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CHANDA'S SECRETS

ALLAN STRATTON

"*Life, Above All* has the high art and big heart of any award-worthy film."
Time Magazine

"The film is about deep human emotions, evoked with sympathy and love."
Roger Ebert, *Chicago Sun-Times*



Chanda's Secrets

Allan Stratton

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Chanda's Secrets Allan Stratton

Chanda's Secrets is a suspense-filled novel about a teenager who fights to rescue the people she loves. Through his dramatic storytelling, Allan Stratton captures the enduring strength of loyalty, the profound impact of loss, and a fearlessness that is powered by the heart. Above all, this is a story about living with truth.

Chanda's Secrets Details

Date : Published February 1st 2004 by Annick Press

ISBN : 9781550378344

Author : Allan Stratton

Format : Paperback 193 pages

Genre : Young Adult, Fiction, Cultural, Africa, Realistic Fiction, Teen

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From Reader Review Chanda's Secrets for online ebook

Laquisa says

This book was very interesting story of a young girl who was forced to grow up too soon. With her mother dying of AIDS and her best friend resorting to prostitution for survival, Chanda is forced to grow up and raise her younger siblings. The thought of even knowing someone with the AIDS virus is looked down upon by her community, resulting in ostracization or death. I recommend everyone to read this story.

Kathleen Garber says

This book was heartbreaking. Although I've read about AIDS I don't know anyone personally who has it (or at least that I know has it) so I've never experienced seeing a loved one deteriorate from the disease. This book almost made me feel like it WAS my loved one(s) who were suffering. The descriptions are amazing but it's not overly descriptive (which I don't like.)

The book isn't set in any specific African country, just a fictional Sub-Saharan one. However the way life is depicted in the book is the way life is like in any Sub-Saharan African country.

This is one of those books that is so good you don't know what to say. At this part of the author's website, if you scroll down, you will find more info on the book including what the cover looks like around the world, the background of why the book was written, a YouTube interview with the author, an excerpt of Chapter One, praise, awards and citations, and a teacher's guide. You can also check out the page for the book at its publisher, Annick Press. Check out the LONG list of Awards and Lists the book has made!

I also learned there is a sequel that just came out called Chanda's Wars (published through HarperCollins instead of Annick Press).

Pam says

Excellent book about a sixteen-year-old girl who struggles to keep her dream alive of a scholarship and career while living in sub-Saharan Africa in a home that doesn't have electricity nor running water and with the pallor of AIDS overshadowing everything. Despite the hardship and depressing nature of the subject, the heroic character traits of the main character are inspiring. The author did a great job highlighting the dignity amidst a world of sustenance living and hardships we can barely imagine.

Erika says

I absolutely LOVED this book. Even though it is very tragic it was thoroughly written and made me feel all the emotions Chanda was going through. I rated this book 5 stars because it has a great plot, shows a lot about what Africa is like with the HIV virus, and shows courage and true bravery. This book was a great read, anyone who shows interest in this book should definitely read it.

Marc Kohlman says

What a tragic, encouraging, contemporary and moving book! Read this in my high school book club and I was completely blown away by it. At the center of it is a sixteen-year old sub-Saharan African girl struggling to get a higher education and move up in the world. The main fear Chanda has is of contracting AIDS which is a very real and damaging disease in that part of the world. I admire Chanda for the drive and courage within her. She represents the many children of Africa, especially those trying to support families themselves when they are still kids in need of help themselves. Chanda's bold and self-less acts in helping and taking in her friend Esther, who resorted to prostitution and contracted AIDS and the odyssey Chanda embarked on to find her mother were what I liked most about the book. Chanda did not give up on two people she loved and cared for and despite superstition and ridicule from others- Chanda did not let them break her. I watched half of the film "Life, Above All" adapted from the novel and I say it does follow the book quite closely. It definitely deserved to be selected for the Best Foreign Language Film at the 83rd Academy Awards. The ending of the film was the most touching moment when Chanda's neighbors, once prejudiced to her family and people who had AIDS recognized the strength and love Chanda had for her mother and her quest to bring her home, come together and sang when her mother passes on moved me to tears. It reminded me that the fight for life is never ending, how precious it is, and that even in terrible and inescapable situations there is always hope. This is a story of bravery and heart all people should read. It transcends time and cultures and an illness people in many countries such as Chanda's do not fully understand, struggle to cure and look upon as taboo.

