

Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher: OOHS English Department Grade: 11-12 School: OOHS

Book Title: Atonement Genre: Contemporary Fiction

Author: Ian McEwan Pages: 351

Publisher: Anchor Books (Random House) Copyright: 2001

In a brief rationale, please provide the following information relative to the book you would like added to the school's book collection for classroom use. You may attach additional pages as needed.

Book Summary and summary citation: (suggested resources include book flap summaries, review summaries from publisher, book vendors, etc.)

Ian McEwan's symphonic novel of love and war, childhood and class, guilt and forgiveness provides all the satisfaction of a brilliant narrative and the provocation we have come to expect from this master of English prose.

On a hot summer day in 1935, thirteen-year-old Briony Tallis witnesses a moment's flirtation between her older sister, Cecilia, and Robbie Turner, the son of a servant and Cecilia's childhood friend. But Briony's incomplete grasp of adult motives—together with her precocious literary gifts—brings about a crime that will change all their lives. As it follows that crime's repercussions through the chaos and carnage of World War II and into the close of the twentieth century, *Atonement* engages the reader on every conceivable level, with an ease and authority that mark it as a genuine masterpiece.

http://www.amazon.com/Atonement-Novel-Ian-McEwan/dp/038572179X/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1404918789&sr=1-1&keywords=atonement

Provide an instructional rationale for the use of this title, including specific reference to the OLSD curriculum map(s): (Curriculum maps may be referenced by grade/course and indicator number or curriculum maps with indicators highlighted may be attached to this form)

The curricular requirements from the College Board for AP English Literature & Composition includes the following statement: "...by the time the student completes AP English Literature and Composition she or he will have studied literature from both British and American writers, as well as works written in several genres from the sixteenth century to contemporary times. The works selected for the course should require careful, deliberative reading that yields multiple meanings." *Atonement* is what many would consider a contemporary classic. Furthermore, texts by Ian McEwan frequently appear on the AP English Literature & Composition Exam's free-response essay question as a suggested text. As such, this contemporary tour-de-force is ideal for study in the AP Literature & Composition course.

This text is one of several options for students to read as a part of their summer reading before entering the AP English Literature & Composition course at OOHS. They read this text in tandem with Thomas Foster's *How to Read Novels Like a Professor*, journaling in response to both texts.

The skills of reading, or rather the thinking moves, that Foster outlines in his text are hallmarks of the study of reading novels and plays in the course. Because of its mixture of complexity and accessibility for high school students, *Atonement* is ideally suited for this pairing. In addition to the summer work, students will have the opportunity to write about the novel multiple times throughout the year, mostly in timed-writing settings, a practice necessary for success on the AP English Literature & Composition Exam.

Include two professional reviews of this title: (a suggested list of resources for identifying professional reviews is shown below. Reviews may be “cut and pasted” (with citation) into the form or printed reviews may be attached to the form)

Review #1

From Publishers Weekly

This haunting novel, which just failed to win the Booker this year, is at once McEwan at his most closely observed and psychologically penetrating, and his most sweeping and expansive. It is in effect two, or even three, books in one, all masterfully crafted. The first part ushers us into a domestic crisis that becomes a crime story centered around an event that changes the lives of half a dozen people in an upper-middle-class country home on a hot English summer's day in 1935. Young Briony Tallis, a hyperimaginative 13-year-old who sees her older sister, Cecilia, mysteriously involved with their neighbor Robbie Turner, a fellow Cambridge student subsidized by the Tallis family, points a finger at Robbie when her young cousin is assaulted in the grounds that night; on her testimony alone, Robbie is jailed. The second part of the book moves forward five years to focus on Robbie, now freed and part of the British Army that was cornered and eventually evacuated by a fleet of small boats at Dunkirk during the early days of WWII. This is an astonishingly imagined fresco that bares the full anguish of what Britain in later years came to see as a kind of victory. In the third part, Briony becomes a nurse amid wonderfully observed scenes of London as the nation mobilizes. No, she doesn't have Robbie as a patient, but she begins to come to terms with what she has done and offers to make amends to him and Cecilia, now together as lovers. In an ironic epilogue that is yet another coup de the tre, McEwan offers Briony as an elderly novelist today, revisiting her past in fact and fancy and contributing a moving windup to the sustained flight of a deeply novelistic imagination. With each book McEwan ranges wider, and his powers have never been more fully in evidence than here. Author tour. (Mar. 19)Forecast: McEwan's work has been building a strong literary readership, and the brilliantly evoked prewar and wartime scenes here should extend that; expect strong results from handselling to the faithful. The cover photo of a stately English home nicely establishes the novel's atmosphere

