

## Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher:	Julie Brown	School:	Olentangy High School
Book Title:	On Writing	Genre:	Non-fiction
Author:	Stephen King	Pages:	288
Publisher:	Simon & Schuster	Copyright:	1947

*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 *On Writing*, Stephen King celebrates his influences, shares his first attempts at writing, sheds new light on some of his own books, reveals his process, offers his advice, and relates in vivid detail the story of the 1999 roadside accident that nearly cost him his life. It's a first-hand guide to the writer — and to writing, itself. Clear-headed, honest, and opinionated, *On Writing* offers a wealth of technical advice with a refreshing lack of the academic snobbery so common in writing guides, paying due respect instead to the ultimate goal of any aspiring writer, gaining a readership." Dave Weich, Powells.com

**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)

Rationale: AP Language and Composition is a class that largely focuses on the process of writing. King's book exemplifies this process with first hand accounts of what that process is and has been like for him. Through the use of an extended metaphor, King discusses the "tools" all writers should have in their "toolboxes."

Reading Applications Informational

5. Analyze and interpret samples of good writing, identifying and explaining an author's use of rhetorical strategies and techniques in their own writing.

7. Analyze the features and structures of informational text and critique them for effectiveness.

Reading Process

4. Develop reading comprehension and critical analysis of a variety of texts.

**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 Amazon.com

Short and snappy as it is, Stephen King's *On Writing* really contains two books: a fondly sardonic autobiography and a tough-love lesson for aspiring novelists. The memoir is terrific stuff, a vivid description of how a writer grew out of a misbehaving kid. You're right there with the young author as he's tormented by poison ivy, gas-passing babysitters, uptight schoolmarm, and a laundry job nastier than Jack London's. It's a ripping yarn that casts a sharp light on his fiction. This was a child who dug Yvette Vickers from *Attack of the Giant Leeches*, not Sandra Dee. "I wanted monsters that ate whole cities, radioactive corpses that came out of the ocean and ate surfers, and girls in black bras who looked like trailer trash." But massive reading on all literary levels was a craving just as crucial, and soon King was the published author of "I Was a Teen-Age Graverobber." As a young adult raising a family in a trailer, King started a story inspired by his stint as a janitor cleaning a high-school girls locker room. He crumpled it up, but his writer wife retrieved it from the trash, and using her advice about the girl milieu and his own memories of two reviled teenage classmates who died young, he came up with *Carrie*. King gives us lots of revelations about his life and work. The kidnapper character in *Misery*, the mind-possessing monsters in *The Tommyknockers*, and the haunting of the blocked writer in *The Shining* symbolized his cocaine and booze addiction (overcome thanks to his wife's intervention, which he describes). "There's one novel, *Cujo*, that I barely remember writing."

King also evokes his college days and his recovery from the van crash that nearly killed him, but the focus is always on what it all means to the craft. He gives you a whole writer's "tool kit": a reading list, writing assignments, a corrected story, and nuts-and-bolts advice on dollars and cents, plot and character, the basic building block of the paragraph, and literary models. He shows what you can learn from H.P. Lovecraft's arcane vocabulary, Hemingway's leanness, Grisham's authenticity, Richard Dooling's artful obscenity, Jonathan Kellerman's sentence fragments. He explains why *Hart's War* is a great story marred by a tin ear for dialogue, and how Elmore Leonard's *Be Cool* could be the antidote.

Review #2

From Library Journal

In 1981 King penned *Danse Macabre*, a thoughtful analysis of the horror genre. Now he is treating his vast readership to another glimpse into the intellect that spawns his astoundingly imaginative works. This volume, slim by King standards, manages to cover his life from early childhood through the aftermath of the 1999 accident that nearly killed him. Along the way, King touts the writing philosophies of William Strunk and Ernest Hemingway, advocates a healthy appetite for reading, expounds upon the subject of grammar, critiques a number of popular writers, and offers the reader a chance to try out his theories. But most important, we who climb aboard for this ride with the master spend a few pleasant hours under the impression that we know what it's like to think like Stephen King. Recommended for anyone who wants to write and everyone who loves to read

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

Title:     **Writing Down the Bones**

Author:   **Natalie Goldberg**

Title:

Author:

Title:

Author:

Title:  
Title:  
Title:

Author:  
Author:  
Author:

**Document any potentially controversial content:**

Strong profanity contributes to author voice

Many references to drugs and alcohol reflects author's experiences

**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:** 5/23/2007

**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