

English 7: 2018-2019 Literature and Movie Rationales

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## ***The Outsiders* by S.E. Hinton (1967) & *The Outsiders* directed by Francis Ford Coppola (1983)**

The English Department has carefully evaluated *The Outsiders* as a whole and deemed it worthy for the 7th grade English curriculum.

### **PLOT SUMMARY**

*The Outsiders* tells the story of two rival gangs struggling to live in a society that encourages their polarization through social divides. As an orphan, Ponyboy struggles with his sense of identity and what constitutes a family. One fateful evening, during a clash between the two gangs, a murder occurs which permanently changes the trajectory of each character's life. The movie version follows the novel's plot closely.

### **RATIONALE AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

Students will learn to identify cultural and social issues found in the novel and relate those issues to their own experiences and modern-day society; some of these issues include 1960s American pop culture, stereotyping, identity, and teenage social issues then and now. The literary learning objectives include recognition of character development as an important part of plot development, as well as the different types of conflict and how that impacts the story. Students will also practice identifying plot development, i.e.: exposition, rising action, climax, falling action and resolution. In addition to reading the novel by S. E. Hinton, students will view the film version: *The Outsiders*, directed by Francis Ford Coppola (1983). The purpose of viewing the film is for students to compare the novel to the visual representation, examining the use of lighting, stage direction, dialogue, costume, music, and actor choice and its effectiveness in conveying the story.

### **COMMON CORE STANDARDS**

#### **Reading Standards for Literature:**

- Independently and proficiently read grade-appropriate and increasingly complex literature from a variety of genres
- Analyze how key details build the central idea or theme of a text
- Cite textual evidence to support analysis and inferences
- Compare and contrast how texts from different genres address similar themes or topics
- Analyze the interaction of literary elements, such as setting, characters, plot, theme, etc. to consider the impact one element might have on another
- Determine the central idea or theme of a text as well as write an objective summary
- Analyze intentional author choice by comparing and contrasting characters, points of view, structures, mediums and citing evidence to support analysis
- Compare and contrast a written form of text to an audio, visual, or staged version of the text
- Determining and analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone

#### **Reading Standards for Informational:**

- Analyze the interaction between/among individuals, events, and ideas presented in a variety of informational texts
- Analyze and evaluate how different authors present the same subject/topic through varying mediums

#### **Writing Standards:**

- Develop and produce clear and coherent writing for a variety of tasks, purposes, and audiences using argumentative, informational, and narrative writing types
- Develop arguments supported with reasoning and evidence gathered from multiple credible print and digital resources
- Begin to acknowledge opposing viewpoints in writing

- Routinely plan, draft, revise and edit writing tasks

### **Speaking and Listening Standards:**

- Collaboratively discuss and analyze a variety of subjects
- Develop and practice respectful communication skills in order to clarify, extend, and challenge presented information
- Present arguments and information, incorporating multimedia and other visual/audio elements as appropriate to meet the needs of the audience and purpose

### **Language Standards:**

- Demonstrate mastery of grade level conventions (grammar, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling)
- Choose among simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentence structures to signal differing relationships among ideas
- Apply various strategies to determine the meaning of unknown words, phrases, and figurative language

## **ADDRESSING SENSITIVE SUBJECTS**

Possible sensitive topics contained in *The Outsiders*: gang violence, death, and mild language.

Throughout the study of the novel and the film, students will examine the culture of the time period and discuss how it contributed to the choices made and the subsequent consequences. Students will also examine contemporary social issues and discuss how these social issues change society. Students will examine any social issues that connect with their own lives and will be encouraged to talk through solutions, and if applicable, apply those solutions to their own lives or local organizations. Through these studies, students will come to understand that violence is not used for shock or gratuitousness in the novel or the movie.

In the classroom, sensitive topics will be dealt with in a mature fashion, toward an understanding of why this material is included in the novel. The English department feels that the literary merit of this novel more than compensates for the inclusion of this sensitive subject matter. The student is encouraged to feel comfortable expressing his/her beliefs and views openly within the classroom environment. If the student is uncomfortable at any time, the student should meet with the teacher to discuss his/her concerns.

