

Essay Draft (1200-1400 Words):

Question?

One of the most striking features of Anthony Burgess' novel, *A Clockwork Orange*, is the narration of the protagonist, Alex, in the fictional argot of Nadsat. Created by Burgess, himself a linguist, as a blend of cockney slang and borrowed Russian terms, Nadsat not only represents a highly specific idiolect used by Alex's social group (the droogs), but, in its esotericism, also portrays the droogs, and their ultraviolent tendencies, as a group separate from, and at odds with society.

Give some background to introduce the text

Both the dialogue between the various droogs (Alex, Georgie, Dim, and Pete) and Alex's narration are in Nadsat, placing the reader as a member of Alex's droogs, with the narration acting as a direct speech towards the reader. This connection between the droogs and the reader is strengthened in the repetition of phrases such as "O, my brothers" that often interject Alex's narration. The mere fact that Alex is speaking Nadsat towards the reader is evidence of a strong connection between that; in dialogue with non-droogs, such as his own correctional officer, P.D. Deltoid, Alex speaks in normal, comprehensible English, in an attempt to disguise his own ultraviolent appetites as a droog, often correcting himself when he accidentally slips into using Nadsat terminology (such as referring to "tea" as "chai" in his conversation with Deltoid [pg. 42]). The creation of an "in-group, out-group" dynamic between Alex, the reader, and his droogs, and the jarring contrast between a narration delivered in thick, idiosyncratic Nadsat and dialogue towards non-droogs delivered in regular English, creates a clear divide between Alex's droogs and the rest of society, placing the two groups at odds with each other. This, from a narratological standpoint, also mirrors the dynamic between the two groups; the droogs, by virtue of constantly indulging their appetites for "ultraviolence" through bouts of assault, rape, and vandalism, are seen by the rest of society as violent outcasts, and, hence, are constantly fleeing from the so-called "millicents" (police officers). Once Alex is apprehended by the police for the (unintentional) murder of a woman whose home he intended to rob, he is himself subjected to violence by the police, being struck by the "top millicent" for no real reason whilst being held for interrogation (pg. 75). The violence used by the police, however, blurs the line clearly drawn between the droogs and the rest of society through the use of Nadsat; despite the fact the police may speak comprehensible English, they have a similar penchant for ultraviolence as the droogs. Interestingly, during his time in prison, even as Alex is on his best behaviour, attempting to obsequiously cosy up to the prison chaplain in the hopes that he may have his sentence shortened, the narration remains in Nadsat, despite the fact he speaks to the chaplain in regular English, clearly showing that he retains his mental status as a droog regardless of his current incarceration. Indeed, this strengthens the bond between the reader and Alex, as Israel A.C states in his analysis '**Nadsat-The Language of Violence: From Violence to Film**' "Alex imposes a sense of brotherhood unto the readers, whilst he is imprisoned and keeps using Nadsat, although no one there, but the reader or the viewer, understands him." In fact, despite his external niceties, he remains just as much an ultraviolent individual as he was before his arrest, as seen in both his continued narration in Nadsat, and his, and his cellmates', assault on a fellow prisoner, resulting in his death (pg. 102), and Alex's subsequent admittance as a guinea pig in the newfound "Ludovico Technique" program. In this sense, Alex's narration in Nadsat not only sets him and his droogs apart from the rest of society through their ultraviolent tendencies, but also indicates the deep-seatedness of said

not paragraph
but to clearly
structure your
developing
arguing

There's no mention of Burgess here -
remember this is entirely his
narration.

no need to
mention it
build on
the quote
though -
either
challenge
or let
it

tendencies, serving as a mark of Alex's constant animalistic impulses for violence throughout the novel.

Beyond only portraying the droogs as outcasts from society, with their ultraviolent tendencies viewed as anathema by most of the "civilised world", the argot of Nadsat also portrays an important role in placing the reader in the role of a droog, often normalising, or at least desensitising the reader to violence through use of unfamiliar terminology. For instance, the first example of ultraviolence in the book (the droog's assault on a scholar returning home from a public library), is described as such: "Pete held his rookers and Georgie sort of hooked his rot wide open for him and Dim yanked out his false zoobies, upper and lower" (pg. 9). The use of zany, childlike terminology (such as "zoobies", meaning teeth) to describe what would otherwise be an act of senseless violence desensitises the reader to said violence by placing them in the shoes of a droog, only viewing violence through the immature, ultraviolent lens of a Nadsat-speaker; a member of the droog in-group. Another, perhaps far more egregious example of how use of Nadsat desensitises the reader to the visceral implications of the droog's ultraviolence, is when Alex describes his own rape of a woman simply as "plunging" (pg. 27), and, later in the story, as "the old in-out", a highly euphemistic term that, like many others in the Nadsat lexicon, describes acts of great violence through an almost childlike lens. This juvenile terminology mirrors the droogs' equally irreverent view on violence (or, as they call it, ultraviolence); acts committed for no real reason, with no goal beyond satisfying their own perverse urges at the cost of others. In contrast to society, that treats crimes such as assault and rape with the highest severity, the droogs view such acts as little more than sources of entertainment, not knowing what else to do with their evenings. Terms that conjure a visceral association to violence in the reader, such as "horrorshow", are Nadsat-speak for "good", therefore, as Israel A.C describes "Although to call something horrorshow is a favourable judgment, what Alex describes as horrorshow is always associated with violence."

As the novel progresses, and the reader's familiarity with Nadsat increases, the reader correspondingly becomes increasingly desensitised with violence; scenes such as Alex and his cellmates assaulting a newcomer to their cell (pg. 98) seem increasingly normalised, and, to an extent, even mundane for the reader, now having been exposed to violence considered run-of-the-mill for droogs; in a sense, the reader has now become a droog. As Israel A.C states; "As the public goes further in the story and grows more familiar with the glossopoeia, a bond is made with the character and the reader as much so as to overlook his lack of morality and ethics in Alex's pitiless actions." The brutal brainwashing technique known as "the Ludovico Technique" that Alex is brainwashed to acts on Alex in precisely the same way as the narration in Nadsat acts on the reader; it is a psychological programming to avert Alex from violence, whereas the Nadsat is a linguistic programming to normalise the reader to violence. Alex's constant repetition of "Oh, my brothers" throughout his narration now also groups the reader as part of the "in-group" of droogs; having been accustomed to this degree of ultraviolence, the reader no longer views the story as an outsider, but as a droog.

The role of Nadsat throughout *A Clockwork Orange* cannot be understated; despite being dismissed as a teenage novelty by characters within the novel, the argot is crucial to

understanding both the ultraviolent sub-
conditioning to normalise violence in
the novel.
Sources:

The context is really
important here - why does
Burgess do this? (Time & Space)

make sure you format quotations
accurately

You need
a background
to Nadsat
too - again
let the experts
speak for
you.

Try to make
your quotations
more specific
- Be selective

understanding both the ultraviolent subculture of the droogs, and the subtle linguistic conditioning to normalise violence that the reader experiences throughout their reading of the novel.

Sources;

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- ① Foreground the writer! Make it clear that Burgess constructed this
- ② Situate your text in a time and space to show your detailed understanding of it.
- ③ Engage with your secondary reading, ~~whether~~^{whether} by expanding on it or challenging it.
- ④ Cite sources!