Candidate 3 evidence

In what ways does Ammaniti portray Michele as morally stronger than the adults around him?

The novel opens with Michele and his friends, enjoying childhood freedom as they hurdle through the splendour of golden, sun kissed wheat fields in Acqua Traverse. A lazy, steaming, Italian summer set in 1978, and from first glance, Ammaniti has created a world that is seemingly carefree. Beneath Ammaniti's beautiful landscape, however, lies a dark secret, in what ironically is [1]"quella maledetta estate del 1978." Michele's innocent outlook permanently changes when he accidentally discovers the plans of the adults around him: they hold ransom a young boy, Filippo, in the bottom of a dark hole. Michele accidentally stumbles upon this hole and befriends Filippo, yet interestingly, it is Michele who acts in time to save the life of this young stranger, not any of the adults. Throughout the storyline, Ammaniti's role reversal is thought provoking, leaving the reader to question the complexity of morality and reconsider who the real victims and villains are in this story.

In the beginning of the novel, Michele's good morals are very intelligible. Even before Michele embarks his rescue mission for Filippo, it is clear that his kindness has always been a foundation of who he is. An early example, was when his little sister Maria approached him in great distress after being injured. Despite the inconvenient timing, and the fact that Michele could tell that [2]"faceva finta, era stanca," he took himself away from his friends mid bike-ride so that he could check if she was ok and help to comfort as [3]"nessuno si era fermato ad aiutarla," displaying extensive compassion [4]" le ho slacciato la scarpa di ginnastica e l'ho sfilata con molta attenzione." Here, Michele is morally wise enough to prioritise his sister's needs over fun and games, and is even able to overlook his own desires to tirelessly pursue Maria's happiness in the long run. He is respectful and empathetic with a young girl, Barbara, who is constantly the victim of cruelty and banter. After losing a challenge, Barbara is dared by Teschio to [5]"ci fai vedere la fessa. La fessa pelosa" as punishment. However, Michele is able to take a step back and properly reevaluate the situation and recognise how [6]"non era giusta quella penitenza" and out of consideration he took the forfeit, protecting both Barbara's innocence and her dignity. Michele's kindness is a fruit of his own courage and Ammaniti makes this particularly evident when Michele acts with bravery amidst the centre of a desperate situation. After the discovery of Filippo, Michele even states that [7]"Non potevo

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[1] '*Io Non Ho Paura*' (book) - Written by Niccolò Ammaniti (2001) P2

[2] '*Io Non Ho La Paura*' (book) - Written by Niccolò Ammaniti (2001) P4

[3] '*Io Non Ho Paura*' (book) - Written by Niccolò Ammaniti (2001) P4

[4] '*Io Non Ho Paura*' (book) - Written by Niccolò Ammaniti (2001) P4

[5] '*Io Non Ho Paura*' (book) - Written by Niccolò Ammaniti (2001) P16

[6] '*Io Non Ho Paura*' (book) - Written by Niccolò Ammaniti (2001) P16

[7] '*Io Non Ho Paura*' (book) - Written by Niccolò Ammaniti (2001) P54

lasciarlo li," because of how [8] "mi faceva pena", and ever so loyally he continues to return each time with food and water [9]"per prendersi cura di Filippo". Here Ammaniti's characterisation is telling - it is clear that Michele's morals have not been polluted by the cruelty of both adults and their teachings upon their children. When Barbara is treated like an object, he chooses to act with instinctive empathy and kindness. With Filippo, Michele's empathy enables him to see a child, while adults around him see money and investment for their future. This righteousness proves to stand unswayed than the influence of those around him, reinforcing his strong morals .

Although, Ammaniti raises the question of whether Michele is acting through his own, proper, moral understanding, and not just the fresh clarity of childhood. Until the very end of the novel, Michele doesn't fully discover what is happening, why Filippo is in the hole, what the adults are scheming in the background, and how money is the driving force. For this reason it could be argued that Michele's so called 'heroism' is actually a product of accident rather than a deliberate sense of justice or 'right' and 'wrong'. Furthermore, Michele [10]"ha paura di su padre e non ha il coraggio di dire la verità," frequently lying and disobeying to sneak out to see Filippo. This highlights his flawed sense of what is right, as surely, if his morals were that strong he would not trespass the rules put in place to protect his own safety. Yet, Michele meets this boy and is led astray by curiosity. This is particularly telling through his wild, untamed imagination - a clear giveaway to his youthful mind. At one point he fantasises that Filippo, [11]"il bambino nel buco era mio fratello" and that together, [12]"forse io e lui eravamo gemelli,"suggesting that really, he is swept up in the plot of his own imagination and everything he did for him was stemmed from pure nosiness and a desire to entertain his curiosity. Often, readers witness how the bravery that Michele possesses is achieved through vivid role-play, as he whispers a quiet mantra under his breath of [13]"devo essere coraggioso. Tiger Jack. Pensa a Tiger Jack." He conjures up disproportionate stories and characters, such as [14] "le streghe, nude e vecchie," who are [15]"senza denti". Some readers may find that Ammaniti's characterisation is almost humorous, yet, beneath the hilarity, Ammaniti's vivid imagery here exposes Michele's distorted sense of reality. Through these moments readers are able to interpret that Michele's strong sense of morality may originate from childhood innocence and not maturity.

