

## Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher:	Gannon	School:	Hyatt
Book Title:	Downsiders	Genre:	realistic fiction
Author:	Neal Shusterman	Pages:	246
Publisher:	Simon & Shuster	Copyright:	1999

*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.)

Beneath the sewer grates and manholes of the city lies a strange and secret world called the Downside. Every Downsider knows that it's forbidden to go Topside, and most fear a collision of the two worlds. But fourteen-year-old Talon is curious about what goes on above ground, and one day he ventures out in search of medicine for his ailing sister. There he meets Lindsay, who is as curious about Talon's world as he is about hers. When Lindsay visits the Downside for the first time, she marvels at the spirit of the Downsiders, and the way they create works of art from topside "trash," like old subway tokens and forgotten earrings. As awed as she is by the Downside, however, she also questions its origins, and when she finds out that this fantastic world is not all it appears to be, she is determined to tell Talon the truth. Then a construction accident threatens to crush Talon's world, and his loyalty is put to the test. Can the truth save the Downside, or will it destroy an entire civilization? Neal Shusterman takes readers on an amazing journey into a place that's only a few steps away, yet beyond their wildest dreams.

**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)  
CCS - Fiction-Reading Literature - Statement Standards #1, #2, #3, #4, #6

**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 Publishers Weekly

History and urban folklore are wittily combined in Shusterman's (The Eyes of Kid Midas) well-wrought fantasy, centering on an alternative society that thrives undisturbed in the subterranean recesses of New York City. Despite stringently enforced rules against mixing with "Topsiders," 14-year-old Talon sneaks aboveground into an Upper East Side townhouse. There he meets Lindsay, also 14, whose self-absorbed, divorced mom has left her with her equally inattentive dad "for all eternity." The friendless girl quickly forms a bond with the pale, otherworldly boy, and when he finds her again, she eagerly goes with him to tour his underground universe. However, Lindsay's presence, as well as some historical information she unearths, are as threatening to the Downsiders

as the excavations for her father's West Side aqueduct project. Amidst the thrills and insider humor (Downsiders eat throgsneck soup and have hunted sewer alligators to extinction), Shusterman offers a crisply written coming-of-age story with a message worth pondering: "Better that the truth be like the moonAa bright sphere only showing half of its face at a time, leaving the rest to be uncovered fragment by fragment, in its own proper time." Ages 10-up. (June)  
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Review #2

Amazon.com Review

Meticulous 14-year-old Lindsay isn't exactly thrilled about moving to the chaos that she believes is New York City. Her flighty "career college student" mom, now divorced, has dumped her on her city engineer dad, "a man who lived his life twenty minutes behind schedule and in a perpetual state of apology." Lindsay is certain that nothing better awaits her than prep school boredom and constant battles with her evil stepbrother Todd. But she is wrong. Quite by accident, Lindsay discovers an unusual boy named Talon who resides in a secret city beneath New York--a kind of underground Oz called the Downside. Talon and Lindsey are fascinated by the differences in their dual worlds and soon grow equally fascinated with each other. But when Lindsay's dad's construction project hits a snag that reveals the Downside, it is not only the blooming relationship that hangs in the balance, but the entire future of the Downside as well.

Downsiders is both funny and compelling. But while Lindsay and Talon's observations of their distinct environments is humorous (Talon compares Lindsay's French braid to a "gator's tail" and, despite Talon's explanation that "time is of low importance," Lindsay still thinks it's strange that Talon wears his watch around his ankle), Neal Shusterman also uses their relationship to illustrate how much a particular culture both shapes our identity and affects how we view people from backgrounds other than our own. This call to look beneath the surface is cleverly and subtly woven through an original story with broad appeal. (Ages 10 to 16) --Jennifer Hubert --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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

<u>Title:</u> <b>The Giver</b>	<u>Author:</u> <b>Lois Lowry</b>
<u>Title:</u> <b>Gathering Blue</b>	<u>Author:</u> <b>Lois Lowry</b>
<u>Title:</u> <b>The Messenger</b>	<u>Author:</u> <b>Lois Lowry</b>
<u>Title:</u>	<u>Author:</u>
<u>Title:</u>	<u>Author:</u>
<u>Title:</u>	<u>Author:</u>

**Document any potentially controversial content:**

**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):** Ages 10 and up

**Date Submitted to Department Chair:** 4/11/12

**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