being sent to school (a great opportunity) but it is so that the Headman can cover up his brother’s actions as a murderer. At the end, both father & son explore their decisions and whether they made the right/wrong choice given the consequences. The last scene shows the Headman & his brother, the Headman smiling at his brother and the brother showing relief that they got away with it.

Form
- Omniscient narrator – allows us to learn the feelings of each of the characters – an overview of the story.
- Short story bildungsroman: shows the character growing up/maturing when he learns the nature of good/evil and something about morality, “I will never forget this town and the sin that it buries today.” (line 216) as a child, we believe in right & wrong and that sins are punished. However, he learns that there is not always justice in the world, and in fact sin is metaphorically buried.
• **Epiphany:** as above: “I will never forget this town and the sin that it buries today.” (line 216.)

**Structure**

• Lines 93-95- powerful **visual- cinematic description** of the body shocks us- climax shocking so early in the story.
• Lines 41- 60- the boy’s fears are presented: father, fear of the dark, mosquito, ghosts- writer uses **one word lines** to reflect the **tension**, ‘They. Peyi. Pesase. Ghosts.’- also ‘Dare he?’- the **omniscient narrator** draws us into Anil’s mind.
• Lines 159-160- the second section is used to describe the aftermath where Anil finds himself accusing the murderer, ‘You killed her.’ We are left on a cliff-hanger as we wonder what the consequences will be, ‘...about this son of yours.’
• See epiphany is form.
• Lines 198-202- we are now given **Ragunathan’s perspective** and the writer presents his confused shame as Anil is sent away.

**Language**

• Lines 1-14 (opening paragraph): heat is emphasised to create a claustrophobic and confined **setting**, ‘hot, sweltering’- contrasts with the **image** of the star Anil watches, ‘a small star shone...’ as his dreams set him apart (omniscient narrator allows us to see Anil’s perspective and draws us to him.)
• Lines 21-31- **physical details** of mother reinforce the heat and discomfort/pain of the setting and their lives, ‘wet patch...layers of fat’- a child’s view amuses us ‘Wheee...the fly slid down’ but is mixed with the accepted pain/violence/abuse ‘the bruise...where Appa...had hit her.’
• Lines 69- 74- **symbolism** of the tree- from **childish view** ‘...a tree that ate little children.’ To shocking reality ‘They were hanging a woman.’
• Lines 222- end- the worm **simile** used to describe how Marimuthu views the train/the truth within Anil reflects the relief he feels at having escaped justice- the heat of his wife’s injustice distorts the train and makes the image sinister, but even more sinister to the reader is the ‘shadow of a smile’ which hints that all is under control again.

**How to use PETER for analysis:**

P- The writer uses a star at the beginning of the story and after the climax of the murder to highlight Anil’s innocence and isolation,

E- ‘silencing the sobs that wracked his little body, as a star shimmered above.’

T- The repeated symbolism of the star as well as the alliteration of ‘silencing the sobs’ and ‘star shimmered’ **E**- **draws our attention to his vulnerability and perhaps loss of innocence as he witnesses such a crime. R- We cannot help but feel pity for Anil’s character as we share his pain and terror. O- create your own other interpretation here...