OLENTANGY SCHOOLS LITERATURE SELECTION REVIEW FORM

LOCATION

Building(s): EL Department
Classes/Grade Level(s): Middle School EL IELA

ABOUT THE BOOK

Selection Title/Author: *Saint Louis Armstrong Beach* by Brenda Woods
Genre: Realistic Fiction / Historical Fiction
Lexile Reading Level: 840L
Total number of pages: 160

Book Summary (abbreviated, bulleted list or link to a book summary)	**Potentially Objectionable Content (list all categories and at least one example, referenced with a page or chapter number)**
• Saint Louis Armstrong Beach, an 11-year-old clarinet player in New Orleans, loves jazz, his dog Shadow, and his lively neighborhood. • When Hurricane Katrina approaches, Saint's family prepares to evacuate, but he is separated from them while trying to rescue Shadow. • Trapped by the rising floodwaters, Saint must rely on courage, quick thinking, and help from unexpected neighbors to survive. • The novel explores the devastating impact of the hurricane through the eyes of a child while celebrating community, family, and resilience. • Themes include bravery, hope, music as healing, and the strength of human	**Natural Disaster/Trauma:** Intense descriptions of Hurricane Katrina and flooding (Chapters 7–10) **Loss/Fear:** Saint experiences separation and fear for his family and dog (Chapter 9) **Mild Language/Tension:** Occasional emotional dialogue during stressful moments **Death (implied)** References to storm victims and destruction (Chapter 11)

connection in the face of disaster. Publisher's Page – Penguin Random House	

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

Kirkus Reviews – *Saint Louis Armstrong Beach*
Woods's heartfelt story captures the voice of a spirited young musician caught in the chaos of Hurricane Katrina. Saint's courage and humor balance the tragedy of the storm, offering readers both suspense and inspiration. The novel honors the culture of New Orleans and the human will to survive.
(Source: *Kirkus Reviews*, 2011)
https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/brenda-woods/saint-louis-armstrong-beach/

https://www.commonsensemedia.org/book-reviews/saint-louis-armstrong-beach

ABOUT THE CLASS

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

Saint Louis Armstrong Beach provides students with a deeply human perspective on a major historical event—Hurricane Katrina. It encourages empathy, resilience, and cultural understanding while connecting personal experiences to larger social and environmental themes. The novel's accessible style, emotional depth, and connection to real-world events make it an excellent text for grades 5–8. It supports social-emotional learning by helping students analyze how individuals respond to crisis and loss while maintaining hope and compassion.

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. **RL.6.1 / RL.7.1** – *Cite textual evidence* to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
   ➔ Students can cite examples of how Saint's actions show courage and growth during the storm.

2. **RL.6.3** – Describe how a particular story's plot unfolds and how the characters respond or change as the plot moves toward a resolution.

3. **RL.6.2** – Determine a theme or central idea of a text and how it is conveyed through particular details; provide a summary distinct from personal opinions.

4. **RL.6.4 / RL.7.4** – *Determine the meaning of words and phrases* as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings.
   → The novel's jazz and musical references invite exploration of tone, rhythm, and figurative language.

5. **RL.6.5 / RL.7.5** – *Analyze how structure contributes to meaning and style.*
   → The story's chronological build-up to the hurricane and its aftermath provides a strong model for analyzing narrative pacing and structure.

6. **RL.6.6 / RL.7.6** – *Analyze point of view or perspective.*
   → Saint's first-person narration gives students a chance to study voice, perspective, and reliability.

7. **RL.6.9 / RL.7.9** – *Compare and contrast texts in different forms or genres in terms of themes and topics.*
   → Students can compare this novel with nonfiction accounts or news articles about Hurricane Katrina.

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. ***Brown Girl Dreaming* by Jacqueline Woodson**

Themes aligned:

- Family, heritage, and cultural identity
- Perseverance through change
- Finding one's voice through art and expression

Why it fits:

Like *Saint Louis Armstrong Beach*, this book highlights the importance of community and self-expression (through writing instead of music). It promotes discussion about identity and resilience, key middle school ELA themes.

2. ***A Long Way Home* by Saroo Brierley (young readers' edition)**

Themes aligned:

- Family bonds and separation
- Determination and courage
- The power of hope and belonging

Why it fits:

This memoir mirrors the resilience and emotional journey seen in *Saint Louis Armstrong Beach*. It encourages empathy and analysis of character motivation—skills central to middle school reading standards.

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

Teacher: Suzanne K Gyr — Date: 10/22/25

ELA Department Chair: — Date:

Building Principal: Erin B Tulley — Date: 10/28/25

District Curriculum Administrator: Elaine Ford — Date: 11/11/25