

Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher: OLHS English Grade: 9 School: OLHS

Book Title: Monster Genre: Fiction/ Contemporary Young Adult

Author: Walter Dean Myers Pages: 288

Publisher: Amistad Copyright: 2001

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.)

Amazon.com

"Monster" is what the prosecutor called 16-year-old Steve Harmon for his supposed role in the fatal shooting of a convenience-store owner. But was Steve really the lookout who gave the "all clear" to the murderer, or was he just in the wrong place at the wrong time? In this innovative novel by Walter Dean Myers, the reader becomes both juror and witness during the trial of Steve's life. To calm his nerves as he sits in the courtroom, aspiring filmmaker Steve chronicles the proceedings in movie script format. Interspersed throughout his screenplay are journal writings that provide insight into Steve's life before the murder and his feelings about being held in prison during the trial. "They take away your shoelaces and your belt so you can't kill yourself no matter how bad it is. I guess making you live is part of the punishment."

Myers, known for the inner-city classic *Motown and Didi* (first published in 1984), proves with *Monster* that he has kept up with both the struggles and the lingo of today's teens. Steve is an adolescent caught up in the violent circumstances of an adult world--a situation most teens can relate to on some level. Readers will no doubt be attracted to the novel's handwriting-style typeface, emphasis on dialogue, and fast-paced courtroom action. By weaving together Steve's journal entries and his script, Myers has given the first-person voice a new twist and added yet another worthy volume to his already admirable body of work. (Ages 12 and older) --Jennifer Hubert

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 School Library Journal

Grade 7 Up-Steve Harmon, 16, is accused of serving as a lookout for a robbery of a Harlem drugstore. The owner was shot and killed, and now Steve is in prison awaiting trial for murder. From there, he tells about his case and his incarceration. Many elements of this story are familiar, but Myers keeps it fresh and alive by telling it from an unusual perspective. Steve, an amateur filmmaker, recounts his experiences in the form of a movie screenplay. His striking scene-by-scene narrative of how his life has dramatically changed is riveting. Interspersed within the script are diary entries in which the teen vividly describes the nightmarish conditions of his confinement. Myers expertly presents the many facets of his protagonist's character and readers will find themselves feeling both sympathy and repugnance for him. Steve searches deep within his soul to prove to himself that he is not the "monster" the prosecutor presented him as to the jury. Ultimately, he reconnects with his humanity and regains a moral awareness that he had lost. Christopher Myers's superfluous black-and-white drawings are less successful. Their grainy, unfocused look complements the cinematic quality of the text, but they do little to enhance the story. *Monster* will challenge readers with difficult questions, to which there are no definitive answers. In some respects, the novel is reminiscent of Virginia Walter's *Making Up Megaboy* (DK Ink, 1998), another book enriched by its ambiguity. Like it, *Monster* lends itself well to classroom or group discussion. It's an emotionally charged story that readers will find compelling and disturbing. Edward Sullivan, New York Public Library
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Review #2

From Kirkus Reviews

In a riveting novel from Myers (*At Her Majesty's Request*, 1999, etc.), a teenager who dreams of being a filmmaker writes the story of his trial for felony murder in the form of a movie script, with journal entries after each day's action. Steve is accused of being an accomplice in the robbery and murder of a drug store owner. As he goes through his trial, returning each night to a prison where most nights he can hear other inmates being beaten and raped, he reviews the events leading to this point in his life. Although Steve is eventually acquitted, Myers leaves it up to readers to decide for themselves on his protagonist's guilt or innocence. The format of this taut and moving drama forcefully regulates the pacing; breathless, edge-of-the-seat courtroom scenes written entirely in dialogue alternate with thoughtful, introspective journal entries that offer a sense of Steve's terror and confusion, and that deftly demonstrate Myers's point: the road from innocence to trouble is comprised of small, almost invisible steps, each involving an experience in which a "positive moral decision" was not made. (illustrations, not seen) (Fiction. 12-14) -- Copyright ©1999, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

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

Title: Chanda's Secrets

Author: Allan Stratton

Title: Sleeping Freshmen Never Lie

Author: David Lubar

Title: Whale Talk

Author: Chris Crutcher

Title: The Bean Trees

Author: Barbara Kingsolver

Title: Author:

Title: Author:

Document any potentially controversial content:

Mature themes/ subject matter such as references to drug use, moderate violence

Despite the potentially controversial content, this text successfully meets several curriculum standards (see above) and appeals to teens, especially reluctant readers.

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: 04/09/07

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