

Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher: OLHS English Department

School: Liberty High School

Book Title: *Darius the Great is Not Okay*

Genre: Young Adult

Author: Adib Khorram

Publisher: Penguin Youth Publisher

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Book Summary and Summary Citation: (suggested resources include book flap summaries, review summaries from publisher, book vendors, etc.)

Darius doesn't think he'll ever be enough, in America or in Iran.

Darius Kellner speaks better Klingon than Farsi, and he knows more about Hobbit social cues than Persian ones. He's a Fractional Persian—half, his mom's side—and his first-ever trip to Iran is about to change his life.

Darius has never really fit in at home in Portland, and he just knows things are going to be the same in Iran. His clinical depression doesn't exactly help matters, and trying to explain his medication to his grandparents only makes things harder. Then Darius meets Sohrab, the boy next door, and everything changes. Sohrab introduces Darius to all of his favorite things—mint syrup and the soccer field and a secret rooftop overlooking the city's skyline. He gets Darius an Iranian National Football Team jersey that makes him feel like a True Persian for the first time. And he understands that sometimes, friends don't have to talk. Sohrab calls him Darioush--the original Persian version of his name—and Darius has never felt more like himself than he does now that he's Darioush to Sohrab. (Penguin Random House Publishing)

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

The text will be used as a model for close reading and narrative writing.

Reading:

- **RL.9-10.2:** Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development of the text, including how it emerges and shaped and refined by specific details; objectively summarize a text
- **RL.9-10.3:** Analyze how complex characters (e.g. those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, advance the plot, and develop theme
- **RL.9-10.6:** Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.

Writing:

- **W.9-10.3:** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences
- **W.9-10.3b:** Engage/orient the reader by setting out a problem; establish points of view; introduce narrator and characters; create a smooth progression/sequence of events

- **W.9-10.3c:** Use a variety of events to sequence events so that they build on one another to create a coherent whole
- **W.9-10.3d:** Use precise words and phrases, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters
- **W.9-10.3e:** Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects what is experienced, observed, or resolved over the course of the narrative

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:

Darius Kellner suffers from depression, bullying by high school jocks, and a father who seems to always be disappointed in him.

When Darius’ grandfather becomes terminally ill, Darius, along with his parents and younger sister, travels to Iran for the first time in his life. Iranian on his mother’s side and white American on his father’s side, Darius never quite fits in. He’s mocked for his name and nerdy interests at Chapel Hill High School in Portland, Oregon, and doesn’t speak enough Farsi to communicate with his Iranian relatives either. When he arrives in Iran, learning to play the Persian card game Rook, socializing, and celebrating Nowruz with a family he had never properly met before is all overwhelming and leaves Darius wondering if he’ll ever truly belong anywhere. But all that changes when Darius meets Sohrab, a Bahá’í boy, in Yazd. Sohrab teaches Darius what friendship is really about: loyalty, honesty, and someone who has your back in a football (soccer) match. For the first time in a long time, Darius learns to love himself no matter what external forces attempt to squash his confidence. Khorram’s debut novel is filled with insight into the lives of teens, weaving together the reality of living with mental illness while also dealing with identity and immigration politics.

This tear-jerker will leave readers wanting to follow the next chapter in Darius’ life. (*Fiction. 12-adult*)

Review #2 Publisher’s Weekly

First-time author Khorram’s coming-of-age novel brings to life the sights, sounds, smells, and tastes of a culture steeped in tradition. After learning that her Iranian father is ailing, high school sophomore Darius’s mother decides to take the family to visit her father and relatives in Iran. Suffering from chronic depression and bullied at school in America, Darius isn’t sure how he’ll fare in a country he’s never seen. It doesn’t take him long to adjust as people welcome him with open arms, however, especially after he meets Sohrab, his grandparents’ teenaged neighbor, who invites him to play soccer and quickly becomes Darius’s first real friend ever. While the book doesn’t sugarcoat problems in the country (unjust imprisonment and an outdated view of mental illness are mentioned), it mainly stays focused on the positive—Iran’s impressive landscape and mouthwatering food, the warmth of its people—as it shows how a boy who feels like an outcast at home

finds himself and true friendship overseas. Ages 12–up. Agent: Molly O’Neill, Waxman Leavell. (Aug.)

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

- *The Catcher in the Rye* by J.D. Salinger
- *The Secret Life of Bees* by Sue Monk Kidd

Document any potentially controversial content:

- Suggestive Language
- Discussion of mental health issues (depression, specifically)
- Descriptions of bullying
- References to male anatomy

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: Alexandria Zahra Date: 9/13/2021

Department Head: [Signature] Date: 9/13/21

Building Administrator: _____ Date: 9/

Curriculum Supervisor: [Signature] Date: 10/4/21