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http://www.amazon.com/Atonement-A-Novel-Ian-McEwan/dp/product-description/038572179X/ref=dp_proddesc_0?ie=UTF8&n=283155&s=books

Review #2

From School Library Journal

Adult/High School-Set during the seemingly idyllic summer of 1935 at the country estate of the Tallis family, the first section of this thought-provoking novel ambles through one scorchingly hot day that changes the lives of almost everyone present. The catalyst is overly imaginative 13-year-old Briony, who accuses Robbie, her sister's childhood friend and their housemaid's son, of raping her cousin Lola. The young man is sent to prison and Cecilia, heartbroken, abandons her family and becomes a nursing sister in London. In the second part, McEwan vividly describes another single

day, this time Robbie's experiences during the ignominious British retreat to Dunkirk early in World War II. Finally, readers meet Briony again, now a nursing student. She is aware that she might have been wrong that day five years earlier and begins to seek atonement, having clearly ruined two lives. In a story within a story, McEwan brilliantly engages readers in a tour de force of what ifs and might have beens until they begin to wonder what actually happened. The story is compelling, the characters well drawn and engaging, and the outcome is almost always in doubt. The descriptions of the retreat and the subsequent hospitalization of the soldiers are grim and realistic. Readers are spared little, yet the journey is worth the observed pain and distress. Well-read teens will find much to think about in this novel.

Susan H. Woodcock, Chantilly Regional Library, VA

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http://www.amazon.com/Atonement-A-Novel-Ian-McEwan/dp/product-description/038572179X/ref=dp_proddesc_0?ie=UTF8&n=283155&s=books

What alternate text(s) could also fulfill the instructional requirements?

Title: The Bean Trees Author: Barbara Kingsolver

Title: The Bluest Eye Author: Toni Morrison

Title: Going After Cacciato Author: Tim O'Brien

Title: The Kite Runner Author: Khaled Hosseini

Title: Author:

Title: Author:

Document any potentially controversial content:

Sex: Some explicit language (e.g., cunt) precedes a young pair of lovers have sex in the library of the girl's home only to be interrupted by the girl's sister. The sex scene contains some explicit content (pages 126-129 in particular). The scene is laced with tenderness and is presented in contrast to a later rape scene, which remains clouded in mystery.

Violence: With WWII as the backdrop for much of the latter part of the book, images of the violence of war are to be expected. That said, the violence that does appear serves to echo the results of the narrator's actions; lives are ruined, directed down paths of undeserved suffering, as a consequence of her witless crime.

Keeping in mind the age, academic level, and maturity of the intended reader, what is the suggested classroom use: (check all that apply)

Gifted/Accelerated Regular At Risk

GRADE LEVEL(S): 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Reading level of this title (if applicable): N/A

Date Submitted to Department Chair: Summer 2014

Suggested Professional Literary Review Sources:

School Library Journal

Horn Book

Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books

VOYA (Voice of Youth Advocates)

Library Journal

Book Links

Publisher's Weekly

Booklist

Kirkus Review

Wilson Library Catalog

English Journal (and other resources of the National Council of Teachers of English)

The Reading Teacher (International Reading Association)

Literature for Today's Young Adults