## ***The Call of the Wild* by Jack London (1903) & *The Call of the Wild* Graphic Novel adapted by Lloyd S. Wagner (2010)**

The English Department has carefully evaluated *The Call of the Wild* as a whole and deemed it worthy for the 7th grade English curriculum.

### **PLOT SUMMARY**

*The Call of the Wild*, set during the 19th century Klondike Gold Rush, is told from the perspective of Buck, a dog who is stolen from a domesticated life and forced into the wild and volatile life of an Alaskan sled dog. The story tells of Buck's journey as he becomes the dog he never knew he could be—strong, respected, and primitive--as he ventures through the Gold Rush and encounters numerous people throughout. Jack London's classic novel touches on the themes of identity, survival, friendship and the inherent laws of the wild.

### **RATIONALE AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

Through the reading and study of this novel, students will discuss the themes addressed above. They will analyze characters and note how their identities change throughout the novel. Students will come to understand how the characters are affected and, to some extent, created by the harsh environment in which most of the novel occurs. Students will also spend a good deal of time analyzing the setting of the novel and evaluating how the setting of their town (Flagstaff) was similar to and different from the Alaskan frontier during the time period in which the novel was set. Students will address and respond to the novel and its themes through diverse written assignments. Additionally, students will use the novel for the purpose of studying Jack London's writing style and the expanse of high-level vocabulary found within his writing.

Additionally to reading the novel by Jack London, students will also read the graphic genre of this novel, *The Call of the Wild: The Graphic Novel* adapted by Lloyd S. Wagner. The purpose will be to compare the novel to an illustrated form in order to make contrasts between the language style and visual representations. Students will explore how texts can be represented in other media forms, including comics.

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#### **Reading Standards for Informational:**

- Analyze the interaction between/among individuals, events, and ideas presented in a variety of informational texts
- Cite appropriate textual evidence to support inference drawn from informational texts, as well as writing effective objective summaries of the text
- Analyze claims by evaluating the supporting reasoning and evidence presented in a text

- Analyze and evaluate how different authors present the same subject/topic through varying mediums

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- Apply various strategies to determine the meaning of unknown words, phrases, and figurative language

### **ADDRESSING SENSITIVE SUBJECTS**

Possible sensitive topics contained in *The Call of the Wild*: depictions of animal cruelty, fighting between animal characters, and mild language.

Students will discuss how the plot and character development are altered by the inclusion of this material. Students will also learn about the real-life setting of the Alaskan frontier and in doing so will come to conclusions about the intrinsic wild and violent nature of the setting, therefore coming to understand that the violent scenes from the novel are not included gratuitously.

In the classroom, sensitive topics will be dealt with in a mature fashion, toward an understanding of why this material is included in the novel. The English department feels that the literary merit of this novel more than compensates for the inclusion of this sensitive subject matter. The student is encouraged to feel comfortable expressing his/her beliefs and views openly within the classroom environment. If the student is uncomfortable at any time, the student should meet with the teacher to discuss his/her concerns.

## ***White Fang* directed by Randal Kleiser (1991)**

The English Department has carefully evaluated *White Fang* as a whole and deemed it worthy for the 7th grade English curriculum.

### **PLOT SUMMARY**

In gripping detail, London bares the savage realities of the battle for survival among all species in a harsh, unyielding environment. *White Fang* is part wolf, part dog, a ferocious and magnificent creature through whose experiences we see and feel essential rhythms and patterns of life in the animal kingdom and among mankind as well. It is, above all, a novel that keenly observes the extraordinary working of one of nature's greatest gifts to its creatures: the power to adapt. Focusing on this wondrous process, London created in *White Fang* a classic adventure story as fresh and appealing for today's audiences as for those who made him among the best-selling novelists of his day.

