



OLETANGY SCHOOLS LITERATURE SELECTION REVIEW FORM

LOCATION

Building(s): EL Program

Classes/Grade Level(s): High School EL IELA

ABOUT THE BOOK

Selection Title/Author: *The Last Book in the Universe* by Rodman Philbrick

Genre: Science Fiction / Dystopian

Lexile Reading Level: 740L

Total Number of Pages: 223

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

- Set in a post-apocalyptic future where most people live in ruined cities and spend their time using "mind probes" to escape reality.
- The story is narrated by Spaz, a teenage boy with epilepsy, who lives in a gang-controlled "latch" area.
- Spaz meets an old man named Ryter, who encourages him to value stories, imagination, and books.
- When Spaz learns that his sister Bean is dying, he sets out on a dangerous journey to save her.
- Along the way, Spaz, Ryter, and a young girl named Little Face travel through dangerous territories and encounter both hope and cruelty.

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

- **Violence:** Occasional fight scenes between gangs (Chapters 2–4).
- **Language:** Mild slang and harsh tone typical of dystopian youth dialogue.
- **Death:** Ryter's death near the end of the novel (Chapter 21).
- **Drug-like use:** "Mind probes" function as a metaphor for drug addiction (recurring theme).



- The group eventually reaches Eden, a technologically advanced area protected from the outside world.
- The novel explores the power of storytelling, memory, and human connection in a world that has forgotten them.

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

<https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/rodman-philbrick/the-last-book-in-the-universe/>
Philbrick delivers a compelling dystopian tale about a boy's search for truth and humanity in a broken world. The author's rich world-building and emotional storytelling invite readers to question the cost of ignorance and escapism. Themes of literacy and moral courage make this novel both thought-provoking and accessible.
(Source: Kirkus Reviews, 2000)

Gr 6–9 – In a bleak future controlled by technology and gang rule, Spaz's quest to save his sister becomes a journey toward rediscovering compassion and storytelling. Philbrick's writing is vivid and fast-paced, with an uplifting message about human resilience and hope. A strong choice for middle school readers exploring dystopian themes.
(Source: School Library Journal, November 2000)

ABOUT THE CLASS

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

The Last Book in the Universe offers middle school readers an engaging introduction to dystopian fiction while exploring deep themes of literacy, technology, and empathy. It encourages students to reflect on the role of knowledge, storytelling, and human connection in shaping society. The accessible language, relatable protagonist, and thought-provoking themes make it a strong fit for grades 6–8, especially for discussions about ethics, courage, and the importance of reading.



The novel also supports social-emotional learning by prompting students to consider how personal choices and relationships can shape one's sense of identity and hope in challenging circumstances.

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.7.3 – Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot).

RL.7.2 – Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development; provide an objective summary.

RL.7.6 – Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters.

RL.7.10 – Read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 6–8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

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. Among the Hidden / Margaret Peterson Haddix
2. The Giver / Lois Lowry

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

Teacher: 

Date: 10/22/25

ELA Department Chair:

Date:

Building Principal: 

Date: 10/28/25

District Curriculum Administrator:

Date:



11/11/25