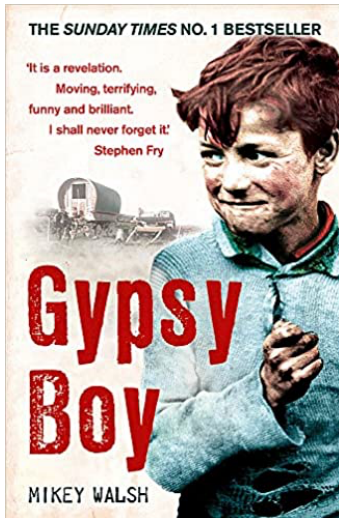


Gypsy Boy By Mikey Walsh



Mikey was born into a Romany Gypsy family. They live in a closeted community, and little is known about their way of life. After centuries of persecution Gypsies are wary of outsiders and if you choose to leave you can never come back. This is something Mikey knows only too well. Growing up, he rarely went to school, and seldom mixed with non-Gypsies. The caravan and camp were his world. But although Mikey inherited a vibrant and loyal culture his family's legacy was bittersweet with a hidden history of grief and abuse. Eventually Mikey was forced to make an agonising decision - to stay and keep secrets, or escape and find somewhere he could truly belong.

Discussion Questions

1. How much did you know before reading the book about the Romany Gypsy way of life?
2. What emotions did you feel when reading the book and did this change after you had finished it?

3. P.200 "*Despite the crushing rules, I was proud of being a Gypsy. It was who I was.*" Mikey is proud of his heritage but also suffered as a result of it, how does he cope with this internal struggle?
4. P.262 "*for a moment the old fear returned, but he greeted me with respect, shaking my hand and patting my back, before graciously taking a step back to allow the rest of us to have time with each other and I realised that he had called a truce, if only for this day.*" What is your opinion of Mikey and his father's relationship, do you think he eventually respects Mikey?
5. Why do you think gender roles are so sharply defined in the book? For example, the stereotype of Gypsy men as 'fighters,' and does Walsh offer an insight into the complexities behind these stereotypes?