

**Title: *Golden Arm***  
**Author: Carl Deuker**  
**Perspectives Category: Socio-Economic Differences**

**Reviewer Name and Grade: Yaseen V., Grade 10**

**Date Reviewed: 7/20/21**

*1. What is the main plot of this book?*

The main plot of this book follows Lazarus “Laz” Weathers, a shy kid who lives on the poor side of town and struggles with a stutter. Lazarus discovers a passion for baseball because it helps him escape the world of poverty and the normalization of drugs. The plot gets more interesting when he gets an amazing opportunity to pitch for the rich kids on the other side of town. While he is excited for the chance to get drafted by the big leagues, his transition to the other side of town is met with other obstacles as his younger brother falls into a dangerous cycle of drug use.

*2. Which character did you most identify with and why?*

When I was reading this book, I found myself identifying with Lazarus the most because he is a shy kid who does not have the most confidence. I found that he and I were similar in character traits because we take care of our younger siblings.

*3. What do you believe is the main message of this book?*

I believe the main message of this book is to work hard in order to achieve your dreams and to never give up despite the obstacles that will inevitably come in your way. This book shows me how Lazarus dealt with the issues in his life and how he still worked towards his goals through it all.

*4. Do you think the main message of this book was effectively integrated into the story, or did it come across as too “preachy”?*

I think that the author did an amazing job at incorporating serious topics such as poverty and drug use into the storyline. This book effectively shows the audience the overall message of the book without being too “preachy” and instead did so in a relatable way.

*5. If two or more perspectives on an important topic were explored/presented in this book, which one did you agree with and why?*

In this novel, readers got to see how Lazarus lived on the poor side of town, and how he navigated with pitching for the wealthy kids on the rich side of town. This stark contrast of setting truly highlighted the socioeconomic differences Lazarus faced and how it affected his mindset. Overall, this helped me understand the perspective of Lazarus and how hard he worked for his goals.

*6. In what ways (if any) were your beliefs about a topic changed or reaffirmed through reading this book?*

While reading this book, my view on hard work and how socio economic differences can affect people was reaffirmed. The way the author dealt with these topics were very inspirational and truly showed Lazarus’ character development.

7. *What perspective, if any, do you think was missing from this book?*

I think that the author did a great job showing the different perspectives found in the story. For example, the readers got to understand both the rich and poor sides of town, and how drugs negatively impacted Lazarus' younger brother. Due to this, I do not think any perspective was missing from the book.

8. *Did this book encourage you to pursue any topics further through more reading, research, action, etc., and if so, how?*

Yes, this book encouraged me to put more action and effort into my future. It helped me understand the value of hard work and not giving up on your dreams even when times get rough and hard to manage.

9. *What type of reader (based on age, interests, perspectives, etc.) would you suggest this book to?*

I believe this book is a wonderful read to students in need of inspiration and have been stuck in a mindset where they believe their dreams are far from reach. This book does a nuanced job at implementing the hard parts of life and how our dreams help us balance it all.

10. *What other book(s) have you read that you think would make a good addition to this category of the Perspectives Bibliography, and why?*

One other book I would recommend to readers that I think would make a good addition to this category is Gutless, because it not only is written by the same author, but also because of a similar plotline of the book, which tells the story of when one individual faces the problems of bullying, and how that motivated them to do well on their football team to achieve success.

**Reviewer Name and Grade:** Zahra V., Grade 9

**Date Reviewed:** August 14th, 2023

1. *What is the main plot of this book?*

Lazarus "Laz" Weathers lives in a trailer park in Seattle. Laz hasn't had the best reputation in terms of his overall self, with having a speech impediment and learning disabilities. Though, this doesn't stop him from standing out in a special way; He is a great pitcher. When his town gets demolished for building, he must take the opportunity to live with a wealthy family in a nice area. Coincidentally their son is the star player of the top baseball team in the area. He has to fight both to land himself in the top of his league, but also the abuse of drugs and depression.

2. *Which character did you most identify with and why?*

I identify most with Laz for many reasons. Firstly, he takes on the immense pressure of being an older sibling, who often worries about the turn-out of his younger brother. I also struggle with letting my younger sister have freedom and protecting her from the dangers of the outside world, similar to Laz. I also understand where he is coming from when he deals with the hardships of being poor and seeing the clear socio-economic differences. I believe this is a very serious issue, and nobody should feel lower or less superior based on their wealth.

3. *What do you believe is the main message of this book?*

I believe this book has many positive main messages. In all, I think this book is proving that the people you surround yourself with, truly impacts who you become and how you view the world. This is significant when it comes to your family and their influence.

4. *Do you think the main message of this book was effectively integrated into the story, or did it come across as too "preachy"?*

I believe the main message of this story was effectively integrated into the story. To add on, I think the author did a great job of showing through different characters how the abuse of drugs, poverty, and life struggles took different effects of Laz. This was done slowly while giving the readers minor nudges towards the overall message.

5. *If two or more perspectives on an important topic were explored/presented in this book, which one did you agree with and why?*

With the two detectives of this story being the wealthy stable family that housed Laz, and Laz with his unstable lifestyle, I would have to agree more of the morals of Laz. To explain, in the story the wealthy people had certain tritypes about those who are underneath them economically. I completely disagree and am on Laz's side. That is because he proves that no matter what your past or where you came from, everyone can change for the better.

6. *In what ways (if any) were your beliefs about a topic changed or reaffirmed through reading this book?*

My beliefs that people who start using drugs are just not having self control and are being dumb on purpose when using them, was completely changed after reading this. I came to see how even a friend's influence can lead to a depression spiral filled with drugs and sadness. Those people who sadly fall into this are not bad, and just made wrong decisions. I am glad that I was able to understand this through the story.

7. *What perspective, if any, do you think was missing from this book?*

I believe the perspective of Laz's father is missing from the story. To add on, I think it would have added more of a depth to the story if his dad showed his views on drugs, and baseball. Since he is the reason why Laz fell in love with it in the first place.

8. *Did this book encourage you to pursue any topics further through more reading, research, action, etc., and if so, how?*

This book definitely inspired me to conduct more research on kids who have lived in the slums or had a life filled with poverty, who made it and have a successful career. I think it is very inspiring to see those who came from nothing, and used hard work and perseverance to make a comfortable life for themselves.

9. *What type of reader (based on age, interests, perspectives, etc.) would you suggest this book to?*

I would recommend this book to readers who are interested in learning about kids who have a lower socio-economic status, and see how their lives are hard but still fight through. I also believe kids ages 9+ would love this story, especially those who like sports and baseball.

10. *What other book(s) have you read that you think would make a good addition to this category of the Perspectives Bibliography, and why?*

A wonderful book I have read in the past that I believe would make a great addition to this category is *evicted* by Matthew Desmond. I think that because it shows how families struggle because of their socio-economic status, and how America still suffers from inequality of the poor.