

Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher: Ross Grade: 8 School: OBMS

Book Title: The Beast Genre: realistic fiction

Author: Walter Dean Myers Pages: 176

Publisher: Scholastic Copyright: 2003

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.)

Seventeen-year-old Anthony "Spoon" Witherspoon is returning to Harlem after seven months at an exclusive prep school. He never wanted to leave the city in the first place--especially not to walk the hallowed halls of a mostly white New England school. But now that Spoon is back home, he realizes how much he's come to rely on his prep-school friends and routine. And the one thing he's looking forward to most--seeing his girlfriend, Gabi--brings him the greatest shock. When he left, Gabi was a vibrant young poet. Now she's a thin, wasted drug addict. Can Spoon help her find her way again?

A visit to his Harlem neighborhood and the discovery that the girl he loves is using drugs give sixteen-year-old Anthony Witherspoon a new perspective both on his home and on his life at a Connecticut prep school.

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 8 Up-Anthony "Spoon" Witherspoon, 17, leaves Harlem, and his girl, Gabi, to spend his senior year at Wallingford Academy in Connecticut, with the hope that he will get into an Ivy League college. While he adjusts to prep-school life and navigates the racial and social divides of the haves and the want-to-haves, Gabi's life comes undone. Her mother is dying, her younger brother may be running with a gang, and her blind grandfather has come to stay. When Spoon comes home for Christmas, Gabi is different. She's thinner, certainly, and so is her spirit. Spoon discovers a needle in her room and "the beast," heroin, is uncovered. Gabi-a clear-eyed, sassy Dominicana who writes poetry and dreams of attending Columbia-explains that she has lost the road that once ran through her life to her future. Most of the first-person narrative takes place during the holiday break in Harlem, and Myers's descriptions of the streets and people-the bright, clean, working-class hope and the slate-gray bankruptcy of drugs and crime-are photographically authentic and dizzyingly musical. Spoon's observations are philosophical and precocious, but the story races along at the pace of his anxieties-about a future, with or without Gabi, and about his place in Harlem and in the world. The language is simple and clean; the plot unfolds seamlessly; and the characters emerge shaky, worldly wise, and cautiously optimistic.

Johanna Lewis, New York Public Library

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Review #2

When Anthony "Spoon" Witherspoon comes home to Harlem from Wallingford Academy, he finds himself caught between two very different worlds, and he doesn't really feel like he belongs in either. Things are different for him in Harlem. People seem to have changed, and their reaction to him has changed. His best friend has dropped out of school, and a prim and proper classmate from "the Ave," Clara, is pregnant. His girlfriend, Gabi, is acting strangely. Her mother is sick, and her little brother, Rafe, is running with gang-bangers. Spoon doesn't understand why she is keeping him at a distance until he catches her in a daze with a hypodermic needle at her bedside. On the other side of his dual existence, Spoon's well-to-do friend from Wallingford Academy, Chanelle, makes it known that she wants to be more than just friends. Spoon struggles to find an identity that works in Harlem and at Wallingford. The Beast is an excellent novel about difficult issues, including race, drugs, and the juxtaposition of poverty and affluence; however, Walter Dean Myers resists the temptation to preach or provide simple answers to complicated problems. 2003, Scholastic Press, 170 pp., Ages young adult.

—Ray Castle

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:

dangers of drug abuse

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): young adult

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