

## **Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review**

Teacher: Centa/Conley/Shoemaker    Grade: 10    School: OHS

Book Title: Rocket Boys    Genre: memoir

Author: Homer Hickam    Pages: 368

Publisher: Dell    Copyright: 1998

*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.)

Rocket Boys is a uniquely American memoir—a powerful, luminous story of coming of age at the dawn of the 1960s, of a mother's love and a father's fears, of a group of young men who dreamed of launching rockets into outer space...and who made those dreams come true. With the grace of a natural storyteller, NASA engineer Homer Hickam paints a warm, vivid portrait of the harsh West Virginia mining town of his youth, evoking a time of innocence and promise, when anything was possible, even in a company town that swallowed its men alive. A story of romance and loss, of growing up and getting out, Homer Hickam's lush, lyrical memoir is a chronicle of triumph—at once exquisitely written and marvelously entertaining.

**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)

Taken from the Ohio Common Core Standards for Literary Text:

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

**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

Great memoirs must balance the universal and the particular. Too much of the former makes it overly familiar; too much of the latter makes readers ask what the story has to do with them. In his debut, Hickam walks that line beautifully. No matter how jaded readers have become by the onslaught of memoirs, none will want to miss the fantastic voyage of BCMA, Auk and Coalwood.  
-Publisher's Weekly

Review #2

In 1957, the national panic set off by Sputnik I reached into the hollows of Coalwood, West Virginia, the setting for this affecting story. The second son of a coal mine's manager, teenage Homer went bonkers about rockets, listening to Sputnik I's beep, watching it streak across the night sky, and yearning to work for Wernher von Braun. So he formed a rocket club, whose adventures in launching the Auk series of rockets, from their first attempt that burned up Mom's fence to the last that flew six miles up, form the frame of the memoir. The content comes from the conflict and gossip generated by his rocket compadres' activities, and if dialogue is remembered suspiciously accurately and entrances and exits occur with too dramatically effective timing, the narrative still rings true. Hickam's profiles of Coalwood's people (some, he admits, are composites) invite cheers and boos: boos for brother Jim and his thick-browed gridiron buddies, always threatening to pound on Sonny and his four-eyed friends; cheers for rocketeer Quentin, surely a composite geek from central casting whose word of approval is prodigious. Even if Hickam stretched the strict truth to metamorphose his memories into Stand by Melike material for Hollywood (and a movie has been made, with release set for late this year), the embellishing only converts what is a good story into an absorbing, rapidly readable one that is unsentimental but artful about adolescence, high school, and family life.

-Booklist

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

Title: Death Be Not Proud    Author: John Gunther

Title:                    Author:

Title:                    Author:

Title:                    Author:

Title:                    Author:

Title:                    Author:

**Document any potentially controversial content:**

**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:** May 15, 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