

## Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher: Morgan Lewis    Grade: 6-8    School: Berkshire Middle School

Book Title: Stuck in Neutral    Genre: Realistic Fiction

Author: Terry Trueman    Pages: 144

Publisher: HarperTeen    Copyright: 2000

*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.)

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.

Taken from Amazon.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)

Stuck in Neutral will be the anchor text in a unit focused on point of view. This text was chosen because to fully understand the point of view of this novel, students will need to engage in deep, guided analysis. Teachers will have the students analyze the effect point of view has on a story and discuss why the author chose Shawn's point of view along with discussing how Shawn's point of view impacts other literary elements.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.1 Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.3 Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.7.6 Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a 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

A teenager with profound cerebral palsy, who is utterly unable to give even those who know him best the faintest sign that he is sentient, narrates this devastating family portrait-cum-moral conundrum. Inside Shawn's twitching, drooling, seizure-racked body is a sane, intelligent teenager with an eidetic memory. A sympathetic observer of the effect his presence has on everyone around him, he leads a relatively rich, if vicarious, inner life. It is fueled by dreams (or perhaps more than

dreams) of flight, total recall of everything he has ever seen or heard, and feelings as intense as anyone's: love, amusement, bemusement, frustration--and anxiety. He overhears comments about ending his pain, from his doting, tormented father Sydney--who has begun research for a biography of a man convicted of smothering a profoundly disabled child. Trueman has a son with CP, and has obviously drawn in part from that experience, both for the story's events and for the issues he raises involving the social and emotional costs of caring for the physically helpless. Thematically, the story is built around Sydney's dilemma as he desperately searches for reasons not to end his son's life, and finds many seductive, compelling arguments otherwise; the abrupt, ambiguous ending leaves him on the verge of killing Shawn, or not, and so transmits his inner debate to readers. Though character is not the author's strongest concern here, like the similarly lucid brain-damaged teen in Joan Leslie Woodruff's *The Shiloh Renewal* (1999), Shawn will stay with readers, not for what he does, but for what he is and has made of himself. (Fiction. 12 ) -- Copyright © 2000 Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

### Review #2

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)

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

Title: Petey

Author: Ben Mikaelson

Title: Freak the Mighty

Author: Rodman Philbrick

Title: A Corner of the Universe

Author: Ann Martin

Title: Author:

Title: Author:

Title: Author:

### **Document any potentially controversial content:**

Some use of mild language

Father contemplating ending his son's "pain"

**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):** Grade level equivalent 6.1  
Lexile level 820

**Date Submitted to Department Chair:** November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013

**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