

## **Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review**

Teacher: Jessica Hendershot    Grade: 7    School: OBMS

Book Title: Boot Camp    Genre: Realistic Fiction

Author: Todd Strasser    Pages: 235

Publisher: Simon & Schuster    Copyright: 2007

*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.)

In the middle of the night Garrett is taken from his home to Harmony Lake, a boot camp for troubled teens. Maybe some kids deserve to be sent there, but Garrett knows he doesn't. Subjected to brutal physical and psychological abuse, he tries to fight back, but the battle is futile. He won't be allowed to leave until he's admitted his "mistakes" and conformed to Harmony Lake's standards of behavior. And there's no way to fake it. Beaten, humiliated, and stripped of his pride, Garrett's spirit is slowly ebbing away. Then he hears whispers of an escape plot. It's incredibly risky -- if he's caught, the consequences will be unthinkable -- but it may be his only way out. In this tense, riveting novel, award-winning YA author Todd Strasser reveals what really goes on in highly secretive -- and notoriously dangerous -- boot camps, a stealth prison system where any teenager under the age of eighteen can be imprisoned at his parents' whim.

**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 - juvenile delinquents- troubled teens, boot camps, teenage relationships, teenage smoking & drug use, not obeying parents / authority.

**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 8 Up—In this vivid and realistic novel, Strasser describes the horrifying violence and injustices experienced by teens sent to a disciplinary boot camp at the behest of their parents.

Abducted by transporters in the middle of the night, 15-year-old Garrett finds himself handcuffed in the back of a car trying to make sense of why he is being sent to a facility for troubled teens. Convinced that he does not belong in Lake Harmony, he has difficulty conforming to the camp's standards. As a result, he is subjected to continuous physical and mental abuse. Drawn in by two other students, Garrett takes part in an ambitious plot to escape this never-ending "behavior modification." Throughout the story, readers are given a strong sense of the hopelessness the teen feels, especially when he realizes that he is completely isolated from anyone who can help him. The ending is both realistic and disturbing as his fate at Lake Harmony is revealed. Writing in the teen's mature and perceptive voice, Strasser creates characters who will provoke strong reactions from readers. While most teens will undoubtedly identify with the protagonist's sense of being misunderstood by his parents, many will be outraged by the manipulation, torture, and hopelessness experienced by the residents at Lake Harmony. However, all of them will certainly find themselves engrossed in this fast-paced and revealing story about the hidden side of teenage incarceration.—  
Lynn Rashid, Marriots Ridge High School, Marriotsville, MD

### Review #2

#### From Booklist

Louis Sachar's *Holes* (1998) described a juvenile detention camp with tall-tale trappings. For a somewhat older audience, this documentary-style novel tackles similar "boot camps" without the fablelike buffer, delivering a troubling glimpse of what might go on in such camps (and backing it up with an author's note and sources). Garrett, 15, is trapped in the "secret prison system for teenagers" when his controlling parents, enraged by his affair with a teacher, are lured by the promise of a boot-camp brochure: "The child who returns from the Lake Harmony experience is the child you always knew you had." Once at the camp, Garrett endures a battery of brainwashing techniques, including physical abuse, and eventually meets two other desperate teens who want to escape. Some plot elements don't add up; it's hard to believe, for instance, that the one supportive adult Garrett encounters—a warden—would let the camp continue without blowing the whistle. But as in Strasser's *Give a Boy a Gun* (2000), the real-world issues will hit a nerve.

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

Title: *Thirteen reasons Why* Author: Jay Asher

Title: *If I Grow Up* Author: Todd Strasser

Title: *Hate List* Author: Jennifer Brown

Title: *Snitch* Author: Allison van Diepen

Title: *Bystander* Author: James Preller

Title: *Can't Get There from Here* Author: Todd Strasser

### **Document any potentially controversial content:**

Garrett is sent to Lake Harmony a boot camp because he did not obey his parents, doing things like staying out all night, smoking and having an intimate relationship with his teacher (who got fired). The relationship is mentioned on multiple occasions but Strasser does not go into details. This book does describe abuse from the camp counselor and other inmates and blood and gore.

Page 11 - During the first night at the camp, Garret is made to strip naked and stand in the same spot for 24 hours.

Page 28 - "You want to know why Garrett's here? Because he'd stay out all night and wouldn't come home. Because he didn't go to school. Because he lied, he stole money, he took drugs, and he was messing around with his teacher, who was eight years older than him."

Page 29 - cussing including the word "hell"

Page 34 - "To fight the monotony and boredom of TI, I begin to relive memories: the day I walked into math class and saw Sabrina for the first time, in a red short-sleeved dress, writing an equation on the board; the first time we met outside of school; the first kiss; the first time we made love; and then every time after that."

Page 40 - "That's all you have to say?" Joe asks. "Nothing about her being eight years older than you? Or that she was your teacher? Or that you repeatedly disobeyed your parents, who forbade you to see her?"

**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