

## Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher: Alessandra Zahran (CP 9 Team)	School: Liberty High School
Book Title: <i>This Train is Being Held</i>	Genre: Realistic Fiction, YA
Author: Ismee Williams	Pages: 304
Publisher: Amulet & Abrams	Copyright: 2020

*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 private school student Isabelle Warren first meets Dominican-American Alex Rosario on the downtown 1 train, she remembers his green eyes and his gentlemanly behavior. He remembers her untroubled happiness, something he feels all rich kids must possess. That, and her long dancer legs. Over the course of multiple subway encounters spanning the next three years, Isabelle learns of Alex's struggle with his father, who is hell-bent on Alex being a contender for the major leagues, despite Alex's desire to go to college and become a poet. Alex learns about Isabelle's unstable mother, a woman with a prejudice against Latino men. But fate—and the 1 train—throw them together when Isabelle needs Alex most. Heartfelt and evocative, this romantic drama will appeal to readers of Jenny Han and Sarah Dessen. (Goodreads)

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

*This Train is Being Held* will serve as a supplemental text for instruction and assessment pertaining to Reading Literature and Writing (specifically, close reading). It will be included among a list of choice novels, and students will make selections based on prior research and conferring with their instructor.

Unit Title: Close Reading + Literary Analysis

1. How does my environment affect me?
2. What dictates the way I interact with my environment?
3. What parts of my identity are determined for me by members of society/my environment?

**Priority Standards:**

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.4](#)

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3](#)

Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the

course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.4](#)

Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1-3 above.)

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.9-10.3](#)

Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

**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 (Kirkus Review)**

Isa and Alex have a pretty typical meet-cute: Alex holds the door open for her on the subway so the train won't leave without her—which is good, because she has a very important dance audition to get to. Alex, meanwhile, has regular baseball practices not just with his team, but with his demanding father, who played for the Yankees for a year and a half before a drug addiction set him back. They represent two very different New Yorkers: Isa's well-off family is downsizing after her financier father lost his job and is also trying to keep her mother's and older brother's mental illnesses from tearing the family apart. Alex attends public school in Washington Heights and splits his time between his divorced parents; his mother works in a nursing home. What Alex's parents and friends don't know is that he's a poet. Soon he's writing poems for Isa and leaving them on the train car where at first they just keep happening to run into each other before they eventually meet on purpose, away from their parents and clashing friend groups. Blonde Isa is half Cuban and half white American; Alex is Dominican. Code-switching and bilingualism are realistically placed in dialogue throughout the text, without italics to disrupt the reader's flow. Anxieties over mental health, socio-economics, and police and gang violence effectively complicate and deepen the narrative.

Heartfelt and meaty. (*Realistic fiction. 13-18*)

**Review #2 (Publisher's Weekly)**

In a charming novel by Williams (*Water in May*), a ballet dancer and a rising baseball star find common ground and romance via the New York City subway. Upper East Sider Isa, who attends a private school, pursues ballet despite the disapproval of her tempestuous Cuban mother, a perpetual board member who's struggling with her husband's layoff. Dominican Alex, who attends school in Washington Heights and travels between his divorced parents, would rather write poetry than play ball, but his former-Yankee father is pushing him to go professional. Both teens are intensely driven, and both have stormy home lives they'd rather keep private. Yet despite their avowals that neither has time for a relationship, their random subway encounters, which begin when Alex holds the door for Isa, evolve into planned time together. When Isa's stability at home begins to dissolve, her attempts to keep up a strong front drive a wedge between them until they find themselves thrown together in a crisis. Demanding parents, experiences of racism, mental-health challenges, gang violence, and the fallout of a lost job blend seamlessly with moments of poetry to create a realistic and complex romance. Ages 13–up. (*Feb.*)

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

Title: *A Million Junes*

Author: Emily Henry

Title: *Pride*

Author: Ibi Zoboi

Title: *A Very Large Expanse of Sea*

Author: Tahereh Mafi

**Document any potentially controversial content:**

There is periodic language used (cursing). There is some implication of drinking, exploration of gang violence and racial profiling & prejudice. There is also exploration of the impact & stigma of mental illness.

**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: Alessandra Zahran, Sarah McCarty, Chris Talbert, Victoria Lewis    Date: 11/9/2020**

**Department Head:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Building Administrator:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Curriculum Supervisor:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_