Salma says

This was an interesting read. It opened up my eyes on AIDS and HIV, which I didn't know about until I read this book. As expected, it was a very sad book, and it made me uncomfortable at times. The protagonist in this novel, Chanda, is a strong, independent 16-year-old, and younger readers should definitely look up to her.

Mag says

A very well written novel about the AIDS epidemic in sub-Saharan Africa. It takes place in an imaginary country, in an average African city and shows the scale and all the complexity of the problem. It is narrated by a sixteen-year-old girl any teenager in the developed world could relate to, who is dealing with the enormity of the problem firsthand.

I didn't know that in 2010, *Chanda's Secrets* was made into the movie *Life, Above All*. The film, a German/South African co-production, won quite a few prizes and was South Africa's entry for Best Foreign Film at the 2011 Oscars, where it was one of nine finalists.

It's a re-read for me in preparation for *Chanda's Wars*, a stand-alone sequel to *Chanda's Secrets*. Appropriate for ESLD and up. Due to fantastically executed but limited themes, probably better for independent reading than a class novel.

Kyra says

Secrets of Denial - By Kyra, Tori, Matu and Mathew

In the book "Chanda's Secrets" by Allan Stratton, the author uses symbolism and metaphors to show a denial of AIDS, and the negative impact it has on personal lives and society. This book is the story of a girl and the times in her life that is laced with AIDS how she dealt with what other people thought about her and her family. In the story, of this part, the mother goes to Tiro because she didn't want her children, loved ones and society of her small town to see she had AIDS. She was ashamed of it so she denied that she had AIDS to her children and walked away. The daughter suspects this and goes to Tiro to find her mother. She finds her very sick and brings her home. She dies. After that, on page 189, Chanda and the children see a white stork that they think is their mother after her death, "There perched on the wheelbarrow, was my stork. It craned its neck towards us. Iris and Soly waved. The stork raised its right foot as if giving us a blessing. Then it arched its back and began to fly, circling the yard three times before disappearing into the night." Generally, storks are symbols for hope and freedom. From the author's point of view, she put this scene in to symbolize that the mother is free from denial of her sickness and shame of this disease but also her realizing her mistake. Using that foot as a sign begging for forgiveness. The negative impact it had on personal ones was leaving them motherless and orphans, but the mother realized her mistakes of denial and the author used the stork as a symbol. Judging the mother, she acted out of selfishness to leave her family but is understandable because the population is small and would get the whole town talking about the family in a bad way. Hypothesizing, if the mother didn't leave her children and society, accepted she had AIDS, they could spend more time with her and lived with that death would have to come and live in peace with that. But nevertheless, her mother was free from her denial.

People are afraid of AIDS and that has made them afraid of anyone knowing in someone in their family has AIDS or if they have AIDS, so people stay hidden and keep secrets instead of fixing up this messed up society. On page 192 "The secrets keep us hiding behind the curtain. The welcome center throws back that curtain." The welcome center is a place where people with AIDS all meet and talk about their lives. It helps the people they get the weight of their shoulders, but the society thinks that when you go there you are a dirty and a bad person. Chanda goes anyway and finds that it is like a home and the people there understand them. Normally, when people are afraid of something they will deny it. But here in this story Chanda faces the problem of that her best friend and mother have AIDS, and she is faced with the shame; although, people shun her she keeps fighting for what's right and fights for her mother. The society is denying the truth about AIDS because they are scared, but in this story we learn denial only makes it worse. This related to the quote "Don't deny what's obvious to see" by picture quotes. The author uses this metaphor to show that when you say the truth you feel so much better about yourself. Chanda realizes that if she stands up for what's right than you could change anything. I think that Chanda is a good person because she wants to show people that AIDS isn't something to be afraid of; in fact, it is something that the community should face together. They should not snub people who have AIDS instead they should help and esteem people who have AIDS so that they can feel welcomed and people don't have to feel shamed about their families. Chanda's belief in doing what's right and accepting AIDS really has had a good affect on the community around her, and people were finally able to admit that either they had AIDS or someone in their family did; as a result, the community was more open, and didn't snub people who did have AIDS. This taught us a good life lesson, when we face the truth we feel better and more complete, but if we deny it and stint the people who need help then we will never feel like everything is ok. So face the truth. Fight for what's right. Don't be like everyone else!

