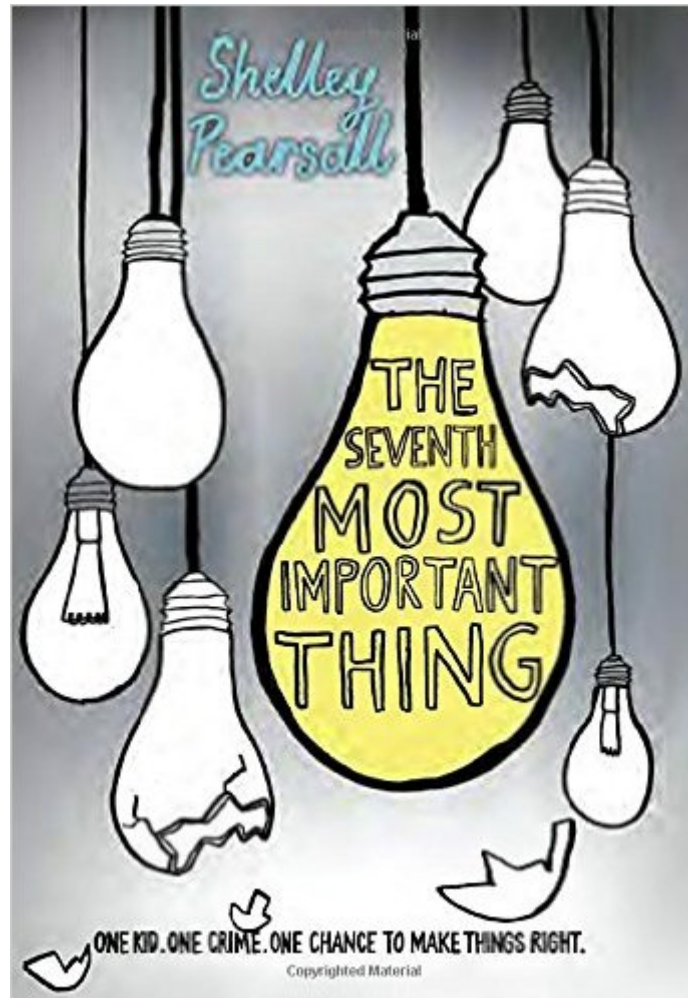


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The Seventh Most Important Thing



Synopsis

Shelley Pearsall's story of anger and art, loss and redemption, is a transformative read that will appeal to fans of Lisa Graff's *Lost in the Sun* and Vince Vawter's *Paperboy*. One kid. One crime. One chance to make things right. It was a bitterly cold day when Arthur T. Owens grabbed a brick and hurled it at the trash picker. Arthur had his reasons, and the brick hit the Junk Man in the arm, not the head. But none of that matters to the judge—he is ready to send Arthur to juvie for the foreseeable future. Amazingly, it's the Junk Man himself who offers an alternative: 120 hours of community service . . . working for him. Arthur is given a rickety shopping cart and a list of the Seven Most Important Things: glass bottles, foil, cardboard, pieces of wood, lightbulbs, coffee cans, and mirrors. He can't believe it—is he really supposed to rummage through people's trash? But it isn't long before Arthur realizes there's more to the Junk Man than meets the eye, and the trash he's collecting is being transformed into something more precious than anyone could imagine. . . . Inspired by the work of American folk artist James Hampton, award-winning author Shelley Pearsall has crafted an affecting and redemptive novel about discovering what shines within us all, even when life seems full of darkness.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 0760 (What's this?)

Hardcover: 288 pages

Publisher: Knopf Books for Young Readers (September 8, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0553497286

ISBN-13: 978-0553497281

Product Dimensions: 5.8 x 1 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.6 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (45 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #68,352 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #98 in [Books > Children's Books >](#)

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[Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > United States > 1900s](#) #186 in [Books >](#)

[Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Multicultural Stories > African-American](#)

Age Range: 10 and up

Grade Level: 5 and up

Customer Reviews

“The Seventh Most Important Thing” is a novel that teaches some familiar and very important lessons. Shelley Pearsall bases her book on the creation and preservation of artist James Hampton’s “The Throne of the Third Heaven”. Through the addition of other characters, she gives readers an opportunity to reflect on their own attitudes and actions as they interact with those who may be viewed as different or eccentric. As he deals with his father’s death, thirteen-year old Arthur Owens reacts angrily when he sees the old Junk Man wearing his father’s cap. In that moment, all the fury that had been building in Arthur since his father’s death came exploding out. Arthur throws a brick at the man, injuring him. After three weeks in juvie and when his hearing commences, Arthur is surprised to see the man “neatly dressed in a suit and well groomed” in the courtroom. He is even more astonished when the judge, who views Arthur as someone like his father that will be heading down the wrong path, pronounces his sentence. At James Hampton’s request, the judge issues a “highly unconventional sentence”. Arthur is assigned to work for him [Hampton] until his arm has healed. During the hours and weeks of his labors, Arthur begins to understand and appreciate the value of work, of self expression, and of those who may be “different”. Through Arthur and his ongoing personal growth, Shelley Pearsall provides some valuable lessons for her readers. When Arthur learns the Junk Man is “James Hampton”, he “tried not to look surprised by the fact the man had a real name”. He “never thought about the Junk Man having one”. Many times individuals looked at someone less fortunate than they are and have thoughts similar to those Arthur had.

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