

Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher:	Horman	School:	OOMS
Book Title:	The Wave	Genre:	Suspense (through novelization)
Author:	Todd Strasser	Pages:	138
Publisher:	Dell	Copyright:	1981

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.)

The Wave is set at Gordon High School over a period of nine days. But this isn't your average high school drama story.

Day 1: Ben Ross shows his students a documentary on the Holocaust. He's upset when he realizes that his students have questions about the Holocaust that he can't answer – he wishes he could give them more.

Day 2: Ben decides to try an experiment that will help his students understand how it was possible for the Nazis to gain control without someone stopping them.

And the experiment begins: he starts by showing them how they can be more disciplined by adjusting their posture and following certain rules. The students already love Ben and they seem to enjoy the exercise.

Day 3: Ben's students want more of what went down the day before, so he goes along with it. He creates a group called The Wave, complete with a logo, mottos, and a salute. One student, David Collins, thinks The Wave can help Gordon High's losing football team, and he starts teaching his teammates about the rules of the group.

David's girlfriend, Laurie Saunders, is kind of excited about The Wave, too. But, when she tells her parents about it, her mom freaks out and Laurie wonders if she has a point. In fact, something about The Wave just creeps her out. (Hey, Shmoop is feeling a little creeped out, too.) Meanwhile, Ben's wife Christy is also concerned about The Wave and she hopes her husband isn't getting into something he can't control.

Day 4: Laurie and David get into a tiff on the way to school when she voices her doubts about The Wave. In class that day, Ben gives his students Wave membership cards, which designate some students as "monitors" who are supposed to report Wave members who break the rules. (Uh oh.) He also tells his students that they need to start taking action, action to benefit The Wave. He orders them to recruit new members. (Double uh oh.)

Laurie is increasingly doubtful about The Wave, but her friends get angry when she mentions it. Plus, The Wave seems to be really helping Robert Billings, the class loser. Now that they have The Wave, students accept Robert and he's actually becoming a leader. So it can't be all bad, right? Right?!

On this day, Ben realizes how big The Wave is becoming and he hopes he has it under control.

Day 5: A lot goes down on this day.

Laurie, editor of the school newspaper, gets an anonymous letter from a student complaining that Wave members are bullying other students to try to make them join The Wave. Not good.

Robert Billings asks Ben if he can be Ben's bodyguard – Ben agrees. Um?

The pep-rally for Saturday's football game becomes a Wave rally, and some two hundred new members join. Yikes.

When Laurie refuses to go to the rally, David breaks up with her. So, she hangs out in the publication office of the school paper with other staff members while the Wave members rally.

Laurie's had enough: she decides to investigate The Wave and write an exposé about it for the paper.

Day 6: At the football game, Laurie tries to go into the bleachers to talk to her friend Amy, but is told that she can't go up unless she gives The Wave salute. She refuses to give the salute and just heads on out. (Pretty cool how she stands by what she believes in, even with intense peer pressure.)

Day 7: On Sunday, Laurie and the school paper staff have an emergency meeting to flesh out their special issue on The Wave.

Day 8: The special issue is published, which inspires many more students to come forward with bad stories about The Wave. Ben is in big trouble with the principal and many parents, and he knows he has to find a way to stop this mess before things get worse.

After a creepy experience after hours for Laurie in school, David begs Laurie to stop criticizing The Wave. She refuses and he gets physical with her, throwing her to the ground.. Immediately, David realizes what he's done. The Wave has made him forget who he really is and what he really cares about. He and Laurie make up (that was quick!) and go to Ben's house to beg him to stop The Wave.

Day 9: On Tuesday, Ben ends the experiment by telling his students that they have been acting like Nazis. (As noted in "What's Up With the Ending?" this is a tad problematic.) The Wave disbands, leaving Robert Billings in tears. Ben finds Robert crying and heads out with him for a chat and a bite to eat. Hopefully, Ben will find a way to help this kid out... a way that doesn't involve a way-too-weird experiment. - Shmoop.com (online)

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)

Reading Applications Literary: Gain and demonstrate a deeper understanding of human story by reading varieties of genres. #1, #2, #3

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

The Wave will intrigue readers from the beginning. It is a story based upon actual events that took place as the result of a History class experiment in a California high school in 1969. Ben Ross, a high school history teacher, begins his usual unit on World War II with a film strip depicting the horrors that occurred in Nazi concentration camps. His students have mixed reactions to the film. Among them, Laurie, a popular student, raises questions that the teacher cannot answer and states that this type of event could never happen again. The teacher concocts an experiment to illustrate to his students just how this type of blind following can easily happen, even in their own school. It begins simply enough as a game in his history class but soon the students want to spread their new found discipline to other areas of the school including the school's football team. As time passes, the other teachers, administration, and a handful of students become more concerned with the effects of the Wave, the term given to the experiment. Eventually, Mr. Ross must also acknowledge that

things have gone too far and must devise a plan to put an end to the fast-spreading craze. In the end, the students learn a valuable lesson about blindly following a leader.

