

'In Church', by Iain Crichton Smith – Approaches to Questions

Satisfying Ending / Key Incident / Climax

- Briefly describe what happens in the ending/the key incident/the climax – the deserter's murder of Colin.
- Discuss how well the ending is foreshadowed ('mirage', 'pale', "are you alone?")
- Discuss how the ending explores the destructive impact of isolation (the once devout deserter is now willing to kill).
- Discuss how the theme of the destructiveness of war is shown through Colin's murder (he's away from the battlefield, on leave – he still dies as a result of the war).
- Discuss how the theme of the destructiveness of war is shown through the multiple reversals and ironies (Colin speaks English, but would have survived if he were German; Colin is murdered by someone dressed as a priest, who shouldn't commit crimes; Colin dies in a church, which should be a place of sanctuary).

Theme / Issue / Message

- Discuss Crichton Smith's depictions of combat, focusing on one (Colin's memories of the artillery battles, Colin's memories of the dogfight between the British and German planes, the deserter's memories of the football truce and its business-like end).
- Discuss the two birds attacking the other bird, and how this shows how violent conflict exists throughout nature.
- Discuss how the deserter's morals, faith, and habits have been warped by the war – he has gone from a devout soldier (albeit one who doesn't like other people much) to a skulking hermit, feeding on rats and rabbits, who is willing to commit murder.

- Discuss how the destructiveness of war is shown to spread beyond the battlefield, and beyond one's country: Colin is killed in a church, a place of sanctuary, away from the battlefield.
- Discuss all the other ways in which war has upset or destroyed the normal way of things: Colin is killed by a man dressed as a priest; Colin would have been spared had he been speaking English; Colin is killed while he's on leave; Colin is killed by someone he agrees completely with.