## *Winger*

## By Andrew Smith

## Louisiana Teen Readers’ Choice Nominee 2016

**Grade 9-12**

Submitted by Erin Orr Ragsdale, Graduate Student

School of Library and Information Science, LSU, Baton Rouge

**Title:** *Winger*

**Author:** Andrew Smith

**Illustrator:** Sam Bosma

**Publisher:** Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers

**Pages:** 438 pages

**SUMMARY**

Ryan Dean West attends a boarding school for the wealthy where he is a talented rugby player and is close with his teammates. Nonetheless, he is only fourteen, which makes him two years younger than the other juniors in his grade. To make matters worse, as the result of stealing a teacher’s cellphone the preceding school year, he has been assigned to a dorm room specifically for troublemakers. Now, the biggest bully at the school is his roommate, a situation sure to cause him trouble since he has a crush on the girl who happens to be his new roommate’s girlfriend. Ryan Dean fills the book with cartoon-like drawings that are intended for his friends, and these illustrations combined with the text tell the story of a young man who has determination but who is also very insecure about many areas of his life. Ryan Dean learns a great deal about himself throughout the story as he is forced to face tough decisions about his personal life, friendships, and growing up.

**AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY**

Andrew Smith is a California native and the award winning author of several novels, short stories, and articles. He always knew that he wanted to be a writer and studied journalism in college. He first worked as a teacher for at-risk youth, and it was not until 2008 that he published his first book.

Bibliographical information taken from the author’s website at

<http://www.authorandrewsmith.com/Author_Andrew_Smith/Home.html>

Accessed January 27, 2015

**ILLUSTRATOR BIOGRAPHY**

Sam Bosma was born in Ohio but lived most of his life in suburban Pennsylvania. He moved to Maryland to attend the Maryland Institute College of Art, and upon graduation, he stayed on as a professor of illustration. He has won several awards from the Society of Illustrators, including both silver and gold medals for his illustrations. He also does illustrations for the Cartoon Network.

Bibliographical information taken from the illustrator’s website at

<http://www.sbosma.com/?/about/>

Accessed January 27, 2015

**AWARDS**

American Library Association’s Top 10 for 2014

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Author’s website [http://www.authorandrewsmith.com](http://www.authorandrewsmith.com/Author_Andrew_Smith/Home.html)

Illustrator’s website <http://www.sbosma.com/>

**OTHER TITLES BY AUTHOR**

*Grasshopper Jungle,* 2014

*The Marbury Lens,* 2010

*100 Sideways Miles,* 2014

# RELATED TITLES

*Eleanor & Park* byRainbow Rowell

*We Were Liars* byE. Lockhart

**CLASSROOM CONNECTIONS**

**Language Arts:**

Ask students to analyze specific quotes from the novel and identify their significance. Ask them to name the speaker and context of each quote before specifically explaining its importance. Does the quote reveal information about the author, characters, plot, or themes? Is it an example of foreshadowing? In class, discuss the most frequently chosen quotes and provide several others for analysis as a group. Finally, after the discussion and practice analyses, ask students to create a formal narrative writing sample about one or two of the quotes from the book.

**Social Studies:**

* Have students to listen to a podcast about teens who are dealing with a range of obstacles and hardships. Some of the books are funny while others are suspenseful page-turners. They each have a main character who finds him/herself in a terrible situation but finds a way to respond with strength and hope. After listening to the podcast, students will be given a list of the books to choose from and go to the library to check them out for reading and analysis. The podcast can be accessed at

<http://www.readwritethink.org/parent-afterschool-resources/podcast-episodes/resilience-literature-31123.html>.

* \*Controversial Topic\* Ask students to research statistics and stories about hate crimes that occur in today’s society, paying particular attention to the murder of Matthew Shepard. Have a class or small group discussion about the hate crime that occurs in the book *Winger*, and compare it to the murder of Matthew Shepard. Students will then write a narrative essay about the impact they felt after learning that situations like what happened to Joey in the book happen outside of fiction.

**Physical Education:**

Ask students to research the sport of rugby. They should focus on the characteristics of the sport as well as the methods game play. Once students have a full understanding of the sport, divide them into teams to play rugby (or a modified version of the sport) during their P.E. classes.

**Art:**

* Have students create comics to tell narrative stories. They will research the styles and characteristics of various artists as well as the style of Sam Bosma, the illustrator of *Winger.* Ultimately, the students will use their thoughts and feelings to create several entries for a photo journal similar to that of Ryan Dean West.
* Ask students to compare and contrast the front and back covers of the book, available at <https://thatcovergirl.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/smith_winger_front1.jpg> and <https://thatcovergirl.files.wordpress.com/2012/11/smith_winger_back.jpg>. Are the images really the same? Why are they mirror images? Do the photograph and the illustration convey any differences? Does one image better represent the book or make you want to read the book more than the other? Why? If you were asked to design the cover of the book, what would it look like?

**VOCABULARY**

Impeccably

Perception

Spontaneous

Agonizing

Intimidation

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Analyze the illustrations throughout the book. Provide at least three examples with supporting evidence to show that the illustrations contribute to the story. What might be lost or differently interpreted without these illustrations?
2. Who is the hero of this story? Why? Are there more than one? Provide specific evidence from the text to support your answer.
3. Analyze the themes presented in this story. What are the main themes? Describe each one, providing evidence from the text to support your response.
4. How does Andrew Smith build his characters throughout the book? How does characterization bolster other elements of the text?
5. How does rugby contribute to the plot, characterization, and themes of this text? Could the author have chosen another sport? Explain.

**RELATED WEBSITES**

**USA Youth Rugby**

<http://usarugby.org/youth>

A website about the sport of rugby growing in the United States.

**Ghost Medicine**

<http://ghostmedicine.blogspot.com/>

This is the personal blog of Andrew Smith.

**Unleashing Readers**

<http://www.unleashingreaders.com/?p=4044>

This website presents information about the book *Winger*, the author, classroom connections, and possible book pairings for the book.

**More *Winger* Info**

<http://www.georgiapeachaward.org/sites/default/files/Winger3.pdf>

This site provides additional discussion questions about the book, classroom connections, and other books that could be taught with *Winger.*