### **RATIONALE AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

Students will watch this film for multiple purposes. The first is to compare the film version to the novel, and students will compose a formal essay discussing the similarities and differences, addressing the varying characterization, settings, and conflicts. Students will also have the opportunity to compare this film to the themes and plot of *The Call of the Wild* and address similarities and differences.

### **COMMON CORE STANDARDS**

#### **Reading Standards for Literature:**

- Analyze how key details build the central idea or theme of a text
- Cite textual evidence to support analysis and inferences
- Analyze the interaction of literary elements, such as setting, characters, plot, theme, etc. to consider the impact one element might have on another
- Analyze intentional author choice by comparing and contrasting characters, points of view, structures, mediums and citing evidence to support analysis
- Compare and contrast a written form of text to an audio, visual, or staged version of the text

#### **Reading Standards for Informational:**

- Analyze the interaction between/among individuals, events, and ideas presented in a variety of informational texts
- Cite appropriate textual evidence to support inference drawn from informational texts, as well as writing effective objective summaries of the text
- Analyze claims by evaluating the supporting reasoning and evidence presented in a text
- Analyze and evaluate how different authors present the same subject/topic through varying mediums

#### **Writing Standards:**

- Develop and produce clear and coherent writing for a variety of tasks, purposes, and audiences using argumentative, informational, and narrative writing types
- Develop arguments supported with reasoning and evidence gathered from multiple credible print and digital resources
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- Routinely plan, draft, revise and edit writing tasks

#### **Speaking and Listening Standards:**

- Collaboratively discuss and analyze a variety of subjects

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**Language Standards:**

- Demonstrate mastery of grade level conventions (grammar, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling)
- Choose among simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentence structures to signal differing relationships among ideas
- Apply various strategies to determine the meaning of unknown words, phrases, and figurative language

**ADDRESSING SENSITIVE SUBJECTS**

Possible sensitive topics contained in *White Fang*: depictions of animal cruelty, fighting between animal characters, and mild language.

Students will discuss how the plot and character development are altered by the inclusion of this material. Students will also learn about the real-life setting of the Alaskan frontier and in doing so will come to conclusions about the intrinsic wild and violent nature of the setting, therefore coming to understand that the violent scenes from the novel are not included gratuitously.

In the classroom, sensitive topics will be dealt with in a mature fashion, toward an understanding of why this material is included in the novel. The English department feels that the literary merit of this novel more than compensates for the inclusion of this sensitive subject matter. The student is encouraged to feel comfortable expressing his/her beliefs and views openly within the classroom environment. If the student is uncomfortable at any time, the student should meet with the teacher to discuss his/her concerns.

## ***The Pearl* by John Steinbeck (1945)**

The English Department has carefully evaluated *The Pearl* as a whole and deemed it worthy for the 7th grade English curriculum.

### **PLOT SUMMARY**

John Steinbeck's *The Pearl* is a retelling of a Mexican folktale about the misconceptions of wealth and poverty. When Kino discovers the pearl, he mistakenly believes that the wealth he will accumulate will solve all of his problems. Steinbeck pushes the reader to identify symbols and their meanings, allowing the student to examine the many different layers of a text.

### **RATIONALE AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

Students will study symbolism and will discover the symbols presented and how they help the reader beyond the surface of the story. They will discover the effectiveness of the parable in conveying great truths with simplicity. Students will also compare the genre of parable with traditional folktales, fairy tales, and myths. Students will have the opportunity to read many example texts in order to build a collection of their own.

### **COMMON CORE STANDARDS**

#### **Reading Standards for Literature:**

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- Cite textual evidence to support analysis and inferences
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#### **Speaking and Listening Standards:**

- Collaboratively discuss and analyze a variety of subjects

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**ADDRESSING SENSITIVE SUBJECTS**

Possible sensitive topics contained in *The Pearl*: violence.

Students will discuss how the plot and character development are altered by the inclusion of this material. Students will also learn about the real-life settings of colonial Mexico and in doing so will come to conclusions about the sometimes violent nature of the setting, therefore coming to understand that the violent scenes from the novel are not included gratuitously.

