

Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

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

Book Title: Give a Boy a Gun Genre: Realistic Fiction

Author: Todd Strasser Pages: 208

Publisher: Simon Pulse Copyright: 2000

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.)

For as long as they can remember, Brendan and Gary have been mercilessly teased and harrassed by the jocks who the rule Middletown High. But not anymore. Stealing a small arsenal of guns from a neighbor they take their classmates hostage at a school dance. In the panic of this desperate situation it soon becomes clear that only one thing matters to Brendan and Gary: revenge.

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 this year. This book also builds background knowledge for 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

From School Library Journal

Grade 8 Up-Two boys go on a shooting rampage at Middletown High School; one commits suicide, the other is beaten unconscious before he gets the chance. It happens in the gymnasium, not the library, but the scenario will sound familiar. The story unfolds in a series of interviews, after the fact, conducted by a college student who reveals her relationship to the case at the end of the book. She tries to piece together the puzzle of the tragedy by gathering various individuals' recollections about the boys beginning in grade school. Gary was very bright, quiet, and had a weight problem. Brendan was thin, defensive, and quick to anger. As the chapters move from middle school up, readers hear from classmates and teachers that these boys were outcasts-ostracized and bullied by their peers-and potential trouble. They remain flat, two-dimensional characters, and what their suicide notes say and how the events play out come as no surprise. Statistics, quotes, and facts related to actual incidents of school violence appear in dark print at the bottom of the pages. An appendix includes a chronology of school shootings in the United States, the author's own treatise on gun control, and places to get more information. While this book lacks the literary merit of Avi's *Nothing But the Truth* (Orchard, 1991) or Rob Thomas's *Slave Day* (S & S, 1997), it will satisfy empathetic teenage readers and might succeed as a springboard for a class discussion.

Vicki Reutter, Cazenovia High School, NY

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Review #2

From Booklist

Gr. 6-12. In this powerful documentary novel, Strasser presents a passionate indictment of America's gun culture and the equally pernicious, pervasive caste system that has created a society of disaffected outsiders in America's secondary schools. When these cultures collide, as they did at Columbine, the consequences can be tragic. Without exploitation, he charts the growing disaffection of Gary and Brendan, two teenage friends who dream of taking revenge on the people (primarily members of the school's football team) who have tormented them. Told in a variety of voices, which are presented as excerpts from interviews with family, friends, teachers, and others, the story gains momentum and intensity as the boys turn their revenge fantasies into reality. Using a device that recalls John Dos Passos, Strasser includes a contrapuntal collection of quotations, facts, and figures about school and gun violence, which appears in a different typeface at the bottom of most pages. The cumulative effect of this combination of information and fiction is deeply moving and disturbing, as are the appended lists of school shootings and incidents of violence that occurred while the book was being written. Both haunting and harrowing, the book deserves a wide readership, discussion, and debate. Michael Cart

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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: Can't Get There From Here Author: Todd Strasser

Title: Author:

Title: Author:

Document any potentially controversial content:

Homosexuals slurs, gun violence, violent discussion over instant messaging

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: 12/18/07

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