

A Clockwork Orange

Of all Anthony Burgess' work, *A Clockwork Orange* was the most under-rated. To his shock and surprise, with the help of the film by Stanley Kubrick, the novel became his most popular works. It was one of five and a half novels he wrote in 1960 when he was diagnosed with an inoperable brain tumour. The novel focuses on a futuristic society in which youth violence is growing at an alarming rate. The main character, Alex, is a fifteen year old boy and leader of a gang of three others: juveniles who spend the nights roaming city streets, beating and robbing men, and raping women. After one victim, an elderly woman, dies and he is betrayed by his gang, Alex is sentenced to prison for fourteen years. After a couple years of being imprisoned, Alex is the subject of another accidental murder and is chosen to be the first candidate for a new technique of punishment: Ludovico's Technique. Alex is given a drug to make him feel deathly ill, and then forced to watch films of extreme violence. After the two weeks of this new state-issued technique, Alex is set free. His is, however, forever punished as the mere thought of violence will bring him to his knees in sickness. The government has removed his freedom of choice in return for a life-time of good-deeds. Is it better for one to choose to be bad or to be conditioned to be good? It is the fundamental question raised by Burgess in his novel *A Clockwork Orange*.

"They have turned you into something other than a human being. You have no power of choice any longer. You are committed to socially acceptable acts, a little machine capable only of good."

"What's it going to be then eh?"

The only time Alex truly changes is at the end of the novel. Some may say he changes after he has left the Clinique where he was "cured", however, I feel he was changed by another force instead of on his own free will. At the close of the novel, he is allowed to go back to his violent ways without the feeling of sickness; however, he has lost the taste for violence along with his youth. He is now in search of a future he can share with a family.

I would strongly suggest that this novel goes nowhere near a junior high school; however, I feel it is a mandatory read for someone in high school close to my age and that of Alex himself. *A Clockwork Orange* makes me realize how lucky I am to have the freedom of choice; while this remains true, I must direct my choices in the direction of goodness and personal well-being.