Southwest Licking School District

Literature Selection Review

Teacher: Paula Ball
School: Watkins Memorial High School

Book Title: Tuesdays With Morrie
Genre: Nonfiction

Author: Mitch Albom
Publisher: Crown Publishing Group

Book Summary and summary citation:

From Barnes and Noble:

Maybe it was a grandparent, or a teacher. Someone older who understood you when you were young and searching, who helped you see the world as a more profound place, and gave you advice to help you make your way through it. For Mitch Albom, that person was Morrie Schwartz, his college professor from nearly twenty years ago.

Maybe, like Mitch, you lost track of your mentor as you made your way, and the insights faded, and the world seemed colder. Wouldn't you like to see that person again, ask the bigger questions that still haunt you?

Mitch Albom had that second chance. He rediscovered Morrie in the last months of the older man's life. Knowing he was dying, Morrie visited with Mitch in his study every Tuesday, just as they used to back in college.

Tuesdays With Morrie is a magical chronicle of their time together, through which Mitch shares Morrie's lasting gift to the world.

Instructional Rationale/Objectives:

Read and comprehend nonfiction at grade level.

Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

Review #1:

Publishers Weekly:

As a student at Brandeis University in the late 1970s, Albom was especially drawn to his sociology professor, Morris Schwartz. On graduation he vowed to keep in touch with him, which he failed to do until 1994, when he saw a segment about Schwartz on the TV program Nightline,
and learned that he had just been diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's disease. By then a sports
columnist for the Detroit Free Press and author of six books, including Fab Five, Albom was
idled by the newspaper strike in the Motor City and so had the opportunity to visit Schwartz in
Boston every week until the older man died. Their dialogue is the subject of this moving book in
which Schwartz discourses on life, self-pity, regrets, aging, love and death, offering aphorisms
about each e.g., "After you have wept and grieved for your physical losses, cherish the functions
and the life you have left." Far from being awash in sentiment, the dying man retains a firm
grasp on reality. An emotionally rich book and a deeply affecting memorial to a wise mentor,
who was 79 when he died in 1995.

Review #2:

From Kirkus Reviews:

Award-winning sportswriter Albom was a student at Brandeis University, some two decades ago,
of sociologist Morrie Schwartz. Here Albom recounts how, recently, as the old man was dying,
he renewed his warm relationship with his revered mentor. This is the vivid record of the
teacher's battle with muscle-wasting amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, or Lou Gehrig's disease. The
dying man, largely because of his life-affirming attitude toward his death-dealing illness, became
a sort of thanatopic guru, and was the subject of three Ted Koppel interviews on Nightline. That
was how the author first learned of Morrie's condition. Albom well fulfilled the age-old
obligation to visit the sick. He calls his weekly visits to his teacher his last class, and the present
book a term paper. The subject: The Meaning of Life. Unfortunately, but surely not surprisingly,
those relying on this text will not actually learn The Meaning of Life here. Albom does not
present a full transcript of the regular Tuesday talks. Rather, he expands a little on the professor's
aphorisms, which are, to be sure, unassailable. "Love is the only rational act," Morrie said.
"Love each other or perish," he warned, quoting Auden. Albom learned well the teaching that
"death ends a life, not a relationship." The love between the old man and the younger one is
manifest. This book, small and easily digested, stopping just short of the maudlin and the
mawkish, is on the whole sincere, sentimental, and skillful. (The substantial costs of Morrie's last
illness, Albom tells us, were partly defrayed by the publisher's advance). Place it under the
heading "Inspirational." "Death," said Morrie, "is as natural as life. It's part of the deal we
made." If that is so (and it's not a notion quickly gainsaid), this book could well have been called
"The Art of the Deal." -- Copyright ©1997, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved. --This
text refers to the Hardcover edition.

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

Title: How to Win Friends and Influence People Dale Carnegie

Document any potentially controversial content:

Realistic portrayal of dealing with impending death
GRADE LEVEL(S): 9 and 10

Reading level of this title (if applicable): 9/10

Date Submitted to website: August 1, 2011

Suggested Professional Literary 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