

Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher: Mary Bischoff	School: OLMS
Book Title: Counting By 7s	Genre: Realistic Fiction
Author: Holly Goldberg Sloan	Pages: 400
Publisher: Penguin Young Readers Group	Copyright: 2014

In a brief rationale, please provide the following information relative to the book you would like added to the school's book collection for classroom use. You may attach additional pages as needed.

Book Summary and Summary Citation: (suggested resources include book flap summaries, review summaries from publisher, book vendors, etc.) **n the tradition of *Out of My Mind, Wonder, and Mockingbird*, this is an intensely moving middle grade novel about being an outsider, coping with loss, and discovering the true meaning of family.**

Willow Chance is a twelve-year-old genius, obsessed with nature and diagnosing medical conditions, who finds it comforting to count by 7s. It has never been easy for her to connect with anyone other than her adoptive parents, but that hasn't kept her from leading a quietly happy life . . . until now.

Suddenly Willow's world is tragically changed when her parents both die in a car crash, leaving her alone in a baffling world. The triumph of this book is that it is *not* a tragedy. This extraordinarily odd, but extraordinarily endearing, girl manages to push through her grief. Her journey to find a fascinatingly diverse and fully believable surrogate family is a joy and a revelation to read.

RL.7.10, RL.7.1, RL.7.2,RL.7.6

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

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: Gr 5–8—Twelve-year-old Willow Chase lived with her adoptive parents in Bakersfield, California. There in the midst of the high desert, she grew a garden in her backyard, her sanctuary. She was excited about starting a new school, hoping this time she might fit in, might find a friend. Willow had been identified in preschool as highly gifted, most of the time causing confusion and feelings of ineptness in her teachers. Now at her new school she is accused of cheating because no one has ever finished the state proficiency test in just 17 minutes, let alone gotten a perfect score. Her reward is behavioral counseling with Dell Duke, an ineffectual counselor with organizational and social issues of his own. She does make a friend when Mai Nguyen brings her brother, Quang-ha, to his appointment, and their lives begin to intertwine when Willow's parents are killed in an auto accident. For the second time in her life she is an orphan, forced to find a "new normal." She is taken in temporarily by Mai's mother, who must stay ahead of Social Services. While Willow sees herself as just an observer, trying to figure out the social norms of regular family life, she is actually a catalyst for change, bringing together unsuspecting people and changing their lives

forever. The narration cleverly shifts among characters as the story evolves. Willow's philosophical and intellectual observations contrast with Quang-ha's typical teenage boy obsessions and the struggles of a Vietnamese family fighting to live above the poverty level. Willow's story is one of renewal, and her journey of rebuilding the ties that unite people as a family will stay in readers' hearts long after the last page.—Cheryl Ashton, Amherst Public Library, OH

School Library Journal

Review #2: A story of renewal and belonging that succeeds despite, not because of, its contrivances. Twelve-year-old genius Willow Chance was adopted as an infant by her "so white" parents (Willow is mixed race) and loses them both in one afternoon in a convenient car accident. Outside of her parents, she has a hard time making friends since her mishmash of (also convenient, plotwise) interests--disease, plants and the number seven--doesn't appeal to her fellow middle-grade students. Losing her parents propels her on her hero's-journey quest to find belonging. Along the way, her fate intertwines with those of a confident high school girl named Mai and her surly brother, Quang-ha; their energetic, manicure-salon-owning mother, Pattie (formerly Dung); Jairo Hernandez, a taxi driver with an existential crisis; and a failure of a school counselor named Dell Duke. With these characters' ages running the gamut from 12 to high school to mid-30s and their voices included in a concurrent third-person narration along with Willow's precise, unemotional first-person narration, readers may well have a hard time engaging. Relying heavily on serendipity--a technique that only adds, alas, to the "leave no stone unturned" feeling of the story--the plot resolves in a bright and heartfelt, if predictable conclusion. Despite its apparent desire to be all things to all people, this is, in the end, an uplifting story. (*Fiction. 10-14*)

Kirkus Reviews

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

Title: Out Of My Mind Author: Sharon M. Draper

Title: Author:

Title: Author:

Document any potentially controversial content: Parents need to know that *Counting by 7s* is an exceptional novel that deals with a death and grief. The 12-year-old protagonist, Willow Chance, is a genius outsider whose parents are killed in a car crash as the book begins, but the accident's not described in graphic detail. The only blood in the book appears when Willow faints and cuts her head on a table. Positive role models abound in this heartwarming story that shows how grief feels but is ultimately a celebration of the indomitable human spirit. And though it's marketed to kids as young as 10, it could appeal to teens, as well, as it tackles complex feelings and issues of fitting in and features two compelling teen characters. 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: _____