

OLENTANGY SCHOOLS LITERATURE SELECTION REVIEW FORM

LOCATION

Building(s): OLMS

Classes/Grade Level(s): 6,7,8

ABOUT THE BOOK

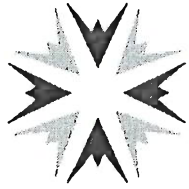
Selection Title/Author: The Last Cuentista / Donna Barba Higuera

Genre: Science Fiction

Lexile Reading Level: 925L

Total number of pages: 320

<p>Book Summary (abbreviated, bulleted list or link to a book summary)</p> <p>This award-winning book is a sci-fi adventure that clips along while still managing to hit a wide-range of themes: the love and value of family, the worth of stories and storytellers, assimilation and homogeneity, distorted dystopian values and tyranny, and a few others.</p> <p>As THE LAST CUENTISTA opens, 14-year-old Petra Peña is about to join her parents and brother on an interstellar trip to another habitable planet. When she wakes up, she discovers she's been betrayed by the Collective, that her family members have been purged instead of resuscitated. Deposited on the planet Sagan, Petra looks for the opportunity to leave the other settlers behind while keeping the storytelling traditions alive.</p>	<p>Potentially Objectionable Content (list all categories and at least one example, referenced with a page or chapter number)</p> <p>Profanity/Language: 5 religious exclamations (throughout the book).</p> <p>Reference to a memory of kids playing with their dad's cigars; many characters drink brightly colored drinks that are used to stabilize their moods; poison is developed to eliminate threats (implied that these threats are humans).</p> <p>There is no mention of sex or physical romance.</p> <p>Character is shocked as part of a medical procedure; painful and slightly frightening medical procedure; destruction of the earth and most of the people by an asteroid (implied, understood that this is/did happen); gunshots are heard and people with weapons are seen storming a ship (page 40,41) Report that a ship is destroyed with its inhabitants (page 20)</p> <p>Description of removing tonsils; explosion causing damage; character is being</p>
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punished by being exposed to foreign elements as part of an experiment, death implied; development of a toxin with intent to use it to kill (p155) implied early end to many individuals (including children) who were in hibernation—exact status or details are unclear (page page 70,71); people brainwashed against their will; person is taken away as punishment (page 220).

Book Reviews (1-2 link(s)) *Note: teacher is not responsible for broken links*

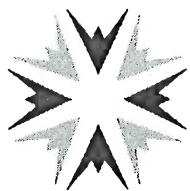
<https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/donna-barba-higuera/the-last-cuentista/>

With Halley's comet barreling toward Earth, humanity's last hope—including a young Latinx storyteller—retreats into the stars.

Only a select few have the opportunity to vacate Earth in the year 2061, travel for 380 years in stasis, and start a new life on the planet of Sagan. Tearing herself away from her grandma and her cuentos, or stories, Petra Peña follows her family aboard one of three fleeing spaceships. One ship—reserved for leaders and politicians—is lost. Petra awakens years later to find that the ominous Collective has taken over her ship. Along the way to Sagan, the Collective has ensured the eradication of any Earth-associated memories, reprogramming everyone onboard—and purging some—for the so-called greater good. Petra, however, eludes reprogramming. To survive the Collective's fanaticism, Petra must play her part and participate in scouting missions on Sagan to help the Collective prepare for colonization. As she shares cuentos with other child passengers to stir their Earth memories, Petra concocts a plan to escape, seeking a rumored Collective-free colony of First Arrivers on Sagan. With poetic use of startling imagery and unabashed nostalgia, Higuera spins a tale that crosses the depths of space, interweaving Mexican folklore with a mystical strand of science fiction. It all works thanks to the author's keen appreciation of storytelling's role in shaping cultures, dreams, and lives. An overall slow burner, this tale packs a wallop.

An exquisite tonic for storytellers far and wide, young and old. (Science fiction. 10-14)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/06/books/review/donna-barba-higuera-the-last-cuentista.html>



The brilliance of Higuera’s narrative is that it shows rather than tells us the power of story. As Petra shares her tales and they guide her shipmates out of darkness, readers will find corners of their own hearts illuminated as well. This book is gripping in its twists and turns, and moving in its themes – truly a beautiful cuento.

ABOUT THE CLASS

Rationale for the Literature Selection (in addition to standards): (To be completed by the teacher or team)

7th Grade ELA can work this book into their science fiction unit as it deals with many of the tropes and themes of the genre. It is also a complex book about identity and storytelling that can be used by many other teachers for focusing on heritage and tradition—what can be saved through stories.

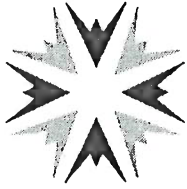
The Ohio Department of Education ELA Standards (list priority standards *only and* abbreviations of the main ideas of the priority standards) [Link to Ohio's ELA Standards](#)

1. RL.7.3 Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot).
2. RL.7.6 Analyze how an author uses the point of view to develop and contrast the perspectives of different characters or narrators in a text.
3. RL.7.2 Analyze literary text development. a. Determine a theme of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text. b. Incorporate the development of a theme and other story details into an objective summary of the text.

ALTERNATIVE TEXTS

What alternative texts would allow students to meet the same objectives? (1-2 texts, title/author; Note: these texts must also have lit. reviews forms associated with their selection)

1. Unwind
2. The Martian



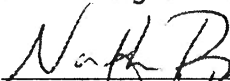
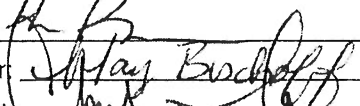
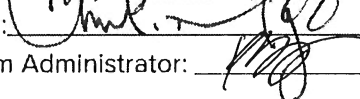

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1. The Outsiders

SIGNATURES (embedded jpegs of authentic signatures are fine OR download/print form and obtain traditional signatures)

Teacher:		Date:	5/17/23
Department Chair:		Date:	5/18/23
Building Principal:		Date:	5/17/23
District Curriculum Administrator:		Date:	5/31/23