

Approved for use in all levels of English I and II.

Summary of the Work:

Eric Calhoun is the narrator who begins telling the story at age eighteen as a high school senior, but then flashes back to his traumatic years in middle school. Eric Calhoun, nicknamed Moby, has been a social outcast for most of his life. He befriends Sarah Byrnes, a severe burn victim, in middle school. Both are ostracized—Eric because of his obesity and Sarah because of her scars. Throughout the story, the two band together to battle bullies, Sarah's abusive father, poor self-esteem, and in the end become genuine heroes. In addition to its focus on the two main characters, the narrative also involves balanced discussions of spirituality, abortion, abuse of authority, freedom of speech, vigilante justice, physical abuse, and stereotypes. The main theme of the novel is the importance of integrity, friendship, loyalty, and courage.

Rationale:

This novel encourages students to discuss issues of importance, and to learn how to be open to accepting and understanding both sides of an idea/issue. Even if a student has a particularly strong opinion about an issue, he/she still has to consider and understand where the other side is coming from.

Students can easily relate to the main characters because of their ages and life experiences. Through the characters, the novel explores the ideas of true friendship, courage, hypocrisy, shame, sacrifice, and integrity.

Moreover, the writing style is as compelling as the content is humorous and poignant. Students seem to have trouble putting the book down!

Professional Reviews and/or Critical Essays:

Booklist (Vol. 89, No. 14 (March 15, 1993))
Horn Book starred (September, 1993)
Kirkus Review starred (1993)
Publishers Weekly (March 29, 1993)
School Library Journal (March 1998)

* Print resources are available from the library media center and libraries in the district. Contact any library media specialist to view the scholarly sources.

* Scholarly reviews are also available online through Books in Print and Gale. Contact the library media specialist to obtain username and password information to access the subscription database of full-text reviews.

Noted Distinction:

Wilson's Senior High School 10/01/07
Notable/Best Books (A.L.A.)
Book Links (A.L.A.) 11/01/03
Publishers Weekly
Wilson's Junior High School 11/01/05
School Library Journal 3/01/93
Child Study Children's Book Committee
Booklist 05/01/95

Readability:

- Lexile Score: 920
- Readability Level: 5.4

Learning Resources Guidelines:

- The novel meets the Learning Resources Guidelines.

Standard Alignment: *(link)*

Approval:

Submitted to Committee:

Approved for Adoption: 2007

Notes on the Text:

(The best way to evaluate and understand a novel is to personally read the book in its entirety.)

Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes is more than just a great young adult mystery story. Author Chris Crutcher also explores both sides of contemporary, sensitive issues, giving students the opportunity to thoughtfully consider the perspectives of others from different backgrounds. However, the novel does have violence, some language, which is why it is important to discuss the affects of bullying and abuse with students. The novel should be prefaced with discussion of maturity and strong content so that students are prepared for its stark realism and themes.

Connection to the Curriculum:

The novel demonstrates the hero's journey pattern; literary techniques of foreshadow, flashback, metaphor, symbolism, and voice all in the context of a thrilling mystery.

Additional Connections:

(AP, Honors, Essential/Applied, Dramas, Films, etc.)

Connections reviews how the book fulfills a curricular objective or how it provides insight for the students related to curriculum.