

The Merit of English Section

Junior Division

Name of Winner : Yu Yan Kiu

Name of School : Wa Ying College

Book Title : *Shiloh*

Author : Phyllis Reynolds Naylor

Publisher : Atheneum Books for Young Readers

Shiloh is a Newbery Medal-winning novel written by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor. A warm novel about the touching story between a boy and a beagle. The story is about abuse, love, the relationship between humans and animals and morality. It deeply moves the reader's heart and it is very thought-provoking.

The main character, Martin (“Marty”) Preston was a boy who was caring and kind. He wanted to keep an abused dog, Shiloh, named by Marty. Shiloh was owned by Marty’s rude neighbour, Judd Travers. Judd always

abused his hunting dogs and did illegal hunts. Marty worked for Judd buying Shiloh home.

The story is set in the year that Marty was 11. It took place in the hills of Friendly, West Virginia that was near Marty's house. At the beginning, Marty Preston found a poor abused beagle at the hill near his home. The beagle followed Marty home. Marty named the beagle Shiloh. Shiloh belonged to Marty's mean neighbour Judd Travers who always hit and kicked his dogs. Marty's parents wanted Marty to return Shiloh to Judd but Marty could not put up with animals being hurt and abused. He even would not eat a rabbit that was bulletted. How could Marty return Shiloh back to the "hell" and let it keep being abused? So after Marty reluctantly returned Shiloh to Judd, Marty took Shiloh back when Shiloh ran away from Judd while hunting.

Marty kept Shiloh on the hill near his house with

his handmade wire pen. Marty gave some of his dinner to Shiloh for its meal. After Marty started to keep Shiloh, he set a web of lies to keep this secret and hid Shiloh from Judd. For example, Marty would lie that his friend David didn't have much to do with him at David's home just for having more time to stay with Shiloh. On the other hand, Marty started to collect plastic bottles for money to buy Shiloh from Judd.

Then, Marty's mother found out Marty's secret but Marty persuaded mom not to reveal the secret. Unfortunately, that night, Shiloh was attacked by a German Shepherd Dog. Shiloh was skittish and weak; he could not counterattack the strong dog. Shiloh got hurt badly. He got blood on his side, his ear, a big open gash on one leg and he couldn't move.

Marty begged his father to bring Shiloh to the town doctor. Shiloh was still alive. But then, Marty's whole

family knew the secret about Shiloh. Marty's father required Marty to return Shiloh to Judd immediately. Marty begged and begged and finally his dad allowed Marty to keep Shiloh till he was well.

Marty's family was starting to like Shiloh during the period staying with Shiloh. But Shiloh got well soon. They went to find Judd and told Judd the truth. Marty tried to buy Shiloh from Judd. Judd told Marty that he needed to pay good money to get him a new hunting dog. But then, Marty found out that Judd hunted a doe out of season. Marty attempted to blackmail Judd out of Shiloh. So, Marty and Judd made a deal that Marty would earn Shiloh by 20 hours working for Judd. Afterwards, Judd said that he wouldn't abide by the deal because the evidence of him killing the doe had faded over time. But Marty still continued working for Judd. They started to chat about dogs and Judd's father, who started abusing Judd when he was four. Finally, Marty's persistence

touched Judd. Judd repented and gave Shiloh back to Marty.

I like this novel a lot. The story between Shiloh and Marty is very touching and warm. Also, I have a lot of thoughts and feelings after reading this book. This book is mainly about four different aspects, abuse, love, the relationship between humans and animals and morality. I have learnt a lot about them through this book.

First, the story is about abuse and love. Judd was abused when he was four, so he lacked love in his childhood. Judd didn't know how to love and empathize that he also abused his dogs, too. On the other hand, Marty's heart was filled with warmth and love. He always cared for others, especially animals. Marty's love and care helped Shiloh overcome those "disasters" and also healed Judd's poor abused childhood. This makes me understand the great power of love.

Second, the story is about the relationship between humans and animals. In this story, not just Judd, but many people also treat animals badly. Marty's father once said to Marty, "You think Judd Travers is the only one around here hard-heated towards his animals? You think he's the only one who starves 'em or kicks 'em or worse?" It meant that everyone there knew that there were people who abused animals but no one thought to deal with this. But this greatly highlights the pure relationship between Marty and Shiloh. The author Phyllis Reynolds Naylor described the pure friendship between them with cute details. For example, Marty would let Shiloh rest his paws on his chest and lie on the hill with Shiloh. In addition, I love the story that showed how Marty and Shiloh get along with each other. They are very lovely and cute.

The story is also about morality. Marty lied about him keeping Shiloh. He set up a big web of lies, using

one lie to hide another. He felt so bad about it, but if he had told the truth, Shiloh would have been returned to Judd. Marty stayed in the grey zone of morality. He prayed every night “Jesus, which do you want me to do?”

Are white lies guilty? Everyone has their values. In my opinion, I think white lies are not guilty. If I were Marty, I would do the same with him. This is best for a life, Shiloh. Shiloh would not be hurt by Judd if I lied. In Marty’s and my values, life is the most important. So Marty and I would choose to lie. After reading this novel, it is also a good choice to reflect and examine your own values too.

Lastly, I highly recommend that you read this amazing book. I am sure you will be amazed by the wonderful touching story and have different thoughts after reading. I hope all of us can always be kind and pure like Marty.