

## Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher: 7<sup>th</sup> Grade ELA teachers (for book room)

School: OLMS

Book Title: *We Were Liars*

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Author: E. Lockhart

Pages: 240

Publisher: Delacorte

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.)

Cadence Sinclair Eastman spends summers on her family's island near Martha's Vineyard. Yes, her family has an entire island, where each of Harris Sinclair's three daughters has a house. The kids who populate these houses are cousins and cohorts; the oldest posse of the cousins call themselves the Liars. Her parents' dramatic divorce leaves Cady with horrible migraines. She finds comfort at Beechwood Island with her cousins, particularly with a stepcousin named Gat. The Sinclair family begins to fracture, as the aunts vie for their share of the inheritance, and the Liars decide to take matters into their own hands.

(Summary from commonsensemedia.org)

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

*We Were Liars* is a cautionary tale of the tragic consequences of overwhelming greed. Many of our students can relate to the wealth and affluence of the characters in this novel, but it does warn of the dangers that extreme wealth can lead to. While there are references to underage drinking, the kids in the novel pay penance for their mistakes. Big time.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.2

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.10

By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 6-8 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of rhymes and other repetitions of sounds (e.g., alliteration) on a specific verse or stanza of a poem or section of a story or drama.

**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 devastating tale of greed and secrets springs from the summer that tore Cady’s life apart. Cady Sinclair’s family uses its inherited wealth to ensure that each successive generation is blond, beautiful and powerful. Reunited each summer by the family patriarch on his private island, his three adult daughters and various grandchildren lead charmed, fairy-tale lives (an idea reinforced by the periodic inclusions of Cady’s reworkings of fairy tales to tell the Sinclair family story). But this is no sanitized, modern Disney fairy tale; this is Cinderella with her stepsisters’ slashed heels in bloody glass slippers. Cady’s fairy-tale retellings are dark, as is the personal tragedy that has led to her examination of the skeletons in the Sinclair castle’s closets; its rent turns out to be extracted in personal sacrifices. Brilliantly, Lockhart resists simply crucifying the Sinclairs, which might make the family’s foreshadowed tragedy predictable or even satisfying. Instead, she humanizes them (and their painful contradictions) by including nostalgic images that showcase the love shared among Cady, her two cousins closest in age, and Gat, the Heathcliff-esque figure she has always loved. Though increasingly disenchanted with the Sinclair legacy of self-absorption, the four believe family redemption is possible—if they have the courage to act. Their sincere hopes and foolish naïveté make the teens’ desperate, grand gesture all that much more tragic.

Riveting, brutal and beautifully told. (Kirkus)

Review #2

Lockhart’s gimlet-eyed depiction of Yankee privilege is astute; the Sinclairs are bigoted “old-money Democrats” who prize height, blonde hair, athleticism, and possessions above all else. There’s enough of a King Lear dynamic going on between Granddad and his three avaricious daughters to distract readers from Lockhart’s deft foreshadowing of the novel’s principal tragedy, and even that may be saying too much. Lockhart has created a mystery with an ending most readers won’t see coming, one so horrific it will prompt some to return immediately to page one to figure out how they missed it. At the center of it is a girl who learns the hardest way of all what family means, and what it means to lose the one that really mattered to you. (Publisher’s Weekly)

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

Title: *The Pearl*

Author: Steinbeck

Title: *The Great Gatsby*

Author: Fitzgerald

**Document any potentially controversial content:**

Intermittent profanity, underage drinking (although this topic is presented as a cautionary tale), references to sexual attraction.

**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):**

770 Lexile Level

**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:** \_\_\_\_\_