

Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher:	Asbury	School:	OLMS
Book Title:	Mississippi Trial 1955	Genre:	Historical Fiction
Author:	Chris Crowe	Pages:	231
Publisher:	P. Fogelman Books	Copyright:	2002

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.)

In Mississippi in 1955, a sixteen-year-old finds himself at odds with his grandfather over issues surrounding the kidnapping and murder of a fourteen-year-old African American from Chicago.

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 application 8: Examine author's purpose and style

Research standard 8: Formulate open ended research questions suitable for investigation

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 6-8-While visiting relatives in Mississippi, Emmett Till, 14, spoke "ugly" to a white woman and was subsequently tortured and murdered. Two men were arrested and tried for this heinous crime, but in spite of substantial evidence, were found not guilty. Crowe has woven the plot of his novel around these historical events. Hiram, the fictional main character, had lived with his grandparents in Mississippi as a child. Now 16, he returns to visit his aging grandfather, where he meets Emmett Till. He also renews a childhood acquaintance with R.C. Rydell, a redneck bully. When Emmett's mutilated body is found, Hiram immediately suspects that R.C. was involved. In a predictable twist at the end, he learns that it was his grandfather, not R.C., who helped the murderers. The Deep South setting is well realized. Descriptions of the climate, food, and landscape are vivid and on target. Likewise, Southern racial attitudes from the period are accurately portrayed. Grampa is a racist but Hiram enables readers to see his good qualities as well. Hiram himself seems rather naive. He is unable to fathom the racial prejudice at the root of his father's alienation from his grandfather. Nor does he feel the aura of racial fear and hatred that hangs over the entire region. The novel succeeds in telling Emmett Till's story, but there is an emotional distance that keeps readers from caring as deeply as they should about this crime. Still, it is a story that needs to be told. This book belongs in all collections to show young readers the full range of American history.

Bruce Anne Shook, Mendenhall Middle School, Greensboro, NC
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Review #2

From Publishers Weekly

Basing his promising debut novel on historical events, Crowe adopts the point of view of a white teenager confronting racism in the 1950s South. Hiram Hillburn has resented his civil-rights-minded father ever since the age of nine, when his parents moved him from his adored grandfather's home in Greenwood, Miss., to the more liberal climate of an Arizona college town. Now that he is 16, Hiram has finally been permitted to visit Grampa Hillburn again. Crowe takes a bit too much time before arriving at the central action: the lynching of Emmett Till, a black teenager from Chicago who reputedly made "ugly remarks" to a white woman, and the nationally publicized trial, in which the murderers were acquitted. However, the author takes a nuanced approach to ethical dilemmas and his plotting seems lifelike. Events force Hiram to question his willingness to stand up for his beliefs and to reevaluate his understanding of the animosity between his grandfather and father. The characterizations are sketched with care, from the white lawyers who mock the black witnesses they cross-examine, to R.C., the bully whom Hiram suspects of participating in the crime, to R.C.'s sister, whom Hiram likes. If the conclusion feels a little hasty, Crowe's otherwise measured treatment will get readers thinking. Ages 12-up.

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

<u>Title:</u> Dangerous Skies	<u>Author:</u> Suzanne Fisher Staples
<u>Title:</u> The Watsons go to Birmingham	<u>Author:</u> Christopher Paul Curtis
<u>Title:</u> The Glory Field	<u>Author:</u> Walter Dean Myers
<u>Title:</u>	<u>Author:</u>
<u>Title:</u>	<u>Author:</u>
<u>Title:</u>	<u>Author:</u>

Document any potentially controversial content:

murder of Emmitt Hill
racism

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): 5.7

Date Submitted to Department Chair: 12-2-2011

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