

TEENS and TWENTIES

the bridges of madison county

EXPERIENCE OF A LIFETIME

by Usaila Alam (Udita)

THE cover showed Meryl Streep, head bent in the arms of Clint Eastwood — a fact that it had also been made into a motion picture. Well that was nothing surprising, I thought. Hence with the distinct idea that it was like any other love story. I took up the book and began reading Robert James Waller's first novel, The Bridges of Madison County.

What awaited me was a different story altogether, for I found myself transformed into the subtle world of love, magic and so much pain that as I went on a lump formed in my throat and it kept on growing till the last page.

The story opens long after the death of the two central characters Robert Kincaid and Francesca Johnson. Michael and Carolyn Johnson approach the writer with the tragic story of their mother in the vain hope that he will write about it. At first the writer is skeptical, but as he listens, images begin to form in his mind and he decides to put the story on paper.

Robert Kincaid arrives in Iowa to photograph the bridges of the Madison County. On the way he stops at a farm house to ask the way, and that is when he comes across Francesca Johnson. She takes a bold step, shows him the way and later on invites him to dinner. Robert comes to dinner and across the candle lit table blooms an intimacy grows that comes only once in a lifetime. Francesca opens her heart and tells Robert of her detached life with her husband (Richard Johnson) and two children who are away and Robert understands. In the span of just four days Robert and Francesca live their whole lives.

For Francesca, it seems, Robert is the fulfilment of her childhood dream. He is the man who makes all her parts into whole. But the end comes too soon and Robert has to leave. He begs Francesca to go with him

and cries to her that 'in a universe of ambiguity love comes only once and never again, no matter how many lifetimes you live,' but she chooses to stay. She couldn't stand the fact that her children will be called names for her disrespectful behaviour. Robert leaves and Francesca resumes her daily life when her family returns. Francesca hurries to the point when at times she goes completely insane, but she doesn't hurt her children.

Hence life goes on. In the meantime Robert writes to her and says that if she ever needs him "anytime, anywhere" he will always be there for her. Fourteen years pass away until in 1979 Richard Johnson dies of old age. It leaves Francesca free from her responsibilities and she tries to contact Robert Kincaid at the National Geographic, where he works, but in vain. She learns that he is no longer there. Three years elapse and in 1982 Francesca receives a package with an attorney's letter stating that Robert Kincaid has recently passed away. Francesca's dreams, it seems, remain unfulfilled and she spends the rest of her uneventful life with the memories of the time she has spent with Robert Kincaid, until fatigued with old age. She also leaves this world. Later, after her death, her children come across a letter that she leaves for them and gets to know their mother's story.

It is hard to understand the relationship of Robert Kincaid and Francesca Johnson, which reaches beyond reason or logic. Like the author says that "If you've ever experienced the one true love of your life, a love that for some reason could never be, you'll understand the far reaches of such a relationship. The book is a beautiful, unforgettable experience and shows us what it is to love and be loved so intensely that life is never the same again."

Life

by KFZ (Rooster)

Life! what is it?
A few moments of pleasure
A prolonged period of grief
A story of love
A story of denial
A story of anger
A story of deceive.....

Or is it just feelings...

But why do they come?
And why do they go?
Why do some take it easily
And just say "No"
Are the feelings so unworthy
I don't know...

Me and Life.. here how it goes

The past years of my life were a complete joke
Because all my feelings went broke.
Why was I so stupid enough to let myself play as a pawn in the game...
Is it because I have nothing in me to earn a fame...

Why so many lie
And then hurt,
Why so may betray
And treat people like dirt.

Ode to Her

by Ashequr Rahman (Ronnie)

You are the fading shadow of a late spring
You are the gentle breeze of a midsummer evening.
You are the stillness of midnight
You are the waves of the restless sea,
You are the love of my life.

You are my favourite poem
During a midnight respite
A happy dream, a lingering memory
As musical as early birds —
You are the fountain of my heart,
Wilder than the wildest storms
Livelier than the greenest tree
My dear — you mean everything to me.

"Love — So Easy"

by Samia Israt Ronnee

MBBS — 1st Yr

LOVE is easy,
Its so cosy!
Love is so much soft to feel,
It can make the whole sky kneel.
Love is lively,
But so costly,
You never know what's its price,
Till your heart gets cold as ice.
A broken heart,
Ache and hurt,
Storms strike in; Your heart gets rusty,
Filled with tears, yet so much empty.
Such mistake,
Flesh don't make,
Never promise to love till end,
Just try to love and care your friend.
'Cause, promise is something
Always breaking!
Love is something you can't touch,
Friends forever need it very much.

SOME days ago I was talking to an O-Level student in a foreign library in Dhaka. At one stage of our gossiping, I told the boy that he was having standard and better education that most of our children could have. In reply, he spoke about his apprehensions of the country's progress.

His noble feelings for the motherland, undoubtedly, made me happy but at the same time his pessimism made me wordless and fed-up; specifically, when he cited before me the negative examples of our country in general, our economy in particular. Is there any country on the globe where frustration begins at the childhood like ours? The question at once made me think.

