

As the Crow Flies



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Recommended Grades: 6-9

Subjects/Courses: English Language Arts, Physical and Health Education

ERAC Review

DESCRIPTION

Thirteen-year-old Charlie attends a spiritual, all-girls outdoor camp hoping to find her connection to God through nature, but as the only black girl, she finds it difficult to fit in. Charlie questions her values, her faith, and even her participation in this journey of self-discovery, but she is heartened when she and Sydney, a transgender participant who also feels on the outside, become friendly and plot to derail the final ceremony of the camp. This engaging graphic novel deals with mature themes of identity, acceptance, and belong in a gentle way accessible to students. Suitable as a class read-along, literature circle set, or independent reading.

CURRICULUM FIT

Does the resource support BC curriculum? Extensively

This product supports the Core Competencies of the BC curriculum:

- Communication
- Critical thinking
- Positive Personal and Cultural Identity
- Personal Awareness and Responsibility
- Social Responsibility

Comments:

CURRICULUM FIT

In the Grades 6-9 English Language Arts curriculum, *As the Crow Flies* allows opportunities to explore stories to help us understand ourselves and make connections to others and to the world, and to recognize and identify the role of personal, social, and cultural contexts, values, and perspectives in texts. The graphic novel also provides opportunities for conversations about identity and intersectionality, thereby extending connections into the Grades 6-9 Physical and Health Education curriculum involving exploration of "influences on individual identity, including sexual identity, gender, values, and beliefs."

SOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Gender Roles, Identity & Sexual Orientation:	The protagonist identifies as more masculine than feminine. She prefers using the name "Charlie" to "Charlotte." She deals with the onset of her period while on the outdoor excursion. Campfire stories are shared about the women of the community and their traditional roles like harvesting, cooking, and cleaning. The premise of their camping trip is to celebrate an early explorer's tradition in which "the women of the town would leave their husbands and families for a week" and venture into the wilderness, defying stereotypes and gender roles. The men they left behind are mocked, suggesting that their concerns about the safety of the women stem from their fear of having to feed themselves.
Multiculturalism:	The protagonist experiences doubts about her ability to fit in because she is a "Person of Colour" attending a camp program where she notices the rest of the participants are white. Charlie is surprised by the solution to the accumulation of dirt, sin, doubt, and temptation is the "whitening" of their souls. Charlie imagines how others might dismiss her concerns for being a minority who gets bent out of shape over nothing. Charlie deals with the realization that the radical women being celebrated as feminists also kept slaves as servants.
Belief System:	There are many references to the religious nature of the excursion and its objective to worship and praise God. Terms like redemption, purification, and the whitening of souls are used to describe the trip they are about to embark on. Charlie seems to be struggling with her spiritual identity and connecting to God, alternating between her openness to messages and her feelings of isolation or abandonment. She and Sydney plot to derail the ceremony at the climax of the trip, including suggestions that they speak in tongues or perform an exorcism.

Social Considerations Comments:

Do the social considerations support, rather than detract from, student learning? Extensively

Though the story deals with some mature and sensitive issues, the social considerations provide realistic context to the aspects of her identity that Charlie is struggling with. They contribute significantly to the readers understanding of Charlie's character and the microaggressions she encounters that make her question her value. Many of the questionable interactions are addressed in subtle problem-solving ways that may prompt some insightful conversation and awareness.

GENERAL CONTENT

Content:

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This resource supports the characteristics of Aboriginal worldviews and perspectives:

- Connectedness and Relationship
- Awareness of History
- Engagement with the Land, Nature, the Outdoors
- Emphasis on Identity

Is the resource engaging?	Extensively
Is the content current for the intended curriculum and grade?	Moderately
Is the content accurate for the intended curriculum and grade?	Moderately
Is the content timely and important for student broad understandings?	Extensively

Audience:

Is the content appropriate to the emotional maturity and cognitive level of students?	Extensively
Does the resource provide opportunities for creative and critical thinking?	Moderately
Can the content be differentiated?	Moderately
Can reading level be adjusted?	Moderately
Is the level of detail appropriate?	Extensively
Is the content of particular interest to male students?	Not at all or slightly
Is the content of particular interest to female students?	Moderately
Is the language use appropriate to the emotional maturity and cognitive level of students?	Extensively
Are the visuals appropriate to the emotional maturity and cognitive level of students?	Extensively

Comments:

The combination of the graphics and the text allow for a deeper, more sophisticated understanding of the story, particularly for students who might be challenged by some of the text. Without guidance, some boys may have difficulty connecting to the characters and their situations because they are female and situations involve conversations about feminism and dealing with feminine hygiene products may be difficult for male readers to deal with in a mature manner.

TECHNICAL DESIGN

Does the resource make effective use of the medium?	Extensively
Is the location of illustrations appropriate?	Extensively
Is the resource easy to use?	Extensively
Is the use of font, text size and presentation uniform?	Moderately
Are extraneous elements/illustrations kept to a minimum?	Extensively

Comments:

As the Crow Flies is a 272 page graphic novel. It features muted, pencil crayon drawings and engaging images of nature that complement the story. The images appear simple, but provide complex detail that enhances understanding of the subtext of the story.

PRINT NOVEL

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Does the text show insight into the complexity of the human condition?	Extensively
Does the text broaden students' experiences and understanding?	Extensively
To what degree is this text stylistically rich?	Extensively

Plot description:

Motivated by a desire to feel connected to God through nature, Charlie attends an outdoor retreat involving a foray into the wilderness. It is a spiritual retreat which intends to simultaneously celebrate feminism and the rejection of traditional gender roles. Feeling like an outsider, she questions her presence, looking for guidance from God as to what her roles are and whether or not she is meant to be there. She encounters microaggressions that lead her to question her value, her faith, and her participation on her journey to self-discovery.

Related Comments:

Charlie is a complex character who struggles with social situations. Her perspective is often given through internal monologues that many readers will relate to. The graphic novel tackles mature themes relating to identity, acceptance, and belonging in a gentle way that readers will find accessible.

Descriptors:

Genre:

Contemporary
Illustrated Novel

Literary Highlights:

Rich Characterization
Well-developed themes
Point of view

Type:

Graphic Novel

SUGGESTED CLASSROOM USAGE

Comments:

The book could be shared as a class read-along where images and panels could be projected and ongoing guided conversation could be facilitated. Individual panels or excerpts could be used to illustrate the concept of microaggressions. It could be included in a literature circle set, or placed in a classroom library for independent reading.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Readability:

At intended grade level(s)

Comments:

The graphic novel was recognized as a Stonewall Honour Award book in 2018.