

Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher: Angela Tremmel, Kristy Santangelo

School: Liberty High School

Book Title: *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* Genre: Realistic Fiction, LGBTQ+

Author: Benjamin Alire Sáenz

Pages: 358

Publisher: Simon & Schuster

Copyright: 2012

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.)

“ ‘This Printz Honor Book is a “tender, honest exploration of identity” (*Publishers Weekly*) that distills lyrical truths about family and friendship.’

Aristotle is an angry teen with a brother in prison. Dante is a know-it-all who has an unusual way of looking at the world. When the two meet at the swimming pool, they seem to have nothing in common. But as the loners start spending time together, they discover that they share a special friendship—the kind that changes lives and lasts a lifetime. And it is through this friendship that Ari and Dante will learn the most important truths about themselves and the kind of people they want to be.” (Simon & Schuster)

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

Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe will serve as a supplemental text for instruction and assessment pertaining to Reading Literature and Writing (specifically, narrative writing). It will be included among a list of choice novels, and students will make selections based on prior research and conferring with their instructor. Priority standards for this unit are listed below:

Unit Title: Realistic Fiction and Narrative

Essential Questions: What is my story? What makes it unique? In what ways can I tell it? Who do I need/want to listen?

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.9-10.3

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

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

“A boring summer stretches ahead of Ari, who at 15 feels hemmed in by a life filled with rules and family secrets.

He doesn't know why his older brother is in prison, since his parents and adult sisters refuse to talk about it. His father also keeps his experience in Vietnam locked up inside. On a whim, Ari heads to the town swimming pool, where a boy he's never met offers to teach him to swim. Ari, a loner who's good in a fight, is caught off guard by the self-assured, artistic Dante. The two develop an easy friendship, ribbing each other about who is more Mexican, discussing life's big questions, and wondering when they'll be old enough to take on the world. An accident near the end of summer complicates their friendship while bringing their families closer. Sáenz's interplay of poetic and ordinary speech beautifully captures this transitional time: " 'That's a very Dante question,' I said. 'That's a very Ari answer,' he said.... For a few minutes I wished that Dante and I lived in the universe of boys instead of the universe of almost-men." Plot elements come together at the midpoint as Ari, adding up the parts of his life, begins to define himself.

Meticulous pacing and finely nuanced characters underpin the author's gift for affecting prose that illuminates the struggles within relationships. (*Fiction. 14 & up*)” (Kirkus)

Review #2

“Fifteen-year-old Aristotle (Ari) has always felt lonely and distant from people until he meets Dante, a boy from another school who teaches him how to swim. As trust grows between the boys and they become friends (a first for Ari). Ari's world opens up while they discuss life, art, literature, and their Mexican-American roots. Additionally, the influence of Dante's warm, open family (they even have a “no secrets” rule) is shaping Ari's relationship with his parents, particularly in regard to a family secret; Ari has an older brother in prison, who no one ever mentions. In a poetic coming-of-age story written in

concise first-person narrative, Sáenz (Sammy and Juliana in Hollywood) crystallizes significant turning points in the boys' relationship, especially as Ari comes to understand that Dante's feelings for him extend beyond friendship. The story swells to a dramatic climax as Ari's loyalties are tested, and he confronts his most deeply buried fears and desires. It's a tender, honest exploration of identity and sexuality, and a passionate reminder that love—whether romantic or familial—should be open, free, and without shame. Ages 12–up. (Feb.)" (Publishers Weekly)

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

Title: *Darius the Great is Not Ok*

Author: Adib Khorram

Title: *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*

Author: Stephen Chbosky

Title: *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* Author: Sherman Alexie

Document any potentially controversial content:

"Parents need to know that 2013 Printz Honor Book *Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe* is an introspective coming-of-age story about two Mexican-American boys growing up in El Paso, Texas, in 1987. It brings up questions of identity, particularly in terms of sexuality and sexual orientation. Each boy experiments with kissing a girl; one also does so with a boy. They also try weed and drink beer. Dante gets jumped by a group of boys, and Ari (short for Aristotle) punches a boy, breaking his nose. And Ari tries out a few curse words to see how his mom reacts. But the book's real focus is friendship and how the perspective and love of a good friend can make you look at yourself differently and motivate you to change for the better." (Common Sense Media)

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: Angela Tremmel, Kristy Santangelo

Date: 10/4/2019



Department Head: Hannah Rust, Cathie Boone

Date: 10/4/2019



Building Administrator: _____

Date: _____

Curriculum Supervisor: 

Date: 10/4/2021