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[8] *'Io Non Ho Paura'* (book) - Written by Niccolò Ammaniti (2001) P54

[9] *'Il bene e il male'* - (book) - Written by Joyce Emmelkamp (2010) Chapter 3.1

[10] *'Il bene e il male'* - (book) - Written by Joyce Emmelkamp (2010)

[11] *'Io Non Ho Paura'* (book) - Written by Niccolò Ammaniti (2001)

[12] *'Io Non Ho Paura'* (book) - Written by Niccolò Ammaniti (2001)

[13] *'Io Non Ho Paura'* (book) - Written by Niccolò Ammaniti (2001)

[14] *'Io Non Ho Paura'* (book) - Written by Niccolò Ammaniti (2001)

[15] *'Io Non Ho Paura'* (book) - Written by Niccolò Ammaniti (2001)

Michele's mind may be untamed, however, he is able to embrace his big emotions and lead boldly with his heart - a quality that the adults seem to lack. Eventually, Michele discovers his father's role in the kidnapping. It is a climactic turning point in the novel, as from this point onwards Michele's 'innocent' outlook of his life and his family has been shattered. His father, who was once his hero, whom he relies on [16]"papá mi avrebbe spiegato tutto" is now a monster to him, he is [17]"l'uomo nero…di giorno ero buono, ma di notte era cattivo," and Michele is forced to grieve a version of his father that he thought he knew. Through this, Ammaniti illustrates Michele's emerging sense of justice. He has been banned from visiting Filippo permanently, and although he is aware of his orders, it is his moral grounding that pushes him to disobey. Ammaniti's characterisation here emphasises how Michele is willing to go to extraordinary and dangerous lengths to do what he believes is right. He escapes through his bedroom window at night, despite being terrified. On the contrary, the adults are said to symbolise [18]"un mondo corrotto e privo di morale", where their decisions are not taken in the best interest of others. The adults are paralysed by pride and profit, and Michele is the only person amongst them who is able to break free from his own emotional barriers. Michele protects Filippo's safety above his own [19]"fatto il bene: ha aiutato Filippo a scappare." Through this, the novel symbolises how the naive minds of children can work in their favour, as they are clean from the polluted and greedy motives of society. This turning point in the narrative highlights the failure of the adults, who should possess a greater wisdom to act for what is right.

At the end of the novel, Ammaniti suggests that the adults are vulnerable and at a difficult emotional crossfire rather than plainly 'corrupt', often [20]"dove l'avidità e la paura guidano le azioni." This is clear through their volatile behaviour towards their children and each other, often communicated through the semantic field of violence and threats such as [21]"ascoltiami bene, non sto scherzando. Se ci torni io ti ammazzo di botte," which symbolise their inner fear of being caught. Additionally, through the economic theme of the 'North and South Divide', Ammaniti explores how not all adults are monsters - many are trapped by labour and poverty, where [22]"l'italia si trovava in crisi pubblico era aumentato" where [23]"per i lavoratori più poveri il deficit non resta nient'altro da fare che cercare i soldi nel circuito criminali." This is reinforced with their lifestyle: the Amitrano family live in an isolated, underdeveloped hamlet, where Michele's mother slaves tirelessly in the kitchen and

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16 '*Io Non Ho Paura*' (book) - Written by Niccolò Ammaniti (2001)

17 '*Io Non Ho Paura*' (book) - Written by Niccolò Ammaniti (2001)

18 Bene e male nel libro *'Io non ho paura'* - Article (2024)

19 *'Il bene e il male'* - (book) - Written by Joyce Emmelkamp (2010)

20 Bene e male nel libro *'Io non ho paura'* - Article (2024)

21 '*Io Non Ho Paura*' (book) - Written by Niccolò Ammaniti (2001)

22 *'Il bene e il male'* - (book) - Written by Joyce Emmelkamp (2010)

23 *'Il bene e il male'* - (book) - Written by Joyce Emmelkamp (2010)

his father is a truck driver, earning substantial, modest wages. Morally, Michele's father is compromised, but proves not to be entirely cruel and heartless. The man is not proud or confident when reflecting on his decisions and he is hesitant when the suggestion to kill Filippo emerges, as [24]"si é preso la testa tra le mani e ha sussurrato - che razza di casino". Equally, his regret is apparent through his dramatic moment of guilt and regret, having accidentally shot his own son after mistaking him for Filippo, where he gets down on his hands and knees and [25]"piange e accarezza il figlio". Likewise, the mother Teresa expresses her financial struggle and grind, reminding her son that [26]"io i soldi non li trove nell'orto!"

Ammaniti justifies Michele's character as virtuous and conscientious, more than the adults around him [27] "Ammanti ha provato ad esprimere la forza dei bambini … e fa vedere come sono superiori agli adulti in queste situazioni." The book is named 'I am not scared', and it is clear that throughout the plot Michele is scared and confused. His naivety at the beginning does align with 'accidental heroism', where the children are [28]"innocenza… senso innato di giustizia" however by the end he has achieved a self discovery through Filipo. Ammaniti has effectively illustrated the transformative journey that Michele has undergone from beginning to end. In this sense, through chasing justice, his friendship with Filippo, exposure to criminals - Michele has found purpose and realisation in all these life lessons. He learns to value kindness and humanity over greed and profit - key proof of his high moral intelligence. Interestingly, Michele doesn't conform to the cruelty surrounding him, in fact, it is the opposite. Michele clings to his values, while utilising his gift of an imagination in his stride as a coping mechanism to remain grounded in the face of fear where [29]"la sua fantasia lo aiuta a farsi coraggio per salvage Filippo dalle mani di sun padre." What distinguishes Michele from the adults, is how his moral sense of justice enables him to push past and act bravely while in the heart of his fear, while the adults are all weakly consumed by it. In this sense, Michele is an embodiment of this mantra; his courage is not the absence of fear, but the decision to morally act in spite of it.
Word count: 1,206

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[26] *'Io Non Ho Paura'* (book) - Written by Niccolò Ammaniti (2001)

[27] *'Il bene e il male'* - (book) - Written by Joyce Emmelkamp (2010)

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