On page 178 “ Everything’s still, except for a circle of large black birds hovering overhead.” She had come in search of her mother who had left to see her family in Tiro, but really her mother had left so that she could die away from her children and save them the shame of her having AIDS. And when Mrs Tafa supports them in front of the public and welcomes them home, not letting the fact that they have AIDS affect how she treats them, she realizes the secret that she Most people think that when someone is near death you should leave them to die in peace, alone. But Chanda didn’t give up even after the black bird sign. Black is the color of death, dreary and bad things. The black birds show death and bad luck, just like the stork gave them a blessing, the black birds are giving her a curse. Chanda doesn’t give up or back down; even though she’s lost and scared and her mother has AIDS. She finds the strength in herself by accepting the truth and doesn’t let what others think, see or do affect her, like how she doesn’t get affected by the black birds. We learn that people fight for what they love and this shows her strength to accept AIDS and not deny it. She changes. People deny AIDS and let it take a negative impact on them, but Chanda doesn’t deny it and she doesn’t let others affect her. This author talks about the denial of AIDS; but also, about how it affects people lives’ and the society around them negatively; in fact, just like a criminal not admitting his crimes. He does this by using symbolism and metaphors.

Kris says

Stratton, A. (2004). *Chanda's secret*. Toronto: Annick.

Genre: Multicultural

Awards:

Michael L. Printz Honor Award 2005

Independent Publisher Book Awards Winner(IPPYs) 2005

ForeWord Magazine Book of the Year Awards Winner 2004

CLA Young Adult Book Award Nominee 2005

Nominated to several state book award lists in 2007

Format: Print -paperback

Selection Process: YALSA Teen Book Finder, Bowker Books in Print

Review:

Chanda's Secrets is a gripping tale of 16 year old Chanda, who must deal with more secrets than she can handle -her secrets, her family's secrets, her culture's secrets. Until she can overcome the fear of secrets, Chanda knows that her family and people of her village will not protect themselves and heal. A deadly disease too scary to talk about is killing people and the mere mention of it has people shunned and abandoned while others are either too fearful or ignorant to admit the truth. Chanda and everyone close to her could be next. Stratton does a superb job of mixing the cultures of an imaginary sub-saharan Africa, where he let's Chandashow us the complexities of dealing with how people of her culture perceive the medical profession and the educational system that are out to save them but embedded beliefs make it difficult to come to grips with their wrongs. Readers will share this village with Chanda and her family and friends as she experiences little joys and huge sorrows as she stands up for her family and friends to show that an educated society can save its people. Highly Recommended.

Allan Stratton says

Hi,

I'm Allan Stratton, the author of CHANDA'S SECRETS. I love meeting readers and would be happy to answer any questions you might have. Just write me c/o this site, or, if you want to see all the foreign edition covers, at my website www.allanstratton.com Also the movie trailer!

It was made into the movie LIFE, ABOVE ALL (a very close adaptation) that premiered at Cannes, spring 2010, and opens in North America through Sony Pictures Classics, July 2011.

CHANDA'S SECRETS is about a young woman who realizes very early on that there is something seriously wrong with her mother. But she's afraid to face what that might mean, since she loves her mama more than anything and can't bear losing her and having to raise her siblings alone. Chanda also has a best friend, Esther, who lost her parents to AIDS, and who has turned to prostitution to earn the money to win back her brothers and sisters who've been scattered around the countryside after their parent's death.

CHANDA'S SECRETS is more than about AIDS, though. At heart, it's about the secrets we all have, about our fears of shame and stigma and losing the love and respect of the people we love. It's about the pain of bereavement. And above all, the courage of living with truth.

I love Chanda and her family very much. I hope you will too.

J.D. Holman says

Interesting and different. I've been on a kick lately of listening to audiobooks about teens in rougher parts of the world, and this certainly hits topics that are overlooked in the West.

elissa says

About AIDS in Africa, a very unique topic for YA lit. Extremely well written, but very depressing.

