

## Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher:	Mary Bischoff	School:	OLMS
Book Title:	Lions of Little Rock	Genre:	Historical Fiction
Author:	Kristen Levine	Pages:	320
Publisher:	Penguin Young Readers Group	Copyright:	2013

*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.)

### Overview

As twelve-year-old Marlee starts middle school in 1958 Little Rock, it feels like her whole world is falling apart. Until she meets Liz, the new girl at school. Liz is everything Marlee wishes she could be: she's brave, brash and always knows the right thing to say. But when Liz leaves school without even a good-bye, the rumor is that Liz was caught passing for white. Marlee decides that doesn't matter. She just wants her friend back. And to stay friends, Marlee and Liz are even willing to take on segregation and the dangers their friendship could bring to both their families.

**Provide an instructional rationale for the use of this title, including specific reference to the OLSD curriculum map(s):** (Curriculum maps may be referenced by grade/course and indicator number or curriculum maps with indicators highlighted may be attached to this form)

RL. 1,2,3, and RL. 9

**Include two professional reviews 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)

### Review #1

School Library Journal

Gr 5–8—In this stunning piece of historical fiction, Levine sheds light on the little-known period immediately following the Little Rock Nine's integration of Central High School in 1957. In September 1958, Governor Orval Faubus ordered the closure of all public high schools in the city. This novel depicts the tumultuous era through the eyes of 12-year-old Marlee Nisbett, who is painfully shy but eventually reclaims her voice by having the courage to do the right thing. On her first day at West Side Junior High, Marlee meets Liz, a new girl unafraid of speaking her mind. Emboldened by her friendship with Liz, Marlee begins talking and interacting more with her classmates. When Liz abruptly disappears amid rumors that she is a black girl—"Can you believe it...A nigger at our school?"—passing for white, Marlee is bereft but determined to uphold the friendship, at great cost to both girls' safety. In trying to sustain her relationship with Liz, Marlee ultimately realizes that there is a bigger cause at stake. With remarkable depth and clarity, Levine unflinchingly portrays racial tensions in the 1950s Deep South. Her descriptions of the Women's Emergency Committee to Open Our Schools (WEC) and the Stop This Outrageous Purge (STOP)

campaign further lend an air of historical authenticity to the book. Readers will be moved by Marlee and Liz's strong bonds and inspired by Marlee's unwavering tenacity in the face of what seems like insurmountable adversity.—Lalitha Nataraj, Escondido Public Library, CA

Review #2

Kirkus Reviews

The remarkable story of the Little Rock Nine is familiar to many, but what happened next? In this quietly powerful page-turner, Levine focuses her attention on the events that unfolded in Little Rock the year after the integration of the city's public schools. Readers meet quiet, 12-year-old Marlee and her outgoing and warm-hearted best friend, Liz, who is instrumental in Marlee's burgeoning ability to speak her mind to anyone outside of her family. To Marlee's dismay, Liz suddenly vanishes from school, and the rumor is that she has been passing for white. Marlee initially feels betrayed by her friend, but her understanding of the complicated nature of race relations and politics matures. Levine sensitively portrays her process as she sorts out these feelings, finds a way to stay friends with Liz and becomes involved with the Womens' Emergency Committee to Open Our Schools (WEC) after the city shuts down all of its public schools to prevent integration. When Marlee's father, a schoolteacher, is fired because of his pro-integration stance, the entire family becomes involved in the Stop This Outrageous Purge (STOP) campaign in an attempt to have all of the teachers rehired and the public schools reopened. This engaging story, with its emphasis on the impact of friendship and on finding one's voice when it is most important to be heard, will no doubt appeal to a broad range of readers and inspire many interesting conversations. (author's note)  
(Historical fiction. 10-14)

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

Title: **Watsons Go To Brimingham**

Author: **Christopher Paul Curtis**

Title: **Bud, Not Buddy**

Author: **Christopher Paul Curtis**

Title:

Author:

Title:

Author:

Title:

Author:

Title:

Author:

**Document any potentially controversial content:**

The Lions of Little Rock includes some suspenseful parts where characters are threatened by violence. An explosion takes place, and though no one is hurt, the threat from violent bigots is very real in the world of the novel. Also, characters talk frankly with young people about the murder of Emmett Till and other violent acts perpetrated or threatened against African Americans and white "integrationists."

Offensive language in The Lions of Little Rock is bigoted language. The "N" word is used by some white characters, sometimes in reference to children.

Twelve-year-old kids find empty beer cans, which suggests that a couple of teenagers have been drinking

**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):** 10-13

**Date Submitted to Department Chair:** 12-19-2013

**Suggested Professional Literary 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