

## Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher:	6 <sup>th</sup> grade team	School:	OLMS
Book Title:	Touching Spirit Bear	Genre:	Realistic Fiction
Author:	Ben Mikaelson	Pages:	256
Publisher:	HarperCollins	Copyright:	2002

*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.)

Overview: back of book

Within Cole Matthews lie anger, rage, and hate. Cole has been stealing, fighting, and lying for years. His attack on a classmate has left the boy with permanent physical and deep psychological damage and Cole in the biggest trouble of his life. To most, Cole seems beyond hope. But when he's offered a chance at an alternative path called Circle Justice, based on Native American tradition, Cole finds himself banished to a remote Alaskan island, where his rage and isolation lead him to another brazen attack. This time, his intended victim is the Spirit Bear of Native American legend—and the clumsy assault ends with Cole mauled nearly to death, desperately clinging to the life he has tried so hard to waste.

Rescuers arrive to save Cole's life, but it is the attack of the Spirit Bear that is the start of Cole's long journey to accepting responsibility for his life and saving his soul.

This gripping, graphic survival story from an award-winning writer paints an unsparing picture of one violent teen and offers a poignant testimony to the power of pain that can destroy and may also heal.

**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)

RL. 6.1: Citing several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says

RL.6.2: Determining theme and analyze it through the course of the text

**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

Children's Literature

In order to avoid a prison sentence, fifteen-year-old Cole Matthews opts to spend a year alone on an island in Southwest Alaska. This alternative punishment is part of Circle Justice, a healing form of justice that has been practiced by native cultures for thousands of years. But Cole harbors resentment toward the world that no justice can placate. He torches his shelter, destroys his supplies, and then has a run-in with a giant white Spirit Bear that leaves him maimed and badly

injured. But has this near death experience helped Cole accept the patience, gentleness, strength, and honesty that is Circle Justice's goal? Cole's parole officer and a Native American elder, Edwin, risk their reputations so that Cole can give the island another chance. Finally, Cole realizes that it is not through anger but through forgiveness that he will find redemption. The author, who lives with an adopted 700-pound black bear in Montana, does not shy away from describing the violent and sometimes gruesome confrontations with man and beast that Cole pits himself against. 2001, HarperCollins, \$15.95. Ages 10 up. Reviewer: Christopher Moning

Review #2

From Booklist

Gr. 6-9. Cole Matthews is a 15-year-old, baby-faced con. The child of wealthy, abusive alcoholic parents, Cole has been getting into trouble most of his life. One day, he beats a fellow student so severely the boy suffers permanent physical damage. Mikaelson's new novel is the story of Cole's redemption; it is also a look at an unusual justice system. Cole's parole officer arranges for Cole to face "Circle Justice," a Native American tradition. The Circle decides that Cole must spend a year, by himself, on a remote Alaskan island. Cole is at first resistant, but he eventually learns much about himself and his anger, and he even finds a way to help his victim. Some may argue that the change in Cole comes too quickly to be realistic, but even students with very different backgrounds will empathize with this tortured bully. As in Countdown (1997), Mikaelson is at his best when using the story to explain other cultures. An excellent companion to Gary Paulsen's Hatchet (1987) and Allan Eckert's Incident at Hawk's Hill (1971). Marta Segal

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

<u>Title:</u> <b>Brains Winter</b>	<u>Author:</u> <b>Gary Paulsen</b>
<u>Title:</u> <b>Hatchet</b>	<u>Author:</u> <b>Gary Paulsen</b>
<u>Title:</u> <b>The River</b>	<u>Author:</u> <b>Gary Paulsen</b>
<u>Title:</u>	<u>Author:</u>
<u>Title:</u>	<u>Author:</u>
<u>Title:</u>	<u>Author:</u>

**Document any potentially controversial content:**

Story begins with a bullying incident, mild violence with surviving the wilderness, short description of father's alcohol abuse

**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):** 13+

**Date Submitted to Department Chair:**

**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