

## Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher: Ross    Grade: 8    School: OBMS

Book Title: Somewhere in the Darkness    Genre: realistic fiction

Author: Walter Dean Myers    Pages: 168

Publisher: Scholastic    Copyright: 05/01/2008

*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.)

Jimmy hasn't seen his father in nine years. But one day he comes back -- on the run from the law. Together, the two of them travel across the country -- where Jimmy's dad will find the man who can exonerate him of the crime for which he was convicted. Along the way, Jimmy discovers a lot about his father and himself -- and that while things can't always be fixed, sometimes they can be understood and forgiven.

A teenage boy accompanies his father, who has recently escaped from prison, on a trip that turns out to be an, often painful, time of discovery for them both.

**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 being used as an optional text for students to further explore the author, Walter Dean Myers. The focus of the unit is for students to get a glimpse of how the historical and cultural influences on an author's life can have an effect on his writing. It is also a time for students to analyze the author's writing style. The following statements are directly pulled from the OLSD 8th grade Integrated English Curriculum Map and are the guidance for the reading focus of this unit:

I can...

Reading Applications: Literary Text

\*analyze the influence that the setting has on the story and other literary elements.

\* identify and explain different types of characters and how their interactions and conflicts affect the plot.

\*explain how the type of point of view a story contains, affects the plot.

\* explain how an author paces the action of the story (plot).

\* discuss and explain the major themes in a piece of writing, discuss how the same theme may cross over multiple works by the same author.

\* identify the multiple ways an author makes his/her writing unique (style).

Reading Applications: Informational Text

\*analyze an author's argument, perspective or viewpoint & explain the development of key points.

Reading Process

\*apply reading comprehension strategies, including making predictions, comparing and contrasting, recalling and summarizing and making inferences and drawing conclusions.

**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 7-10-- A poignant story of motherless, 14-year-old Jimmy Little, whose convict father takes him on a search for truth, identity, and family. Whisked away from the stability of a homelife with his devoted grandmother, Mama Jean, Jimmy confronts the harsh realities of his father's life on the run. Jailed for his involvement in an armed robbery and falsely accused of killing a man, Crab escapes from prison to convince his son of his innocence. What Jimmy discovers is a man desperate to establish a relationship with his son but unable to break free of a lifestyle of stealing and moving on that leaves little room for security. On their highway odyssey, Crab becomes increasingly sick with a kidney ailment. Following a climactic encounter with the man who accused him, Crab is again arrested and hospitalized. For Jimmy, the flicker of hope that he and his father might work things out becomes a realization that love is built on trust, concern, and honesty. Through terse dialogue and characterization, Myers conveys a powerful message about the need for parent and child to believe in and respect one another. By story's end, the boy understands that to fully appreciate someone else's life you must first give meaning to your own. Whether from urban or rural backgrounds, single or double parent families, readers will find this universal journey of self-discovery gratifying. --Gerry Larson, Chewing Junior High School, Durham, NC

Review #2

From Kirkus Reviews

An eminent author who's excelled with both tragedy (Scorpions, 1988, Newbery Honor) and funny, lighthearted novels writes in a serious vein but offers a realistic gleam of hope. Jimmy, 14, has been raised by his beloved, dependable "Mama Jean," a friend of parents he doesn't remember; his mother is dead, and his dad, "Crab," is in prison for killing a man in an armed robbery. Suddenly Crab shows up, claiming that he's on parole and has a job in Chicago. Jimmy agrees to go with him, but Crab's lies begin to unravel even before they leave New York: he has kidney failure, and has escaped from a prison hospital ("When they start operating on an inmate, I don't know what they'd be thinking"); the job is an illusion. The two go on to Arkansas, where Crab hopes old friend Rydell will vouch for his innocence: Crab was convicted of murder as the result of another associate's plea-bargaining. Rydell, who once betrayed Crab with his silence, betrays him again by calling the police; Crab surrenders, then dies soon after in the hospital. Myers builds a poignant picture here of a failed man whose clumsy reaching out to his son comes too late to make a real bond. Yet Crab does leave a legacy: going home to Mama Jean, Jimmy--a bright, honest, loving boy who has recently been floundering in his inner-city school and exhibiting signs of real depression--resolves that the next generation will be different: "He would know just how he was like his son...and where their souls touched and where they didn't." Sober, thought-provoking, rich in insight and detail: another splendid achievement. (Fiction. 12+) -- Copyright ©1992, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

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

Title: Any novel written by... Author: Walter Dean Myers

Title: Author:

Title: Author:

Title: Author:

Title: Author:

Title: Author:

**Document any potentially controversial content:**

References to the past life of the father of the main character - stealing, breaking the law, possibly killing a man.

**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):** LX 640

**Date Submitted to Department Chair:** January 23, 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