

On *Tracy* by Mirabelle Maslin

I hope 'Tracy' is put on every High School reading list. Young adolescents would definitely reap benefits from reading it. It makes a lot of sense and is very reassuring, demonstrating to young people (and their parents, if they show the book them!) the importance of exploring difficult feelings without having to feel guilty about having them, and helping them to realise that they are not alone in experiencing these feelings.

It shows how worthwhile it is to struggle to put the feelings into words and then to manage to share them with someone who can be trusted.

Valerie Carrigan, mother of three – now adults
6 September 2005

I am full of admiration for your ability to tell a good tale and get your message across.

I should think it could be as useful for parents as for their young.

Gill Bateman, a grandmother, and a former science teacher
9 September 2005

Your book captures the intensely personal, emotional, and intellectual dialogue that takes place amongst children and young people, showing that with adequate and appropriate information they can form in-depth and growth-producing relationships with the adult community. It also shows that adults have much to learn from young people about how open communication can build more meaningful relationships. It hit home the truth that it takes courage to stand up and speak, but that it also takes courage to sit down and listen.

On reading the book, I marvelled at how Tracy's inner resources, built up because she really felt the love of her close family, gave her strength to reach out to the distress of others. The Dalai Lama said on his recent 70th birthday that humans need happiness.

Tracy seemed to be happy throughout her time with Flora, her cousin. I wonder if a sequel would show her to be less happy later in her life, or if her early experience orients her towards being happy throughout her life.

Brian Magee

I really enjoyed reading Tracy – watching her develop into a more confident girl. I am entering my final year at High School, and although this novel is aimed at a younger readership, I was able to engage with it quite strongly, as I can clearly remember what it is like to be that young. Tracy still has a naïve perception of the world, and I was able to connect with that, as I also shared her views at that age. In our society – where younger people are coming into contact with serious issues such as drugs, smoking and underage sex at an increasingly younger age – this book encourages, but does not demand, that young people take the right path by providing them with options. I found this highly refreshing. Aunt May – one of the most prominent figures in the book – shows how it is not only okay, but beneficial, to share problems with her, and that she both understands and helps Tracy and Flora. This book demonstrates how powerful communication of that sort can be. It helps Tracy and Flora to mature; and through encouraging their friends to open up more, they all work through many problems and are better for it in the end.

Having been through that vulnerable stage myself, I know how worrying life can be when you are faced with many dilemmas, and don't know how to put them into words, or who to approach about them. This book is brilliant on the front of helping to understand feelings and questions a young person might be too scared to ask about. Tracy learns how to cope with such situations through interaction with a wide range of older people – including Miss Maitland, who is two generations her senior. I like the way that the characters are able to engage in spontaneous acts of kindness towards one another.

After reading this book, my hope is that any young people who are feeling vulnerable can take strength from what they absorb from this novel and share their problems to find a path that is really right for them.

Claire Henderson, secondary school pupil
26 July 2005