

Noorhan Amani  
Grade 8  
Islamic School of San Diego  
Balboa Library

### Calling the Streets “Home”

A child roams the streets wearing raggedy clothes, scrounging through piles of trash just for a small piece of bread. That was exactly what Shauzia, the main character in the book *Mud City* by Deborah Ellis, was experiencing. Though she is faced with many tribulations in her fourteen years of life, she has high hopes that one day she will “sit in the middle of a lavender field in France.” Although Shauzia’s story is fiction, there are many children around the world living under the same circumstances.

Tens of millions of children live on the streets in developing countries worldwide. Some of them are orphans and have no families or an actual home to go back to and use the streets as a dwelling. Others are the sole breadwinners of their large families and sell all kinds of things on the street. Still others escape to the streets in order to find better lives away from their abusive and neglected families. This was the case with Shauzia as she fled from her family to avoid being used for money. This leads her to a compound for children and widows in Pakistan where one of her old teachers, Ms. Weera, whom she dislikes, is the coordinator. After some time in the compound, Shauzia can’t stand bossy Ms. Weera so she decides to run away in the pitch black of night to the nearest city of Peshawar to follow her dreams.

However, street life isn’t easy. Shauzia ends up disguising herself as a boy, almost on the verge of being abducted, and at one point, being thrown in jail for something she didn’t even do. Around the globe street children are experiencing

all this, and sometimes even worse. In the summer of 2012 I visited my parents' home country of Bangladesh. I stayed for about two weeks in the capital city of Dhaka, and what I saw was unimaginable. Children, both boys and girls, many of them my age and younger, were walking in the middle of traffic-filled streets, trying to sell everything from fruits on sticks to maps and coin purses. It was as if they didn't even care that they could be run over any minute. Others were just roaming the streets, trying to get somewhere, unaware of their surroundings. I have read stories in Bangladeshi newspapers about street children being kidnapped, sold, and used for the most horrific things. Yet the children were heedless of the danger.

One day we were stuck in the usual traffic in Dhaka, and I was almost about to doze off. Just then I hear a knock on the car window. I quickly jolted myself up and saw a girl about seven years of age staring into our car with a handful of fruit candies. I examined her face closely and noticed her eyes. Though she was a mere child, she looked as if she were 80 years old. By looking inside her eyes, I could tell she had been through so much. . . . but I couldn't fathom what. Still there was a spark of hope in her eyes. When I read about Shauzia's plight, I was appalled. I finally got a taste of what many children were actually going through, and it was ALL real.

My mom gave the young girl some money and told her she could keep it without giving us the candies. However, she insisted, so we ended up taking the fruity lozenges. What really amazed me was her truthfulness and integrity. Even though someone was offering her free money, she still did not take it. I used to think that all street children only begged and were up to no good. However, after

meeting one myself, my whole perspective changed, and reading *Mud City* gave me insight on what kind of dangers they were actually facing.

Shauzia's story, together with my experience in Dhaka, motivated me to acquire more information on the topic of street children. I came to know the many reasons, including rapid urbanization, dwindling farm land, war, and extreme poverty are significantly contributing to the increase in the number of street children worldwide. Though a number of organizations are being set up globally for disadvantaged children, it is not nearly enough to take care of most of them. I think the whole world needs to know about this epidemic. The eyes of the small girl on the streets of Dhaka reminds me that as a society we cannot deny our responsibility towards these children as they are the future of the world. Should not we all lend a helping hand to street children like Shauzia so that they can pursue their dreams and lead a healthy and productive life.

Anthony Anderson  
Grade 8  
St. Vincent de Paul School  
Mission Hills Library

### One Book I Would Save

There are a lot of books that many people love. Some talk about politics, people, love, or nature, but what if you had to save that one book that spoke to you the most. Someone once told me that a book is someone's thoughts, words, and ideas, and if you throw the book away, you are throwing away a part of that person. Choosing one book to save can be extremely challenging, but if you find the one that touches you the most, that is the one to save. The one book that does that for me is *The Republic* by Plato. It touches on many things that I can relate to as being current in the world today.

It would be an understatement to say that Plato's book *The Republic*, has had its share of discussion and criticism over the years. Many questions arise from reading this book. Why do people behave unjustly? Is it because they fear punishment, or is it just due to free will? Plato talks about politics, people, and society. In my opinion *The Republic* would be the perfect book to save because its issues are timeless. The book talks about truth in society and how people act. Plato says, "The parallels between the just society and the just individual run deep." Plato talks about how the world is divided into two realms, the visible, and the intelligible. The visible is grasped with our senses, and the intelligible is grasped with our minds. Plato's thoughts and ideas still ring true today.

When I think of a good book, I think of something with depth, that makes you think. In order for a book to be truly great, it has to hit home with readers.

Plato put a lot of thought and research into *The Republic*, and we can all benefit from his labor. Plato had a hard time publishing this book because it was during the Peloponnesian War. The fact that this book was published, its timeless relevancy, and its impact on us all make it worth saving.

People treasure books and the meaning behind them, but some help more than others. *The Republic* shows us right from wrong, what we should and shouldn't do. It is a truly great work of art and labor and has been judged by critics the world over in a favorable way. Many of us would like a book that shows us the way and guides us forward. This book can help us all on multiple levels, in a way that other books cannot. *The Republic* can help me and others like me in a variety of ways from family relationships all the way to advice on a national level. *The Republic* is a time honored book that will always be relevant and have words that speak to all of us.