

Monster Book Report

In *Monster*, by Walter Dean Myers, the reader learns from Steve Harmon's experiences that sometimes guilt or innocence of a person might not be determined by solid evidence but by onlooker's opinions and interpretation of the crime. There is not a large amount of scientific evidence in the case against Steve Harmon, so the jury must rely on Steve's background information, their opinions of guilt and innocence, and the testimonies of the witnesses who are mostly criminals. From Steve's trial, the reader learns that a person's guilt or innocence is often determined by their status in life, even by coincidence.

In a journal one of Steve's entries he ponders, "What did I do? Anybody can walk into a drugstore and look around. Is that what I'm on trial for? I didn't do nothing! I didn't do nothing! But everybody is just messed up with the pain. I didn't fight with Mr. Nesbitt. I didn't take any money from him". This quote shows that Steve believes he is innocent and that it was a mere coincidence that he was in the store just before the robbery. Steve Harmon lives in the same neighborhood as "Bobo" Evans, James King and Osvaldo Cruz and he is acquainted with all three men.

The fact that Steve was in the store and knew all the people involved in the crime leads the jury to believe that he was a part of the crime. Steve's innocence or guilt will be partly determined because of these things. The testimonies during the trial will also affect the jury's verdict of guilt or innocence. Mrs. Henry's testimony showed Harmon 's innocence. When she was called to the stand, Petrocelli questioned Henry about what she had witnessed. Mrs. Henry stated, "I saw two young men engaged in an argument.

Then I saw one of them grab the drugstore owner by the collar". This tells the jury that either Steve is an extremely bad look out or that it was a coincidence and he was set up. This testimony could lead the jury to believe that Steve could be innocent or that the witness was questionable and unreliable. Later, Petrocelli asked Mrs. Henry to identify one of the men in the store. She clearly pointed out James King. "Let the record show that Mrs. Henry has indicated that the defendant, James King, was one of the men in the drugstore on that day" (Myers 164).

This means that there was only one other man in the store who helped commit the crime. That man was Mr. "Bobo" Evans. According to Mrs. Henry's testimony, it could be determined that Steve had already left the area and there was

nothing he could do to stop the murder of Mr. Nesbitt. This also means that the jury's opinions on certain issues can affect the outcome of a trial. Finally, this book shows that the guilt or innocence of a person may be determined by how the jury feels on political issues, or how they interpret what has been said.

In the United States, a person is supposed to be assumed innocent until proven guilty but Defense attorney Kathy O'Brien argues that innocent people are often considered guilty, "But in reality, it depends on how the jury interprets the case" (Myers 79). In the case of Steve Harmon, the line between guilt and innocence is very hazy, so the jury must come to a verdict by using scientific evidence, the testimonies, background information, their own opinions, and finally their interpretation. The difference between guilt and innocence is reflected in the eyes of the jury

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