Prison Reading Groups

Almond

By Won-Pyung Sohn

Yunjae was born with a brain condition called alexithymia that makes it hard for him to feel emotions like fear and anger. He does not have friends, but his devoted mother and grandmother provide him with a safe and contented life. But everything changes when a shocking act of random violence shatters his world, leaving him alone and on his own.

Struggling to cope with his loss, Yunjae retreats into silent isolation, until troubled teenager Gon arrives at school. The two form a surprising bond and when Gon suddenly life finds his life at risk, Yunjae will have to step outside of every comfort zone he has created to perhaps become the hero of his own story.

Discussion Questions:

1. Yunjae's mother had tried many ways to help her son understand the reasoning and meaning behind different emotions. Do you think she did a good job in teaching her son about them?

2. Does the absence of emotion in Yunjae's narration stop you from feeling sympathy for the characters?

3. The book is separated in to four parts. What do you think the different parts signify?

4. Yunjae's grandmother uses the term 'monster' as a sign of endearment. How does the word affect Yunjae?

5. Yunjae hoped Steel Wire would someday be "*given the chance to be able to wear a different expression on his face"*. What expression do you think Yunjae is referring to here?

6. Yunjae states you can never know "*whether a story is happy or tragic*" and *"it may be impossible to categorise a story neatly in the first place".* How did you expect this book to end?

7. Lastly, do you think the cover is a good match for the book?

Thank you to our volunteer Rayan for choosing this title and creating the resource