

Plot	
Chapters 1-3	A badly disfigured Francis Cassavant returns to Frenchtown after WW2. He wants to hide his identity and carries a gun with which to kill Larry LaSalle. In a flashback, he describes meeting Nicole Renard. He suffers terrible nightmares about his experiences in the war.
Chapters 4-5	Francis meets Arthur Rivier and other war veterans at the St Jude Club who talk about their plans for the future. He still doesn't reveal his identity. He goes to his old youth club, the Rec Centre (or Wreck Centre) and in a flashback he describes their inspirational teacher and leader Larry LaSalle.
Chapters 6-10	Arthur recognises Francis' voice but agrees not to reveal his identity. Francis has won a Silver Star medal for bravery in the war, as has Larry LaSalle. In flashbacks Francis describes becoming the table tennis champion of the Wreck Centre under Larry's guidance and coaching. Francis describes how his relationship with Nicole developed and they see a newsreel in the cinema showing Larry as a war hero.
Chapters 11-12	In flashback, Francis describes Larry returning to Frenchtown as a war hero. That night Larry rapes Nicole at the Wreck Centre. Francis overhears but does nothing. Francis is tortured with guilt and Nicole is scornful and contemptuous of his weakness. Francis considers suicide but joins the army, after lying about his age.
Chapters 13-14	Back to 1945 and Francis visits Larry in Frenchtown, intending to kill him as revenge for what he did to Nicole. Larry admits his weaknesses. Francis leaves and Larry kills himself.
Chapters 15-17	Francis visits Nicole to ask for forgiveness and hoping to restart their relationship. Nicole forgives him but the relationship is over. Francis thinks about his future, will he become a writer or will he use the gun to shoot himself?

Themes			
War	Betrayal	Deception	Appearances and reality
Heroism	Guilt	Isolation	Forgiveness
Love	Relationships	Trust	Innocence

Vocabulary				
First person narrator	Chronological/non chronological	Stereotype	Loneliness	Metaphor
Perspective	Simile	Outcast	Adulation	Regret
Flashback	Cliff hanger	Remorse	Role model	Prose
Redemption	Ambiguity			

Background
The novel begins during the end of the Great Depression. The effects of this period can be seen in the poverty and hardship facing the working-class people of Frenchtown. The renovation of the Wreck Centre is an example of one of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's "New Deal" civic engagement programmes that tried to cut unemployment.
The USA entered WW2 as a result of Japan's bombing of Pearl Harbour, an American naval base in Hawaii, on 7th Dec 1941. Numerous US battleships were destroyed and over 2,000 people were killed.
This event caused a huge feeling of patriotism and thousands of Americans joined up to fight. There was no conscription as there was in Britain during WW2.
Many young men had interrupted their education to go and fight. The US government introduced the GI Bill which funded ex-servicemen to go back to college and enter new careers.
There was more emphasis on the economy than on individuals' mental welfare. Traumatized young soldiers like Francis were not supported.

Form
The story is told in non chronological order, through a series of flashbacks. This allows the reader to track how the characters change and develop. It also increases the element of tension in the events.
It is written in 17 chapters, and there are flashbacks in nine of the first 12 chapters. The flashbacks help the reader to build up an understanding of Francis' motive for wanting to kill Larry LaSalle.

Assessment Objectives	
AO1	Respond to texts critically and imaginatively; select and evaluate relevant textual detail to illustrate and support interpretations.
AO2	Explain how language, structure and form contribute to writers' presentation of ideas, themes and settings.

