

Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher: Jessica Hendershot Grade: 7 School: OBMS

Book Title: Anything But Typical Genre: Realistic Fiction

Author: Nora Raleigh Baskin Pages: 208

Publisher: Simon & Schuster Copyright: 2009

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.)

Jason Blake is an autistic 12-year-old living in a neurotypical world. Most days it's just a matter of time before something goes wrong. But Jason finds a glimmer of understanding when he comes across PhoenixBird, who posts stories to the same online site as he does.

Jason can be himself when he writes and he thinks that PhoenixBird-her name is Rebecca-could be his first real friend. But as desperate as Jason is to meet her, he's terrified that if they do meet, Rebecca will only see his autism and not who Jason really is. By acclaimed writer Nora Raleigh Baskin, this is the breathtaking depiction of an autistic boy's struggles-and a story for anyone who has ever worried about fitting in.

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)

Reading Applications: Literary Text Indicator: Explain the defining characteristics of literary forms and genres, including poetry, drama, myths, biographies, autobiographies, science fiction, fiction and non-fiction.

This is a great text that supports a modern problem research topic - autism (from a first person perspective), friendship

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 School Library Journal

Grade 4–7—Baskin writes in the voice of a high-functioning boy who identifies himself as having numerous disorders, most with labels that appear as alphabet soup. In the third grade, after yet another battery of tests, Jason receives the diagnosis of autism. Now in sixth grade, he relates how he does not fit in, even though he tries to follow the instructions of his therapists and helpers. He labels the rest of his classmates and teachers as neurotypicals, or NTs for short. While humor resonates throughout the book, the pathos of Jason's situation is never far from readers'

consciousness. If only he could act on what he knows he needs to do, his life would be so much easier. Jason also shows himself to be a deep thinker and an excellent writer. Through his stories and thinly veiled fictional characters, Baskin reveals not only the obstacles that Jason faces, but also his fierce determination to be himself at all costs. Jason is a believable and empathetic character in spite of his idiosyncrasies. Baskin also does a superb job of developing his parents and younger brother as real people with real problems, bravely traversing their lives with a differently abled child without a road map, but with a great deal of love.—Wendy Smith-D'Arezzo, Loyola College, Baltimore, MD

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Review #2

From Booklist

Starred Review Baskin tells this luminous story entirely from the point of view of Jason, an autistic boy who is a creative-writing whiz and deft explainer of literary devices, but markedly at a loss in social interactions with “neurotypicals” both at school and at home. He is most comfortable in an online writing forum called Storyboard, where his stories kindle an e-mail-based friendship with a girl. His excitement over having a real friend (and maybe even girlfriend) turns to terror when he learns that his parents want to take him on a trip to the Storyboard conference, where he’ll no doubt have to meet her in person. With stunning economy, Baskin describes Jason’s attempts to interpret body language and social expectations, revealing the extreme disconnect created by his internalization of the world around him. Despite his handicap, Jason moves through his failures and triumphs with the same depth of courage and confusion of any boy his age. His story, while neither particularly heartbreaking nor heartwarming, shows that the distinction between “normal” and “not normal” is whisper-thin but easily amplified to create the chasm between “different” and “defective.” This is an enormously difficult subject, but Baskin, without dramatics or sentimentality, makes it universal. As Jason explains, there’s really only one kind of plot: “Stuff happens. That’s it.” Grades 4-7. --Ian Chipman

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

Title: Out of My Mind Author: Sharon Draper

Title: Because of Mr. Terupt Author: Rob Buyea

Title: Al Capone Does My Shirts Author: Gennifer Choldenko

Title: Autism, the Invisible Cord: A Sibling's Diary Author: Barbara S. Cain

Title: In his Shoes, A Short Journey Through Autism Author: Joanna Keating-Velasco

Title: Borderline Author: Bonnie Rozanski

Document any potentially controversial content:

There are no curse words, sexual or violent events in this book.

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): Ages 12 and up

Date Submitted to Department Chair: 5/29/2012

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