In the classroom, sensitive topics will be dealt with in a mature fashion, toward an understanding of why this material is included in the novel. The English department feels that the literary merit of this novel more than compensates for the inclusion of this sensitive subject matter. The student is encouraged to feel comfortable expressing his/her beliefs and views openly within the classroom environment. If the student is uncomfortable at any time, the student should meet with the teacher to discuss his/her concerns.

## ***The Lightning Thief* (2006) & *The Lightning Thief* Graphic Novel (2010) by Rick Riordan**

The English Department has carefully evaluated *The Lightning Thief* as a whole and deemed it worthy for the 7th grade English curriculum.

### **PLOT SUMMARY**

After getting expelled from yet another school for yet another clash with mythological monsters only he can see, twelve-year-old Percy Jackson is taken to Camp Half-Blood, where he finally learns the truth about his unique abilities: He is a demigod, half human, half immortal. Even more stunning: His father is the Greek god Poseidon, ruler of the sea, making Percy one of the most powerful demigods alive. There's little time to process this news. All too soon, a cryptic prophecy from the Oracle sends Percy on his first quest, a mission to the Underworld to prevent a war among the gods of Olympus.

This first installment of Rick Riordan's best-selling series is a non-stop thrill-ride and a classic of mythic proportions.

### **RATIONALE AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

Students will study the novel for the purposes of further studying literary techniques like dialogue, figurative language, and imagery. Additionally, students will study myths throughout the unit in order to discover how these stories have been retold in different cultures and genres.

Additionally to reading the novel, students will also read the graphic genre of this novel. The purpose will be to compare the novel to an illustrated form in order to make contrasts between the language style and visual representations, as well as plot points and characterization. Students will explore how texts can be represented in other media forms, including comics.

### **COMMON CORE STANDARDS**

#### **Reading Standards for Literature:**

- Independently and proficiently read grade-appropriate and increasingly complex literature from a variety of genres
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- Apply various strategies to determine the meaning of unknown words, phrases, and figurative language

### **ADDRESSING SENSITIVE SUBJECTS**

Possible sensitive topics contained in *The Lightning Thief: The Graphic Novel*: mild violence and mild sexual innuendos

The premise of this novel is that mythical gods have affairs with mortal women which results in children who are demigods. This can lead to discussions of how these affairs began, although this book does not include detail. It also alludes to and describes fantasy violence, although again, the novel does not dive into details with this.

In the classroom, sensitive topics will be dealt with in a mature fashion, toward an understanding of why this material is included in the novel. The English department feels that the literary merit of this novel more than compensates for the inclusion of this sensitive subject matter. The student is encouraged to feel comfortable expressing his/her beliefs and views openly within the classroom environment. If the student is uncomfortable at any time, the student should meet with the teacher to discuss his/her concerns.

## ***The Giver* by Lois Lowry (1993) & *The Giver* directed by Phillip Noyce (2014)**

The English Department has carefully evaluated *The Giver* as a whole and deemed it worthy for the 7th grade English curriculum.

### **PLOT SUMMARY**

In Jonas' perfect world, everything is under control. There is no war or fear or pain. But when Jonas learns the truth, there is no turning back. In a utopian community where there are no choices-- where everyone has his or her place in the world assigned according to gifts and interests-- the time has come for 12-year-old Jonas to become the new Receiver of Memory. He will be the one to bear the collective memories of a society that lives only in the present, where "Sameness" is the rule. But Jonas soon recognizes the losses and discovers the lie that supports his community. He decides he will change his world-- but he cannot predict how that change will come about, or what that change will mean for himself and the "newchild" Gabriel, whom he has resolved to protect.

### **RATIONALE AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

Students will have the opportunity to study themes including survival, identity, coming of age, choice, and family. Students will also look specifically at the idea of diversity, the role of government, and the idea that memory can serve multiple purposes. Students will also be able to read the rest of the series, which is critically acclaimed. Additionally, students will examine various short stories and compare the ideas, themes, and characters. Through this study, students will be able to draw parallels between different types of literature, as well as pinpoint differences.

