OLENTANGY SCHOOLS LITERATURE SELECTION REVIEW FORM

LOCATION

Building(s): OSMS

Classes/Grade Level(s): 6th Grade

ABOUT THE BOOK

Selection Title/Author: Fish in a Tree by Lynda Mullaly Hunt

Genre: Realistic Fiction

Lexile Reading Level: 550

Total number of pages: 320

Book Summary

Ally has been smart enough to fool a lot of smart people. Every time she lands in a new school, she is able to hide her inability to read by creating clever yet disruptive distractions. She is afraid to ask for help; after all, how can you cure dumb? However, her newest teacher Mr. Daniels sees the bright, creative kid underneath the trouble maker. With his help, Ally learns not to be so hard on herself and that dyslexia is nothing to be ashamed of. As her confidence grows, Ally feels free to be herself and the world starts opening up with possibilities. She discovers that there's a lot more to her—and to everyone—than a label, and that great minds don't always think alike.

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

Violence

- One of the main character's friends describes how bullies beat him up after school. Ch 19
- A boy grabs a girl's arm and pushes her down. Ch 50
- The main character's friend finally gets the courage to stand up to his bullies and lifts another boy by the coat lapels and tosses him to the ground. Several other boys charge at him and he fights them off as well. Ch 50

Crushes

- Girls in the main character's class play a trick on her by writing a fake love letter from a boy in their class. Ch 41

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

From Kirkus Reviews:

Hunt draws a portrait of dyslexia and getting along. Ally Nickerson, who's passed through seven schools in seven years, maintains a Sketchbook of Impossible Things. A snowman in a furnace factory is more plausible than imagining herself doing something right—like reading. She doesn't know why, but letters dance and give her headaches. Her acting out to disguise her difficulty causes headaches for her teachers, who, oddly, never consider dyslexia, even though each notices signs like inconsistent spellings of the same word. Ally's confusion is poignant when misunderstandings like an unintentional sympathy card for a pregnant teacher



make her good intentions backfire, and readers will sympathize as she copes with the class "mean girls." When a creative new teacher, Mr. Daniels, steps in, the plot turns more uplifting but also metaphor-heavy; a coin with a valuable flaw, cupcakes with hidden letters, mystery boxes and references to the Island of Misfit Toys somewhat belabor the messages that things aren't always what they seem and everyone is smart in their own ways. Despite emphasis on "thinking outside the box," characters are occasionally stereotypical—a snob, a brainiac, an unorthodox teacher—but Ally's new friendships are satisfying, as are the recognition of her dyslexia and her renewed determination to read.Fans of R.J. Palacio's Wonder (2012) will appreciate this feel-good story of friendship and unconventional smarts. (Fiction. 10-12)

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 an ELA reading and research project on neurodiversity. Students will read the novel, and then research the condition the main character has in preparation for sharing what they've learned with the class. They will research the specific element of neurodiversity and then they will create a presentation to educate their classmates.

This book has been selected because of its plot and character perspective. It provides a unique perspective of a neurodiverse individual, which allows students to build empathy towards that character. In addition to adopting a new perspective, the book provides a springboard for researching more about the character's struggles through research.

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. The Truth as Told by Mason Buttle by Leslie Connor
2. Rain Reign by Ann M. Martin

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

Teacher: _____ Date: 10/10/25

Department Chair: Valerie Biggam Date: 10.9.25

Building Principal: _____ Date: 10/10/25

District Curriculum Administrator: _____ Date: 10/24/25