

Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher: OLHS English Grade: 9 School: OL H S

Book Title: The Bean Trees Genre: Young Adult Fiction

Author: Barbara Kingsolver Pages: 240

Publisher: Harper Perennial Copyright: 1989

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.)

Barbara Kingsolver demonstrates that politics are personal in *The Bean Trees*, her novel of friendship and survival set in the arid American Southwest. The novel focuses on Taylor Greer's search for a new life as she moves from her dull Kentucky home to exotic Arizona and the lessons that she learns along the way. Taylor's adoption of an abused Cherokee toddler, her friendship with a pair of Guatemalan refugees, and her support system of a small community of women, all contribute to the novel's central conviction that people cannot survive without empathy and generosity. Published in 1988 to an enthusiastic critical reception, *The Bean Trees* won an American Library Association award and a School Library Association award and has found a devoted reading audience around the world. Critics and readers alike relish Taylor's humor and warmth, with her down-home speech and perceptive observations. Like her narrator, Kingsolver grew up in Kentucky, and she draws from the voices she heard in her youth to create Taylor's voice. This voice helps to guide the novel, with its strong humanitarian views, away from simple political correctness toward a rich believability. Kingsolver has been praised for her skill in *The Bean Trees* at walking the fine line between preaching and taking a moral stand, and Taylor's straightforwardness and humor provide the cornerstone to Kingsolver's approach.

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:

This book is one of six novels selected to explore and examine how marginalized groups and/or individuals are represented in society. The selection of books for this unit allows students to view the world from the viewpoint of marginalized characters. We will be examining stereotypes and questioning how stereotypes are established and perpetuated. Students will be asked to propose solutions to stop stereotyping and call others to action against stereotyping. Students will work in literature circles as they read this novel. The reading will be done individually and students will meet in their groups to discuss their novel. Literature circles offer powerful benefits to readers of all ages. The circles are structured to move readers through a range of cognitive roles as they discuss books that are self-selected. Literature circles allow students to connect with each other, with texts, and ultimately, with the world in which they live. They learn to take responsibility as members of a group who, together, must construct meaning through discussion, debate and

reflection. Discussion, debate and reflection are anchored in the text which serves as a springboard to explore social issues.

Connection to the state standards/OLSD curriculum map(s):

- Acquisition of Vocabulary (1)
- Reading Application Informational (5, 6)
- Reading Application Literary (7, 9, 10, 11)
- Writing Process (all)
- Writing Application (5, 7, 9)
- Writing Conventions (10)
- Research Standard (11)
- Communication Standard (13)

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

Feisty Marietta Greer changes her name to "Taylor" when her car runs out of gas in Taylorville, Ill. By the time she reaches Oklahoma, this strong-willed young Kentucky native with a quick tongue and an open mind is catapulted into a surprising new life. Taylor leaves home in a beat-up '55 Volkswagen bug, on her way to nowhere in particular, savoring her freedom. But when a forlorn Cherokee woman drops a baby in Taylor's passenger seat and asks her to take it, she does. A first novel, *The Bean Trees* is an overwhelming delight, as random and unexpected as real life. The unmistakable voice of its irresistible heroine is whimsical, yet deeply insightful. Taylor playfully names her little foundling "Turtle," because she clings with an unrelenting, reptilian grip; at the same time, Taylor aches at the thought of the silent, staring child's past suffering. With Turtle in tow, Taylor lands in Tucson, Ariz., with two flat tires and decides to stay. The desert climate, landscape and vegetation are completely foreign to Taylor, and in learning to love Arizona, she also comes face to face with its rattlesnakes and tarantulas. Similarly, Taylor finds that motherhood, responsibility and independence are thorny, if welcome, gifts. This funny, inspiring book is a marvelous affirmation of risk-taking, commitment and everyday miracles.

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Review #2

From Library Journal

This debut novel follows the gritty, outspoken Taylor Greer, who leaves her native Kentucky to head west. She becomes mother to an abandoned baby and, when her jalopy dies in Tucson, is forced to work in a tire garage and to room with a young, battered divorcee who also has a little girl. With sisterly counsel and personal honesty, the two face their painful lot (told in ponderous detail). The blue-collar setting, described vibrantly, often turns violent, with baby beatings, street brawls, and drug busts. Despite the hurt and rage, themes of love and nurturing emerge. A refreshingly upbeat, presentable first effort by an author whose subsequent novels will probably generate more interest than this one. Edward C. Lynskey, Documentation, Atlantic Research Corp., Alexandria, Va.

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

Title: Sleeping Freshmen Never Lie

Author: David Lubar

Title: Chandra's Secret

Author: Allan Stratton

Title:

Author:

Title: Whale Talk

Author: Chris Crutcher

Title: Monster

Author: Walter Dean Myers

Title: Author:

Document any potentially controversial content:

This book deals with issues of child abandonment. The protagonist is asked by a complete stranger to take a Native-American child and care for her. The protagonist comes to find bruises on the child, and although it is never explicitly stated, there are overtones that suggest that the child has been abused.

Profanity: The protagonist uses the word s**t four times within the novel. The protagonist is showing frustration with her 1955 Volkswagon vehicle that consistently breaks down on her.

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: 4/2/2007

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