

Olentangy Local School District Literature Selection Review

Teacher: Jenifern Pulliam

School: Hyatts Middle School

Book Title: *Secrets in the Fire*

Genre: historical fiction

Author: Henning Mankell

Publisher: Annick Press

Copyright: September 2003

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

Amazon: It is the wise old woman of the village who teaches young Sofia about the secrets in the fire. Within the flames hide all things past and all things yet to be. But not even old Muazena can see the horrors the fire holds for Sofia and her family—not the murderous bandits who drive them from their home, and not the landmine that takes Sofia's legs. In her long journey toward recovery, Sofia must still deal with growing up. Along the way, she discovers friends, and foes, in places she'd never expected. Through it all, Sofia draws on a strength she never knew she had, a fire of her own that's been a secret all along. In beautifully spare, unsentimental language, Henning Mankell's stunning novel puts a very human face on the suffering in Africa.

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

Read alouds in the 6th grade classroom are for the purpose of introducing various genres of reading, modeling reading strategies, modeling writing response to literature, and to anchor the kids with the learning standards. This novel will be used to address the following four learning standards in order to model examples with a common text. RL.6.1 Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text. RL.6.2 Analyze literary text development. a. Determine a theme of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details. b. Incorporate a theme and story details into an objective summary of the text. RI.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. W.6.10 Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences. Then, students will be expected to apply these same standards to assigned readings as well as their own choice selections throughout the course of the year.

By offering an anchor text, the classroom instructor is able to refer back to a common and familiar text when expanding lessons with the same standards. This particular title was selected based on the idea of diversity and inclusion as well as perseverance. This title was also selected as an introduction to the historical fiction genre.

Professional reviews: Reviews should suggest an appropriate grade-level or grade-band.

Review #1

MANKELL, Henning.

Secrets in the Fire.

tr. from Swedish by Anne Connie Stuksrud.

176p. CIP. Annick, dist. by Firefly. 2003. Tr \$17.95.

ISBN 1-55037-801-5; pap. \$7.95.

ISBN 1-55037-800-7. LC C2003-900340-X.

Gr 6-9-- A hard-hitting, eye-opening novel that brings readers face-to-face with the horrors of war. Although a work of fiction, it is based on the real-life experiences of Sofia Alface, a friend of the author. The story takes place in Mozambique, which is in the midst of a civil war (1975-1992). One night, most of the village population, including Sofia's father, are murdered by ax-wielding bandits. Sofia, her sister Maria, her mother, and her brother survive the attack and travel by foot to a faraway village. Just as they seem to be recovering from the trauma, disaster strikes again. Maria and Sofia are playing on a path when Sofia steps on a landmine. In that second, life is altered permanently. Maria dies, and Sofia loses both legs. This is one child's story of survival, strength, determination, and triumph. Through it, readers come to understand what happens to survivors of landmine accidents--physically, psychologically, emotionally, and spiritually. Mankell's language and style are spare, but elicit a deeply emotional response. An appended "Message from Adopt-A-Minefield" gives facts and statistics, as well as the mission of the organization and how readers can help. This outstanding book has been adapted for film, and Sofia's inspirational story is continued in a second book, *Playing with Fire*, currently published in Australia (Allen & Unwin, 2002).

Oluonye, Mary N., and Phyllis Levy Mandell. "Secrets in the Fire (Book)." *School Library Journal*, vol. 50, no. 5, May 2004, pp. 152-154. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lfh&AN=13074387&site=eds-live&scope=site.

Review #2

"Mankell, Henning. *Secrets in the Fire*. 2003. Tr. by Anne Connie Stuksrud. 176p. Annick, \$14.95 (1-55037-801-5); paper, \$7.95 (1-55037-800-7). Gr. 4-8. Running with her sister in the fields near their village in Mozambique, southern Africa, Sofia steps on a landmine. She loses both her legs, and her sister dies. Swedish writer Mankell, recognized for his adult mysteries, knows the real Sofia and her country, and his novel, originally published in Sweden and translated here with simple clarity, dramatizes the landmine horror, especially its devastating toll on children. With the help of a dedicated doctor, a priest, and hospital caregivers, Sofia is fitted with two artificial legs and learns to walk again. Mankell never denies how the difficulties Sofia faces—the pain, grief, and family separation (her stepfather won't have her in the house), and the poverty in the war-ravaged country, where school is one classroom without books, paper, pens, or chalk. The resolution is hopeful; Sofia learns to use a sewing machine and support herself, but the physical reality is always visible as she straps on her legs every day. One of the first books to dramatize the global landmine crisis for children, this docu-novel will grab readers with the truth of one child's terror and courage. —Hazel Rochman

Rochman, Hazel. "Secrets in the Fire (Book)." *Booklist*, vol. 100, no. 8, Dec. 2003, p. 749. *EBSCOhost*, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=lfh&AN=11870762&site=eds-live&scope=site.

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

The Breadwinner by Deborah Ellis

Document any potentially controversial content:


Implication of landmines injuring individuals without harsh language


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

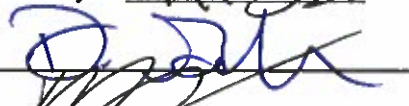
Gifted/Accelerated Regular At Risk


GRADE LEVEL(S): 6 7 8 9 10 11 12
Reading Level of this Title (if applicable): Grades 4-9

Signatures:

Teacher: _____ Jennifer Pulliam  Date: _____ 10/4/21 _____

Department Head: _____ Melissa Byard  Date: _____ 10/7/21 _____

Building Administrator: _____  Date: _____ 10-8-21 _____

Curriculum Supervisor: _____  Date: _____ 10/20-21 _____