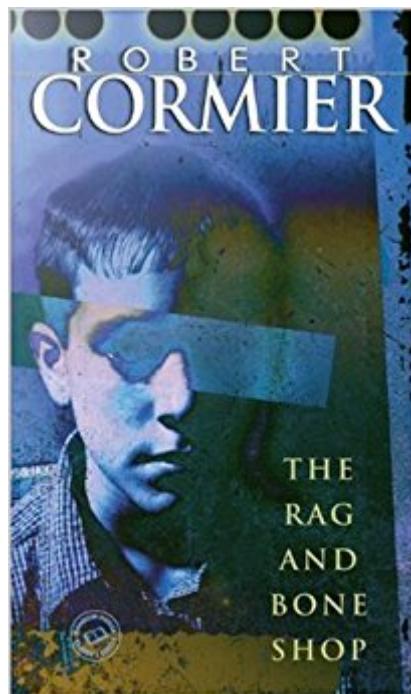


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# The Rag And Bone Shop



## **Synopsis**

Twelve-year old Jason is accused of the brutal murder of a young girl. Is he innocent or guilty? The shocked town calls on an interrogator with a stellar reputation: he always gets a confession. The confrontation between Jason and his interrogator forms the chilling climax of this terrifying look at what can happen when the pursuit of justice becomes a personal crusade for victory at any cost. From the Hardcover edition.

## **Book Information**

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Best Sellers Rank: #175,488 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #110 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Bullying #160 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Violence #183 in Books > Teens > Mysteries & Thrillers > Law & Crime

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## **Customer Reviews**

This final novel from the grand master of young-adult fiction is one last jewel in the literary crown of Robert Cormier, who died in November 2000. In it he continues to explore the themes that are so characteristic of his work: guilt and forgiveness, misuse of authority, and the corruption of innocence. But a new book from Cormier is always a surprise, and here he gives us a brilliant evocation of the detective story, in a narrative that centers on the interrogation of a murder suspect. A 7-year-old girl has been battered to death, and there are no suspects, no leads. The police, under political pressure to make an arrest, bring in Trent, a cold, ambitious professional interrogator who prides himself on his ability to extract confessions. His victim is 12-year-old Jason--the last person to see the girl. We know that Jason is innocent, and halfway through the interrogation Trent realizes

it, too, in "a blazing moment." But like a medieval torturer, his goal is confession, not truth, and so he stifles his impulses for good and proceeds with the job, with deeply ironic consequences. The interrogation itself, which forms the centerpiece of the novel, is dazzling in its elegant thrust-and-parry, its subtle twists and turns, as Jason frantically tries to escape, like a mouse caged with a python. The point of view snaps back and forth so that we are intensely aware of the shifting emotions of both participants in the deadly game. And once again, Cormier has given us an ending that seems provocative and uncomfortable--until we remember that the center of his moral universe was always summed up by the words "if only." (Ages 12 and older) --Patty Campbell --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Cormier's (The Chocolate War) final novel, published posthumously, is characteristically dark and thought-provoking as he delves into "the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart," (from the Yeats poem). The author offers an in-depth study of two complicated characters: Trent, an ambitious and renowned interrogator who holds a perfect record wrenching confessions out of criminals, and 12-year-old Jason Dorrant, suspected of murdering his neighbor, seven-year-old Alicia Bartlett. The killing attracts much publicity plus the attention of a senator. The local police, anxious to solve the case quickly, call on the expertise of Trent to get Jason, the last person seen with the victim, to confess to the crime. The interview between Trent and Jason evolves into a taut, sinister mind game as the interrogation expert twists the boy's thoughts and manipulates his words. Jason parries the insinuations and accusations against him to the best of his ability, but finds himself questioning his own sense of reality. The tension mounts as it becomes increasingly evident that Trent is more concerned with getting Jason to say the words he wants to hear than discovering what really happened on the day Alicia died. The chilling results of the questioning will leave an indelible mark on readers and prompt heated discussions regarding the definition of guilt and the fine line between truth and deception. Ages 12-up. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I'd read an article where the author mentioned having read Mr. Cormier's book during childhood. I found the book, aside from being well written, tells a cautionary tale without any 'icing on the top.' I would recommend Mr. Cormier's books to 7th grade and up.

Love it, amazing product!

When seven-year-old Alicia Bartlett is mysteriously murdered, Trent, a relentless ace investigator for the police department, finds himself faced with a difficult and irresistible moral decision. Is it worth the risk to sacrifice truth for the sake of his impeccable reputation? As Trent interviews Jason, a thirteen-year-old friend of the victim and the last person to see her alive, he questions whether or not the innocent, naive boy, too, is expendable. With no clues as to the identity of the murderer, Trent's hard-earned, perfect record of criminal confessions is in danger. But young Jason has even more to lose. Concisely and subtly, yet effectively and without didacticism, Cormier bravely poses a question facing the human condition: what price would one pay for success, love, and reputation? In this dark novel, the protagonist struggles against himself. The reader is afforded a glimpse of the same "foul rag and bone shop of the heart" of humanity that Trent claims to visit in each criminal he interrogates. The backdrop settings, from the freshness of a sunny and carefree early-summer vacation day, to the sweltering confines of the tortuous interrogation room, are highly effective in reinforcing the characterization and heightening the tension of the plot. The unexpected denouement is thought-provoking and alarming. This novel may not be for everyone, though. Raw emotional brutality is part of the plot and may be too frank and offensive to some readers.

