

Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher: Jill C. Hartley

School: OHS

Book Title: The Other Wes Moore

Genre: Nonfiction

Author: Wes Moore

Pages: 233

Publisher: Spiegel & Grau

Copyright: 2010

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:

The chilling truth is that his story could have been mine. The tragedy is that my story could have been his.

Two kids named Wes Moore were born blocks apart within a year of each other. Both grew up fatherless in similar Baltimore neighborhoods and had difficult childhoods; both hung out on street corners with their crews; both ran into trouble with the police. How, then, did one grow up to be a Rhodes Scholar, decorated veteran, White House Fellow, and business leader, while the other ended up a convicted murderer serving a life sentence? Wes Moore, the author of this fascinating book, sets out to answer this profound question. In alternating narratives that take readers from heart-wrenching losses to moments of surprising redemption, *The Other Wes Moore* tells the story of a generation of boys trying to find their way in a hostile world.

Wes Moore is a Rhodes Scholar and a combat veteran of Afghanistan. As a White House Fellow, he worked as a special assistant to Secretary Condoleezza Rice at the State Department. He was a featured speaker at the 2008 Democratic National Convention, was named one of *Ebony* magazine's Top 30 Leaders Under 30 (2007), and, most recently, was dubbed one of the top young business leaders in New York by *Crain's New York Business*. He works in New York City. (barnesandnoble.com)

Provide an instructional rationale for the use of this title, including specific reference to the OLSD curriculum map(s):

This text provides opportunities at all high school grade levels to examine the author's development of his story as well as the structure of the text itself. This selection also provides an opportunity as our common book to discuss the choices we make in our lives and how they impact our futures while building a community conversation in our building on this concept.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3: Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.5: Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.6: Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.8: Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

Include two professional reviews of this title:

Review #1

When Wes Moore won a Rhodes scholarship in 2000, The Baltimore Sun published an article about his triumph. He was the first student at Johns Hopkins to win a Rhodes in 13 years, and the first black student there ever to win the award.

At about the same time, The Sun published articles about another young African-American man, also named Wes Moore. This one was facing charges of first-degree murder for the killing of an off-duty police officer named Bruce Prothero, a father of five.

Both Wes Moores had troubled youths in blighted neighborhoods, difficulties in school, clashes with authority and unpleasant encounters with police handcuffs. But one ended up graduating Phi Beta Kappa and serving as a White House fellow, and today is a banker with many volunteer activities. The other is serving a life prison sentence without the possibility of parole.

“One of us is free and has experienced things that he never even knew to dream about as a kid,” the successful Wes Moore writes in a new book, “The Other Wes Moore.” “The other will spend every day until his death behind bars. ... The chilling truth is that his story could have been mine. The tragedy is that my story could have been his.”

For me, the book is a reminder of two basic truths about poverty and race in America.

The first is that American antipoverty efforts have been disgracefully inadequate. It should be a scandal that California spends \$216,000 on each child in the juvenile justice system, and only \$8,000 on each child in the Oakland public schools.

Far too many Americans are caught in a whirlpool of poverty, broken families, failed schools and self-destructive behavior that is replicated generation after generation. The imprisoned Wes Moore became a grandfather last year at 33.

The writer Wes Moore offers clues from his own experience about how boys get sucked into that whirlpool.

His father, a radio and television journalist, died of a virus after a hospital emergency room — seeing only a disoriented, disheveled black man — misdiagnosed him and sent him home to get “more sleep,” Mr. Moore writes. The writer Wes grew up in a poor, drug-ravaged neighborhood of the Bronx.

His mother worked multiple jobs and scrounged to send him to Riverdale Country School, an elite prep school, but Wes felt out of place among wealthy, white students — and his black friends at home teased him for going to “that white school.” Wes skipped classes, let his grades slip, hung out with a friend who was dealing drugs, and collided with the police.

Despairing, Wes’s mother dispatched him to a military school. There he finally began to soar.

In the case of the other Wes, there were some moments when he almost escaped. His mother was earning a college degree at Johns Hopkins — which probably would have provided the family a ladder to the middle class — when Reagan-era budget cuts terminated her financial aid and forced her to drop out.

Then the criminal Wes almost found his footing with the Job Corps. There he earned his G.E.D., testing near the top of his class, and began reading at a college level. He learned carpentry skills — but afterward never found a good job and tumbled back into his old life.

A different Wes Moore, of Baltimore, hugging his daughter in prison in 2007.

The second basic truth underscored by this story is that kids can escape the whirlpool — but they need help.

The author Wes Moore escaped partly because of family support and partly because he was helped by mentors at his military school. Not surprisingly, Mr. Moore believes passionately in mentoring, partly because so many boys in poor families have no father at home and lack male role models. He mentors boys and girls in Baltimore and New York and is directing some of the profits from his book to two organizations that provide mentoring.

One is City Year, which supports young people taking a year of public service to work in impoverished neighborhoods. Another is the U.S. Dream Academy, which supports children whose parents are in prison (and who are consequently at great risk themselves of tumbling into trouble).

There are no quick fixes to solve poverty. But carefully conducted experiments show that some strategies work: intensive early childhood education modeled after the Abecedarian Project, rigorous schools like those in the KIPP network, volunteer reader tutoring like that done by Start Making a Reader Today, and subsidized jobs programs like Canada’s Self-Sufficiency Project that build the employment habit. These approaches have a much better record than juvenile detention and are far cheaper.

Mr. Moore ends his book with a call to action, arguing that each of us can play a role through volunteer work or donations. His own trajectory underscores that lives are at stake, and they can be turned around. (The New York Times, Nicholas Kristof, June 12, 2010)

Review #2

"It takes a village to raise a child," goes the African proverb. This book is a cautionary tale of what happens when the village is ill equipped to do so. The author, a Rhodes scholar and investment banker, intercuts his life story with that of another young man with the same name. Both were born around the same time in the same Baltimore neighborhood; both were fatherless; both suffered

under the weight of poverty, drugs and crime. The other Wes Moore, however, will spend the rest of his life inside a prison cell for murder. "Wes's story could have been mine; the tragedy is that my story could have been his," Moore writes. Of course, nothing is ever that simple. When it appeared her son's life was headed for disaster, the author's mother moved in with her supportive parents and found money to send him to military school. Yet despite interviews with family and the other man, we never fully understand the other Wes Moore's motivations. The author knows it took many helping hands to save his life. In the case of the other Wes Moore, there appears to be no clear answer as to what went wrong. (Times Magazine, Frances Romero, May 17, 2010)

What alternate texts) could also fulfill the instructional requirements?

<u>Title</u>	The Short and Tragic Life of Robert Peace	<u>Author:</u>	Jeff Hobbs
:			
<u>Title</u>	A Long Way Gone	<u>Author:</u>	Ishmael Beah
:			
<u>Title</u>	An Invisible Thread	<u>Author:</u>	Laura Schroff
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<u>Title</u>		<u>Author:</u>	
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<u>Title</u>		<u>Author:</u>	
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<u>Title</u>		<u>Author:</u>	
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Document any potentially controversial content:

descriptions of situations involving of drug deals, one instance of b--ch

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: April 12, 2016