Students will also have the opportunity to compare the novel to its movie version, *The Giver* directed by Philip Noyce (2014). Students will discuss the effects of lighting, music, stage movement, and dialogue and will also examine how successful the movie is in portraying the story.

### **COMMON CORE STANDARDS**

#### **Reading Standards for Literature:**

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- Apply various strategies to determine the meaning of unknown words, phrases, and figurative language

### **ADDRESSING SENSITIVE SUBJECTS**

Possible sensitive topics contained in *The Giver*: mild violence, mild sexual innuendos, suicide, and euthanasia.

*The Giver* is a classic dystopian novel that examines many themes that are relevant to modern-day dystopian novels. Although this book touches on many different topics that could be potentially sensitive, none of the scenes are gratuitous, and many times, the main character struggles with these things as much as the reader might. Also, because the main character is on the younger side, many of the scenes are glossed over, in the same way young people do in the real world: they know something is going on that might be painful or wrong, but they don't spend much time on the intricacies. Students will explore the themes in this novel by discussing or writing about different scenarios, and how the characters acted, and what the characters could have done differently. Students will also examine the importance of the negative parts of life, and how those negatives are organically balanced out by the many positives.

In the classroom, sensitive topics will be dealt with in a mature fashion, toward an understanding of why this material is included in the novel. The English department feels that the literary merit of this novel more than compensates for the inclusion of this sensitive subject matter. The student is encouraged to feel comfortable expressing his/her beliefs and views openly within the classroom environment. If the student is uncomfortable at any time, the student should meet with the teacher to discuss his/her concerns.

## ***The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins (2008) & *The Hunger Games* directed by Gary Ross (2012)**

The English Department has carefully evaluated *The Hunger Games* as a whole and deemed it worthy for the 7th grade English curriculum.

### **PLOT SUMMARY**

In the ruins of a place once known as North America lies the nation of Panem, a shining Capitol surrounded by twelve outlying districts. Long ago the districts waged war on the Capitol and were defeated. As part of the surrender terms, each district agreed to send one boy and one girl to appear in an annual televised event, The Hunger Games, a fight to the death on live TV. Sixteen-year-old Katniss Everdeen, who lives alone with her mother and younger sister, regards it as a death sentence when she is forced to represent her district in the Games. The terrain, rules, and level of audience participation may change, but one thing is constant: kill or be killed.

### **RATIONALE AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

Students will have the opportunity to study themes including survival, identity, choice, and family. Students will also look specifically at the idea of diversity, the role of government, and the fight for a better future. Students will also be able to read the rest of the series, which is critically acclaimed. Additionally, students will examine various short stories and compare the ideas, themes, and characters. Through this study, students will be able to draw parallels between different types of literature, as well as pinpoint differences.

Students will also have the opportunity to compare the novel to its movie version, *The Hunger Games* directed by Gary Ross (2012). Students will discuss the effects of lighting, music, stage movement, and dialogue and will also examine how successful the movie is in portraying the story.

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## **ADDRESSING SENSITIVE SUBJECTS**

Possible sensitive topics contained in *The Hunger Games*: violence and mild sexual innuendos.

*The Hunger Games* no doubt has a fair amount of violence, and young people are often the victims. Although this violence is seen throughout the book, the merits of the novel far outweigh the instances of violence. Indeed, one of the most important ways students will explore the protagonist is by critiquing and examining how she handles the unnecessary violence she is forced to participate in, and how she plans to put a stop to the violence, and make the rest of her community understand just how horrific the Hunger Games are. The violence is always purposeful: it forces the main character to continually evaluate who she is as a person, what she values, and what she can and cannot stand for. This will allow students to have in-depth discussions and reflections about identity and how one person can change the world. Suzanne Collins focuses on the implications and consequences of each act of violence, as opposed to the violence itself, which will encourage students to examine the bigger picture as well.

