

Title

Creech, S. (2005). *Replay*. New York: Harper Collins.

Genre

Young Adult Fiction

Cultural Designation

Italian-American

Grade levels

This text is most likely associated with grades 5-8. Although some younger, more advanced readers would be able to comprehend the text and storyline well enough, the themes might escape the younger readers.

How I learned about this text

I encountered several Sharon Creech books on the bookshelf of the English class I am observing in Fieldwork. I also found a recommendation for Sharon Creech's books on several of the young adult book web sites recommended by Professor Gregory on her syllabus.

Synopsis

Leonardo (Sardine) is a relatively normal twelve year-old experiencing life as a second child within a family of four. Though he is the oldest of three boys in the family, Leo feels left out of his family, as is evidenced by his nickname, and turns to drama and imagination to recreate scenes of his life in the way he wishes that they would occur. Leo's big news for his family comes in the form of a small part in a play, as an old woman. Instead of his family expressing their pride in his news, his siblings pick on him and his parents barely respond. Leo uses his free time to escape to the attic, where one day, he discovers his father's diary from when he was thirteen. As Leo reads, he encounters his father's sister, Rosaria, whom he has never met and realizes his family never mentions. Slowly, as he rehearses for his school play, Leo ventures to ask his questions about Rosaria of his parents and grandparents. The story is a search for belonging, for answers, and for true meaning of life. Leo is a symbolic protagonist for all young adults as they struggle to develop and find an identity with a sense of belonging, fulfillment and purpose. Creech also includes the text of the play that Leo has a part in for any reader who wishes to read the text or any class that wishes to enact the play.

Teaching the text

Since this text focuses on a boy's place within his family and his sense of a lack of belonging, I would likely center class discussions around this area. Students would first read aloud/act out the play that Creech includes in the back of the book. Then, students might regularly write journal responses to prompts such as, "Describe a time you felt left out in your family. Was your reaction different from Leo's?" Finally, students would write a letter to Rosaria speaking to her about her break with her family and Leo about his problems growing up and belonging to his family. This would hopefully encourage discussion about sibling rivalry, growing up and becoming a teenager.

Synergistic texts

Criss Cross by Lynne Rae Perkins – this text would offer students the opportunity to discuss gender differences in growing up. Since the text interchanges prose, poetry, and questions-and-answers, students would also experience differences in forms of expression in writing.

Hitler Youth: Growing Up In Hitler's Shadow by Susan Campbell Bartoletti – This nonfiction book draws on primary and secondary sources from 1933 and beyond to tell the stories of twelve individuals and their experiences growing up under the rule of Adolf Hitler. With this text, students could discuss different cultural aspects and their influences on growing up and study young adulthood throughout history.

Appropriate Ages

This book is entirely appropriate and could be read by anyone or read to a child of any age.

Recommendation

This text could be read as either an assigned classroom text or an independent read. However, I think students would really enjoy acting out the play and as such, I would probably be more likely to use the text within the classroom.

Reading plan

p. 3 followed by p. 160. Page 3 introduces Leo and his nickname of "sardine" and how it fits into Leo's sense of belonging within his family. Page 160 goes more into depth about Leo's perception of his family's attitude toward him and his aspirations, particularly with relation to the school play in which Leo plays the part of an old crone.