

Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher: Stoll/Swaney/Williams Grade: 7 School: Orange Middle School

Book Title: Can't Get There from Here Genre: Realistic Fiction

Author: Todd Strasser Pages: 208

Publisher: Simon and Schuster Books for Young Readers Copyright: 2005

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.)

Her street name is Maybe

She lives with a tribe of homeless teens -- runaways and throwaways, kids who have no place to go other than the cold city streets, and no family except for one another. Abused, abandoned, and forgotten, they struggle against the cold, hunger, and constant danger.

With the frigid winds of January comes a new girl: Tears, a twelve-year-old whose mother doesn't believe her stepfather abuses her. As the other kids start to disappear -- victims of violence, addiction, and exposure -- Maybe tries to help Tears get off the streets...if it's not already too late. Todd Strasser, author of the powerful and disturbing Give a Boy a Gun, again focuses on an important social issue as he tells a thought-provoking, heart-wrenching story of young lives lost to the streets, and of a society that has forgotten how to care.

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: Gain and demonstrate a deeper understanding of human story by reading varieties of genres. #1, #2, #3

Todd Strasser is our visiting author. Reading this book will build background knowledge on our modern problems unit.

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

Publishers Weekly

Strasser's (Give a Boy a Gun) largely bleak novel centers on a group of homeless teens attempting to survive on the streets of New York City during a frigid winter. Several don't make it, victims of alcohol poisoning, strangulation or suicide. Narrator Maybe (wont to answer questions with that noncommittal word) escaped from an abusive home to join what she calls "an asphalt tribe that roamed the streets searching for food and shelter." Maybe's character gradually comes into focus and, as it does, Strasser reveals her perception of the dead-end life around her. Musing on the pain that one of her foundering friends feels, Maybe concludes, "It was a pain from inside. The pain of this cold, hungry, dirty life where nobody cared whether you lived or died. Where you were not even a name." However, the author does not delineate many of the other street urchins' characters. This season's The Blue Mirror by Kathe Koja and Ineke Holtjwik's Asphalt Angels paint a more realistic picture of life on the streets and the ways in which homeless kids can be exploited by others and by each other. For Maybe and for Tears, a 12-year-old who left home when her mother refused to believe that the girl's stepfather was sexually abusing her, there are hopeful futures-- thanks to the intervention of a caring librarian. But repetitive scenes and dialogue at times stall the

pace of the narrative and weaken its impact. Ages 12-up. (Apr.) Copyright 2004 Reed Business Information.

Review #2

Cindy L. Carolan - Children's Literature

This dark, depressing, seemingly realistic look at a fictionalized group of runaways living on the streets of New York City opens with a quote by one of the characters, OG. "Here is where you are. There is where you want to be. But you can't get there from here." The runaways' story is told from the perspective of Maybe, who, along with the other homeless members of her makeshift street family (OG, Country Club, Jewel, 2Moro, Maggot, Rainbow and Tears) has been abused and rejected, tries to survive in a very dangerous world. One-page "rap sheets" on certain members of the group at the beginning of chapters foreshadow a desperate end. It is not all doom and gloom though; glimmers of light are found in a compassionate librarian and adult leaders of a group house. Maybe realizes at the conclusion of the book that OG's statement may have been wrong, and that maybe if you tried, you could get somewhere. This text does not contain foul language, but it does touch upon mature themes, such as sexual abuse, physical abuse, alcohol poisoning, suicide, drug use and prostitution. The author, a novelist for twenty-five years, has written many books for teenagers, including the award winning Give the Boy a Gun, which looks at school violence. Should be required reading for any child or grown up who ever contemplated running away from home. Recommended with caution for the younger end of the suggested age group because of mature thematic content. 2004 (orig. 1999), Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, Ages 12 up.

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

Title: Help, I'm Trapped in the Body of a Pro-Wrestler Author: Todd Strasser

Title: Help, I'm Trapped in the Body of my Teacher Author: Todd Strasser

Title: Confidence Author: Todd Strasser

Title: Author:

Title: Author:

Title: Author:

Document any potentially controversial content:

Realistic depictions of homeless teens, talk of drug use, homosexual references, references to nudity

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):

Date Submitted to Department Chair: 12/18/2007

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