In the classroom, sensitive topics will be dealt with in a mature fashion, toward an understanding of why this material is included in the novel. The English department feels that the literary merit of this novel more than compensates for the inclusion of this sensitive subject matter. The student is encouraged to feel comfortable expressing his/her beliefs and views openly within the classroom environment. If the student is uncomfortable at any time, the student should meet with the teacher to discuss his/her concerns.

## ***Milkweed* by Jerry Spinelli (2003)**

The English Department has carefully evaluated *Milkweed* as a whole and deemed it worthy for the 7th grade English curriculum.

### **PLOT SUMMARY**

Jerry Spinelli's novel *Milkweed* allows the reader to learn about the Holocaust through the eyes of a young orphan boy. The reader is often asked to fill in the holes in Spinelli's narrative, as Misha himself is often confused about what is happening around him. As Misha struggles to survive in Nazi occupied Poland, the reader is pushed to critically evaluate themes of identity, friendship, family, and survival.

### **RATIONALE AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

This novel serves as an excellent introduction to the Holocaust because it allows students to see the events unfold through the eyes of a narrator near their own age. Students will discuss the effect that the point of view and the narrator's voice have on their impressions and understanding throughout the story. This unit contains a research component as well: Spinelli includes many historical figures and places (Himmler, Dr. Korczak, the Warsaw Ghetto, etc.), and students will work within groups to research the historical truths behind them. Spinelli creates many excellent examples of figurative language which can be used to introduce or review these terms/concepts as well as to assist in the study of poetry written during/about the Holocaust. Students will focus on the ghettos and the inhabitants who resided there; students will also study the historical framework to better understand the decisions characters make throughout the novel.

### **COMMON CORE STANDARDS**

#### **Reading Standards for Literature:**

- Independently and proficiently read grade-appropriate and increasingly complex literature from a variety of genres
- Analyze how key details build the central idea or theme of a text
- Cite textual evidence to support analysis and inferences
- Compare and contrast how texts from different genres address similar themes or topics
- Analyze the interaction of literary elements, such as setting, characters, plot, theme, etc. to consider the impact one element might have on another
- Determine the central idea or theme of a text as well as write an objective summary
- Analyze intentional author choice by comparing and contrasting characters, points of view, structures, mediums and citing evidence to support analysis
- Determining and analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone

#### **Reading Standards for Informational:**

- Analyze the interaction between/among individuals, events, and ideas presented in a variety of informational texts
- Cite appropriate textual evidence to support inference drawn from informational texts, as well as writing effective objective summaries of the text
- Analyze claims by evaluating the supporting reasoning and evidence presented in a text
- Analyze and evaluate how different authors present the same subject/topic through varying mediums

#### **Writing Standards:**

- Develop and produce clear and coherent writing for a variety of tasks, purposes, and audiences using argumentative, informational, and narrative writing types
- Develop arguments supported with reasoning and evidence gathered from multiple credible print and digital resources
- Begin to acknowledge opposing viewpoints in writing

- Routinely plan, draft, revise and edit writing tasks

### **Speaking and Listening Standards:**

- Collaboratively discuss and analyze a variety of subjects
- Develop and practice respectful communication skills in order to clarify, extend, and challenge presented information
- Present arguments and information, incorporating multimedia and other visual/audio elements as appropriate to meet the needs of the audience and purpose

### **Language Standards:**

- Demonstrate mastery of grade level conventions (grammar, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling)
- Choose among simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentence structures to signal differing relationships among ideas
- Apply various strategies to determine the meaning of unknown words, phrases, and figurative language

### **ADDRESSING SENSITIVE SUBJECTS**

Possible sensitive topics contained in *Milkweed*: depictions of Holocaust-specific torture, violence, death, and anti-Semitic language.

Students will participate in discussions about these topics and why they are hurtful. Students will participate in discussions and write reflectively to help process their emotional reactions to both the novel, and supplemental readings included within the unit. A strong emphasis will be placed on the idea that it is necessary to study the horrific periods of our history so that they are not repeated. Students will be encouraged to pose questions, discuss any confusion, and study supplementary texts in order to better understand the events in the novel, as well as the characters' actions and the consequences.

