

Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher:	Eric Hanna	School:	Olentangy Shanahan Middle School
Book Title:	Two Miserable Presidents	Genre:	Non -Fiction
Author:	Steve Sheinkin	Pages:	244
Publisher:	Roaring Book Press - New York	Copyright:	2008

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.)
"Sheinkin succeeds in making history as interesting for young people to read as it should be."
- Library Media Connections

From www.scholastic.com -

About this book -

May 22, 1856: A member of Congress from South Carolina walks into the Senate chamber, looking for trouble.

That Congressman, Preston Brooks, was ready to attack Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts over remarks Sumner made slamming senators who supported slavery in Kansas. Brooks lifted his cane to beat Sumner, and here the action in the book stops, so that Steve Sheinkin can explain just where this confrontation started. In the process, he unravels the complicated string of events — the small things, the personal ones, the big issues — that led to the Civil War. It is a time and a war that threatened America's very existence, revealed in the surprising true stories of the soldiers and statesmen who battled it out.

About this author -

Steve Sheinkin

National Book Award Finalist Steve Sheinkin has been writing history books for years. A meticulous researcher and documenter, he is also a former teacher and knows well how to grab young readers' interest and hold it. He lives in Brooklyn, New York.

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)

Standard #11 - Disputes over the nature of federalism, complicated by economic developments in the United States, resulted in sectional issues, including slavery, which led to the American Civil War.

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

May 22, 1856: A MEMBER OF CONGRESS FROM SOUTH CAROLINA WALKS INTO THE SENATE CHAMBER, LOOKING FOR TROUBLE. That Congressman, Preston Brooks, was ready to attack Senator Charles Sumner of Massachusetts over remarks Sumner made slamming senators who supported slavery in Kansas. Brooks lifted his cane to beat Sumner, and here the action in the book stops, so that Steve Sheinkin can explain just where this confrontation started. In the process, he unravels the complicated string of events – the small things, the personal ones, the big issues – that led to The Civil War. It is a time and a war that threatened America’s very existence, revealed in the surprising true stories of the soldiers and statesmen who battled it out. *Two Miserable Presidents* is a 2009 Bank Street - Best Children's Book of the Year.

<http://us.macmillan.com/twomiserablepresidents/stevesheinkin>

Review #2

<http://www.erc.udel.edu/two-miserable-presidents/>

Two Miserable Presidents
by Steve Sheinkin
illustrated by Tim Robinson
Roaring Brook Press
246p.

An interesting way to learn history is one where you can feel like you are a part of the story. When I read that the author of “Two Miserable Presidents” was a textbook writer, I shuddered to think that I was going to be reading another bland stale narrative that will cover much, yet leave the reader disconnected to the events and the people that played major and minor roles in those events. This is not the case with this narrative. The author begins with the canning of Senator Sumner and ends with the assassination of President Lincoln. Readers will get a clear sense of what caused this war to take place and the cost suffered to fight it for both the North and the South. The title is reinforced throughout the book by giving the reader a picture of what it was like for Presidents Lincoln and Davis. You learn what it is like to be a leader when things don’t go right. With the success of Joy Hakim’s work it is not surprising that history has become much more engaging to read. This book provides a wonderful introduction to the Civil War period that would work well with 4th graders through adult. The quotes provided indicate extensive research that is supported by the quotation notes at the end of the book. For those seeking to further investigate a particular person or event taking place during the war, you will find extensive source notes as well as several short biographies.

“Two Miserable Presidents” reads so well that it can be used as a daily reading with which students can become curious about numerous related topics. The nature of this work is one that doesn’t dig deeply but one that provokes an understanding of just how horrible it is to fight a Civil War. The reader is not sheltered from the cost of war. The author tells the story through topical vignettes inserting quotes that make the story come alive.

Reviewed by Orval Foraker, University of Delaware

7/14/08

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

<u>Title:</u> Scholastic Encyclopedia of the Civil War	<u>Author:</u> Catherine Clinton
<u>Title:</u> Big Bad Ironclad	<u>Author:</u> Nathan Hale
<u>Title:</u> The Civil War - Day by Day	<u>Author:</u> Phillip Katcher
<u>Title:</u> War, Terrible War	<u>Author:</u> Joy Hakim
<u>Title:</u>	<u>Author:</u>
<u>Title:</u>	<u>Author:</u>

Document any potentially controversial content:

Pages 68 - 70 discuss two examples of women who dressed as men to fight in battle. Pages 101 and 102 discuss Clara Barton using a pocket knife to remove a bullet from a man's cheekbone, but it gives no more detail than what is listed here. Page 183 discusses men sewing their names in their uniform so their bodies could be identified and one soldier writing a passage in his diary predicting he would die in the next days battle.

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 Regular At Risk

GRADE LEVEL(S): 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Reading level of this title (if applicable): The lexile score of 950, from a history standpoint, places it at the 8th grade level.

Date Submitted to Department Chair: April 13, 2015

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

