

Merit of English Section

Junior Section

Name of Winner: Sze Weng Lam

Name of School: Pui Ching Middle School Macau

Book Title: The White Bicycle

Author: Red Deer Press

Publisher: Beverley Brenna

This is a book about Taylor Jane, a nineteen-year-old girl with Asperger's Syndrome. Taylor's condition wasn't diagnosed until she was eleven. As a consequence, her early school memories were not happy ones for sure. When she was nineteen, she travelled to France with her mother to be a summer personal care assistant for Martin Phoenix. Martin needed to sit on a wheelchair and was unable to speak without special equipment. Taylor decided to take the job because she wanted to put this working experience in her resume. Moreover, she would

like to get a job and to become an independent girl. At her leisure time, Taylor liked to explore the French countryside on her white bicycle. She found that it's the best time for her to review the past, and also look forward to the future.

Since Taylor's story is so inspiring and instructive that I can't help but fall in love with this book. I am grateful to have known more about what a person with Asperger's Syndrome has to struggle with every day. Actually, a person with this syndrome thinks differently than other people and cannot get along with others easily. He or she may make people angry by speaking too straight forwardly, as he or she lacks the social communication skills. In addition, Taylor had particular difficulties in reading the emotions of the people around her. Therefore, Taylor's counsellor helped her to learn some coping strategies such as controlling her anger down to her toes,

and this successfully made it not so likely for her to hurt anyone unintentionally.

The White Bicycle is a good reminder especially for students or people out there who really do have to struggle with daily communication and need others' help and understanding. This is a moving story about growing up and overcoming obstacles. People with Asperger's Syndrome have inabilities to socialize in acceptable ways, and are usually misinterpreted by people around them. After reading this story, I feel that I must support unfortunate people with this syndrome. I always watch in movies that they are being bullied and are alone with sadness. This is completely unacceptable, as Asperger's students are simply thinking in a different way rather than in a defective way. This story teaches us to have acceptance of differences and to give people in need a kind helping hand.

The second noteworthy point of this story is the determination to learn to be independent, especially for a person like Taylor with Asperger's. There was a scene in the story where Taylor had spoken such heartfelt words that she would like to get away from her comfort zone and grow up independently. Going to France alone was definitely a difficult task for Taylor to complete. as there were a number of challenges like multiple plane changes, missed connection, luggage missing, etc. As a nineteen-year-old lady, Taylor didn't need a boyfriend nor a job. Instead, she had a goal to become independent. This target is also insightful for teenagers nowadays, since they are rather relying on their parents to pave the future for them.

The third lesson I have learned from this story is that it shows how a mother's over involvement can hurt a relationship. As Taylor grew up, she became more rebellious over her mother telling her what she can do or

cannot do. However, it was also the force that had strengthened Taylor to become independent. Personally, I think this reflection may arouse parents' deep thought about how much liberty or control should they put on teenagers' shoulders in today's society.

Furthermore, another attraction of the book is the beautiful artwork for the magnificent book cover which was done by the artist Taylor Crowe, a lady diagnosed with autism at a young age. This book cover, with a lady walking with a white bicycle into the woods, has successfully caught my attention and appreciation.

After reading this story, I would recommend it to my classmates. It is so inspiring and educational that I do desire to act as Taylor in a drama myself. A simple smile, a pad on the shoulder, a daily conversation with people suffering from autism will definitely be one of the most

beautiful sceneries in my life.