

Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher: OLHS English Department

School: Liberty High School

Book Title: *An Absolutely Remarkable Thing*

Genre: Sci-fi/Dystopian

Author: Hank Green

Pages: 352

Publisher: Dutton

Copyright: 2018

Book Summary and Summary Citation: (suggested resources include book flap summaries, review summaries from publisher, book vendors, etc.)

THE INSTANT #1 *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLER

Entertainment Weekly's 20 New Books to Read in September

Nylon's 12 Great New Books to Read This September

Newsweek's Best Books to Read in September 2018

Paste's 12 Best Novels of 2018

Library Journal's Best Debut Novels of 2018

BookPage's Most Anticipated Fall 2018 Fiction

In his much-anticipated debut novel, Hank Green--cocreator of Crash Course, Vlogbrothers, and SciShow--spins a sweeping, cinematic tale about a young woman who becomes an overnight celebrity before realizing she's part of something bigger, and stranger, than anyone could have possibly imagined.

The Carls just appeared.

Roaming through New York City at three a.m., twenty-three-year-old April May stumbles across a giant sculpture. Delighted by its appearance and craftsmanship--like a ten-foot-tall Transformer wearing a suit of samurai armor--April and her best friend, Andy, make a video with it, which Andy uploads to YouTube. The next day, April wakes up to a viral video and a new life. News quickly spreads that there are Carls in dozens of cities around the world--from Beijing to Buenos Aires--and April, as their first documentarian, finds herself at the center of an intense international media spotlight.

Seizing the opportunity to make her mark on the world, April now has to deal with the consequences her new particular brand of fame has on her relationships, her safety, and her own identity. And all eyes are on April to figure out not just what the Carls are, but what they want from us.

Compulsively entertaining and powerfully relevant, *An Absolutely Remarkable Thing* grapples with big themes, including how the social internet is changing fame, rhetoric, and radicalization; how our culture deals with fear and uncertainty; and how vilification and adoration spring for the same dehumanization that follows a life in the public eye. The beginning of an exciting fiction career, *An Absolutely Remarkable Thing* is a bold and insightful novel of now.

(Taken from the GoodReads)

Provide an instructional rationale for the use of this title, including specific reference to the OLSD curriculum blueprints and/or State standards.

An Absolutely Remarkable Thing will serve as a literature circle choice novel. The literature circle texts are focused on American identities and perspectives and how America is constructed of a variety of people experiencing a variety of things, with the added layer of science-fiction/dystopian elements. The novel was selected to fit into the year-long conversations about American ideologies and will end our year thinking about not only America's future, but the world's future.

Unit Title: To infinity and beyond!: The future-- ourselves and others, here and there.

Essential Questions: What happens next? How do we use our knowledge and experiences to benefit/inhibit others? What concerns are there morally with technological advances?

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.1

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.2

Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3

Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful. (Include Shakespeare as well as other authors.)

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.5

Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.6

Analyze a case in which grasping a point of view requires distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).

By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 11-CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently.

Include two professional review of this title: (a suggested list of resources for identifying professional reviews is shown below. Reviews may be “cut and pasted” (with citation) into the form or printed reviews may be attached to the form). Reviews should suggest an appropriate grade-level or grade-band.

Review #1

A young graphic artist inspires worldwide hysteria when she accidentally makes first contact with an alien.

