

Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher:	Overbeck/Boone/Shachter/Boden	School:	OLHS
Book Title:	Zeitoun	Genre:	non-fiction
Author:	David Eggers	Pages:	335
Publisher:	McSweeney's Books	Copyright:	2009

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 McSeeney's Books:

Winner of the Los Angeles Times Book Award for Current Interest

When Hurricane Katrina struck New Orleans, Abdulrahman Zeitoun, a prosperous Syrian-American and father of four, chose to stay through the storm to protect his house and contracting business. In the days after, he traveled the flooded streets in a secondhand canoe, passing on supplies and helping those he could. But, on September 6, 2005, Zeitoun abruptly disappeared. Eggers's riveting nonfiction book, three years in the making, explores Zeitoun's roots in Syria, his marriage to Kathy—an American who converted to Islam—and their children, and the surreal atmosphere (in New Orleans and the United States generally) in which what happened to Abdulrahman Zeitoun became possible. Like *What Is the What*, *Zeitoun* was written in close collaboration with its subjects and involved vast research—in this case, in the U.S., Spain, and Syria.

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)

Zeitoun serves as the outside reading book during 1st quarter that frontloads the work in CP English 12 during 2nd quarter. Second quarter first asks students to engage in close reading of texts that require students to identify and interpret the tension. In so doing students will then be able to engage in inquiry-based discussion that results in a range of new ideas. Ultimately students will be taught how to synthesize ideas from multiple texts around a common idea. This links to the OLSD curriculum map in Reading Process: "annotate a text" and "close-read in order to interpret increasingly challenging texts." It also links to Author's Voice and Method: "Critique the scope of ideas from multiple sources on the same topic, noting the authors' implicit and explicit philosophical assumptions and beliefs."

Zeitoun is a title commonly found on reading lists for in-coming college freshmen.

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

Booklist Review on Amazon.com:

Eggers burst onto the scene in 2000 with his hugely successful memoir, *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*. Unlike many memoirists, he has resisted the temptation to parcel out the unpublished parts of his life into yet more memoirs. Instead, in his most compelling works since his debut, he has told the stories of others. *What Is the What* (2006) explored, in novel form, the ordeals of Valentino Achak Deng, a Sudanese “lost boy,” and now Eggers chronicles, as nonfiction, the tribulations of Abdulrahman Zeitoun, a Syrian American painting contractor who decides to ride out Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans. Although his wife, Kathy, leaves town with their four children, Abdulrahman (known as Zeitoun because few locals can pronounce his first name) stays behind, hoping to protect their home, their job sites, and their rental properties. After the storm, he paddles the flooded streets in a canoe, rescuing stranded people, feeding trapped dogs, and marveling at the sometimes surreal beauty of the devastation. Was it God’s plan that he help others? he wonders. Then people in uniforms take him at gunpoint and incarcerate him. There are no charges, only the guards’ insistence that he is “al Qaeda” and “Taliban.” Zeitoun’s odyssey—23 days of grueling imprisonment, held incommunicado and deprived of all due process—is but one nightmare of many lived after Katrina. But it is exceptionally well told: here, as in *What Is the What*, Eggers employs a poetic, declarative style, shaping the narrative with subtlety and grace. More importantly, it is exceptionally well chosen. In the wake of disaster, we often cling to stories reassuring us that we respond to trials heroically. But Zeitoun reminds us that we are just as capable of responding to fear fearfully, forgetting the very things we claim to value most. Heartbreaking and haunting. --Keir Graff

Review #2

Various reviewers taken from inside book flap, reprinted on Amazon.com:

This is a beautiful book. Zeitoun is a poignant, haunting, ethereal story about New Orleans in peril. Eggers has bottled up the feeling of post- Katrina despair better than anyone else. This is a simple story with a lingering

radiance. My admiration for the humanist spirit of Eggers knows no bounds.”

— Douglas Brinkley, author of *The Great Deluge: Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans, and the Mississippi Gulf Coast*

“Zeitoun is an American epic. The post-Katrina trials of Abdulrahman Zeitoun would have baffled even Kafka’s Joseph K. Though Zeitoun’s story could have been a source of cynicism or despair, Dave Eggers’s clear and elegant prose manages to deftly capture many of the signature shortcomings of American life while holding onto the innate optimism and endless drive to more closely match our ideals that Zeitoun and his adopted land share. Juggling these contradictions, Eggers captures the puzzle of America.” — Billy Sothorn, author of *Down in New Orleans*

“Zeitoun is a gripping and amazing story that highlights so much about the tragedy of Katrina, post-9/11 life for Arabs and Muslims, and the beautiful nature of American multi-cultural society.”

— Yousef Munayyer, policy analyst, American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee

"Zeitoun is an instant American classic carved from fierce eloquence and a haunting moral sensibility. By wrestling with the demons of xenophobia and racial profiling that converged in the swirling vortex of Hurricane Katrina and post-9/11 America, Eggers lets loose the angels of wisdom and courage that hover over the lives of the beleaguered, but miraculously unbroken, Abdulrahman and Kathy Zeitoun. This is a major work full of fire and wit by one of our most important writers."
— Michael Eric Dyson, author of *Come Hell or High Water*

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

<u>Title:</u> Walden	<u>Author:</u> Henry David Thoreau
<u>Title:</u> Angela's Ashes	<u>Author:</u> Frank McCourt
<u>Title:</u> Black Boy	<u>Author:</u> Richard Wright
<u>Title:</u>	<u>Author:</u>
<u>Title:</u>	<u>Author:</u>
<u>Title:</u>	<u>Author:</u>

Document any potentially controversial content:

Violence: Broad (non-graphic) description of strip searching and violence (pepper spray/beating/rubber bullet use with prisoners.

Language: mild foul language is used by other inmates and/or guards, during Zeitoun's imprisonment.

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: 9/20/10

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