

Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher: OOHS English Department Grade: 11-12 School: OOHS

Book Title: The Bean Trees Genre: Contemporary Fiction

Author: Barbara Kingsolver Pages: 312

Publisher: HarperTorch (HarperCollins) Copyright: 1988

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.)

Clear-eyed and spirited, Taylor Greer grew up poor in rural Kentucky with the goals of avoiding pregnancy and getting away. But when she heads west with high hopes and a barely functional car, she meets the human condition head-on. By the time Taylor arrives in Tucson, Arizona, she has acquired a completely unexpected child, a three-year-old American Indian girl named Turtle, and must somehow come to terms with both motherhood and the necessity of putting down roots. Hers is a story about love and friendship, abandonment and belonging, and the discovery of surprising resources in apparently empty places.

From the back cover.

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)

The curricular requirements from the College Board for AP English Literature & Composition includes the following statement: "...by the time the student completes AP English Literature and Composition she or he will have studied literature from both British and American writers, as well as works written in several genres from the sixteenth century to contemporary times. The works selected for the course should require careful, deliberative reading that yields multiple meanings." The Bean Trees is what many would consider a contemporary classic. Furthermore, texts by Barbara Kingsolver frequently appear on the AP English Literature & Composition Exam's free-response essay question as a suggested text. As such, this contemporary tour-de-force is ideal for study in the AP Literature & Composition course.

This text is one of several options for students to read as a part of their summer reading before entering the AP English Literature & Composition course at OOHS. They read this text in tandem with Thomas Foster's *How to Read Novels Like a Professor*, journaling in response to both texts. The skills of reading, or rather the thinking moves, that Foster outlines in his text are hallmarks of the study of reading novels and plays in the course. Because of its mixture of complexity and accessibility for high school students, *The Bean Trees* is ideally suited for this pairing. In addition to the summer work, students will have the opportunity to write about the novel multiple times throughout the year, mostly in timed-writing settings, a practice necessary for success on the AP English Literature & Composition Exam.

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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http://www.amazon.com/The-Bean-Trees-A-Novel/dp/product-description/0061097314/ref=dp_proddesc_0?ie=UTF8&n=283155&s=books

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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http://www.amazon.com/The-Bean-Trees-A-Novel/dp/product-description/0061097314/ref=dp_proddesc_0?ie=UTF8&n=283155&s=books

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

Title: Atonement Author: Ian McEwan

Title: The Bluest Eye Author: Toni Morrison

Title: Going After Cacciato Author: Tim O'Brien

Title: The Kite Runner Author: Khaled Hosseini

Title: Author:

Title: Author:

Document any potentially controversial content:

Child abuse: There is a suggestion of child abuse of the infant, Turtle, who the protagonist protects throughout the course of the novel. However, there is nothing explicit.

Profanity: A limited number of words used a handful of times in frustration; e.g., shit.

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): N/A

Date Submitted to Department Chair: Summer 2014

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