

## **“Where Good Girls Drown:” Water Imagery and Drug Addiction in Ellen Hopkins *Crank***

With the recent release of novels such as *The Spectacular Now* (2008), *The Year of My Miraculous Reappearance* (2007), and *Recovery Road* (2011), representations of addiction in teen literature have been on the rise. This rise, which mirrors the ever-increasing concern regarding America’s opioid crisis, has made discussing such novels extremely pertinent. Ellen Hopkins’ bestselling novel *Crank*, published in 2004, is perhaps one of the most prominent works of teen literature dealing with drug use. Little has been said critically about Hopkins’ bestselling novel, which is the first in a trilogy. Hopkins’ gritty, raw account of her protagonist Kristina’s dangerous dance with crystal meth is one which is nuanced, evocative, and multi-layered in its approach. My argument focuses on Hopkins’ use of water and drowning imagery throughout the novel. Water in *Crank* serves as a graphic symbol of the addict’s relationship to drugs. Specifically, water evokes isolation in the novel, and drowning conjures images of death, but also those of rebirth and redemption.

I approach this novel’s language by referencing the use of water imagery in public discourse surrounding drug use. I refer to the books of teen 12-step programs, news articles about addiction, and even popular memoirs geared towards teens, such as *Zoo Station: The Story of Christiane F.* and *We All Fall Down: Living with Addiction*. I also place Hopkins’ novel in the tradition of other first-person narratives of drug use, including *Go Ask Alice* (1971).

Ultimately, I argue that Hopkins’ use of drowning is symbolic of the protagonist’s perpetual battle with drugs. The water, a symbol of Kristina’s addiction, renders Kristina isolated and defenseless. It separates and steals her away from everyone Kristina loves. The concept of drowning, also prevalent in the novel, has a twofold purpose, I propose: while drowning serves as a means of death or escape for Kristina, it also brings redemption. In her fantasies of drowning, Kristina sees herself reborn, and free from addiction. *Crank*’s use of water imagery gives readers a window into Kristina’s world, and further, an insider’s view into the agonizing lifestyle of addiction, thus opening up discourse surrounding teenage drug use.