

ANNOTATIONS AND REVIEWS OF YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE

Annotation and Review of *Monster*

Annotation:

Myers, Walter Dean. *Monster*. Illustrated by Christopher Myers. Harper TEEN, 1999. 281 pages. \$8.99. ISBN 978-0-06-440731-1.

Locked up in a New York City detention facility and on trial for possibly participating in a robbery that ended in murder, sixteen-year-old Steve Harmon writes a screen play of the situation and keeps a journal both to help him sort out his life and tell the story.

Review:

Myers, Walter Dean. *Monster*. Illustrated by Christopher Myers. Harper TEEN, 1999. 281 pages. \$8.99. ISBN 978-0-06-440731-1. Grades: 5th and up.

Living in Harlem, sixteen-year-old Steve Harmon finds himself acquainted with some neighborhood kids of questionable character. After a neighborhood drugstore gets robbed and the store owner is shot and killed, Steve is named by other participants of the crime as the lookout man for the “getover.” As a participant, Steve, along with the others, is referred to as a monster by the prosecuting attorney and charged with felony murder. Locked up in a detention facility as he goes through the trial process, Steve must think about his life – before, now in a juvenile prison facility, and what will become of it with the verdict. As a means of helping himself cope, Steve writes a detailed screen play of the situation and keeps a personal journal. Myers cleverly utilizes this first-person point of view and combined writing styles of the screen play and journal to provide readers candid eye-opening insight into the horror of prison life. From Steve’s own words and scene shots Myers allows readers to experience the moral issues and personal choices that Steve made to get where he is, how the judicial system works, and the serious nature of both. An excellent middle or high school small group discussion or essay prompt novel.

Annotation and Review of *Speak*

Annotation:

Anderson, Laurie Halse. ***Speak***. Penguin Group, 1999. 198 pages. \$10.00. ISBN 0-14-240732-1. High school freshman, Melinda Sordino faces internal and external conflicts as she often struggles with navigating through the year's academics as well as with encounters she has with teachers, parents, and other students to find herself again.

Review:

Anderson, Laurie Halse. ***Speak***. Penguin Group, 1999. 198 pages. \$10.00. ISBN 0-14-240732-1. Grades: 6-12.

Melinda Sordino starts high school with uncertainty and disdain, concerned about friendships and where she belongs. As the year progresses, she continuously withdraws into herself by not speaking. As she avoids thinking about her life, Melinda not only sinks further into her isolation, but she also continues to suffer academically and socially. Assignments and interactions with teachers, her parents, and other students play an integral role throughout. Slowly, as with the changing of the seasons, Melinda begins to see herself differently. From beginning to end, emotions are stirred as readers relate to the rigors of high school as well as the underlying seriousness events. Anderson mixes in humor any teenager will relate to. Easy to get caught up in and an excellent and unforgettable read, the only drawback could be that the ending comes rather quickly following the climax. This book is recommended for middle and high school students and can be used for various expository essay prompts and small group discussions.

Annotation and Review of *Thirteen Reasons Why*

Annotation:

Asher, Jay. *Thirteen Reasons Why*. Razorbill. 2007. 288 pages. \$17.99. ISBN 9781595141712. A mysterious package containing a series of cassette recordings sends high school senior Clay Jensen on a journey around town one night as he searches for his part among the thirteen reasons and people a classmate holds responsible for her suicide.

Review:

Asher, Jay. *Thirteen Reasons Why*. Razorbill. 2007. 288 pages. \$17.99. ISBN 9781595141712. Grades 8 and up.

An unsuspecting mystery. High school senior, Clay Jensen, comes home from school one day to find a mysterious package containing seven cassette tapes. As Clay listens, he discovers the tapes are from Hannah Baker, a classmate who had committed suicide two weeks prior. Each side of each tape is dedicated to a particular person and tells how he or she is one of the thirteen reasons why Hannah took her own life. The longer Clay listens, the more he is confused to his part in her unhappiness since secretly he had liked Hannah for some time. As Clay listens to each story, he learns the depth of Hannah's torment and how the actions of others played a significant part. Through the course of one long night, Clay travels around town following a highlighted map and listening to Hannah tell her story. Clay must find out not only where and how he fits into Hannah's reasons, Clay himself must also find a way to reconcile with Hannah's suicide. Asher's writing style is unique. Each chapter is designed to represent one side of each tape, broken up by the symbols of cassette player for continuing and pausing, as Hannah stories are intertwined with Clay's own memories and thoughts in such a way that at times it is as if the two were actually conversing. A very thought provoking story of teenage mentality, how small things can have large effects, and how people and incidents are often more connected than they originally appear. This is a fast-paced, pull-the-reader-in, make-you-think novel that will make for great writing prompt and/or group discussion for older middle through high school students.