Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher: Biggam School: Shanahan

Book Title: Dead End in Norvelt Genre: Historical Fiction

Author: Jack Gantos Pages: 341

Publisher: Farrar Strus Giroux Copyright: 2011

In a brief rationale, please provide the following information relative to the book you would like added to the school's book collection for classroom use. You may attach additional pages as needed.

Book Summary and summary citation: (suggested resources include book flap summaries, review summaries from publisher, book vendors, etc.)

From the book flap of the hardcover edition: Dead End in Norvelt is the winner of the 2012 Newbery Medal for the year's best contribution to children's literature and the Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction! Melding the entirely true and the wildly fictional, Dead End in Norvelt is a novel about an incredible two months for a kid named Jack Gantos, whose plans for vacation excitement are shot down when he is "grounded for life" by his feuding parents, and whose nose spews bad blood at every little shock he gets. But plenty of excitement (and shocks) are coming Jack's way once his mom loans him out to help a feisty old neighbor with a most unusual choretypewriting obituaries filled with stories about the people who founded his utopian town. As one obituary leads to another, Jack is launched on a strange adventure involving molten wax, Eleanor Roosevelt, twisted promises, a homemade airplane, Girl Scout cookies, a man on a trike, a dancing plague, voices from the past, Hells Angels . . . and possibly murder. Endlessly surprising, this sly, sharp-edged narrative is the author at his very best, making readers laugh out loud at the most unexpected things in a dead-funny depiction of growing up in a slightly off-kilter place where the past is present, the present is confusing, and the future is completely up in the air.

Provide an instructional rationale for the use of this title, including specific reference to the OLSD curriculum map(s): (Curriculum maps may be referenced by grade/course and indicator number or curriculum maps with indicators highlighted may be attached to this form) RL.6.10:By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 6-8 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

Students will also continue to work on fluency, accuracy, and expression when reading.

Include two professional reviews of this title: (a suggested list of resources for identifying professional reviews is shown below. Reviews may be "cut and pasted" (with citation) into the form or printed reviews may be attached to the form)

Review #1

From the School Library Journal: Gr 5–8—In 1962, Jack accidentally discharges his father's war relic, a Japanese rifle, and is grounded for the summer. When a neighbor's arthritic hands get the best of her, his mother lifts the restriction and volunteers the 12-year-old to be the woman's scribe, writing obituaries for the local newspaper. Business is brisk for Miss Volker, who doubles as town

coroner, and Norvelt's elderly females seem to be dropping like flies. Prone to nosebleeds at the least bit of excitement (until Miss Volker cauterizes his nose with old veterinarian equipment), Jack is a hapless and endearing narrator. It is a madcap romp, with the boy at the wheel of Miss Volker's car as they try to figure out if a Hell's Angel motorcyclist has put a curse on the town, or who might have laced Mertie-Jo's Girl Scout cookies with rat poison. The gutsy Miss Volker and her relentless but rebuffed suitor, Mr. Spizz, are comedic characters central to the zany, episodic plot, which contains unsubtle descriptions of mortuary science. Each quirky obituary is infused with a bit of Norvelt's history, providing insightful postwar facts focusing on Eleanor Roosevelt's role in founding the town on principles of sustainable farming and land ownership for the poor. Jack's absorption with history of any kind makes for refreshing asides about John F. Kennedy's rescue of PT-109 during World War II, King Richard II, Francisco Pizarro's conquest of Peru, and more. A fast-paced and witty read.—Vicki Reutter

Review #2

From Kirkus Reviews: An exhilarating summer marked by death, gore and fire sparks deep thoughts in a small-town lad not uncoincidentally named "Jack Gantos." The gore is all Jack's, which to his continuing embarrassment "would spray out of my nose holes like dragon flames" whenever anything exciting or upsetting happens. And that would be on every other page, seemingly, as even though Jack's feuding parents unite to ground him for the summer after several mishaps, he does get out. He mixes with the undertaker's daughter, a band of Hell's Angels out to exact fiery revenge for a member flattened in town by a truck and, especially, with arthritic neighbor Miss Volker, for whom he furnishes the "hired hands" that transcribe what becomes a series of impassioned obituaries for the local paper as elderly town residents suddenly begin passing on in rapid succession. Eventually the unusual body count draws the—justified, as it turns out—attention of the police. Ultimately, the obits and the many Landmark Books that Jack reads (this is 1962) in his hours of confinement all combine in his head to broaden his perspective about both history in general and the slow decline his own town is experiencing. Characteristically provocative gothic comedy, with sublime undertones

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

<u>Title:</u>	The Watsons Go to Birmingham	<u>Author:</u>	Christopher Paul Curtis
<u>Title:</u>	The Secret Life of Bees	Author:	Sue Monk Kidd
<u>Title:</u>		<u>Author:</u>	
<u>Title:</u>		<u>Author:</u>	
<u>Title:</u>		<u>Author:</u>	
<u>Title:</u>		Author:	

Document any potentially controversial content:

Pp. 1-14 Account of accidentally firing a rifle.

Pg. 244 A young person smokes a cigarette before the main character tells her to stop.

Throughout the novel there are frequent references to death, corpses, and murder.

Throughout the novel there are frequent references to war violence (specifically WWII) and uses the term "Jap".

The novel also has a small subplot about the gang "The Hell's Angels".

Keeping in mind the age, academic level, and maturity of the intended reader, what is the suggested classroom use: (check all that apply)

Gifted/Accelerated	\boxtimes	Regular 🛭	\boxtimes	At Risk 🖂
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GRADE LEVEL(S): $6 \boxtimes 7 \boxtimes 8 \boxtimes 9 \square 10 \square 11 \square 12 \square$

Reading level of this title (if applicable): 920L

Date Submitted to Department Chair: 5.7.15

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