



OLENTANGY SCHOOLS LITERATURE SELECTION REVIEW FORM

LOCATION

Building(s): OLMS

Classes/Grade Level(s): 8th Grade

ABOUT THE BOOK

Selection Title/Author: Long Way Down Jason Reynolds

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Lexile Reading Level: 720

Total number of pages:

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

A cannon. A strap.

A piece. A biscuit.

A burner. A heater.

A chopper. A gat.

A hammer

A tool

for RULE

Or, you can call it a gun. That's what fifteen-year-old Will has shoved in the back waistband of his jeans. See, his brother Shawn was just murdered. And Will knows the rules. No crying. No snitching.

Revenge. That's where Will's now heading, with that gun shoved in the back waistband of his jeans, the gun that was his brother's gun. He gets on the elevator, seventh floor, stoked. He knows who he's after. Or does he?

As the elevator stops on the sixth floor, on comes Buck. Buck, Will finds out, is who gave Shawn the gun before Will took the gun. Buck tells Will to check that the gun is even loaded. And that's when Will sees that one bullet is missing. And the only one who could have fired Shawn's gun was Shawn. Huh. Will didn't know that Shawn had ever

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

Violence: multiple instances of gun violence, shootings and death (page 3)

Language: one time use of S**t, f***ers (PAGE 191)

Drinking or drug use: Some alcohol use/abuse by adults. Adults and teens (who are ghosts) smoke cigarettes. Will's Uncle Mark sold drugs on the corner.(page 227)

Sex, violence, romance: There are mild discussions of liking girls (page 119)



actually USED his gun. Bigger huh. BUCK IS DEAD. But Buck's in the elevator?

Just as Will's trying to think this through, the door to the next floor opens. A teenage girl gets on, waves away the smoke from Dead Buck's cigarette. Will doesn't know her, but she knew him. Knew. When they were eight. And stray bullets had cut through the playground, and Will had tried to cover her, but she was hit anyway, and so what she wants to know, on that fifth floor elevator stop, is, what if Will, Will with the gun shoved in the back waistband of his jeans, MISSES.

And so it goes, the whole long way down, as the elevator stops on each floor, and at each stop someone connected to his brother gets on to give Will a piece to a bigger story than the one he thinks he knows. A story that might never know an END...if Will gets off that elevator.

Told in short, fierce staccato narrative verse, *Long Way Down* is a fast and furious, dazzlingly brilliant look at teenage gun violence, as could only be told by Jason Reynolds.

Book Reviews (1-2 link(s)) Note: teacher is not responsible for broken links

Review #1

★ 07/31/2017

Will, 15, is following his neighborhood's well-established rules—don't cry, don't snitch, but do get revenge "if someone you love/ gets killed"—when he leaves his apartment, intent on killing whoever murdered his older brother, Shawn. He's emboldened by the gun tucked into his waistband: "I put my hand behind my back/ felt the imprint/ of the piece, like/ another piece/ of me/ an extra vertebra,/ some more/ backbone." As Will makes his way to the ground floor of his building, the elevator stops to accept passengers, each an important figure from his past, all victims of gun violence. Are these ghosts? Or is it Will's subconscious at work, forcing him to think about what he intends to do and what it will accomplish? The story unfolds in the time it takes for the elevator to descend, and it ends with a two-word question that hits like a punch to the gut. Written entirely in spare verse, this is a tour de force from a writer who continues to demonstrate his skill as an exceptionally perceptive chronicler of



what it means to be a black teen in America. Ages 12–up. Agent: Elena Giovinazzo, Pippin Properties. (Oct.)

Publishers Weekly

Though the African-American teen has never held one, Will leaves his apartment with his brother's gun tucked in his waistband. As he travels down on the elevator, the door opens on certain floors, and Will is confronted with a different figure from his past, each a victim of gun violence, each important in his life. They also force Will to face the questions he has about his plan. As each "ghost" speaks, Will realizes how much of his own story has been unknown to him and how intricately woven they are. Told in free-verse poems, this is a raw, powerful, and emotional depiction of urban violence. The structure of the novel heightens the tension, as each stop of the elevator brings a new challenge until the narrative arrives at its taut, ambiguous ending. There is considerable symbolism, including the 15 bullets in the gun and the way the elevator rules parallel street rules. Reynolds masterfully weaves in textured glimpses of the supporting characters. Throughout, readers get a vivid picture of Will and the people in his life, all trying to cope with the circumstances of their environment while expressing the love, uncertainty, and hope that all humans share.

This astonishing book will generate much needed discussion. (*Verse fiction. 12-adult*)
Kirkus Review

ABOUT THE CLASS

Rationale for the Literature Selection (in addition to standards): (To be completed by the teacher or team) Students will examine concepts pertaining to perspective and identity. Our OLSD ELA Curriculum Map wants students to grapple with and consider multiple perspectives. Our main character is trying to navigate a situation with conflicting values. Students will engage in collaborative discussions and support analysis of text with strong and relevant evidence. Students will examine word choice and other literary elements.

R.L. 8.1, 8.4

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.R.L. 8.1

2. R.L. 8.4

ALTERNATIVE TEXTS



What alternative texts would allow students to meet the same objectives? (1-2 texts, title/author; Note: these texts must also have lit. reviews forms associated with their selection)

1. All the Broken Pieces by Ann E. Burg

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

Teacher: Nath D Date: 9/24/2024
ELA Department Chair: Alay Buschhoff Date: 9/24/2024
Building Principal: B. B. B. Date: 7-24-24
District Curriculum Administrator: Clare Date: 10-2-24
John