

Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher: Julie Brown Grade: CP 11, AP 12 School: Olentangy High School

Book Title: The Brimstone Journals Genre: Poetry Novel

Author: Ron Koertge Pages: 113

Publisher: Candlewick Press 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.)

Fifteen high-school students tell their stories in a series of free-verse poems. They chronicle the events, large and small, leading up to an attack on the school planned by one of them. They are bully and victim, white supremacist and African-Americans, anorexic, anarchist, jock, and more. They rebel and conform, rant and plead, preen and worry. But only one will do anything about the attack that all can see coming.

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)

Compare and contrast motivations and reactions of literary characters confronting similar conflicts (e.g., individual vs. nature, freedom vs. responsibility, individual vs. society), using specific examples of character's thoughts, words and actions. 12RALB

Evaluate ways authors develop point of view and style to achieve specific rhetorical and aesthetic purposes (e.g., through use of figurative language, irony, tone, diction, imagery, symbolism and sounds of language), citing specific examples from text to support analysis. 12RALD,E

The book is a contemporary poem-novel that high school students enjoy reading because of its unique style and because its content is extremely relevant to the lives of today's teenagers. Because it is a book about today's high school students, the language is mature. The themes and the ideas presented in the book are also mature and will lend themselves to important discussion. The book is intentionally used at the end of the school year because there is an established classroom community where trust plays an important role. Additionally, its use at the end of the year is the capstone to our exploration and discovery of style.

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: The book is written in free verse, with fifteen different teenage characters narrating four or five poems each. "Novels in verse can be an appealing, accessible introduction for students turned off by poetry or reluctant to read it. The verse authors write for these books is not like what most students are forced to study in class—it does not require analysis and explication. It is straightforward, but it retains the rhythm and succinctness of traditional poetry. By writing their stories in verse, authors offer readers a voyeuristic perspective not possible with prose. Poetry lends itself well to introspection and intense emotion. There is also a more practical

attraction for students—novels in verse are a shorter and faster read. The substantial white space on the pages of these books certainly appeals to reluctant readers” (Ed Sullivan -- School Library Journal).

Review #2

Common Sense Review:

Reviewed By: Matt Berman (An elementary school teacher for 26 years with degrees in education and Philosophy for Children, Matt has written four books on children's literature. His reviews, articles, and columns have appeared in many journals, including Kirkus, School Library Journal, and The Times-Picayune. He has also taught Children's Literature at Tulane University and the University of New Orleans, and is a frequent speaker on the subject. Some of Matt's reviews have appeared previously in the New Orleans Times-Picayune)

“Though all the different voices can get a bit confusing, the types a bit cliched, and the ending a bit too easy, the author shows how the mundane, everyday concerns of teens can be more important to them than the disaster looming before their eyes. The characters may not be developed, but their voices and concerns are often real, and raw, and there's a lot of meaning packed into a few words. Almost any of these short, simple poems, chosen at random, could be a discussion starter between parent and teen, or teacher and class. Cumulatively they give teens much to think and talk about.”

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

Title: The Catcher in the Rye Author: JD Salinger

Title: 10 Pre-approved poems (by the same poet) of the student's choice Author: ?

Title: Author:

Title: Author:

Title: Author:

Title: Author:

Document any potentially controversial content:

Some profanity

References to violence, racism, homosexuality and sex

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): High School

Date Submitted to Department Chair: 5-15-2008

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