



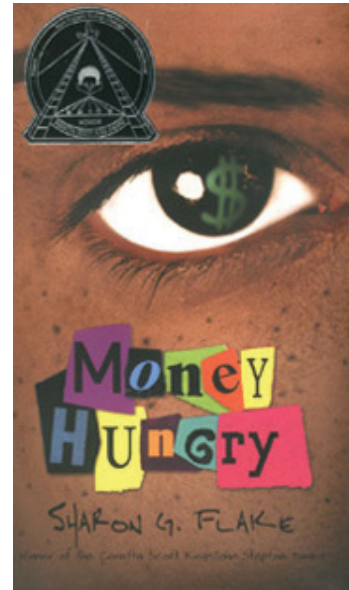
Voices
from the
Gaps

Money Hungry

Sharon G. Flake

In the tale *Money Hungry*, Sharon G. Flake uses multiple writing techniques to bring us into the life of Raspberry Hill, a thirteen-year-old girl living in a housing project. Raspberry has a unique condition for a girl of her age: she'll do anything legal for the almighty dollar. She washes cars, sells rotten candy, skips lunch, and cleans strangers' houses just to keep cash coming into her pockets. On the first page, we are given a brief introduction into the psyche of Raspberry. She tells the reader that she is always trying to think of a way to make a dollar, and when she can't sleep at night she'll grab fistfuls of cash and count it until she dozes off. Along with this habit, Raspberry is known to smell her money, rub it against her skin, and water at the mouth at the sight of it. What is it that drives Raspberry's money-hungry ways? It's not simply the desire to obtain material objects and to climb up the economic ladder. Instead it is the fear of finding herself and her mother living a life out on the streets. Raspberry believes that "money is the only thing in life that won't do you wrong" and lets this consume her every thought and action.

Along with Raspberry, we are introduced to many more residents of the projects. Including Zora, Ja'nae, and Mai, three of Raspberry's friends and classmates. Each girl has one thing in common, they each struggle with conflict in their life. The conflicts range from dealing with recent divorce in a family, a mother that ran off, and a child overcoming the pressures of society she encounters due to her parent's biracial marriage. Through the use of African-American English and other common vernacular, we are told the story of these amazing characters. As each one takes another step to coming to terms with her life, we see exactly how strong and yet fragile these young women can be.



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That said, the story of Raspberry and her mother is what pushes this book forward. Raspberry's mother works two jobs to keep her family in a low-end apartment. She's a strong woman who takes care of her child and seems to communicate well with everyone in her neighborhood, while always maintaining an optimistic attitude. Raspberry and her mother live a life on stilts it would only take one bad step for them to crash to the ground. Early on, Raspberry believes that money is the one thing that can keep them from such a fatal fall. She soon discovers through a series of unfortunate events that money can only last so long and it only belongs to the hand that holds it. When Raspberry has no money left to count, she's still able to count on the support of her friends and family.

Sharon G. Flake writes a story that deals with complicated issues. However, by writing of the lives of children, her novel delivers her major themes in a form that seems simplistic. Along with that when the innocence of children is put at risk it magnifies the situation in the eyes of any reader. Flake has selected an environment that is familiar to a very select audience, but by using topics that can affect anyone in society it allows for the book to speak to people who are not familiar with Raspberry's neighborhood. Overall, Flake has placed some of today's most complicated issues within the pages of *Money Hungry*. The lessons that Raspberry learns, both about money and about people, are lessons that should be taught to all children. This is a novel written in the voice of the modern day author and is speaking towards young adults, but it is also a novel that they'll be able to share with their parents.

Reviewed by Jim Schmit