

Novel-Review Checklist

Title: When You Reach Me
Author: Rebecca Stead
Grade Level: 6-8 (Lexile 750L)
Reviewer(s): N. Toccaceli

Content/Scope/Theme of the Novel: Miranda and her best friend, Sal, know how to navigate their New York City neighborhood. They know where it's safe to go, like the local grocery store, and they know whom to avoid, like the crazy guy on the corner. But things start to unravel. Sal gets punched by a new kid for what seems like no reason, and he shuts Miranda out of his life. The apartment key that Miranda's mom keeps hidden for emergencies is stolen. And then Miranda finds a mysterious note scrawled on a tiny slip of paper:

*I am coming to save your friend's life, and my own.
I must ask two favors. First, you must write me a letter.*

The notes keep coming, and Miranda slowly realizes that whoever is leaving them knows all about her, including things that have not even happened yet. Each message brings her closer to believing that only she can prevent a tragic death. Until the final note makes her think she's too late. (Winner of the 2010 Newbery Medal).

Point of view or bias of the author:

- First-person narration

Accuracy and documentation:

- Adolescent Issues
- Magic and Supernatural
- Friends and Friendship
- Historically accurate references

Ethnic/culture/gender representation:

Female protagonist. Relatable to all genders/cultures. Stead portrays her characters not so much as boys and girls and men and women, but rather, as *people*.

The novel features the death of a man who is hit by a truck in front of the main character. It also addresses a girl's fear of a homeless man near her New York City apartment and touches on racism. The main character's friend is punched in the stomach by another boy for no apparent reason.

Language/Sexual Content:

- Miranda says her mother calls something "a whole different bucket of poop," but that Mom doesn't use the word "poop." *H---* and *darn* appear a few times. Mom drops

something in the kitchen, and Miranda hears a bunch of cursing, though no actual swear words appear in the text.

- Mom fears change, so she refuses to give Richard a key to her apartment. She's also nervous about letting him move in or accepting his offer of marriage. After her win on "\$20,000 Pyramid," she gives him a key. The text also implies that he stays the night. Miranda mentions that she has kissed Colin a few times and that another boy kissed Annemarie.
- The school shuts down its off-campus lunch policy a few times when a naked man is seen running down a nearby street. Miranda also thinks she sees a flickering image of a naked man standing near the laughing man. She ultimately realizes it was Marcus (as the laughing man) on one of his earlier time travel trips, practicing for his stay in New York. Time travel allows one to bring very little, including clothing.

Is it for the beginner with no background in the subject? (If extensive background in the subject is required, please note this):

When You Reach Me is an intertextual book. It often refers to other books and depends upon those other books to help it make meaning – kind of like a book having a conversation with other books.

In this case, the book that's most woven into the fabric of *When You Reach Me* is Madeline L'Engle's young adult fantasy novel *A Wrinkle in Time*. Stead's' protagonist, Miranda, carries a copy of *A Wrinkle in Time* around with her and closely relates to the protagonist of that novel, Meg.

Style

Is the writing Clear Confusing Lively Dry

Is there oversimplification to the point of being unclear, inaccurate or misleading Yes No

Is the organization logical: Yes No

Quality of the index and/or cross-references: Yes No

Is the information readily accessible Yes No

Comparison

Does this book present new material for this grade range: Yes No

Does it cover basic material better than extant standard works:

Yes No

Briefly describe the potential appeal to intended audience:

Excellent read for sci-fi/mystery genre. See *LA Review of Books* for in-depth analysis. <https://lareviewofbooks.org/review/tesser-well-rebecca-steads-when-you-reach-me>

Recommendation

FOR GENERAL PURCHASE FOR SCHOOL

Yes No

NOT RECOMMENDED

Final Rational/Comments/Areas of Concern:

Nicole Toccaceli

12/2/15

Signature of Reviewer

Date

Film Approval Request

School: Kawmeeh

Department: English

Course: Honors English

Grade Level: 8th

Title: *Field of Dreams*

Year: 1989

Director: Phil Alden Robinson

Rating: PG

Summary of Plot: "If you build it, he will come." That's the ethereal message that inspires Iowa farmer Ray Kinsella (Kevin Costner) to construct a baseball diamond in the middle of his cornfield. At first, "he" seems to be the ghost of disgraced ballplayer Shoeless Joe Jackson (Ray Liotta), who materializes on the ballfield and plays a few games with the awestruck Ray. But as the weeks go by, Ray receives several other messages from a disembodied voice, one of which is "Ease his pain." He realizes that his ballfield has been divinely ordained to give a second chance to people who have sacrificed certain valuable aspects of their lives. One of these folks is Salingeresque writer Terence Mann (James Earl Jones), whom Ray kidnaps and takes to a ball game and then to his farm. Another is Doc Graham (Burt Lancaster), a beloved general practitioner who gave up a burgeoning baseball career in favor of medicine. The final "second-chancer" turns out to be much closer to Ray

Rationale for Usage: To compare and contrast the novel *Shoeless Joe* and *Field of Dreams*. *Shoeless Joe* is the novel in which *Field of Dreams* is based.

Novel-Review Checklist

Title: *Shoeless Joe* (Previously called *Dream Field*; AKA *Field of Dreams*)

Author: W.P Kinsella

Grade Level: 8th Honors

Reviewer(s): Deana Buchanan

Content/Scope/Theme of the Novel: "W. P. Kinsella plays with both myth and fantasy in his lyrical novel, which was adapted into the enormously popular movie, 'Field of Dreams.' It begins with the magic of a godlike voice in a cornfield, and ends with the magic of a son playing catch with the ghost of his father. In Kinsella's hands, it's all about as simple, and complex, as the object of baseball itself: coming home. It also about the choices we make as well as coming to grips with one's past and the power of believing in dreams. Kinsella spins baseball as backdrop and metaphor, and, like his predecessors, uses the game to tell us a little something more about who we are and what we need." (<http://www.hmhco.com>)

Point of view or bias of the author: The point of view of this story comes from a middle aged farmer who raises his family in Iowa. He has grown up with baseball his entire life. The audience is never given a name of the man telling the story. He is a hardworking "handy" type. His hard work is rewarded in a way he doesn't expect, helping him to heal from a choice he made many years before.

Accuracy and documentation: Although the story is fictional, it is realistic, and the historical characters, and the history that surrounds them are accurate.

Ethnic/culture/gender representation: n/a

Language/Sexual Content: n/a

Is it for the beginner with no background in the subject? (If extensive background in the subject is required, please note this): Yes

Style

Is the writing	Clear	Confusing	Lively	Dry
Is there oversimplification to the point of being unclear, inaccurate or misleading			Yes	No
Is the organization logical:			Yes	No
Quality of the index and/or cross-references:			Yes	No
Is the information readily accessible			Yes	No

Comparison

Does this book present new material for this grade range: Yes No

Does it cover basic material better than extant standard works: Yes No

Briefly describe the potential appeal to intended audience:

The novel is a rich, nostalgic look at one of our most cherished national pastimes, but, more importantly, a remarkable story about parents and children, love and family, second chances, the importance of choices, and the inimitable joy of finding your way home.

Recommendation

FOR GENERAL PURCHASE FOR SCHOOL Yes No

NOT RECOMMENDED _____

Final Rational/Comments/Areas of Concern:

Signature of Reviewer

Date