

Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher: Good Grade: 6 School: OBMS

Book Title: So Far from the Bamboo Grove Genre: Historical Fiction

Author: Yoko Kawashima Watkins Pages: 175

Publisher: Harper Trophy Copyright: 1986

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.)

In the final days of World War II, Koreans were determined to take back control of their country from the Japanese and end the suffering caused by the Japanese occupation. As an eleven-year-old girl living with her Japanese family in northern Korea, Yoko is suddenly fleeing for her life with her mother and older sister, Ko, trying to escape to Japan, a country Yoko hardly knows. Their journey is terrifying—and remarkable. It's a true story of courage and survival that highlights the plight of individual people in wartime. In the midst of suffering, acts of kindness, as exemplified by a family of Koreans who risk their own lives to help Yoko's brother, are inspiring reminders of the strength and resilience of the human spirit.

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)

- Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.2 Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary of the text distinct from personal opinions or judgments.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.3 Describe how a particular story's or drama's plot unfolds in a series of episodes as well as how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.

Craft and Structure

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.5 Analyze how a particular sentence, chapter, scene, or stanza fits into the overall structure of a text and contributes to the development of the theme, setting, or plot.
- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.6 Explain how an author develops the point of view of the narrator or speaker in a text.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.7 Compare and contrast the experience of reading a story, drama, or poem to listening to or viewing an audio, video, or live version of the text, including contrasting what they “see” and “hear” when reading the text to what they perceive when they listen or watch.
- (RL.6.8 not applicable to literature)

- CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.6.9 Compare and contrast texts in different forms or genres (e.g., stories and poems; historical novels and fantasy stories) in terms of their approaches to similar themes and topics.

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

From School Library Journal

Grade 6 Up A true account that is filled with violence and death, yet one that is ultimately a story of family love and life. Eleven-year-old Yoko Kawashima had led a peaceful and secure life as the daughter of a Japanese government official stationed in North Korea near the end of World War II. Abruptly, all is changed as she, her older sister Ko, and their mother flee the vengeance-seeking North Korean Communists and eventually make their way to an unwelcoming and war-ravaged Japan. Yoko's story is spellbinding. She often escapes death by mere chance; her brother, Hideyo, separated from the family, has an equally harrowing escape. The longed-for arrival in Japan proves to be an almost greater trial, as their mother, defeated by the discovery that all their Japanese relatives are dead, dies. Together, Yoko and Ko create a home in which to await the return of Hideyo. Watkins writes clearly and movingly, with a straightforward style through which the story unfolds quickly. She skillfully alternates her account of the girls' journey with that of their brother, maintaining readers' interest in both. Watkins is able to describe scenes of death, rape, and other atrocities with a simple directness which has no trace of sensationalism yet in no way diminishes their horror. Readers will be riveted by the events of the escape and struggle for survival, and enriched and inspired by the personalities of the family. Especially well drawn is Yoko's gradual emergence from a frightened, whining child to a strong and courageous young girl. Parallels can be drawn to Holocaust survival stories such as Aranka Siegal's *Upon the Head of the Goat* (Farrar, 1981) and Esther Hautzig's *The Endless Steppe* (Crowell, 1968). *So Far from the Bamboo Grove* should have a place among the finest of them. Louise L. Sherman, Anna C. Scott School, Leonia, N.J.

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Review #2

From Publishers Weekly

This riveting novel, based on the author's own experiences, describes a Japanese family forced to flee their home in Korea at the end of WW II. Ages 10-up.

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

Title: When My Name Was Keoko Author: Linda Sue Park

Title: The Year of Impossible Goodbyes Author: Sook Nyul Choi

Title: Author:

Title: Author:

Title: Author:

Title: Author:

Document any potentially controversial content:

Refugees drink urine because there is no water. Main character and female family members must pretend to urinate like men so as not to be taken by Korean men as they flee Japan. Older sister gets "felt up" but she has bound her chest so no one realizes she is female. Rape is mentioned but not described.

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):

- Age Range: 8 - 12 years
- Grade Level: 5 - 7
- Lexile Measure: 730L (What's this?)
- Paperback: 192 pages
- Publisher: HarperCollins; 1st Beech Tree ed edition (August 12, 2008)
- Language: English
- ISBN-10: 0688131158
- ISBN-13: 978-0688131159
- Product Dimensions: 7.6 x 5.1 x 0.5 inches
- Shipping Weight: 11.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)
- Average Customer Review: 4.1 out of 5 stars See all reviews (121 customer reviews)
- Amazon Best Sellers Rank: #68,966 in Books (See Top 100 in Books)

Date Submitted to Department Chair: 3/3/2014

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

