



OLENTANGY SCHOOLS LITERATURE SELECTION REVIEW FORM

LOCATION

Building(s): Shanahan

Classes/Grade Level(s): ELA 6-8

ABOUT THE BOOK

Selection Title/Author: Ground Zero by Alan Gratz

Genre: Historical Fiction

Lexile Reading Level: 690L

Total number of pages: 336

Book Summary (abbreviated, bulleted list or link to a book summary)

A survival story told through the alternating perspective of a 9 year old boy who goes to work with his dad on 9/11 and must escape the World Trade Center towers and an Afghani girl trying to live through a Taliban and US military battle in her village.

Potentially Objectionable Content (list all categories and at least one example, referenced with a page or chapter number)

The first chapter explains the main character has to go to work at the World Trade Center with his dad because he got suspended for punching another student. It is also revealed his mom died from cancer.

Since the book is set on 9/11, there are obviously numerous descriptions of the death and loss that occurred that day. For example, the "Last Call" chapter shows the main character talking on the phone with his dad when he knows he will die because he can't get out of the tower, a woman is severely burned by jet fuel, people die in a falling elevator, and the main character sees people who have jumped falling past the windows.

The chapters told from Reshmina's perspective contain war violence, terrorism, and jihad. For example, chapter 2 features descriptions of the Taliban cutting off the feet and hands of thieves and gun violence.

The words "hell" and "damn" are used a few



	<p>times.</p> <p>The “Poppies” chapter from Reshmina describes how the Taliban farms poppies not for the flowers but for the opium that can be made from them. It explains that opium is used to make illegal drugs.</p> <p>The “Ground Zero” and “9/11” chapters show the main character being critical of the US military involvement in Afghanistan after her village is blown up and she reveals her sister was killed by a US drone.</p>
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Book Reviews (2-3 links) Note: teacher is not responsible for broken links

From Common Sense Media: Parents need to know that *Ground Zero*, by Alan Gratz (*Refugee*), is told in alternating chapters by 9-year-old American Brandon Cruz and 11-year-old Reshmina, who lives in rural Afghanistan. Brandon’s story begins on the morning of September 11, 2000. He’s come to work with his father, who’s a kitchen manager on 107th floor of the North Tower of the World Trade Center. Reshmina begins her story on September 11, 2019, as her village becomes a deadly battleground between Taliban and American forces. For both, it’s a day filled with violence. Brandon sees people burned alive, die in falling elevators, jump from high floors, and killed by the collapse of the Towers. In Afghanistan, Reshmina vividly describes the firefight between the Taliban and American soldiers and the destruction that comes to her village. But amid all this death and destruction there’s also great courage and bravery, as strangers help one another escape the Towers and Reshmina’s family risks their lives to give shelter to a wounded American soldier.

From School Library Journal: Gr 4-7 Gratz writes a searing indictment of America’s involvement in Afghanistan, told through two gripping parallel narratives. On September 11, 2001, nine-year-old Brandon accompanies his father to his job at New York City’s World Trade Center. The two are separated during the ensuing terrorist attack, and, with help from others, Brandon survives. Eighteen years later, 11-year-old Reshmina, living in a remote Afghan village, sees her country and family devastated by the Taliban and the U.S. military, despite both armies’ claims of protection. Brandon’s and Reshmina’s lives intertwine in a fateful encounter that challenges America’s policies as well as its presence in Afghanistan, and puts a human face on the resulting suffering. Vivid details immerse readers in the two disparate settings. The plot starts at a heart-pounding pace and never relents: Brandon and Reshmina’s lives are in danger at every turn. In a superbly structured plot, the two protagonists experience similar perils, and both respond with determination and hope. Gratz provides readers with a brief history of Afghanistan and its occupation by foreign powers. Speaking through Reshmina, he concludes “the United States had surely destroyed Afghanistan.” The book includes extensive back matter, making it an excellent choice for classroom discussion. VERDICT A contemporary history lesson with the uplifting message that humanity’s survival depends on us working for, not against, one another. A must-have.



ABOUT THE CLASS

Rationale for the Literature Selection (in addition to standards): (To be completed by the teacher or team)

Students will read a book of their choosing from 5 options and will participate in book clubs with other students reading the same books. They will ask questions, summarize, and analyze elements of literature as they discuss their books together.

The Ohio Department of Education ELA Standards (list priority standards *only* and abbreviations of the main ideas of the priority standards) [Link to Ohio's ELA Standards](#)

1. RL.6.1 Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
2. RL.6.2 Analyze literary text development.

ALTERNATIVE TEXTS

What alternative texts would allow students to meet the same objectives? (Title/author)

1. Projekt 1065 by Alan Gratz
2. Restart by Gordon Korman

SIGNATURES (embedded jpegs of authentic signatures are fine OR download/print form and obtain traditional signatures)

Teacher: Valerie Biggum Date: 3/9/22
Department Chair: Valerie Biggum Date: 3/9/22
Building Principal: C Zeller Date: 3-14-22
District Curriculum Administrator: [Signature] Date: 3/14/22