The sapling of independence which was planted in 1971 is now 25 years old. We have already celebrated the silver-jubilee of our independence, have recalled the glorious moment of victory for which we had to pay a lot.

But unfortunately, as our present day political life evidences, we have forgotten virtually if not formally all the sufferings of our ancestors. Our status today as an independent nation clearly reveals our failure since the independence and present woes darken the achievement of the past. We can easily compare our dreams with the realities.

Now should not we examine the conformity and discrepancy between our sacrifices and reparations? Should not we today evaluate our political and economic victory as part of our independence or victory day celebrations?

In no way, twenty five years is a small time boundary. The child which was born in 1971 in now twenty five years old young man who has passed twenty-five springs and as many winters. He is obviously matured and he can take decision of his own. Now if our twenty-five years old state still remains an immature child who are we to blame? If I ask you to enlist our achievements by this time you will certainly be bogged down in a quagmire.

On any national day the primary thing that disheartens us is people's way of celebration. According to some, what we do on any red letter day reveals our frustration, as every thing is stereotyped. Only the actors change with the change of government but their policy is unchanged. Their propaganda and action are always aimed at meeting their 'self interests' rather than the national interest. Consequently, we can not see any kind of national harmony even for one memorable day, let alone all the year.

Our protagonists in politics seldom come out of the party boundary on national days and the traditional sympathy for the party dictates their ideology. So the prime concern of the leaders at such moments is to make people know which martyr belonged to their party. What a peculiar way of honour-

Tears for the fallen Luminary

by M J H Javed



ing the martyrs and celebrating the memorable days?

Apart from disharmony, another disgusting part is the lack of consistence in their speeches and deeds, which is a result of their separation from the social, political and economic reality. They hardly can exceed the circle of thought, confined to their personal needs and achievements. And the tragedy lies in that they are masked! We, only the common people deplore such insinuations like December 16 or March 26 is the result of sacrifice made by any party!

Also, leaders talk little about our future. Their speech on the stage is not directed to the future. They rather stress on what the opposing party could not do for the countrymen or what sufferings the formers have brought about to the latter. Politics of broad minded people always guides the commonmen to future and politicians of such kind consider the loss of the nation as the loss of all.

But as we see, our politicians cultivate the failure of the opposition and in doing so, they take the advantage of national loss.

In 1971, we achieved eman-

ipation, but that was merely a political emancipation. Political emancipation is valueless unless the economic emancipation is added to it. Political emancipation could be gained by waging a bloody war. But economic emancipation will not come to the door without proper planning and hard-work. Economic freedom is rather more difficult to achieve as this is the challenging second step of freedom. The second world war almost destroyed the Japanese but today they are an economic superpower. The success of the Japanese is due to proper planning and hard working.

For our today's sufferings nobody is responsible except us. In the last twenty-five years we were ruled by militaries for about fifteen years and they were never accountable to the people. We got a democratic government in 1991 after dramatic changes in the political structure but unfortunately uncertainty hanged over us when the politicians lost patience, a pre-condition for democracy and civil-society. Opposition took to street when we needed political stability very much. National economy collapsed and nation faced irreparable losses

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In Favour of Child Labour



by Farhana Yusuf

CHILD labour, a socio-economic issue, has long been debated and discussed with seemingly very little effect.

It is mentionable that according to a bill (called Child Labour Deterrence Act 1993) passed in the US House of Representatives and Senate on August 5, 1992. Senator Tom Harkin indicated that there would be strong influence to the banning of items produced by using child labour. If attempts such as these were in place Bangladesh, along with many other Third World countries, would lose a large amount of foreign trade. The result would consequently be devastating and disastrous for a large number of children who were working in the export-oriented industries such as garments, carpets and so on. The children will lose their means of liveli-

hood in the process. This issue has given rise to heated discussions amongst campaigners against and for the use of child labour.

Children are destined to lead the future world, so they must have the rights that accord them a secure and healthy life. But the majority of children in developing countries wait for a difficult future, suffering the pangs of life's realities. Health, nutrition, education and other facilities are inaccessible to them, they are exposed to abuse, violence and environmental hazards. These children remain under-equipped for adult life because they are deprived of their basic needs.

Children who are now engaged in earning are surely not to raise their standard of living in future because if they are the breadwinners for their families they will surely go to work for

survival. Such is the vicious 'generational' cycle of poverty and child labour into which the children are being trapped.

What needs to be done is to break this cycle or poverty by getting these children out of the factories and put them in schools. However, withdrawing these children from the factories does not again guarantee their proper education, health-care, nutrition and all other facilities required to develop their potentials. What needs to be put into focus is eradicating the root of the problems, no remaining concerned with the symptoms.

As said earlier, getting the kids out of factories and from many other areas of work is not the solution to our problem, simply because it will not break the cycle of poverty that forces a child to work. Since this issue is related with the overall so-

cio-economic condition of the country, we must find a solution in terms of that situation. When an underdeveloped country like Bangladesh is burdened with such a crucial problem as child labour, finding a quick solution is not easy. If we want to eliminate child labour by putting a ban to it, we must first ask ourselves the question: does our economic situation permit us to do so? Banning child labour will not guarantee the children a better future even by ensuring that they are going to school, because their survival depends on their earning and that there is no alternative to that. In spite of the fact that primary education is now free in Bangladesh, but the attendance is only about 50 per cent with only 40 per cent completing the level.

