

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

Teacher: OLHS English    Grade: 9    School: OLHS

Book Title: Chanda's Secrets Genre: Fiction/Contemporary Young Adult

Author: Allan Stratton    Pages: 196

Publisher: Annick Press Ltd.    Copyright: 2004

*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.)

Sixteen-year-old Chanda loves school and dreams of a scholarship and a life beyond her family's poverty. But her Mama is tired all the time after her little sister's death and Chanda must fight to keep her dreams alive and conquer her fears in the face of the brutal reality of Africa's AIDS epidemic.

From Annick Press Ltd)

Chanda's Secrets is a young adult novel about the life of a 16-year-old girl living in a fictional sub-Saharan African country that is afflicted with the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Chanda seems to be surrounded by death. The story opens with her and her mother making funeral arrangements for her young sister Sarah, who has just passed away at one and a half years of age. There are multiple funerals taking place throughout the community daily. They have become an expected part of life. When people talk about the reasons for the deaths, they talk about things like pneumonia, tuberculosis, and cancer, but the reality is that these deaths are a result of HIV/AIDS. It is absolutely taboo to acknowledge the existence of HIV/AIDS; the consequences are such that the community, and sometimes even the family, is afraid of the suffocating stigma associated with the disease and sever any relationships or support with an individual suspected of being infected. Chanda perseveres and defies the overpowering stereotypes and stigma, and begins to expose the truth about HIV/AIDS in her community. Her mother's words motivate and encourage her dreams: "Save your anger to fight injustice, forgive the rest."

**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)

This book is one of six novels selected to explore and examine how marginalized groups and/or individuals are represented in society. The selection of books for this unit allows students to view the world from the viewpoint of marginalized characters. We will be examining stereotypes and questioning how stereotypes are established and perpetuated. Students will be asked to propose solutions to stop stereotyping and call others to action against stereotyping. Students will work in literature circles as they read this novel. The reading will be done individually and students will meet in their groups to discuss their novel. Literature circles offer powerful benefits to readers of all ages. The circles are structured to move readers through a range of cognitive roles as they

discuss books that are self-selected. Literature circles allow students to connect with each other, with texts, and ultimately, with the world in which they live. They learn to take responsibility as members of a group who, together, must construct meaning through discussion, debate and reflection. Discussion, debate and reflection are anchored in the text which serves as a springboard to explore social issues.

Connection to the state standards/OLSD curriculum map(s):

- Acquisition of Vocabulary (1)
- Reading Application Informational (5, 6)
- Reading Application Literary (7, 9, 10, 11)
- Writing Process (all)
- Writing Application (5, 7, 9)
- Writing Conventions (10)
- Research Standard (11)
- Communication Standard (13)

**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 Amazon.com) From School Library Journal

Grade 8 Up—Chanda, 16, remembers the good times, when she lived with both parents on a cattle post in sub-Saharan Africa and even later on when her family moved to Bonang. Her family's troubles began after her father was killed in the diamond mines. Her first stepfather abused her; the second died of a stroke; the third is a drunken philanderer. Although Chanda lives in a world in which illness and death have become commonplace, it is not one in which AIDS can be mentioned. The horror and desperation of families facing this disease is brought home when her latest stepfather's sister dumps the dying man in front of their shantytown house. Before Chanda can get help from the hospital caseworker, he disappears and the wagon that brought him is burned. Her mother leaves to visit her family on the cattle post and Chanda is forced to give up her dream of further education to care for her younger sister and brother. Slowly she comes to realize that her mother has AIDS, and that she might be infected herself. But Chanda's education serves her well as she faces the disease head-on. In a sad but satisfying ending, she rescues her mother so that she can die at home and she and her siblings get themselves tested. Smart and determined, Chanda is a character whom readers come to care for and believe in, in spite of her almost impossible situation. The details of sub-Saharan African life are convincing and smoothly woven into this moving story of poverty and courage, but the real insight for readers will be the appalling treatment of the AIDS victims. Strong language and frank description are appropriate to the subject matter.—Kathleen Isaacs, Edmund Burke School, Washington, DC

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Review #2

(from Amazon.com) From Booklist

\*Starred Review\* Gr. 9-12. The statistics of the millions infected with HIV/AIDS in southern Africa find a human face in this gripping story of one teenager, Chanda Kabele, who sees the disease threaten her family and community. Far from case history, Chanda's immediate, first-person, present-tense narrative is neither sentimental nor graphic as it brings close the personal struggle with all its pain and loss, shame and guilt. Chanda's stepfather and baby stepbrother died of

the disease. Now Mama may have it. No one will talk about the cause. Is Chandra infected? Her best friend, driven to prostitution, does get AIDS, which is dormant. Should Chanda take her in? Stratton, who has lived and worked in southern Africa, creates an authentic sense of the community in town and in the bush, including the poverty, overburdened hospitals, struggling schools, and packed cemeteries. The message about overcoming ignorance and shame and confronting the facts is ever present, but the tense story and the realistic characters--caring, mean, funny, angry, kind, and cruel--will keep kids reading and break the silence about the tragedy. Proceeds from sales go to fighting AIDS. Hazel Rochman

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

<u>Title:</u>	<u>Author:</u>
<u>Title:</u> Sleeping Freshmen Never Lie	<u>Author:</u> David Lubar
<u>Title:</u> Whale Talk	<u>Author:</u> Chris Crutcher
<u>Title:</u> The Bean Trees	<u>Author:</u> Barbara Kingsolver
<u>Title:</u> Monster	<u>Author:</u> Walter Dean Meyers
<u>Title:</u>	<u>Author:</u>

**Document any potentially controversial content:**

1. Description of the devastating effects of HIV/AIDS on individuals and their families and the description of the mistreatment of those individuals who are dying
2. Class differences and graphic descriptions of poverty
3. Some mild profanity such two references to sonofab\*\*\*h in reference to the loss of a father and the abandonment of a father figure who may have been HIV positive
4. Implied references to prostitution including language such as wh\*\*\*e
5. References to ancient religions practiced in African nations

**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):** Grades 9+

**Date Submitted to Department Chair:** 4/8/07

**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