

Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher:	Biggam	School:	Shanahan Middle School
Book Title:	Twerp	Genre:	Historical Fiction
Author:	Mark Goldblatt	Pages:	274
Publisher:	Random House	Copyright:	2013

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.)

From the hardcover edition's bookflap: Julian Twerski isn't a bully. He's just made a big mistake. So when he returns to school after a weeklong suspension, his English teacher offers him a deal: if he keeps a journal and writes about the terrible incident that got him and his friends suspended, he can get out of writing a report on Shakespeare. Julian jumps at the chance. And so begins his account of life in sixth grade—blowing up homemade fireworks, writing a love letter for his best friend (with disastrous results), and worrying whether he's still the fastest kid in school. Lurking in the background, though, is the one story he can't bring himself to tell, the one story his teacher most wants to hear.

Inspired by Mark Goldblatt's own childhood growing up in 1960s Queens, *Twerp* shines with humor and heart. This remarkably powerful story will have readers laughing and crying right along with these flawed but unforgettable characters.

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.6.10:By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 6-8 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

Students will also continue to work on fluency, accuracy, and expression when reading.

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

School Library Journal:

Gr 6–8—After participating in an act of horrendous bullying, Julian is given the opportunity to atone for his action and lighten his punishment by writing a book throughout the year. What starts as meandering thoughts and stories about him hitting pigeons and chasing cars evolves into a story of self-realization. The bulk of it is given over to a tangled love triangle. When Lonnie asks Julian, a better writer, to craft a love letter from him to new-girl Jillian and sign it anonymously, she believes the amorous intentions are Julian's. The result leaves bitter feelings between two former best

friends. As the story unfolds, Julian comes to identify what he feels is right, not just what his best friend tells him is so. This honest portrayal of 12-year-olds' lives does not gloss over the stupid, hurtful things people do to one another before their moral compasses become fully calibrated. Julian is different from his friends, as he is told throughout the book, but he doesn't see it until the end. In the denouement, he finally stands up and tries to make what he has done right. Not all readers will identify with the sometimes-despicable things the protagonist does, but those who identified with the antihero in Jeff Kinney's "Diary of a Wimpy Kid" (Abrams) but have matured beyond the scope and gravity of that series will find a kindred spirit in Julian.—Devin Burritt

Review #2

Kirkus Reviews:

Twelve-year-old Julian is assigned the task of keeping a journal that details the events that led up to his suspension for bullying. In an open journal to his English teacher, Julian describes life as a sixth-grader in 1969, roaming his Queens neighborhood with a close-knit group of friends. While the descriptions and dialogue evoke a previous era, the issues Julian faces are timeless topics familiar to adolescents. Initially, Julian minimizes his responsibility for what happened to "Danley Dimmel," whose real name is Stanley Stimmel. Rather than addressing what occurred, Julian recounts his various mishaps and adventures with his friends. Alternately poignant and comical, Julian's stories encompass everything from first crushes and first dates to the purpose of his existence. He struggles with the conflicting need to be part of a group, which means coasting in his best friend Lonnie's wake, and to define himself and understand his unique place in the world. Goldblatt neatly captures that transitional stage between childhood and adolescence, deftly examining the complex dynamics of friendships and skillfully portraying Julian's evolution toward self-understanding. When Julian ultimately reveals what occurred, he describes it with devastating honesty. Julian's acknowledgement of his part in the event and his decisive actions at the story's conclusion illuminate his growing maturity. Goldblatt's tale provides a thought-provoking exploration of bullying, personal integrity and self-acceptance.(Ages 10-14)

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

Title: **Being Me**

Author: **Lori Williams**

Title:

Author:

Title:

Author:

Title:

Author:

Title:

Author:

Title:

Author:

Document any potentially controversial content:

General mischief such as throwing rocks (pp.4-9) and using firecrackers (pp.32-36).

Some references to Nazi violence against Jewish people (pp. 80-82, 125).

Insults and bullying directed towards a learning disabled student throughout second half of novel.

Pp.142, 148 reference male anatomy in regards to a groin injury.

Some ethnic and racial stereotypes typical of the 1960s era present throughout.

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): 610L

Date Submitted to Department Chair: 5.7.2015

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