



The Seventh Most Important Thing

By Shelley Pearsall

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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.

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The Seventh Most Important Thing By Shelley Pearsall Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Gr 4–7—A middle school student learns the meaning of redemption in this excellent coming-of-age story. For the rest of the country, it was the year President Kennedy was assassinated. For Arthur Owens, it would always be the year his Dad died. Arthur is struggling to adapt. When he sees his Dad's hat being worn by the neighborhood "Junk Man," it is just too much. Arthur isn't a bad kid, but he picks up that brick and throws it just the same. The judge pronounces a "highly unconventional sentence." At the behest of the victim James Hampton, the "Junk Man," Arthur must spend every weekend of his community service helping to complete Hampton's artistic masterpiece. Inspired by real life artist James Hampton's life and work, "The Throne of the Third Heaven of the Nations' Millennium General Assembly," the plot avoids overt religious tones and sticks with the exploration of friendship, love, and life's most important lessons. From the "Junk Man's" neighbor, Groovy Jim, to no-nonsense Probation Officer Billie to Arthur's new best pal Squeak, and even his family, Pearsall has struck just the right tone by imbuing her well-rounded, interesting characters with authentic voices and pacing the action perfectly. Give this to fans of Wendy Mass's *Jeremy Fink and the Meaning of Life* (Little, Brown, 2006) and Gennifer Choldenko's *Al Capone Does My Shirts* (Penguin, 2004). Reluctant readers may be intimidated by the page count, but a booktalk or read-aloud with this title should change their minds. VERDICT A recommended purchase for all libraries.—Cindy Wall, Southington Library & Museum, CT

Review

"Written in a homespun style that reflects the simple components of the artwork, the story guides readers along with Arthur to an understanding of the most important things in life. **Luminescent**, just like the artwork it celebrates." —*Kirkus Reviews* starred review

"Pearsall has struck just the right tone by imbuing her well-rounded, interesting characters with authentic voices and pacing the action perfectly. **Excellent.**" —*School Library Journal*, starred review

"A **moving** exploration of how there is often so much more than meets the eye." -- *Booklist*, Starred review

"There are so many things to love about this book. **Remarkable.**"--*Christian Science Monitor*

"...interweaves the power and purpose of art with an exploration of a boy's grief and redemption." --
Bulletin

"Pearsall shows us that hope isn't somewhere "out there"—it's quite literally in our own two hands." --Jen Bryant, author of *A Splash of Red: The Life and Art of Horace Pippin*.

About the Author

A former teacher and museum historian, SHELLEY PEARSALL is now a full-time author. The idea for this novel began many years ago when she first saw outsider artist James Hampton's amazing work at the Smithsonian. She was disappointed that so little is known about Hampton and was intrigued that his work was brought to light by anonymous sources. It was the perfect foundation for this redemptive, inspiring historical novel. Her first novel, *Trouble Don't Last*, won the Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction. To learn more about the author and her work, visit ShelleyPearsall.com.

Users Review

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Why don't make it to become your habit? Right now, try to prepare your time to do the important take action, like looking for your favorite guide and reading a reserve. Beside you can solve your short lived problem; you can add your knowledge by the reserve entitled The Seventh Most Important Thing. Try to face the book The Seventh Most Important Thing as your buddy. It means that it can to become your friend when you sense alone and beside that of course make you smarter than ever before. Yeah, it is very fortunated to suit your needs. The book makes you a lot more confidence because you can know everything by the book. So , we should make new experience as well as knowledge with this book.

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Brian Grant:

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