State of Shock Essay
[END OF YEAR 11 EXAM]

Drama can show individuals who they really are, their true expressions, form, and what they appear to others. It acts as a mirror to the person who holds it, to show that person their own reflection. Tony Strachan’s ‘State of Shock’ is based upon the true story of Alwyn Peter, an Aboriginal man, who kills his girlfriend in 1979. Alwyn Peter is replaced as Eddie in the text, and we see the build up, and reasons for his actions, in killing his girlfriend, Doreen, and the aftermath of his violent behaviour.

There are 4 main characters in Strachan’s ‘State of Shock’, appearing as Eddie, Jenny-Bob, Doreen, and Bernie O’Connor. In At One Scene 3 we are introduced to Eddie and Doreen, and their background and personalities. Eddie is immediately seen to the audience as a violent character when under the influence of alcohol, and that he has quite a strong connection with his culture. This differs from Doreen as she has a very weak connection with her culture and her land, and is first introduced as an innocent and naïve adult "We have washing machine... big white fridge... a nice bathroom" her ideals on what she wants in her future and contrasted excessively throughout the entire play with Eddie’s ideals “You wanna be outside all the time up there, I’ll show you the green cave I used to hide when I was a kid”.

We gain more background on Eddie’s criminal past through his grandmother Jenny-Bob; a strong-minded and intelligent character “Eddie steals and fights, and breaks into houses too much”. Jenny-Bob is also a chairman for the Aboriginal Cheka board, which shows she has intelligent mind, and is willing to fight for her people against a parliament nominee, O’Connor. O’Connor is the only white man in the play and is manipulative of the people who live at Yambala “Tell your mother that if she doesn’t vote for me I’ll take you away”.

Eddie holds the greatest change in this text, as after he kills Doreen at the end of act one; Jenny-Bob helps him to help the people in Yambala, and on the reserve. We see this in Act Two, as Jenny-Bob takes Eddie on an imaginary journey over the land, to see all of his people, helpless with no opportunities “That’s your brothers over there sniffing petrol from the can”. When the journey is over, Eddie still must front the court, yet he fights for his belief that a lack of opportunities on the reserve, and under the influence of alcohol did his actions have serious consequences. His case was granted parole, and from here on Eddie began to better himself as an individual in his community.

However, although drama did teach Eddie who he really was, the killing of Doreen was the major turnaround point in the text. Doreen is a faithful and loyal character who never did anything to harm the relationship between herself and Eddie. Eddie on the other hand was strongly influenced by alcohol at this stage of the text and was not listening to Doreen and after finding a plane ticket that was given to Doreen believes she was cheating “You lyin’, you lyin’ bitch!” this anger escalates and eventually leads to Doreen’s death, even though Eddie is not
always violent, this dramatic climax showed a shift in his emotion. The next day Eddie feels remorse, guilt, and sadness over his actions proving that drama reflects attitudes and shows individuals who they really are.

Drama can change the lives of those who overcome it and those people are able to see who they really are as these events can change their lives for better or for worse. Eddie's outcome was positive and all he needed was a guiding hand from his grandmother and the government to change their ways of living.

[638 words]