

Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher: Benjamin McKibben Grade: 11 School: OOHS

Book Title: How to Read Novels Like a Professor Genre: Contemporary Nonfiction

Author: Thomas C. Foster Pages: 336

Publisher: HarperCollins Publishers Copyright: 2008

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.)

Of all the literary forms, the novel is arguably the most discussed . . . and fretted over. From Miguel de Cervantes's *Don Quixote* to the works of Jane Austen, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, and today's masters, the novel has grown with and adapted to changing societies and technologies, mixing tradition and innovation in every age throughout history.

Thomas C. Foster—the sage and scholar who ingeniously led readers through the fascinating symbolic codes of great literature in his first book, *How to Read Literature Like a Professor*—now examines the grammar of the popular novel. Exploring how authors' choices about structure—point of view, narrative voice, first page, chapter construction, character emblems, and narrative (dis)continuity—create meaning and a special literary language, *How to Read Novels Like a Professor* shares the keys to this language with readers who want to get more insight, more understanding, and more pleasure from their reading.

(From the back cover.)

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)

The curricular requirements from the College Board for AP Literature & Composition includes the following statement: "The course teaches students to write an interpretation of a piece of literature that is based on a careful observation of textual details, considering the work's: Structure, style, and themes; the social and historical values it reflects and embodies; Such elements as the use of figurative language, imagery, symbolism, and tone." *How to Read Novels Like a Professor* teaches students to consider these very elements of the novel in a witty and engaging way. As a result, the text is a good teaching tool for practicing the skills of novel analysis.

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

Covering a range of novelists from the classic to the slightly idiosyncratic, Foster (How to Read Literature Like a Professor) expounds on the various elements of novel construction and offers advice on how to analyze them. Foster maintains a conversational tone throughout, offering pithy interjections among his literary explication (on the possibility of having a reliable narrator in Huck Finn: "Now seriously, where's the fun in that?"). Each chapter of the book breaks down a different part of the novel, from the significance of Faulkner's repeated use of the word "self-abnegation" to the intermingling of philosophy and fiction, particularly in the work of John Fowles, one of Foster's favorite writers. Foster's enthusiasm for his subject is palpable, but his audience will probably be limited to students, given the combination of examples like Joyce, Faulkner and Woolf (English course staples) and the tone of Foster's explanations-often simplistic to a degree that would seem condescending to more experienced readers, as when he emphasizes that "the narrative voice in a novel is a device invented by the writer" and then explains the idea for a full paragraph. (July)

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Review #2

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

Title: How to Read Literature Like a Professor Author: Thomas C. Foster

Title: How to Read and Why Author: Harold Bloom

Title: Reading Like a Writer Author: Francine Prose

Title: Author:

Title: Author:

Title: Author:

Document any potentially controversial content:

I do not believe there to be any controversial content in this text.

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): AP Literature and Composition, CP 11, or CP 12

Date Submitted to Department Chair: June 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