In my Middle Childhood Developmental Literacy class this past fall, I asked my students to prepare Book Talks as in a Middle Childhood classroom via video Book Trailers. One of my students used this book. I was so intrigued that I immediately bought the book. When I communicated this with her, she said, "Oh, you will just scream at the end." So as I began reading, those words reverberated in my mind and I was prepared to scream, yet dreading what was ahead. The book begins as a 7-year old girl is murdered and 12-year-old Jason is the last person to see her alive, or is he? As the story unfolds, the authorities seek Jason's "help" in solving the murder. What young boy isn't drawn to the excitement of being a part of solving a murder, especially a boy who is socially on the outer edges. Trent, a supposedly brilliant interrogator, with his own self-created demons, creates a scenario of seeking Jason's help while manipulating a confession. All the while I was reading, questions came to my mind. Why would this mother let Jason go alone to the police station? Why wasn't she suspicious? What did the police think they were doing? Wouldn't there be repercussions? I asked my Criminal Justice husband, could this scenario really be? Would the police actually manipulate the situation to deceive the players? Sadly, he said interrogators can be very manipulative. This was not a comfort to me. On the inside I was beginning to "stand up". While the book had a completely unexpected ending, and was indeed worth "screaming", even crying about, it was only partially satisfying. Yet, isn't that what books are supposed to do? Make us scream, make us cry, maybe

make us uncomfortable, make us consider more deeply? Yes, yes, yes! This book does all of these and while it may deserve a 5, I did not love it. I did not love screaming.

This book kept me intrigued the entire time. Great and easy read for adults and young adults alike. Very suspenseful.

Note: The vote on this review was made by a troll-creature intent on harassing me. The vote does not reflect the book at all! I read "The Rag and Bone Shop" with a deepening sense of dread. In this his last novel, Robert Cormier uses a brilliant economy of words to create a crescendo of dread and fear. The premonition that terrible things will happen hangs heavy in every word. Robert Cormier was never a writer to paint a rosy picture of childhood. Ugly things can and do happen. As they do here. Trent is a celebrated interrogator, a master at extricating a confession for crimes committed from even the most cunning of criminals. Jason is a twelve-year-old boy whose confession Trent is determined to pull out of his heart. After all, Trent's motto has ever been: "I must lie down where all the ladders start,/In the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart" (Yeats). The victim is seven-year-old Alicia, a child Jason admires and whose company he enjoys. He is considered the prime suspect for her murder. Two interior monologs, first one, then the other, of Trent and Jason, comprise the majority of the novel. Trent's thrill of the chase, his burning desire to get that confession, his thoughts and reactions to Jason's every facial gesture, every thrill of his body movements, every pause, drive Trent in an increasing intensity of the climax of a confession. Add to that two factors: public demand that the killer be found and a promised reward by the area's senator for Trent "to write his own ticket" if he manages the rag of confession from the litter of bones in the heart of this Jason. There is no question that the human heart contains rags and bones as the detritus of the human propensity to do evil. Robert Cormier is a master of the story depicting this negative and awful condition. That he frames it in young adult novels is what is so shocking. Another distressing example from Cormier's body of work is *We All Fall Down*. (What? This book is out of print?). In it a gang of boys go on a joy ride then break into a house and trash it, including defecating on the floors, writing on the walls, and destroying furniture, pictures, and obviously prized possessions. Later one of the boys meets the girl who lives there. They begin a lovely relationship until he confesses. It is a shocking and heartbreak novel. Cormier's most controversial and often banned book (prior to "The Rag and Bone Shop") is *The Chocolate War* (Readers Circle). This is a devastating story of a boy forced to sell chocolate. It bears the theme of nonconformity trapped in man's inhumanity to man. One does not easily read a Cormier book without considering the rag and

bone shop fouling man's heart. Another reviewer acidly wonders how Cormier could do to Jason what he does. I ask: Why not? It is an awful thing, but given his character and his nature, he acts legitimately. No, the ending makes me sick, but I think Cormier expressed a very damning road that some people willingly and knowingly take as their choice for their life's journey. "You are what you do."

Everything leads you to one thing but you get sham alum twisted!!!! It was just so interesting and amazing. #im 12

I had to read this for a class I was taking and didn't have high expectations but I was proved wrong. Definitely a book that grabs your attention.

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