

The Merit Prize of English Section

Junior Division

Name of Winner : Laiba Naseer

Name of School : STFA Yung Yau College

Book Title : Girl Online

Author : Zoe Sugg

Publisher : Penguin Books

This is a sweet story with its heart in the right place. In the book, Penny tries to share her anxiety problems through a blog account. She starts off anonymously, naming herself “Girl Online”. Slowly, she starts to get more and more followers. Nobody knows about her blog except for Elliot, her best friend. On the other hand, Penny has a gay best friend, Elliot, and she shares everything with him. Elliot listens to her problems patiently and gives her excellent

advice. Elliot has his own family problems as well, but he is always there to help Penny. He is the best friend anyone could ever have. Oh, where can I sign up to get a best friend like Elliot?

If there is one thing I would want in a book. It is that the characters in the book to not be perfect. I would want the characters to have their own flaws, because everybody knows there isn't a "perfect" human being in this virtual world. If the main characters in the book are portrayed as a perfect person, I would get annoyed quickly and stop reading it.

But in *Girl Online*, Penny, the main girl in this book, is totally not perfect. She is not pulchritudinous. She suffers from anxiety, freaks out when something embarrassing happens to her, freckles cover her face like speckles on an egg, and her red hair always looks like as if she has stuck

her fingers in a plug socket. And this book has perfectly fitted everything that I would want, as the main girl, Penny, isn't the typical popstar of her school, yet she is an innocent and reticent girl in school.

There is a meaningful message hidden in this book, which is to identify your true friends. When Penny's best friend in school, Megan, betrays Penny by posting a video of Penny falling on stage on YouTube and by leaking her secret identity of Girl Online to everyone and by spreading false rumors of Penny, Penny feels truly betrayed. An honest enemy is better than a false friend. This proves that no matter how much we trust a close person, at the end they are the ones who will run a knife through our heart. In this case, Penny trusted Meghan, but Meghan turned out to be her real enemy. It is quite sad on how this world is so fake.

Why are some people so keen on ruining others' life?

On the other hand, this book talks about actual friends. Penny's true friend is definitely Elliot. The part where I could really see their friendship was when Penny was on the plane for the first time and was really nervous, Elliot was travelling abroad for the first time too, but instead of worrying about himself, he told jokes all the way to Penny to help her get through the flight. This made my heart melt with hundreds of emotion. Elliot never gave up on Penny. He had his own problems but decided to put them aside and solve Penny's first. Come on, I really want a BFF like Elliot now!! Every friendship has their ups and downs, but only true friendships know how to make it through.

I've also learnt that some people can totally change your life in seconds!

When Penny meets Noah in New York, she instantly trusted in him when they hung out for the first time. At first, she looked at him as a friend but then slowly their friendship turned into love. She believed that he could help her get through anxiety. But then, things can take a tricky turn and twist your life around. Penny found out a shocking secret of Noah. Noah is actually a famous musician in the UK and already has a girlfriend. Penny's heart shattered and felt betrayed when she found out the truth. The anxiety kicked in again when she started getting hateful comments from strangers on the internet. She got even more scared and anxious when her "anonymous" blog account got leaked. The whole world knew that Girl Online was actually Penny.

But of course, true love always finds its way back. This part reflects that once in your lifetime, a person will

come into your life, will twist your life by either make it good or bad, but you will have good times with that person. You should live with a person you trust and who cares about you yet not someone who treats you like flotsam. But at a time, maybe you will have to give up on that person and that could be a challenge. Maybe after all, that person was a real life roller coaster ride for you. You are either meant to enjoy or dislike the roller coaster ride, there's nothing in between.

In this case, Penny was going through anxiety, but Noah came into her life and fixed everything, and of course with the support and love from Elliot, her family and her internet buddies. She eventually got through it. Her supporters were loyal and were there at the right moment to help her get out of the small room she was trapped in. Noah was like the light in her life that guided her in the dark. He

appeared at the right moment in Penny's life to help her.

I would totally recommend this book to everyone because it teaches us many great lessons. On the one hand, it tells us that what real friends are like and how a person can be life-changing. It can either be an ecstatic or dreadful experience with them. On the other hand, it also teaches us that we should cherish our friendship and get rid of fake friends. This book is definitely on top of my list and will be on yours as well! So sit down and munch on snacks while you enjoy this amazing book!