

Title: *The Light at the Bottom of the World*

Author: London Shah

Genre: Science Fiction

**Reviewer's Name and Grade: Peter S., 10th Grade**

**Date Reviewed: September 29, 2020**

The Light at the Bottom of the World is a science fiction story about a futuristic, underwater, world. The nation of England, where the story takes place, is consumed with the preservation of the past, with exorbitant amounts of money spent to maintain Old World monuments, and the Chief Historian of England holding immense power to keep the structures at the bottom of the sea intact. People also live in fear of the genetically engineered race of Anthropoids, who can survive unassisted in the water and seemingly terrify the population through coordinated attacks. The population lives in hope to one day return to the surface of the Earth where they came from and rebuild civilization there. The book takes place during the end of the twenty-first century and centers around a submersible racer named Leyla McQueen, whose father was mysteriously arrested on false charges of inspiring people with “the seasickness”, a form of depression brought on by their unnatural underwater lifestyle, to commit suicide. Leyla refuses to accept that her father would commit such a crime, and she obsesses over having him freed. It seems like her only option is to win the London Marathon, a submersible race in which the winner receives the gift of being allowed to request anything of the British Prime Minister. After being selected for the London Marathon, Leyla manages to narrowly win and wins a large, luxurious submarine in addition to her wish to the Prime Minister for her father's freedom. However, to her surprise, the Prime Minister denies her request after consulting with his Chief Historian. Leyla discovers that her father was not just arrested for the crimes she was told about, but taken by the Prime Minister's mysterious police force, the Blackwatch. Leyla sets off on a journey in her new submarine to find her father, accompanied by a protector assigned by her grandfather to protect her. Throughout her journey, Leyla explores the preservation of history that takes so many away from the reality of the present, and her people's reliance on the unknown to protect from an unknown threat in the Anthropoids.

Overall, the book was okay, but the pace and plot were difficult as certain events occurred which were written as major events but didn't turn out to be, and the author attempted to put things into the book which felt awkward. I'd recommend this book to people in grades six to nine, as it really wasn't complex or enthralling as I would imagine an older reader would look for. I feel as if it's important to note that while I wouldn't consider this book particularly dystopian, it does contain dystopian elements and themes.

I would give this book *three out of five stars*. I had much higher expectations for it, but I still somewhat enjoyed reading it. The book was confusing, and should have been longer to contain all of the different plot points which were included and didn't go anywhere. Overall, this book is recommended to a younger audience who is interested in science fiction.