

Series Title Comparison and Evaluation

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I. Comparison of Titles

Books in the Omnigraphics Teen Health Series are highly comparable. The overall layout and format are similar throughout the series. The front and back covers seem to only differ by title information. The content is presented in the same manner from volume to volume. Each volume contains the same basic items: a preface, an introductory section, several sections covering subject matter related to the overall topic, a final section including additional information, and an alphabetized index. All content within the volumes is displayed in black and white. Illustrations and images are limited. Grayed text boxes appear throughout highlighting facts, tips, and points to remember. A text box located on the bottom of the first page of every chapter provides citation information for the chapter's content.

There are very few differences in the layout or format within the series. These include such things that relate more to the topic of the volume than in overall design. The number of chapters as well as the number of sections does vary from volume to volume. This is only due to the extent of the information needed to cover the topic. Likewise, the total number of pages per volume is a not set amount. The average number of pages per volume is around 400.

II. Evaluation of Individual Title

The individual title evaluated within the Omnigraphics Teen Health Series was Drug Information for Teens: Health Tips about the Physical and Mental Effects of Substance Abuse. Nonfiction criteria within the Nilsen and Donelson text, Literature for Today's Young Adults, was used to better evaluate this title within the series. The text was first evaluated by using

literary criteria: setting/scope, theme, tone, and style (Nilsen and Donelson 2009, 285). An evaluation was then completed using Nilsen and Donelson's informative nonfiction criteria (Nilsen and Donelson 2009, 286).

A. Evaluation Using Literary Criteria

The topics covered in *Drug Information for Teens* are relevant for teenagers in many parts of the world, but seem to have been written with the American teenager in mind. Within the preface, the editor gives some of the following reasons for using drugs: peer pressure, for fun and excitement, and curiosity (*Drug Information for Teens*, 2006). These reasons are more American (or western) reasons for trying drugs for the first time. The editors did a great job of compiling material that can be easily read by teenagers. Materials within this series can be read and understood by teenagers for personal knowledge or research.

The underlying theme or message in this title is that drugs are bad. The book opens by discussing how drugs affect your brain and then goes into more depth by discussing how each type of drug specifically affects your brain and your whole body.

Along with the purpose of this book being to inform, the tone is also somewhat scholarly. That being said, the authors do a great job of presenting the information on a reading and comprehension level targeted for middle and high school aged young adults. In *Literature for Today's Young Adults*, Nilsen and Donelson quote author Jane Langton on her thoughts about style: "Good books exude some kind of passion or love or caring...and they have the potential for leaving a mark on the readers, changing them in some way" (Nilsen and Donelson, 2009). Based on Jane Langton's ideas on style, *Drug Information for Teens* does not "have the potential for

leaving a mark on readers” (Nilsen and Donelson, 2009). The book provides beneficial information for teens, but there does not seem to be a unique style that reaches out to today’s young adults. The style is overly simplistic and provides basic, factual information about drug and substance abuse.

B. Informative Nonfiction Criteria

I. A subject of interest to young readers, written with zest. Information is up to date and accurate.

The recommended grade levels for this title is grades 8 and up. The text is well written with the intent of making content easy to understand and well organized so that teenagers can find and understand needed information. The subject area is interesting, but it is not “written with zest” (Nilsen and Donelson 2009, 286). Teens can consult this book to find accurate information about drugs, but the book is not written in a way that leaves you wanting to find out more. The edition reviewed is a 2006 edition but the website lists an updated 2011 edition. This indicates that Omnigraphics regularly updates the material so that it is up to date and accurate.

II. New information or information organized in such a way as to present a different point of view than in previously available books.

This title is unique in that it is one of the only comprehensive titles that focuses on drug abuse for teens. One other title found, *Drugs 101: An Overview for Teens*, covered similar

issues. The main difference between the two is that *Drugs 101* focused on including more black and white photographs as opposed to included fact boxes. The fact boxes in the *Omnigraphics* title are helpful, but the photographs may be more appealing to teens.

III. A reading level, vocabulary, and tone of writing that are at a consistent level appropriate to the intended audience.

School Library Journal recommends this title for students grade 8 and up. The chapters are easy to read and the vocabulary is appropriate for the recommended age group. The tone is somewhat informational and scholarly but not so much that teen readers will be turned away. This book would most likely be used for research or to look up a specific fact as opposed to reading an entire chapter or part.

IV. An organization in which basic information is presented first so that chapters and sections build on each other.

Part one is a basic overview titled, “What You Should Know About Substance Abuse and Addiction.” The subsequent parts build on the topics discussed in this section. After the initial overview, parts two, three, and four discuss specific types of drug and substance abuse: marijuana, inhalants, prescription drugs, caffeine and energy drinks, alcohol, tobacco, etc. Part five then discusses how these drugs can affect your body and your health in a section titled “Drug Related Health Concerns.” Part six then provides information about treatment for drug abuse by discussing how to recognize drug abuse, the recovery process, helping a friend with

drug abuse, and what to do if a parent is abusing drugs. Part seven discusses some of the controversies that go along with drug policies such as drug testing in schools and legalizing medical marijuana. The last part, part eight is an “If You Need More Information” section.

V. An index and other aids to help readers look up facts if they want to return to the book for specific information or to glean ideas and facts without reading the entire book.

This title, along with other titles in the series, includes both a table of contents and an index to help the reader find specific information. The table of contents at the beginning of the title helps readers see how the book is organized and determine which chapters within each part would be most beneficial for their needs. The index is listed alphabetically. Page numbers that are italicized refer to illustrations and bold page numbers refer to information in the boxes on that page.

VI. Adequate documentation of the sources of information, including some original sources.

Documentation is included at the beginning of each chapter. A grey box on the bottom of the first page of each chapter indicates where the information for the chapter was taken. The editor then expounds upon the information cited. This adds to the credibility of the text.

VII. Information to help students locate further readings on the subject.

The last part of this title is an “If You Need More Information” section. The chapters within this section provide information on national drug organizations, where to go for help with substance abuse, a state by state list of alcohol and drug referral phone numbers, and a bibliography of additional resources about drugs.

VIII. Illustrations that add interest as well as clarity to the text.

There are no illustrations in this title. There are text boxes that pull out important information from the main text, but no illustrations. Including illustrations would most likely add to the text and help readers to understand the subject matter more clearly. Additionally, including illustrations would add ‘zest’ to the content and engage the reader more so than just plain text.

IX. A competent author with expertise in the subject matter.

The editor of this title in the series is Sandra Augustyn Lawton. Based on information from the preface, this book was compiled using information, documents, and excerpts from many government agencies such as Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Drug Intelligence Center, National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, etc. At the beginning of each chapter, the editor lists where the information for the chapter was gleaned.

Bibliography

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