In the classroom, sensitive topics will be dealt with in a mature fashion, toward an understanding of why this material is included in the novel. The English department feels that the literary merit of this novel more than compensates for the inclusion of this sensitive subject matter. The student is encouraged to feel comfortable expressing his/her beliefs and views openly within the classroom environment. If the student is uncomfortable at any time, the student should meet with the teacher to discuss his/her concerns.

## ***Between Shades of Gray* by Ruta Sepetys (2012)**

The English Department has carefully evaluated *Between Shades of Gray* as a whole and deemed it worthy for the 7th grade English curriculum.

### **PLOT SUMMARY**

Fifteen-year-old Lina is a Lithuanian girl living an ordinary life--until Soviet officers invade her home and tear her family apart. Separated from her father and forced onto a crowded train, Lina, her mother, and her young brother make their way to a Siberian work camp, where they are forced to fight for their lives. Lina finds solace in her art, documenting these events by drawing. Risking everything, she imbeds clues in her drawings of their location and secretly passes them along, hoping her drawings will make their way to her father's prison camp. But will strength, love, and hope be enough for Lina and her family to survive?

### **RATIONALE AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

Students will read this book as a companion novel to *Milkweed*. It works well in this unit because it gives students a different yet equally as important perspective on the Holocaust: how the Soviet Union was contributing to the destruction during World War II. This novel also has a female protagonist, so students will have the opportunity to read about how young people of both genders were affected during this time period. These differences will allow for ample discussions and comparisons between what was going on in Europe and what was going on in the Soviet Union. We will be examining the Holocaust as an entire event--this novel will allow students to have a glimpse at a part of history that is often forgotten or diminished because it wasn't as widespread and as well-known as the European counterpart. This novel, much like *Milkweed*, also allows for students to really examine how these events affected people their age--how those young kids experienced loss, confusion, terror, as well as hope, resilience, and a desire to continue on the fight for what is right and good in the world.

### **COMMON CORE STANDARDS**

#### **Reading Standards for Literature:**

- Independently and proficiently read grade-appropriate and increasingly complex literature from a variety of genres
- Analyze how key details build the central idea or theme of a text
- Cite textual evidence to support analysis and inferences
- Compare and contrast how texts from different genres address similar themes or topics
- Analyze the interaction of literary elements, such as setting, characters, plot, theme, etc. to consider the impact one element might have on another
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- Demonstrate mastery of grade level conventions (grammar, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling)
- Choose among simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentence structures to signal differing relationships among ideas
- Apply various strategies to determine the meaning of unknown words, phrases, and figurative language

### **ADDRESSING SENSITIVE SUBJECTS**

Possible sensitive topics contained in *Between Shades of Gray*: violence, labor camp hardships, death, and mild sexual innuendos.

*Between Shades of Gray* is a realistic, yet fictional account of what people would face as they made the journey from their homes to Soviet Union labor camps in northern Siberia. As this novel will be read after *Milkweed*, students will already know the benefits of discussing historical events, even the painful ones, and will already have established a rapport to discuss these difficult topics. Students will participate in discussions, reflective writings, and comparisons with the characters/experiences in *Milkweed* to help them not only process their own emotional responses, but also to help examine what caused these events to happen, what happened after these events, and how they can apply that knowledge to ensure these types of events are not repeated. Students will also examine how this novel has a main theme of hope—through all of the atrocities, and painful experiences the characters in the novel have, students will continually examine how hope prevails throughout the novel, and how hope can prevail in all situations.

In the classroom, sensitive topics will be dealt with in a mature fashion, toward an understanding of why this material is included in the novel. The English department feels that the literary merit of this novel more than compensates for the inclusion of this sensitive subject matter. The student is encouraged to feel comfortable expressing his/her beliefs and views openly within the classroom environment. If the student is uncomfortable at any time, the student should meet with the teacher to discuss his/her concerns.