OLENTANGY SCHOOLS LITERATURE SELECTION REVIEW FORM

LOCATION

Building(s): Olentangy Liberty High School
Classes/Grade Level(s): English 12

ABOUT THE BOOK

Selection Title/Author: *Headshot* by Rita Bullwinkel
Genre: Sports Fiction
Lexile Reading Level: N/A
Total number of pages: 207

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

- *Headshot* by Rita Bullwinkel takes place over two days at a national girls' boxing tournament in Reno.
- Eight elite teenage fighters compete in a single-elimination championship.
- The novel does not follow a traditional plot but instead moves match by match through the tournament.
- The narration focuses on each boxer's inner life, including fears, memories, motivations, and imagined futures.
- Detailed descriptions highlight both the physical reality of boxing and the psychological intensity of competition.
- The novel explores themes of identity, vulnerability, discipline, and how young women test themselves through control, endurance, and violence.

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

- Language
  - "Rachel Doricko gets that this shit is meaningless." (64)
  - "She is winning this fucking match." (64)
- References to drugs and alcohol
  - "The judges can't wait to get in their cars and drive to their duplexes, or go out to a bar, or go sit on a friend's couch and smoke weed until they pass out." (141)
- References to sex
  - "It's as if inside these Reno clubs, there is no sun and there is no moon. Inside the blue light, the adults become their theme-park versions. Their skin looks better than it has ever been. Their bodies look slimmer than they are. Money runs through their fingers. They dance and drink and fuck with almost no effort." (150)

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

https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/rita-bullwinkel/headshot/

ABOUT THE CLASS

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

Headshot challenges students with complex themes, unconventional narrative structure, and rich opportunities for analytical thinking while remaining grounded in a compelling and accessible premise. Set during a girls' boxing tournament, the novel invites students to examine identity, competition, ambition, and the relationship between the body and the self – topics that resonate with students on the cusp of adulthood.

The novel's structure, which moves match by match rather than following a traditional plot arc, encourages close reading and analysis of authorial choices. Students must consider how Bullwinkel develops character through interiority, imagery, and omniscient narration rather than dialogue or action alone. This supports advanced literary analysis skills expected at the senior level.

Headshot also lends itself well to thematic discussion and synthesis. Students can analyze how the novel interrogates societal expectations placed on young women, the costs of excellence, and the meaning of winning versus self-understanding. These ideas connect naturally to nonfiction pairings, contemporary articles, and broader cultural conversations, supporting cross-textual analysis.

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.11–12.1**: Students cite strong and thorough textual evidence when analyzing characterization, narration, and theme throughout the novel.
2. **RL.11–12.2**: Students determine central ideas such as identity, competition, and vulnerability, and analyze how they develop over the course of the text.
3. **RL.11–12.3**: Students analyze complex characters and how their motivations and inner conflicts interact within the competitive setting.
4. **RL.11–12.5**: Students evaluate Bullwinkel's structural choices, including the tournament format and omniscient narration, and how those choices shape meaning

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. *Into the Wild* by Jon Krakauer

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

Teacher: Sarah McCarty Date: 12/17/25

ELA Department Chair: Sarah McCarty Date: 12/17/25

Building Principal: [signature] Date: 12/18/25

District Curriculum Administrator: [signature] Date: 1/5/26