

Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher:	Zettler	School:	OHS
Book Title:	The Laramie Project	Genre:	Drama
Author:	Moises Kaufman	Pages:	101
Publisher:	Vintage	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.)

Research for the *The Laramie Project*, Moisés Kaufman's internationally successful play, began one month after a horrific crime occurred in the city of Laramie, Wyoming. Members of Kaufman's theatrical group, Tectonic Theater Project, volunteered to travel with their director from New York City to the wide-open ranges of the West in order to gather in-person interviews from Laramie's populace. The idea was to capture the emotions, reflections, and reactions of the people who were most closely related to the crime—a brutal beating and subsequent death of a young college student. Was this a hate crime? Or was it a random, senseless assault and robbery? No matter which, Kaufman's objective was to learn through the town folks' raw responses how the issues of homosexuality, religion, class, economics, education, and non-traditional lifestyles were reflected through this crime. How did this crime define the culture, not just of this Western town, but of the entire United States?

In 1998, Matthew Shepard, a twenty-one-year-old gay student registered at the University of Wyoming, was tied to a cattle fence, beaten about the head, robbed, and left to die on a bitterly cold night in October. Eighteen hours later, he was accidentally discovered by a biker, who had trouble believing that the figure he saw attached to the fence was human. Police and ambulances were dispatched, and Shepard was taken to a local hospital; but this was all done to no avail. Shepard was beyond recovery. He never regained consciousness and died several days later due to his head injuries. Two local young men were charged with the crime.

The play is based on over 400 interviews with about 100 Laramie residents, as well as journal entries from the members of Tectonic Theater Project and Kaufman, as they reflect on their own reactions to the crime and to the interviews they carried out. It is structured as if it were a documentary as it attempts to re-enact the events that occurred on that fateful night.

The play opened at the Denver Theater Center in March 2000 and two months later moved to Union Square Theater in New York, where it ran for five months. Later, HBO, working with the Sundance Theater Lab, turned the play into a film, which Kaufman also directed. It was presented as the opening-night film at the 2002 Sundance Film Festival, with Robert Redford, the founder of Sundance, making a special appearance to introduce the movie. For his work, Kaufman received two Emmy Award nominations for director and writer of the film. - Encyclopedia.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)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.5

Analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of the structure an author uses in his or her exposition or argument, including whether the structure makes points clear, convincing, and engaging.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.6

Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness or beauty of the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.7

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.3.a

Engage and orient the reader by setting out a problem, situation, or observation and its significance, establishing one or multiple point(s) of view, and introducing a narrator and/or characters; create a smooth progression of experiences or events.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.3.b

Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, reflection, and multiple plot lines, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.3.c

Use a variety of techniques to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole and build toward a particular tone and outcome (e.g., a sense of mystery, suspense, growth, or resolution).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.3.d

Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.3.e

Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.4

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1-3 above.)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.5

Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience. (Editing for conventions should demonstrate command of Language standards 1-3 up to and including grades 11-12 here.)

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.6

Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products in response to ongoing feedback, including new arguments or information.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.7

Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.8

Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.9

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

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

Moises Kaufman and his Tectonic Theater Project have written a play documenting the aftermath of the savage killing of Matthew Shepard, including the perspectives of both friends and strangers: The Laramie Project. This innovative theatrical composition, structured not in scenes, but in "moments," addresses the various issues relating to the tragedy of Shepard, a young gay man whose murder has since become a symbol for America's struggle against intolerance. Kaufman's approach is actor-based, as opposed to text-based; a side-effect of this actor-based approach is that in print form it seems as though something is missing. However, the play promises to move the reader with its authentic portrayal of a small town facing a terrifying event.

Review #2

From School Library Journal

Adult/High School-This remarkable play takes the form of a series of juxtaposed monologues, culled from hundreds of interviews that the authors conducted with residents of Laramie, WY, after the fatal beating of Matthew Shepard in 1998. Additional speeches are taken from journals the authors kept while they were involved in this project. From these fragments, a powerful whole is created, giving readers and audiences a full and shimmering picture of a quiet town suddenly thrust into the media spotlight and hastily branded as "backward." Shepard's friends are heard from, as are the friends of his convicted killers. Masterfully woven together to breathtaking effect are statements from Laramie's religious leaders-some of whom condemn the murder, others of whom condemn the victim. A thoughtful and moving theatrical tour de force.

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

Title: **Death of Innocence: The Story of the Hate Crime that Changed America** Author: **Mamie Till-Mobley**

Title: Author:

Title: Author:

Title: Author:

Title: Author:

Title: Author:

Document any potentially controversial content:

Matthew Shepard is gay, but the focus of the play is a hate crime, and the issue of tolerance and love.

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: 1/21/2015

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