

## Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher: OLHS English Department

School: Liberty High School

Book Title: *Punching the Air*

Genre: Fiction

Author: Ibi Zoboi

Pages: 400

Publisher: Balzer + Bray

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.)

**From award-winning, bestselling author Ibi Zoboi and prison reform activist Yusef Salaam of the Exonerated Five comes a powerful YA novel in verse about a boy who is wrongfully incarcerated. Perfect for fans of Jason Reynolds, Walter Dean Myers, and Elizabeth Acevedo.**

*The story that I thought*

*was my life*

*didn't start on the day*

*I was born*

Amal Shahid has always been an artist and a poet. But even in a diverse art school, he's seen as disruptive and unmotivated by a biased system. Then one fateful night, an altercation in a gentrifying neighborhood escalates into tragedy. "Boys just being boys" turns out to be true only when those boys are white.

*The story that I think*

*will be my life*

*starts today*

Suddenly, at just sixteen years old, Amal's bright future is upended: he is convicted of a crime he didn't commit and sent to prison. Despair and rage almost sink him until he turns to the refuge of his words, his art. This never should have been his story. But can he change it?

With spellbinding lyricism, award-winning author Ibi Zoboi and prison reform activist Yusef Salaam tell a moving and deeply profound story about how one boy is able to maintain his humanity and fight for the truth, in a system designed to strip him of both.

(Taken from the back cover of *Punching the Air*)

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

*Punching the Air* will serve as a whole class text. This text will provide the students with the opportunity to analyze what the text says explicitly and implicitly through analysis and close reading skills.

Essential Questions: How do authors use specific language and details to create meaning? How do systems shape and/or impact the world? What is the role of the individual within systems? How do authors seek to create change through a text?

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

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.11-12.3

Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

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.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.6

Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).

**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

"Gr 8 Up-Sixteen-year-old Amal is tried and convicted of an act of violence against a white boy. While there is a sense that he might not have done what he was accused of doing, it is unimportant whether this is the case for the book to work. Through Amal's first-person verse narration, readers learn about his aspirations as a poet and artist, as well as his experience entering the prison system as a young Black man. It is clear that Amal has had a complex relationship with his education, particularly with his art teacher, who clearly saw his talent but also did not work very hard to support Amal's burgeoning interest, and did a bad job of being a character witness at his trial. The authors do an excellent job of showing how the prison experience can dehumanize young men and how their inherent talents can be overshadowed by their feelings of powerlessness and rage. Coauthored by Zoboi and Salaam, who is one of the Exonerated Five and, as such, has firsthand experience of serving an unfair and unjust prison sentence, this book is not a memoir. Instead, it can be seen as an important statement about widespread experiences and the prison industrial complex, rather than the depiction of a single, notable case. What is clear is that this is not an isolated story. VERDICT This book will be Walter Dean Myers's Monster for a new generation of teens. An important, powerful, and beautiful novel that should be an essential purchase for any library that serves teens."

-School Library Journal

Review #2

"Zoboi and Salaam together craft a powerful indictment of institutional racism and mass incarceration through the imagined experience of Amal, a Black, Muslim 16-year-old facing imprisonment."

-Publishers Weekly

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

Title: *The Brimstone Journals*

Author: Ron Koertge

Title: *The House on Mango Street*

Author: Sandra Cisneros

**Document any potentially controversial content:**

Adult content, abuse and violence, language, use of racial slurs.

**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):**

*R R R R*

**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: 9.30.21

Department Head:  Date: 9.30.21

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

Curriculum Supervisor:  Date: 10/1/21