Famous multimedia wunderkind Green is brother to that John Green, so no pressure or anything on his debut novel. Luckily, he applies wit, affection, and cultural intelligence to a comic sci-fi novel suitable for adults and mature teens. It’s endearing how fully he occupies his narrator, a 20-something bi artist named April May who is wasting her youth slaving at a Manhattan startup. On her way home late one night, April encounters an armored humanoid figure, which turns out to be alien in nature—“And I don’t mean alien like ‘weird,’” she says. She phones her videographer friend Andy Skampt, who posts on YouTube a funny introduction to the robot she dubs Carl. April’s life is turned upside down when the video goes massively viral and immovable Carls appear in cities around the world. After they discover a complex riddle involving the Queen song “Don’t Stop Me Now,” the mystery becomes a quest for April; Andy; April’s roommate/kind-of-sort-of girlfriend, Maya; a scientist named Miranda; and April’s new assistant, Robin, to figure out what the Carls are doing here. “None of us older than twenty-five years old, cruising down Santa Monica Boulevard, planning our press strategy for the announcement of First Contact with a space alien,” says April. April and her friends are amiable goofballs and drawn genuinely for their age and time. Meanwhile, the story bobs along on adolescent humor and otherworldly phenomena seeded with very real threats, not least among them a professional hater named Peter Petrawicki and his feral followers. Green is clearly interested in how social media moves the needle on our culture, and he uses April’s fame, choices, and moral quandaries to reflect on the rending of social fabric. Fortunately, this entertaining ride isn’t over yet, as a cliffhanger ending makes clear.

A fun, contemporary adventure that cares about who we are as humans, especially when faced with remarkable events.

-Kirkus Review

Review #2

The younger Vlogbrother (John Green is the other) draws on his passion for science and his experience as a “Tier 3” celebrity (“You’ll probably trend on Twitter if you die”) for a comic debut that combines science fiction and mystery with philosophical musings about the perils of internet fame. His main character, the unfortunately named April May, is a recent art-school grad who happens upon a 10-foot-tall robotic sculpture in the darkened streets of Lower Manhattan. Entranced, she summons Andy, a classmate with a video camera, and the two introduce the figure they dub Carl to the world via YouTube. April May becomes a celebrity but soon discovers that dozens of Carls have appeared in cities across the globe. As she and her friends search for an explanation, she struggles with her newfound addiction to fame and the damage it causes to her most important relationships. April May’s narration, which doesn’t fully work, is both self-effacing and contradictory: she bemoans how much she enjoys fame while cynically crafting a message stressing community, which she determines will best resonate with her fans, thus growing her fame. Though the ending is disappointing (it appears to be setting up a sequel), fans of Green’s YouTube channel will find his humor and perceptiveness intact in this novel. (*Sept.*)

-Publishers Weekly

What alternate text(s) could also fulfill the instructional requirements?

Any dystopian literature with elements of science-fiction.

Document any potentially controversial content:

“Parents need to know that *An Absolutely Remarkable Thing* is a science-fiction story by Hank Green, the driving force along with his brother John of several popular science and "nerd-power" YouTube channels. With protagonist April in her early 20s, it's not marketed strictly at teens, but there's a lot of appeal here. April's just out of college and starting out in New York City, which she loves, and she becomes an internationally famous social media star practically overnight. The book asks a lot of questions about the power of that kind of celebrity, and about the ways in which social media divides and unites people. April identifies as bisexual and briefly addresses sexual preference once or twice. She's currently in a same-sex relationship that mentions some kissing and having sex without any detailed descriptions. Rare violence includes April in peril from attempted murder by shooting, and a direct but non-gory description of someone trapped in a burning building, a roof beam hitting the skull, and burning skin. Strong language is also rare but includes "f--k," "s--t," and "d--k" used in calling names. Other strong themes offering food for thought are the power of celebrity, fear of the unknown, and how we can handle experiences, especially negative ones, in a positive way.”

-Common Sense Media

Keeping in mind the age, academic level, and maturity of the intended reader, what is the suggested classroom use: (check all that apply)

Gifted/Accelerated

Regular

At Risk

GRADE LEVEL(S): 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Reading Level of this Title (if applicable):

Suggested Professional Literacy Review Sources:

School Library Journal

Horn Book

Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books

VOYA (Voice of Youth Advocates)

Library Journal

Book Links

Publisher's Weekly

Booklist

Kirkus Review

Wilson Library Catalog

English Journal (and other resources of the National Council of Teachers of English)

The Reading Teacher (International Reading Association)

Literature for Today's Young Adults

Signatures:

Teacher: _____

Date: _____

Department Head: _____

Date: _____

Building Administrator: _____

Date: _____

Curriculum Supervisor: _____

Date: _____