

YA Book Review

FOR EVERY ONE BY JASON REYNOLDS

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Brought into the light during the grand opening of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial in 2011, Jason Reynolds’s short speech *For Every One*, addresses the youth of this nation—emphasizing the importance of pursuing one’s dreams. A speech, later transformed into a book in verse in 2018, serves as “A poem, A nod. A Nothing to Lose.” In a comforting yet inspirational tone, this heavy-hitting book looks to invigorate youth and provide the necessary fuel to pursue their wildest dreams. The back of the cover reads, “This is for the *courageous*, and everyone who *wants to be*.” This book is brilliantly simple yet immediately empowering. *For Every One*. For every dream; for every person; for every child who wants to make their dreams come true.

For Every One is exactly what every young adult needs in their life. Not only do the verses serve as a pep-talk to the dreamers out there, but the intricate lines reassure the reader that even the most successful people, at one point or another, faced obstacles and had to overcome adversity. Overcoming adversity—as Jason Reynolds explains using his own experiences as an example—was something he too had to face as a young, up-and-coming writer.

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Wonderfully executed, *For Every One* would appeal to young adults not only because of the pace of the book (30 minutes cover to cover) but because of the relatability and connections that young adults could make between their own lives and the experiences Jason Reynolds shares in this book. For instance, the language and tone Reynolds displays are not only inspirational but accessible for all readers.

Finding young adult literature that can be incorporated into the current day English language arts curriculum poses challenges in and of itself for educators. Some of the challenges educators face include the administration or parents not agreeing with the choice novel. That is where the argument regarding tweaks to the literary canon and what texts the students should have

exposure to comes into play. *For Every One* deserves a spot in the literary canon.

For Every One could be included in a variety of English language arts units, including speech or poetry. Through this book, the language could be closely analyzed and used as a way to teach students how to speak motivationally and how diction can be used to make a point. In a poetry unit, students could close-read and analyze the beautiful metaphors, imagery, and tone, and engage in

writing (e.g., black-out poetry, found poems, acrostic poetry) that involve Jason Reynolds's words. "A poem. A nod. A nothing to Lose."

For Every One earns the right to be a part of any classroom library, available to readers who dream and dreamers who read.

Author Biography

Spencer G. Arndt will begin his first year of teaching at Wichita West High School in fall 2020. He enjoys writing poems, hanging out at local coffee shops, and playing with his one-eyed cat. He can be reached at sxarndt@shockers.wichita.edu.