# OLENTANGY SCHOOLS LITERATURE SELECTION REVIEW FORM

## LOCATION

**Building(s):** Olentangy Liberty High School
**Classes/Grade Level(s):** English 10

## ABOUT THE BOOK

**Selection Title/Author:** *The House in the Cerulean Sea* by TJ Klune
**Genre:** Fiction, Fantasy
**Lexile Reading Level:** 620L
**Total number of pages:** 396

**Book Summary (abbreviated, bulleted list or link to a book summary)**

*The House in the Cerulean Sea* by TJ Klune tells the story of Linus Baker, a caseworker for the Department in Charge of Magical Youth, who is assigned to investigate an orphanage on Marsyas Island run by the enigmatic Arthur Parnassus and his six unusual magical children. As Linus spends time with them, he begins to question his rigid beliefs and the strict rules of the Department, finding himself drawn to the unconventional family Arthur has created. The story explores themes of acceptance, found family, and the power of love to overcome prejudice and fear.

**Content Overview →**

Linus Baker's Life: Linus leads a solitary, by-the-book life until he's summoned by Extremely Upper Management to investigate the orphanage for magical children.

The Children: The children in the orphanage are a gnome, a sprite, a wyvern, a green blob, a were-Pomeranian, and the Antichrist.

**Potentially Objectionable Content (list all categories and at least one example, referenced with a page or chapter number)**

**Oppression and Prejudice →**

The book's setting includes a bureaucratic system — the Department in Charge of Magical Youth (DICOMY) — which regulates and isolates these children, often labeling them based on fear rather than understanding. This mirrors real-world systems of institutional oppression.

Prejudice is seen in the way the broader society views magical beings — especially characters like Lucy (the Antichrist) or Chauncey, whose appearances and identities cause others to assume the worst. These children are judged not for who they are but for what others fear they might become. Marginalization is reflected in their physical and social isolation at the orphanage on Marsyas Island, where they are hidden from the public eye.

The story ultimately challenges these structures by promoting empathy, acceptance,



| | |
|---|---|
| Arthur Parnassus' Influence: Arthur, the orphanage caretaker, is devoted to protecting the children and challenges Linus' assumptions about them.<br><br>Linus' Transformation: Linus starts to see the children as individuals rather than threats, realizing the importance of love and acceptance.<br><br>Conflict and Resolution: Linus must confront his prejudices and the rules of the Department ultimately choosing to protect the family he's found.<br><br>Themes: The novel emphasizes the power of found family, the beauty of acceptance, and the courage it takes to challenge societal norms. | and the importance of seeing people as individuals rather than stereotypes. Linus, the protagonist, undergoes a transformation as he confronts his own biases and begins to question the systems he once enforced.<br><br>"Just because you don't experience prejudice in your everyday doesn't stop it from existing for the rest of us" (126).<br><br>"The world likes to see things in black and white, in moral and immoral. But there is gray in between. And just because a person is capable of wickedness, doesn't mean they will act upon it" (162).<br><br>"Change often starts with the smallest of whispers. Like-minded people building it up to a roar" (105).<br><br>**Sexuality Content →**<br><br>In *The House in the Cerulean Sea*, sexuality is present through the developing relationship between Linus Baker and Arthur Parnassus. Their connection is portrayed as a gradual and respectful romantic bond, with an emphasis on emotional intimacy rather than physical expression. The novel subtly portrays the building of romantic/sexual tension between the two characters, and they eventually share one kiss. A few other moments of similarly subtle sexual humor and innuendo are present, primarily through portrayal of the children's age appropriate immaturity and naivete.<br><br>The novel includes LGBTQ+ representation, primarily through this same-sex relationship, but it is not the central focus of the plot. The depiction of sexuality is integrated into the story in a normalized manner, without being a source of conflict or controversy within the narrative. This approach aligns with the book's |

| | |
|---|---|
| | broader themes of identity, acceptance, and belonging.<br><br>""Where did you come from?" "A vagina after it was penetrated by a penis." "Lucy," Mr. Parnassus admonished, as Linus choked" (142).<br><br>"Helen was speaking with Zoe through the open window. They were both smiling. Linus hadn't seen their relationship blossoming, though he seemed to be the only one. It wasn't until he'd stumbled upon them kissing that he figured out why Helen seemed to be at the island more and more" (359).<br><br>"Arthur opened the bedroom door. He held out his hand for Linus. Linus, still sputtering of course, took what was offered" (360). |
| **Book Reviews (1-2 link(s))** *Note: teacher is not responsible for broken links*<br>Kirkus<br>Common Sense Media<br>Publisher's Weekly | |

## ABOUT THE CLASS

**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.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.2

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

2.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.9

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.



3.
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.3
Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

**Rationale for the Literature Selection (in addition to standards):** (To be completed by the teacher or team)
CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.2: Students will analyze how central themes—such as acceptance, resistance to conformity, and bias—develop throughout the text. Through close reading, students trace how these ideas emerge through character interactions, settings, and narrative events. They will also craft objective summaries that highlight how themes are shaped and refined over the course of the novel.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.9: The text provides rich opportunities for students to cite strong and relevant evidence to support literary analysis and personal reflection. For example, students may examine how Linus's evolving perception of the children reflects internal conflict and broader societal critique. These activities support analytical writing, comparative discussions, and research-based inquiry into real-world parallels. The text also provides opportunities for students to cite textual evidence from informational texts to support text-to-world connections in the form of research projects.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.L.9-10.3: Klune's prose offers accessible but layered examples of language use. Students can analyze how tone, dialogue, and narrative voice contribute to meaning and style. The author's deliberate word choices—often balancing humor with sincerity—allow students to explore how language functions within a narrative to shape emotional impact and social commentary. The text also provides relevant opportunities for examination of thematically aligned informational texts, allowing students to analyze key stylistic choices in relation to a text's genre, purpose, and intended audience.

## 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. *Lord of the Flies* by William Goulding
2. *The Giver* by Lois Lowry

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

Teacher: _____ Date: 8/28/25

ELA Department Chair: Hannah CR Oswald Date: 8-27-25

Building Principal: _____ Date: 8/28/25

District Curriculum Administrator: _____ Date: 9/2/25