OLENTANGY SCHOOLS LITERATURE SELECTION REVIEW FORM

LOCATION

Building(s): OSMS
Classes/Grade Level(s): 6th Grade

ABOUT THE BOOK

Selection Title/Author: Listen, Slowly by Thanhhai Lai
Genre: Realistic Fiction
Lexile Reading Level: 800
Total number of pages: 288

Book Summary	**Potentially Objectionable Content** (list all categories and at least one example, referenced with a page or chapter number)
A California girl born and raised, Mai can't wait to spend her vacation at the beach. Instead, she has to travel to Vietnam with her grandmother, who is going back to find out what really happened to her husband during the Vietnam War. Mai's parents think this trip will be a great opportunity for their out-of-touch daughter to learn more about her culture. But to Mai, those are their roots, not her own. Vietnam is hot, smelly, and the last place she wants to be. Besides barely speaking the language, she doesn't know the geography, the local customs, or even her distant relatives. To survive her trip, Mai must find a balance between her two completely different worlds. Perfect for fans of Rita Williams-Garcia and Linda Sue Park, Listen, Slowly is an irresistibly charming and emotionally poignant tale about a girl who discovers that home and culture, family and friends, can all mean different things.	**Romance/Crushes/Puberty** • Ch 1 Main character mentions a boy she likes but hasn't had the courage to talk to. • Ch 2 Main character arrives in Vietnam and muses that every girl there is thin and flat chested. • Ch 13 One of the Vietnamese girls accidentally "moons" a boy when her skirt flips up. (It is meant to be humorous and not sexual). **Violence and/or abuse of any kind** • Ch 32 Main character's father tells her about how when they were airlifting out of Saigon they saw a boy fall out of a helicopter.

Book Reviews (1-2 link(s)) *Note: teacher is not responsible for broken links*
From Kirkus Reviews:
A trip to Vietnam did not figure in Laguna, California, girl Mai Le's summer plans!
Twelve-year-old Mai (Mia at school) was looking forward to a summer at the beach with her

bestie, Montana, trying to catch the eye of HIM (a boy from school), but she's forced on to a plane to keep her grandmother, Bà, company on a trip of indeterminate length. Ông, Bà's husband, went missing during the Vietnam War, and a detective claims to have found a man who knows something about Ông. Mai and Bà stay in Bà's home village, while Mai's doctor father heads into the mountains to run a clinic. Mai's Vietnamese is rusty, and only teenage boy Minh speaks English (but with a Texas accent). The heat, the mosquitoes...even the maybe-relatives are torture. Out of touch with all things American, Mai worries that Montana may put the moves on HIM; and the only girl in the village her age, Ut, is obsessed with frogs. For her sophomore effort, Newbery Honor author Lai delivers a funny, realistic tale of family and friendship and culture clashes. The subtle humor of clunky translations of Vietnamese into English and vice versa are a great contrast to Mai's sharp and sometimes-snarky observations that offer a window into Vietnamese village life and language. A touching tale of preteen angst and translation troubles. (Fiction, 9-12)

ABOUT THE CLASS

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

This book is being used in 6th grade ELA as part of a cross-content ELA and social studies project on the 5 themes of geography, culture, and modern countries in the Eastern Hemisphere. Students will read the novel, and then research the country featured in the novel in preparation for sharing what they've learned with the class. They will research the elements of the country's culture and then they will evaluate the presentation of that culture in the novel they read.

This book has been selected because of its setting and genre. First, it is set in a modern day country in the Eastern Hemisphere, and second, it is a realistic fiction novel that allows students to learn about a culture by reading a story set in that culture. In addition to the culture of the country, students will be asked to describe the 5 themes of geography in relation to that specific country, and to evaluate whether the book's author accurately and fully portrayed the culture.

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

- 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. B. Incorporate a theme and story details into an objective summary of the text.
- 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.

ALTERNATIVE TEXTS

What alternative texts would allow students to meet the same objectives?

1. Middle School: Escape to Australia by James Patterson
2. Rickshaw Girl by Mitali Perkins

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

Teacher: _____ Date: 9/3/25

Department Chair: Valerie Briggman Date: 9.2.25

Building Principal: _____ Date: 9.11.25

District Curriculum Administrator: Eleanor Ford Date: 9/26/25