Character	
Francis Cassavant	The 18 year old war veteran is the protagonist and narrator. A decorated war hero. Hideously disfigured by a bomb blast in the war, he returns home to find his love, Nicole and have revenge on Larry LaSalle. He is driven by revenge, guilt and trauma from his experience of World War II.
Nicole Renard	Francis' childhood love and friend, who is described as being pure and innocent. She is later raped by Larry LaSalle and struggles to deal with this trauma. She feels betrayed by Francis as he witnessed the attack and didn't help.
Larry LaSalle	An inspiration and idol to the children of Frenchtown after reopening the 'Wreck Centre'. He gives Francis' self-esteem by coaching him for the table-tennis championship. After Larry returns from war he rapes Nicole, which devastates Francis and makes him consider suicide. Prematurely aged by the war, Larry shoots himself as he is no longer the fit, athletic figure he once was. Like Francis, he is a decorated war hero.
Enrico Ruchelli	A fellow patient with Francis. He has lost both legs and his arm in the war. We see his pain and bitterness beneath the front he puts on for Francis.
Arthur Rivier	A war veteran of Frenchtown, like Francis. Later, he is found drunk in an alleyway and talks about his trauma following the war.
Mrs Belander	Francis' kindly landlady who sympathises with the wounded veteran. She doesn't recognise him because of his disfigurement.
Uncle Louis	Takes Francis in after the death of his parents. A kind but silent man who does his duty but is not demonstrative with his feelings.
Joey LeBlanc	Childhood friend of Francis seen in flashbacks. More confident than Francis who describes him as a 'big mouth'. Killed in WW2 at Iwo Jima.

Tips
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read the extract carefully and remember to write about the effect of key words and phrases. Prepare quotations lists for the three main characters to show how they develop in the novel.

You are advised to spend about 40 minutes on this question.

How does Robert Cormier present the character of Nicole Renard in 'Heroes'? (20)

Nicole is presented to us throughout the novel from Francis' point of view. He describes her with great love and devotion and uses very romanticised language. Nicole is compared with St Therese, suggesting an aspect of saintliness, holiness and purity to her character. She is also described as wearing 'white' which is again associated with innocence and virginity. The descriptions used for Nicole present her as an ethereal creature of pure beauty and goodness.

Cormier presents Nicole as quite a solitary person, like Francis. She is only mentioned as having one other friend, other than Francis, during the novel, Marie La Croix. This is further shown when she begins dance lessons at the Wreck Centre because she leaves as soon as she has finished.

Nicole seems to be teasing Francis when she warns him 'Don't fall off the banister'. Francis at first seems to come to her attention after the table tennis match and his victory, where she calls him her 'champion'. This marks the start of their relationship where they spend time watching movies and discussing books as well as films and their chaste touches and kisses show their innocence. When war breaks out, Nicole reveals she would like to be a nurse and joins the Red Cross as a volunteer. This implies she is genuinely a kind, caring and selfless character.

After the party for Larry's homecoming, Nicole begs Francis not to leave her alone with Larry, suggesting she suddenly feels vulnerable and apprehensive around him. When she is raped by Larry, she feels betrayed by both Larry and Francis, Larry for the actual abuse and Francis for standing by and doing nothing. Her whole demeanour changes and she becomes almost a different person. She runs out of the room holding her white blouse which is now torn, symbolic perhaps that her innocence and purity have now been shattered. She is filled with pain and anger and tells Francis that she wants nothing to do with him. She no longer leaves her house except to go to mass and doesn't tell anyone about the rape, not even her parents. Instead, she tells her parents that she no longer wants to live in Frenchtown. She has changed from an open, friendly character into a reserved, traumatised victim. She is shown to be deeply hurt by what has happened.

It is only after three years and in a different location before she can begin to start the healing process. She has matured, realising that Francis is not to blame for that night and she apologises. She uses his visit to express her forgiveness over the events of the past and she tells Francis that she is trying to find herself. She is now mature enough to realise that they cannot go back to how things were, thereby breaking Francis' heart and destroying any future hopes of happiness.

To conclude, Robert Cormier presents Nicole in two contrasting ways. At the start of the novel, she is shown as a friendly, open character but after the rape she becomes more introverted and withdrawn. Finally at the end, she is shown to be looking forward instead of dwelling on the past and she pleads with Francis to do the same and move on.