The poor parents are burdened with not only the cost of their school-going children's clothes and other materials, but are also afraid of losing the chances of their child's contribution to family. Poverty alone is not responsible for this, absence in school, rather the conventional teaching methods, schedules and curriculum also play a negative role. As the schools do not suit the needs of the underprivileged people of the country, many parents and children feel alienated and regard schools as unattractive, irrelevant or unnecessary in their daily lives.

Poor parents, not fortunate enough to have wholesome meals at least twice a day, do not consider education as a means of breaking the cycle of poverty and to face the challenges of life ahead. When a boy or a girl is earning 40 to 50 taka just by selling flowers or scavenging for paper, should he or she bother for going to school? Getting these children out of the adverse working conditions does not necessarily mean that they would be attracted towards education. Since such is the case, then a ban on child labour is no solution. Better alternatives must be found so that the children can enjoy their fundamental rights.

The concept of "work and learn" is now a worldwide accepted approach. Working children may not always show interest in formal education, but non-formal education can be an important approach to improve their situation.

R U 2 HIP??

by Sajman



IS your fashion sense more akin to Margaret Thatcher than Sandra Bullock? Do you think you dress more like Homer Simpson than Brad Pitt? Well here's your chance to find out. Select an answer for each of the questions, use the scorecard to add up your total and see which one are you?

- Which of these would you rather watch?
 - a) X-Files
 - b) Top of the Pops/Billboard Chart
 - c) News at Ten
2. What's your favourite channel?
 - a) Discovery
 - b) Star Plus
 - c) VTV
3. You want a new pair of jeans. Which of these would you want?
 - a) Levi's
 - b) What's wrong with a Lungi?
 - c) If it's not a Versace, I'd rather wear my birthday suite (needless to say, scaring the neighbours)
4. What do you think of school uniform?
 - a) It's crime against humanity.
 - b) Absolutely love it — I'd wear it in bed if my mom would let me.
 - c) At least I can wear decent clothes at the weekends.
5. How do you greet friends?
 - a) Shake hands and say "Good Day, would you care for some tea?"
 - b) Give high 5 and say "Yo, my main man, how's it hanging?"
 - c) Wave and say "Hi, how's everything?"
6. What's your favourite food?
 - a) Most expensive caviar available (regardless of what it tastes like).
 - b) "Fuchka" from Belly Road.
 - c) "Shutki", so what if it smells like it has 'gone off', that's probably 'cause it has.
7. Do you watch X-Files?
 - a) No way, it's way past my bedtime.
 - b) When I have some free time.
 - c) I love it. I've got the book, the tape, all the posters, shirt, underwear etc....
8. What's your favourite group?
 - a) Oasis
 - b) Anything with a techno-fusion-trance-dance-beat with splatterings of Bhangra.
 - c) Take That (I've been crying 25 hours a day since they split up).
9. What are schools?
 - a) Hells extension... the headmaster/mistress is Satan incarnate.
 - b) A place to study, and study, and study....
 - c) A place to learn and socialise.
10. Where do shop for clothes?
 - a) Paris, Bangkok, London, America...etc.
 - b) Banga Bazar... so what's wrong with that huh?
 - c) I don't. My mom buys appropriate clothing for me.

The Scoring :

Quest.	Ans. a)	Ans. b)	Ans. c)
Quest. 1	3	2	1
Quest. 2	1	2	3
Quest. 3	2	1	3
Quest. 4	3	1	2
Quest. 5	1	3	2
Quest. 6	3	2	1
Quest. 7	1	2	3
Quest. 8	2	3	1
Quest. 9	3	1	2
Quest. 10	3	2	1

Between 10-14 points

Let's face it you don't care about fashion (and even if you do, it's pretty twisted), or even about looking normal but at least you're an individual. You probably think Oasis is a natural phenomenon found in deserts and Don Giovanni is a person. Do something different and get your nose out of that book. Life's passing you by. Grab it while you still can. You are the John Majors and Marge Simpsons of the world.

Between 15-24 points

You're conscious of trends and fashion but not ruled by it. You don't make a fool of yourself just to be a trend-setter. You're more interested in looking decent and enjoying yourself than become the centre of attention (like some zoo animal). You're balanced. Good for you. You are the Denzel Washingtons and Gillan Andersons of the world.

Between 25-30 points

Quick, get yourself to a hospital, you're a fashion victim in desperate need of first aid. One day, when you realise that dreadlocks aren't hip anymore, you'll realise that you're furthest from taste central. Get a taste or be a slave to fashion forever. No one likes a show-off. Lighten up—there's more to life than Ralph Lauren. You are the Madonnas and Michael Jacksons (Let's face it, wearing more makeup than your partner is not healthy for a guy) of this world.

Over 31

Hello... can't you count, or what? You must be the Beavis and Buttheads of this world.