Sofia Migueis says

Chanda's Secrets successfully "puts a human face to the AIDS pandemic" (Stratton, 2007).

Allan Stratton's suspenseful and moving novel Chanda's Secrets, takes a unique perspective on a global outcry of poverty and its main consequence in this novel is, contracting the disease -- AIDS. The novel is explored through the lens of a young sixteen year old girl named Chanda living in a fictional country, most likely located in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Throughout the book, Chanda's life is filled with illness and death in her family, often accompanied by shame as she lives in a society where AIDS is looked down upon. In poverty, her and her loved ones endeavour a constant struggle with the a lack of health care and lack of education. The story includes constant powerful scenarios where the characters experience drastic events in their life which leave them vulnerable. Chanda puts in all her efforts to save her family from illness and from judgment and shame.

I really enjoyed this novel as it's raw emotion portrayed through the characters captivated me and allowed me to build ties with the characters. Although fictional, Allan Stratton successfully drew light to the controversial issue of AIDS - it's spreading and affect on millions of people around the world.

I would highly recommend this book to young adults as it could enlighten them about the importance of worldwide illnesses such as AIDS and inspire them to attempt to make changes even as teenagers or young adults - just as Chanda did.

Matu says

Like a criminal not admitting his crimes, in the book "Chanda's Secrets" by Allan Stratton, the author uses symbolism and metaphors to show a denial of AIDS, and the negative impact it has on personal lives and society. This book is the story of a girl and the times in her life that is laced with AIDS how she dealt we what other people thought about her and her family. In the story, of this part, the mother goes to Tiro because she didn't want her children, loved ones and society of her small town to see she had AIDS. She was ashamed of it so she denied that she had AIDS to her children and walked away. The daughter suspects this and goes to Tiro to find her mother. She finds her very sick and brings her home. She dies. After that, on page 189, Chanda and the children see a white stork that they think is their mother after her death, "There perched on the wheelbarrow, was my stork. It craned its neck towards us. Iris and Soly waved. The stork raised it's right foot as if giving us a blessing. Then it arched it's back and began to fly, circling the yard three times before disappearing into the night." Generally, storks are symbols for hope and freedom. From the author's point of view, she put this scene in to symbolize that the mother is free from denial of her sickness and shame of this disease but also her realizing her mistake. Using that foot as a sign begging for forgiveness. The negative impact it had on personal ones was leaving them motherless and orphans, but the mother realized her mistakes of denial and the author used the stork as a symbol. Judging the mother, she acted out of selfishness to leave her family but is understandable because the population is small and would get the whole town talking about the family in a bad way. Hypothesizing, if the mother didn't leave her children and society, accepted she had AIDs, they could spend more time with her and lived with that death would have to come and live in peace with that. But netherless, her mother was free from her denial.

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AIDS because they are scared, but in this story we learn denial only makes it worse. This related to the quote "Don't deny what's obvious to see" by picture quotes. The author use this metaphor to show that when you say the truth you feel so much better about yourself. Chanda realizes that if she stands up for what's right than you could change anything. I think that Chanda is a good person because she wants to show people that AIDS isn't something to be afraid of; in fact, it is something that the community should face together. They should not snub people who have AIDS instead they should help and esteem people who have AIDS so that they can feel welcomed and people don't have to feel shamed about their families. Chanda belief in doing what's right and accepting AIDS really has had a good affect on the community around her, and people were finally able to admit that either they had AIDS or someone in their family did; as a result, the community was more open, and didn't snub people who did have aids. This taught us a good life lesson, when we face the truth we feel better and more complete, but if we deny it and stint the people who need help than we will never feel like everything is ok. So face the truth. Fight for what's right. Don't be like everyone else!

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Xochitl Ruiz says

It was about a girl that was really strong to support the dead of her sister and she was moving stuff with a funeral man to make a funeral for her sister.I did like the book cause i like scary story"s but it was"t that scary at all.What i also like from her is that she was really brave one example is she also took care of her friend that was sick and maybe she was going to die.I will recommended to the people that like scary story"s but don't like it that scary.