Commentary

This response covers the relevant stages of character development and presentation. There is a sensitive overview and evaluation of character and her relationships with focus on the effect of language.

You are advised to spend about 20 minutes on this question.

How does Robert Cormier present the character of Larry LaSalle in this extract? (10)

Larry LaSalle was everywhere in the centre, showing how strips of leather could be made into key chains, old wine jugs into lamps, lumps of clay into ashtrays. He tamed the notorious schoolyard bully, Butch Bartoneau, convincing him that he could sing, coaching him patiently day after day, until Butch's version of 'The Dying Cowboy' brought tears to the eyes of everyone in the Wreck Centre's first musical production, Autumn Leaves.

'But he still beats up kids in the schoolyard,' Joey LeBlanc observed.

Under Larry LaSalle's guidance, Edna Beauchene, tall and gawky and shy, became the hit of the show, dressed like a bum and dancing an intricate routine with ash-cans, winning applause like a Broadway star.

'You are all stars,' Larry LaSalle always told us.

Rumours told us that Larry LaSalle had also been a star, performing in night-clubs in New York and Chicago. Someone brought in a faded newspaper clipping, showing him in a tuxedo, standing beside a night-club placard that read 'Starring Larry LaSalle.' We knew little about him, however, and he discouraged questions. We knew that he was born in Frenchtown and his family left to seek their fortunes elsewhere. Larry had taken dance lessons at Madame Toussaint's studio downtown as a boy and had won first prize in an amateur contest at Monument City Hall when he was nine or ten.

Why did he turn his back on show business and return to Frenchtown?

No one dared to ask him although there were dark hints that he had 'gotten into trouble' in New York City, a rumour Joey LeBlanc delighted in repeating, with raised eyebrows and a knowing look.

Dazzled by his talent and his energy, none of us dwelt on the rumours. In fact, the air of mystery that surrounded him added to his glamour. He was our champion and we were happy to be in his presence.

Cormier presents Larry LaSalle as a hero to the children in this extract

Cormier tries to show us how Larry has many talents; he shows the children 'how strips of leather could be made into key chains, old wine jugs into lamps.' These talents suggest Larry's skill and his ability to transform seemingly ordinary objects into something better and more desirable. This is linked to how he changes Francis from a lonely boy into a champion table tennis player. We have also previously learned that Larry is a talented dancer and singer, so these seemingly useless talents make the reader think he's good at everything.

The extract makes us think that Larry loves the children as well as he says, 'you're all stars' and he manages to teach the 'notorious school yard bully' how to sing. The word 'all' suggests that Larry includes everyone, no matter how limited their talents, and this emphasises that he must be a positive figure.

The fact that there are rumours of Larry's glamorous life before Frenchtown is Cormier's way of making him seem mysterious, but also very important. Children wouldn't hear rumours about an average man and be so interested.

The first real sign that Larry may be too good to be true in this extract is when Francis says 'we knew little about him...and he discouraged questions'. This insinuates the possibility he has something to hide. Cormier, earlier in the novel, plugged into our minds Francis' wish to kill Larry LaSalle, so perhaps in this extract the reader is looking for his faults and is surprised when he is described so generously.

Towards the end there's doubt that he's perfect. 'There were dark hints' that he had 'gotten into trouble'. However, in the final paragraph, it is made clear that these hints will be significant.

In the line 'dazzled by his talent and energy, none of us dwelt on the rumours', Cormier is showing us how Larry seems to be so perfect that dark rumours don't even slightly put the children off him. The word 'dazzled' has a slightly more sinister suggestion, though, as it could mean that he managed to blind the children to his real nature and perhaps he can hide things easily.

Commentary

The response demonstrates some solid evaluation of Larry's presentation and this is combined with a secure overview. There is evidence of pertinent selection and analysis of key phrases.