

## SACE 2 - English Communications

### Task 2 Novel: The *Divine Wind* By Gary Disher

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Gary Disher's novel, *The Divine Wind*, is set in a typically Australian town called Broome, before and during World War II. The central characters, Hart, Alice and Mitsy help Disher explore and establish themes regarding numerous relationships which occur within society. Friendship is the first, showing how with age the foundations to which these are made cannot always be strong enough to maintain friendships. The other type of relationships are those relating to love. Next is prejudice which is shown through the relationship of the white Australian citizens and those who are not: Aboriginals and Asians. The book finally shows the theme of loyalty, in particular during World War II.

***"We often make friends for the weakest of reasons – proximity for example, or shared experience, or laziness or need..."***<sup>1</sup> This gives readers an understanding of the beliefs Disher holds regarding the formation of friendships. As well as portraying the theme of changing friendships. The friendship of the characters Mitsy, Alice and Hart are formed at a young age solely through proximity and need. We see this alter when they become adults as Disher shows the changing attitudes of each character. External issues such as race and loyalty to ones country are taken into consideration by each other, especially with the looming war. Disher makes known that as friendships mature proximity and need are not enough to sustain that friendship. Views expressed by others, by society as a whole or individuals, can affect the way we think about a friend, leading to a changed or destroyed friendship. A reflection of everyday life, can cause a breakdown. Classmates in Junior school once swearing to be 'together forever' separate through change in beliefs and values.

***"By the time I was fifteen, Ida had virtually stopped talking to my father"***<sup>2</sup> A reflection made by Hart about his mothers broken relationship with his father.

Love is described in the book as a form of blindness, reflecting on different social backgrounds, which can lead to failed relationships. An example being Michael and Ida. They meet and fall in love, ignoring their different upbringings; Ida's formal and English, Michaels easygoing and Australian. As love felt between them wains, they see the need for their own lifestyles and separate. A further example is Alice, she does not reflect upon Hart's dislike of Carl Venning who she is madly in love with. Instead realising later, of her own accord that their difference in backgrounds and opinions are too far apart, Alice has a great sense of self and always stands up for what she believes in, she ends their relationship. During these times there was a naïve view of love, feelings for another meant that you should be with them. Today there is still a blindness shown when in love. Too often

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<sup>1</sup> Disher, G, 1998, *The Divine Wind*, Griffin Press, South Australia, P.g. 21

<sup>2</sup> I bid, P.g. 13

I have seen heartbroken girls who have misjudged a relationship, ignoring negative signs, and focused on the 'here and now'. A lasting relationship is one formed over time, where aspects of each others lifestyles and ideas have to be accommodated.

**“ ‘Oh, somewhere over in the east, shove ‘em in with the German’s and the Italians I suppose.’ ”**<sup>3</sup> this reveals the prejudicial treatment towards both the Aboriginal and Japanese people at the hands of Australian authorities in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Australia. Disher accurately portrays how these attitudes were formed in the hands of authorities, especially with the coming war. The prejudice was fostered by the indoctrination of white Australian people into the belief that these particular race’s were set to ruin Australia. When World War II was declared, and Japan became Australia’s enemy, concerns that Japanese Australian’s would turn against white Australians became widespread amongst society. In particular we can see how Carl Venning is convinced by the authorities: “Your Abo is unreliable...he’ll collaborate. He’ll guide the Japs through the bush.”<sup>4</sup> This indoctrination led to fear amongst people towards racial minorities. Prejudice still occurs in society today. A typical example is America and its Governments’ ploy to instil fear into the American population by promoting the misinformation that Iraq had ‘weapons of mass destruction’. This substantiated their policy to go to war, as they wanted to control the leadership of Iraq. Personally I believe that in a contemporary society, with a vast amount of knowledge readily available and easy communication, we should not be fearful of others.

**“ ‘I hope your keeping an eye on those Japs you got at your house, sonny.’ ”**<sup>5</sup> was a comment made to Hart for keeping Mitsy and Sadoko in their house. Disher tries to portray that loyalty is highly regarded within relationships. The prejudice which increased during the war against the Japanese and the Aboriginals revealed a loyalty within Hart and his father for their friends. Although there was speculation and name calling by the local Australians, the Penrose family stood loyal to their friends. Disher reveals that whatever and whoever is saying detrimental things about those who are close to you, they should be ignored, instead maintaining your beliefs in that person or people. This serious issue breaks down or strengthens relationships amongst people. On both a small scale, within friendship groups, or to a larger extent between countries. The ‘Coalition of the Willing’ allowed Iraq to be invaded and I believe that some countries change of loyalty to the cause as time has passed has weakened America’s position.

Gary Disher <sup>explores</sup> the main issue of relationships in the book the *Divine Wind*. The issue is expressed through the themes of friendship, love, prejudice and loyalty. Loyalty can be detrimental in a relationship. Friendship is explained as fluid and changes with time. Love is

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<sup>3</sup> Op cit, P.g. 107

<sup>4</sup> Op cit, P.g. 76

<sup>5</sup> Op cit P.g. 138

expressed as a form of blindness. Relationships between races show prejudice, which is formed through authorities views and is brought about by a fear of other races.

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