OLENTANGY SCHOOLS LITERATURE SELECTION REVIEW FORM

LOCATION

Building(s): OSMS

Classes/Grade Level(s): 6th Grade

ABOUT THE BOOK

Selection Title/Author: A Brush with Magic by Flora Ahn

Genre: Realistic Fiction/Fantasy

Lexile Reading Level: 730

Total number of pages: 290

Book Summary

It's finally summer break, and twelve-year-old Yumi is headed to Korea with her older sister, Minji, for the very first time. She can't wait to explore the city of Seoul together—but Minji has other plans. The moment they land, Minji ditches Yumi to hang out with their cousins, who are more fashionable, better at soccer, and all-around cooler than Yumi. Lost and alone, Yumi is stuck at home painting with her grandfather. Everything changes when she finds an intriguing ink brush in a neighborhood art shop—and accidentally summons a creature straight out of her grandfather's retellings of Korean fairy tales. With a new friend by her side and an ink brush that has the power to bring anything she paints to life, Yumi feels unstoppable. From bustling street markets and ancient palaces to riding the subway, Yumi and her friend explore everything Seoul has to offer. But when the magic takes a dark turn, Yumi must dig deep to hear her own voice and protect the family she loves—even if they don't always understand each other.

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

Racial Content

- Ch 2 When talking about what they're looking forward to while visiting Korea, the main character's sister says she's looking forward to no one telling her she smells like kimchi or making fun of her eyes.

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

From Kirkus Reviews:

A universal coming-of-age tale becomes extraordinary through an encounter with Korean folk magic. A California girl makes an unexpected friend during a summer abroad visiting relatives in Seoul. Twelve-year-old Yumi is taking her first trip to South Korea, her parents' homeland, along with her 16-year-old sister, Minji. Yumi hopes the trip will help the sisters be close again, but she soon feels left out when Minji leaves her behind to explore with their teenage cousins. Forlorn, Yumi spends her days with Harabujee, her beloved grandfather, who teaches her brush painting, tells her Korean fairy tales, and shares old memories of Yumi's mom's childhood. One day, Yumi goes to a neighborhood art store, where she finds an unusually beautiful brush. But when she brings it home and tries to paint with it, a dokkaebi, or Korean goblin, emerges. At first it seems that Dodo, the goblin, will alleviate Yumi's loneliness. She shape-shifts into Yumi's look-alike, makes paintings come to life, and leads her on adventures through the city. But Dodo's erratic behavior soon has Yumi wondering whether she can trust her, while simultaneously allowing her insights into Minji's own feelings about growing up. Apt details of contemporary Korean life are woven naturally throughout the narrative, and the well-rounded characters are welcome representations of the diversity of modern-day Korean youth. Fantastical elements are seamlessly woven into this engaging, entertaining story. Park's charming brush painting–style spot art adorns the text. A universal coming-of-age tale becomes extraordinary through an encounter with Korean folk magic. (Adventure. 8-12)

From School Library Journal:
Gr 3-7–When their parents get stuck home in California with an urgent work project, 12-year-old Yumi and 16-year-old Minji are sent to Seoul for a summer break with their widowed grandfather. That Minji immediately chooses to spend time with their cousins without Yumi understandably leaves Yumi—who's always tried to emulate perfect Minji—feeling abandoned. Even their kind grandfather with his painting and fairy tales can't alleviate her loneliness. When Yumi buys an elaborate ink brush at a local art store, she's shocked to discover it comes with its own dokkaebi—mythical goblin. Dodo, as Yumi names her, makes paintings come to life. She's also a boisterous tour guide...until her enthusiasm spins out of control. Biracial Korean American actor Bell's bilingual fluency is notably appreciated as Yumi and Dodo explore Seoul's many must-do destinations. VERDICT Bell turns contemporary magical realism into convincing multicultural exploration.

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: 9/9/25

Department Chair: Valerie Biggam Date: 9.8.25

Building Principal: _____ Date: 9.11.25

District Curriculum Administrator: _____ Date: 10.1.25