

The 2nd Runner Up of English Division
Junior Division

Name of Winner: Ma Ka Hay Harriet

Name of School: St. Mary'S Canossian College

Book Title: Yolk

Author: Mary H.K. Choi

Publisher: Atom

Yolk, written by Mary H.K. Choi and published by Atom, depicted the complex sisterhood between Jayne and June. Although the sisters shared an inseparable bond during childhood, they grew apart as they became older, each opting to keep their distance from each other. However, their distant relationship takes an unexpected turn when June is diagnosed with cancer and has no choice but to seek help

from her younger sister. As they spend more time together, their secrets gradually unveil.

The story is narrated from Jayne's first-person perspective, vividly highlighting her vulnerability as she reconnects with her sister. While Jayne was eight years old, June asked her to carry her backpack but Jayne refused. June dropped her bag and taunted Jayne by saying, "Mom's going to kill you." Initially, Jayne did not pick it up and chased after her sister. However, when they reached the street that led to their house, Jayne gave up and turned around to retrieve the bag. "Heart jackhammering in my chest, I ran all the way back." Unfortunately, Jayne merely escaped death as she picked up June's bag but was almost run over by a car. June instantly called Jayne an idiot, pinched her belly, and

pulled hard. Jayne began bawling immediately. “I can’t believe you didn’t look,” said June, storming off. “You’re such a stupid baby.” She left me to cry on the street. I wept and wept, hiccupping and furious. I wept about what kind of sister would be that hateful.”” After all, she always longed for June’s validation. “I just wish she liked me.” Despite her resentment towards her sister for acting cruelly, Jayne’s willingness to assist her sister during her battle to fighting against cancer adds depth to her character, displaying her care for June.

In comparison, June is portrayed as more authoritative, intelligent and successful. She belittles her younger sister as she claimed that Jayne was a selfish sibling with an “emotional” nature. “You are such a fucking traitor,” she

shrieked, blocking the door. “You have zero loyalty. You’re so selfish, you make me sick. You don’t deserve to be in this family.” “My family thinks it’s a play for attention. My depression. The anxiety. Or as June put it, my “emotional” nature.” June’s image as an antagonist is mitigated eventually when she explains to Jayne that she is aware of her sister’s disordered eating, having discovered bags of vomit, revealing that June’s care towards her sister remains. Ultimately, the contrasting traits of the sisters exemplify the complex nature of their sisterhood.

This book delves not only into sisterhood but also places a strong focus on psychological health. Jayne’s internal struggle with insecurities plays a crucial role. She constantly compares herself to other girls who are

considered more attractive, adversely impacting her self-perception. Throughout her journey to adulthood, Jayne battles with mental issues, including depression and eating disorders. Her parents' interpretation of depression as a cry for attention highlights the taboo surrounding mental health in Asian communities. In an interview with Shondaland, the author, Mary H.K. Choi shared her own personal struggles, “I have an eating disorder and I’ve struggled with disordered eating, body dysmorphia, body obsession, vanity – all of that – for my entire life. For years, I couldn’t enter a room without jockeying for position in terms of where my body weight was in that room. Who am I thinner than? Who am I heavier than? That immediately became my status within that room.” This relatable portrayal resonates with for those who are currently facing similar emotions. In recent years,

suicidal rates have risen alarmingly. According to the statistics from the University of Hong Kong, the suicidal rate per 100,000 people increased from 12.1% in 2021 to 14.2% in 2022. Many individuals find themselves overwhelmed by stress from various sources of stress, including peer pressure, academics, heavy workloads, negative self-perception, etc.

As a student myself, I often feel pressurized by schoolwork. I had personally experienced depressive and suicidal thoughts. I have felt the weight of immersive pressure from peers and found myself trapped in a corner with no way to breathe. I hid in my room and overcame with tears. Eventually, I gathered the courage to share my worries with my parents and friends. Evidently, many of my peers are also going through similar psychological obstacles.

Reading this masterpiece by Mary H.K Choi has inspired me to make room for my flaws, and I encourage you to do the same. *Yolk* serves as a reminder to everyone, especially those facing mental challenges, that acknowledging our negative emotions and seeking assistance from others do not make us losers. It is okay to be not okay!