The fluid, readable style allows secondary students to understand the text, while still engaging adult readers with a fascinating story. In addition to bringing to life a pivotal piece of history, the novel raises questions about contemporary issues and attitudes as well as the power of persuasion and group versus individual psyche. The Wave brings its characters to life. It is well suited for high school or middle school students because it addresses the issues of peer pressure and the fine line between fitting in and blindly following the crowd. It illustrates how quickly people can be convinced that their individual rights are not really important and how important it is for some people to feel as though they are accepted as part of the group. This book is rich in discussion topics and may be used to connect language arts and social studies/history - The University of Texas at Austin College of Education (online)

http://www.edb.utexas.edu/resources/booksR4teens/book_reviews/book_reviews.php?book_id=121

Review #2

Anyone who thinks the Nazi party's rise to power in the 1930s and the Holocaust could never happen again should grab a copy of *The Wave: The Classroom Experiment That Went Too Far* by Todd Strasser, the winner of the Massachusetts Book Award for Children's/Young Adult literature in 1981. *The Wave* is based on the true story of Ron Jones, who conducted an experiment in his Palo Alto, Calif., high school history class in the late 1960s when students asked how the German people could claim to have known little or nothing about the mass extermination of the Jews by the Nazis during World War II.

Strasser's fictionalized telling of the experiment centers on history teacher Ben Ross and student/school newspaper editor Laurie Saunders. Mr. Ross seems to be a hands-on, show-don't-tell kind of teacher, and he thinks the experiment will get his students involved in the class discussion about the Holocaust. He decides to create a movement called *The Wave*, whose motto is "Strength Through Discipline, Strength Through Community, Strength Through Action." Surprisingly, the students obey Mr. Ross's orders, and the movement catches on.

"Now that we understand Discipline and Community," he told the class, "Action is our next lesson. Ultimately, discipline and community are meaningless without action. Discipline gives you the right to action. A disciplined group with a goal can take action to achieve it. Class, do you believe in *The Wave*?"

There was a split-second hesitation, and then the class rose in unison and answered in what seemed like a single voice. "Mr. Ross, yes!"

Mr. Ross nodded. "Then you must take action! Never be afraid to act on what you believe. As *The Wave* you must act together like a well-oiled machine. Through hard work and allegiance to each other, you will learn faster and accomplish more. But only if you support one another, and only if you work together and obey the rules, can you ensure the success of *The Wave*." (pages 59-60)

While Laurie is the main character of the book, readers are introduced to several other students, who basically symbolize the nerds, the jocks, and the losers. *The Wave* becomes popular because all the students feel like equals and don't have to worry about trying to fit into a certain clique. The movement grows so large it encompasses the entire school, and there are membership cards, arm bands, and rallies. It becomes more than Mr. Ross ever imagined, and even he is caught up in all the excitement. Laurie is worried that the movement is going too far, and when students start being bullied to join *The Wave*, she realizes it must stop. But how?

At just 138 pages, I finished *The Wave* in one sitting. I was on the edge of my seat wondering how it would all play out. There wasn't much time for major character development, but Mr. Ross, Laurie, and her boyfriend, David, are fairly well developed. You can see a transformation in the other characters, but you're not really given a chance to get to know them outside of their

interactions with Laurie and in class. However, it's not really necessary to get to know all the characters to understand the implications of the experiment.

It's hard to believe The Wave is based on a true story. It's not clear how much of the book is fact, and I don't think it matters. But it's important to understand that not everyone who supported Hitler was as crazy as he was. I'm not talking about the high-ranking SS officers (Himmler, Goering, Goebbels—I believe they and the others in Hitler's inner circle were just as disturbed as he was). I'm talking about the average citizen. Some of them were swept up in the excitement of the parades and rallies and Hitler's animated speeches about improving Germany's post-World War I economy. Others were too afraid to publicly oppose the Nazis. My maternal grandmother, for instance, lived in Germany during the war, and she told me many years ago before she died that they had to listen to Hitler's speeches on the radio. If they didn't listen to him, or they criticized what he said, someone could report them to the Gestapo. I'm not making excuses for these people, but The Wave shows, albeit on a much smaller scale, how easy it is for such movements to get out of hand, how easy it is for people to be manipulated.

The Wave gives you a lot to ponder, and it's one of those books that sticks with you long after you finish reading. The book shows step by step how Mr. Ross begins and perpetuates the movement, but I leave those details for you to discover on your own. The Wave is shocking, and it makes you take a closer look at your own beliefs. How strong are you to stand up for what is right, even if it means being ostracized or worse? - <http://diaryofaneccentric.wordpress.com/2009/07/21/the-wave-by-todd-strasser/>

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

Title: **Animal Farm**

Author: **Orwell**

Title: **Lord of the Flies**

Author: **Golding**

Title:

Author:

Title:

Author:

Title:

Author:

Title:

Author:

Document any potentially controversial content:

reference to violence in war regarding the Holocaust

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: 2-27-2013

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