

Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher: Kristy Santangelo

School: Liberty High School

Book Title: *The Nickel Boys*

Genre: Fiction

Author: Colson Whitehead

Pages: 210

Publisher: Doubleday

Copyright: 2019

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.)

“When Elwood Curtis, a black boy growing up in 1960s Tallahassee, is unfairly sentenced to a juvenile reformatory called the Nickel Academy, he finds himself trapped in a grotesque chamber of horrors. Elwood’s only salvation is his friendship with fellow “delinquent” Turner, which deepens despite Turner’s conviction that Elwood is hopelessly naive, that the world is crooked, and that the only way to survive is to scheme and avoid trouble. As life at the Academy becomes ever more perilous, the tension between Elwood’s ideals and Turner’s skepticism leads to a decision whose repercussions will echo down the decades.

Based on the real story of a reform school that operated for 111 years and warped the lives of thousands of children, *The Nickel Boys* is a devastating, driven narrative that showcases a great American novelist writing at the height of his powers.”

Provide an instructional rationale for the use of this title, including specific reference to the OLSD curriculum blueprints and/or State standards.

The Nickel Boys will serve as a gateway for instruction and assessment pertaining to Reading Literature and the literary analysis of long fiction. Priority standards for this unit are listed below:

Priority Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.2

Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare

as well as other authors.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.5

Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

Include two professional review 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). Reviews should suggest an appropriate grade-level or grade-band.

Review #1

"Whitehead's magnetic characters exemplify stoicism and courage, and each **supremely crafted** scene smolders and flares with injustice and resistance, building to a staggering revelation. Inspired by an actual school, Whitehead's potently concentrated drama pinpoints the brutality and insidiousness of Jim Crow racism with compassion and protest. . . . **A scorching work.**" —Booklist, starred review

Review #2

"Were Whitehead's only aim to shine an unforgiving light on a redacted chapter of racial terrorism in the American chronicle, that would be achievement enough. What he is doing in his new novel, as in its immediate predecessor, is more challenging than that. . . . He applies a master storyteller's muscle. . . . The elasticity of time in *The Nickel Boys* feels so organic that only when you put the book down do you fully appreciate that its sweep encompasses much of the last century as well as this one. . . . **A writer like Whitehead**, who challenges the complacent assumption that we even fathom what happened in our past, **has rarely seemed more essential.**" —The New York Times Book Review

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

Title: *Native Son*

Author: Richard Wright

Title: *Beloved*

Author: Toni Morrison

Document any potentially controversial content:

The book contains foul language and depicts child abuse and violence.

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):

Suggested Professional Literacy 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

Signatures:

Teacher: _____ **Date:** _____

Department Head: _____ **Date:** _____

Building Administrator: _____ **Date:** _____

Curriculum Supervisor: _____ **Date:** _____