

Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher:	Asbury	School:	OLMS
Book Title:	Stuck in Neutral	Genre:	realistic fiction
Author:	Terry Trueman	Pages:	144
Publisher:	HarperTeen	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.)

Back of book: Shawn McDaniel's life is not what it may seem to anyone looking at him. He is glued to his wheelchair, unable to voluntarily move a muscle—he can't even move his eyes. For all Shawn's father knows, his son may be suffering. Shawn may want a release. And as long as he is unable to communicate his true feelings to his father, Shawn's life is in danger.

To the world, Shawn's senses seem dead. Within these pages, however, we meet a side of him that no one else has seen—a spirit that is rich beyond imagining, breathing life.

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)

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 Publishers Weekly

First-time novelist Trueman raises ethical issues about euthanasia through the relationship between 14-year-old Shawn McDaniel, who suffers from cerebral palsy, and his father. In a conversational tone, narrator Shawn explains that when he was born, a tiny blood vessel burst in his brain, leaving him unable to control any of his muscles. What no one knows is that Shawn is a "secret genius" who, while unable to communicate, remembers everything he has ever heard. His condition, which includes violent seizures, overwhelmed his father, who moved out when Shawn was three years old; the man later won a Pulitzer Prize for a poem based on his experiences as parent to a victim of C.P. Weaving together memories with present-day accounts, Shawn describes the highs and lows of his day-to-day life as well as his father's increasing fascination with euthanasia and evidence that the man is working up the courage to personally "end [Shawn's] pain." The strength of the novel lies in the father-son dynamic; the delicate scenes between them carefully illustrate their mutual quest to understand each other. The other characters (Shawn's brother and sister, mother, teachers) lack this complexity. As a result, many of the scenes feel more contrived than heartfelt ("I always feel so guilty complaining about it at all!" says his sister). All in all, the book's concepts are more compelling than the story line itself. Ages 10-up. (June)

Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --

Review #2

Amazon.com Review

Fourteen-year-old Shawn McDaniel loves the taste of smoked oysters and his mother's gentle hugs. Unfortunately, it's impossible for Shawn to feed himself or to hug his mom back. Shawn has cerebral palsy, a condition he has had since birth that has robbed him of all muscle control. He can't walk, talk, or even focus his eyes on his own. But despite all these handicaps, despite the frustration of not being able to communicate, Shawn is still happy to be alive: "Somehow all the things I think about and remember turn to joy... favorite movies... pinecones... chocolate pudding... the scent of Comet in a stainless steel sink.... Life can be great, even for me. Even for me." That is why he panics when he begins to suspect that his father is thinking of killing him. Shawn knows that his father is trying to be kind; he imagines that his son's life is an endless torment. His dad has no idea of the rich life that Shawn lives inside his head. And Shawn, helpless and mute, has no way of telling him.

Stuck in Neutral is a truly unique journey into the mind of a truly unique character. Shawn McDaniel, who is literally trapped in his own body, will serve as a powerful metaphor for teens who feel cornered by circumstances or their own physical shortcomings. Terry Trueman's first-person portrayal of Shawn is made all the more poignant by the fact that Trueman's own son, Henry, also suffers from cerebral palsy. This is an original and moving debut. (Ages 11 to 15) --Jennifer Hubert

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

<u>Title:</u>	<u>Author:</u>

Document any potentially controversial content:

euthenasia, death, child with severe disabilities

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): Lexile 820

Date Submitted to Department Chair:

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