

# **The Merit of English Section**

## **Junior Division**

**Name of Winner : Ng Wan Ching**

**Name of School : Belilios Public School**

**Book Title : The Fault in Our Star**

**Author : John Green**

**Publisher : Dutton Books**

It is commonly said that life is like a book, when something goes wrong, don't close the book just turn the page; life is like a mirror, smile at it and it smiles back at you. But what if you are diagnosed with thyroid cancer like Hazel does, would you be able to endure the mental and physical pain and to look ahead eagerly to the future?

Hazel Grace, a thoughtful and considerate sixteen-year-old is suffering from terminal cancer. Losing track of her life, she reluctantly attends a cancer patients' support group at her mother's behest. Eventually, she meets the handsome, amusing and optimistic boy, Augustus. The two of them then start a new page in their lives chasing and exploring their dreams.

This book brings out a very educational message: "Life never goes as one's wishes." It is a tragic for the

characters to suffer from cancer but there is no way they can change the fact. Moreover, they cannot live a life like normal kids do as they are labeled by others with discrimination. As mentioned in the story, people size Hazel up because she wears tubes and carries a portable oxygen cart with her. This causes Hazel to tie up herself at home and averse to socialize. Staying at home gazing purposelessly at the television every day, she finds life no interest at all and she is sometimes even sick of and blame herself for this. It is sympathetic to see that Hazel somehow just lives her life for her family because she feels sorry that they have given up all their time and lives to take care and worry about her.

Things couldn't be better since Hazel met Augustus. His perspective of life has changed Hazel's own definition towards herself. I personally really admire Augustus' personality, as he chooses to live with the tumor and enjoy his life in the moment. He shares his experiences with Hazel to straighten her out and encourage her to follow her intuition, doing what she wants. Sooner or later, the two join a scheme and gain the tickets to Amsterdam to visit an author Hazel longs to see.

Even though they are disappointed with Peter Van Houten, the author of "An Imperial Affliction", Hazel and Augustus have found their love in this wonderful journey. Augustus has opened up and ignited her inner-self, bringing a whole new world for Hazel to acquaint. As for Hazel, she finds herself becoming intoxicated into this newly discovered moment of her life and successes in

finding her directions towards life.

Additionally, the writer has done a fascinating work in depicting the inner thoughts of the characters. Words are very persuasive and compelling in showing the emotions and sensations the characters are undergoing. I feel as if I were part of them, deep inside their hearts, laughing and crying with them. Devoted to the characters, I realize the harshness they are enduring and really hope that more people can pay attention to them, giving them as much affection as possible, making their lives remarkable and extraordinary.

Besides, the author portrays a great contradiction between Hazel, Grace and Peter Van Houten. Peter Van Houten is a broken and abrasive alcoholic after the death of his daughter caused by cancer. This incident becomes the stumbling block of his life. Since then, he makes himself suffer all the needless pain and turns himself into a bad-tempered person, wreaking his future. However, unlike Peter Van Houten, Hazel and Augustus do not dwell on the past, about how much they had suffered. Instead, they concentrate their mind on the present moment and dream of the future buoyantly. This shows how life could be distinct among different people due to the great contrast in attitudes towards it.

Returning to my life, I always despairingly give up or lose hope easily whenever I encounter setbacks or difficulties in academic, interpersonal relationship and family relationship aspect. I find myself far too naïve

after reading this book. By comparison, those trivial matters are just minor problems. I should be grateful for being given a healthy body rather than murmuring at the imperfection of my life. Many outstanding and renowned people in the world have a positive belief towards lives even they are suffering from incurable diseases like the characters in the book. Nick Vujicic who was born with tetra-amelia syndrome is a living example. Without limbs, life is more arduous for him than anybody else. Fortunately, he sees the bright, blazing side of life and going after his dreams is the motivation for him to live on. He turns his life into a worthy one and starts his own non-profit organization, travelling around the world doing speeches about his life without limbs, disability and how he has overcome, proclaiming his inmost belief towards God. At this point, he is absolutely the role model for all of us.

Moreover, I get to experience how important love is and the immense power it can bring. Love is probably the most powerful force in the universe. When Hazel gets into the hospital due to the sudden worsen of her condition, her willpower tells her to stay alive because she knows that Augustus and her family are the reasons for her to live on. Furthermore, when Augustus dies, Hazel is able to make through because she knows she has to pass on his spirit, treasure her life and most importantly, she realizes that she does have a say in her own life. On the other hand, love can also be the most destructive weapon. From Peter Van Houten's tragedy of losing his beloved daughter, we can see that he cannot bestir himself again and even give up his interests. It is undoubtedly unfortunate for him to waste his lifetime in

mourning his daughter which is totally insignificant.

Sholom Aleichem, a Jewish writer, has mentioned that “Life is a dream for the wise, a game for the fool, a comedy for the rich, a tragedy for the poor.” But may I correct it a little bit: “Life is decided and determined by each of us. You have the right to choose and strive for the kind of life you want.” The truth is, you don’t know what is going to happen tomorrow. Life is a crazy ride, and nothing is guaranteed. Therefore, treasure your own unique life and make it meaningful so that you won’t regret.