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### The Rag and Bone Shop

Gail Bartholomew

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Cormier, Robert. *The Rag and Bone Shop*. Delacorte, 2001. ISBN 0385729626. \$15.95. 160 pp.

Reviewer: Gail F. Bartholomew

Reading Level: Young adult

Rating: Significant shortcomings

Genre: Contemporary realistic fiction

Subject: Murder--Juvenile fiction; Criminal investigation--Juvenile fiction; Police--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

*The Rag and Bone Shop* is made up of two stories. First is the account of a shy 12-year-old boy, Jason, whose good friend, a seven-year-old girl, has been murdered. It is also the story of the interrogator: a middle-aged man who does not like himself. The book is an intriguing look at how, in the space of three hours, an innocent boy can decide to confess to a murder he did not commit. At the same time it shows a man who starts out wanting to find the truth but decides to coerce a confession from a blameless, vulnerable boy.

*The Rag and Bone Shop* by Robert Cormier has the makings of a great thriller. The writing, the tone, the characters, and the perspective are all enjoyable, but the ending is disappointing. What seems unrealistic is that the characters afterwards are never able to redeem themselves, whereas, most likely, an experience like this would affect the rest of their lives. Jason ends up committing murder himself. This book seems to say that people who are abused or make mistakes will never recover. We certainly shouldn't hide from ourselves or our children that bad things happen, but it is a lie to say people do not recover from terrible experiences.