

The Merit Prize of English Section

Junior Division

Name of Winner : Wong Ho Kwan

Name of School : Wa Ying College

Book Title : The Heaven Shop

Author : Deborah Ellis

Publisher : Oxford University Press

We are living happily with our family now.

However, if one day, you lost your parents, properties, and even your health, what would your life be like?

The Heaven Shop starts with a child radio star in Malawi called Binti, whose father opened a coffin shop, and she was leading a stable life with her father Bambo, brother Kwasi and sister Junie although she had lost her mother many years ago. Unfortunately, her father still could not get rid of the fate like her wife's - he also died due to the AIDS.

However, unlucky things came one after another. Binti's greedy relatives came to her house, and sold everything away so as to gain money. Binti and Junie were then sent to uncle Wysom's house. They could no longer go to school, but had to do household chores every day and sleep in the storage room. They also faced great discriminations caused by the AIDS.

After their long bearing, one night, they decided to run away. Junie started to do sex work in order to earn money to rescue the others, while Binti went to find Gogo, her grandmother, to seek assistance. Although her life even worsened with twelve more children living there, she was willing to stay and she made friends with Memory there.

Then Binti, Memory and Kwasi, who was found later, started a coffin business as Bambo did and earned a lot. Nevertheless, Gogo was getting weaker and weaker and finally passed away. Binti was able to get all Gogo's properties and get rid of the relatives according to

Gogo's will. At last, Junie was also found and they were able to have a reunion eventually.

After reading the book, I do think that Binti was fantastic. For a 13-year-old girl, what she was supposed to be worrying about should be friends and schools. However, she had to face the pressure from the public as a child star at first, and then father's death, discriminations, etc. Nonetheless, Binti managed to get over these challenges. This shows that Binti wasn't just a naive child, but a mature and optimistic girl. On the other hand, the teenagers in Hong Kong are quite like the roses in the greenhouse without much strength to overcome the difficulties that even minor problems might give them a blow. Therefore, shouldn't we learn from Binti and face the challenges bravely? There will be sunny days after the stormy nights.

Secondly, I think that Bamboo was really a generous person. When a poor boy came to him and wanted a coffin for his dead dog, thus Bambo gave the boy a

complimentary coffin. This was obviously a great loss for Bambo, and would worsen his poor financial situation. These show that Bambo was very sympathetic and kind. In contrast, people nowadays always talk about money. They think that they must gain money after they work and thus they are not willing to sacrifice their time to get something like thankfulness, which seems useless. However, if you treat others well, you may not get a lot of money, but can definitely win others' love and respect. Besides, people think that without money, they have no status and can do nothing. The underprivileged have been being laughed by the others, yet we never lend a hand to them but just watch them dying. Bambo illustrated that we ought to help the others selflessly. The society will definitely be full of love if we all step out to help, which also benefits us since this provides chances for us to make more friends and the people you helped may even give assistance to you when you need.

In addition, I learn the importance of caring about

the AIDS patients. In the book, since Binti was thought to have AIDS as her father died owing to this. Therefore, when she went to uncle Wysom's house, she was straightly forbidden to touch his children as they thought that this might pass the AIDS to them. Besides, Junie's boyfriend, Noel, broke up with Junie just because Noel's family didn't want him to be in an AIDS family. These two examples illustrate that in our society, there are severe discrimination and misunderstanding towards the AIDS patients. The people thought that those with AIDS are infectious, so the AIDS patients always live in depression, without any friends. Just think that if you were having a deadly disease, but no one accepted you that you had to walk through the remaining painful life by yourself, what would you feel? What AIDS patient need most is our love and encouragement so as to be courageous enough to fight against the AIDS. Therefore, when we meet an AIDS patient, we should give them support and care them. Also, perhaps we can help spread

the message that we won't get AIDS if we get along with them normally in order to lower the fear of the public towards them, so that they will be more accepted in the future.

Last but not least, going back to the book itself, I do think that its cover design is very meaningful. In the cover, there is a bird flying towards the sky. This signifies a hope that a dead person can go away like a bird, flying to the heaven quickly and rest there peacefully. In fact, I think that everyone in your life is a bird that they all may fly away suddenly. No matter how well do you get along with the birds, they still have the wills to fly away for freedom and will definitely leave you one day. Therefore, we should cherish everyone around us as they are the best gifts from the God, but not regretting why we haven't cared for them only after they have passed away.

Besides telling you an impressive story, this book also exposes some problems in our society and I have

learnt a lot from it. Would you also like to explore Binti's world by reading this book?