

## Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher: Morgan Lewis    Grade: 7    School: Berkshire Middle School

Book Title: Drums, Girls and Dangerous Pie              Genre: Realistic Fiction

Author: Jordan Sonnenblick    Pages: 273

Publisher: Scholastic Paperback    Copyright: September 1, 2006

*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.)

From first-time novelist Jordan Sonnenblick, a brave and beautiful story that will make readers laugh and break their hearts at the same time.

Thirteen-year-old Steven has a totally normal life: he plays drums in the All-Star Jazz band, has a crush on the hottest girl in the school, and is constantly annoyed by his five-year-old brother, Jeffrey. But when Jeffrey is diagnosed with leukemia, Steven's world is turned upside down. He is forced to deal with his brother's illness and his parents' attempts to keep the family in one piece. Salted with humor and peppered with devastating realities, DRUMS, GIRLS, AND DANGEROUS PIE is a heartwarming journey through a year in the life of a family in crisis.

**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)

1. Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
2. Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.
3. Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot).

**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

Grade 6-9—On stage for his eighth-grade graduation, Steven recalls the past school year during which his five-year-old brother, Jeffrey, was diagnosed with and treated for leukemia. Steven is an avid drummer, journal writer, and generally a good student. But the pressures of dealing with Jeff's illness stresses his entire family as his school-teacher mom takes a leave to care for him, Dad withdraws, and Steven stops doing homework. Renee Albert is the object of his lust, while Annette, the piano player in jazz band, gradually becomes beautiful in his eyes. Steven's frequent faux pas seem belabored early in the book, but they do eventually work to show him to be an admirable

fellow who grows in his ability to deal with others, including Renee and Annette, the school counselor, his parents, and Jeff. The book does not miss a single emotional beat, taking every opportunity to demonstrate that Lurlene McDaniel has no stranglehold on jerking tears as Steven details the progress of leukemia's inexorable attack. If the young characters sometimes speak beyond their years and if Steven's wise-ass voice is initially annoying, it is also fresh, energetic, and consistent, becoming more likable as the novel progresses. One stylistic device seemed unnecessary and distracting: characters' speech is indicated by italics, while quotation marks are used to set off Steven's inner thoughts and for special emphasis.—Joel Shoemaker, Southeast Junior High School, Iowa City, IA School Library Journal

#### Review #2

\*Starred Review\* Gr. 5-8. Steven Alper is a typical eighth-grader--smarter than some, a better drummer than most, but with the usual girl problems and family trials. Then, on October 7, his five-year-old brother, Jeffrey, falls, has a nosebleed that doesn't stop, and is diagnosed with leukemia. All hell breaks loose. Mrs. Alper's days and nights revolve around getting Jeffrey to his chemotherapy treatments, and Mr. Alper retreats into a shell, coming out only occasionally to weep over the mounting medical bills. Steven becomes the forgotten son, who throws himself into drumming, even as he quits doing his homework and tries to keep his friends from finding out about Jeffrey's illness. A story that could have morphed into melodrama is saved by reality, rawness, and the wit Sonnenblick infuses into Steven's first-person voice. The recriminations, cares, and nightmares that come with a cancer diagnosis are all here, underscored by vomiting, white blood cell counts, and chemotherapy ports. Yet, this is also about regrouping, solidarity, love, and hope. Most important for a middle-grade audience, Sonneblick shows that even in the midst of tragedy, life goes on, love can flower, and the one thing you can always change is yourself. Ilene Cooper—Booklist

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

Title: Freak the Mighty Author: Rodman Philbrick

Title: The Running Dream Author: Wendelin Van Draanen

Title:           Author:

Title:           Author:

Title:           Author:

Title:           Author:

#### Document any potentially controversial content:

If a student is dealing with a close family member coping with cancer, they might be sensitive with the content of the 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):** 940L

**Date Submitted to Department Chair:**

**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