OLENTANGY SCHOOLS LITERATURE SELECTION REVIEW FORM

LOCATION

Building(s): Middle School
Classes/Grade Level(s): ELA

ABOUT THE BOOK

Selection Title/Author: *Ask Me No Questions* by Marina Budhos
Genre: Realistic Fiction / Contemporary Fiction
Lexile Reading Level: 790L
Total number of pages: 192

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)**
• Fourteen-year-old Nadira and her older sister Aisha are Bangladeshi immigrants living in New York City on expired visas. • After 9/11, the family's undocumented status becomes dangerous, and they travel toward Canada seeking asylum. • Their father is detained at the border, leaving the sisters to navigate school and life in fear. • Nadira, often overshadowed by her high-achieving sister, finds courage and determination to help free her father and hold the family together. • The novel explores identity, prejudice, and what it means to belong in	• **Immigration detention and deportation themes:** The father is arrested and detained at the U.S.–Canada border (Ch. 2). • **Religious profiling and discrimination:** The Muslim Bangladeshi family faces suspicion and fear due to post-9/11 prejudice (Ch. 3–6). • **Emotional distress:** The sisters experience anxiety and fear about losing their family and home (various chapters). • **Mild language and tension:** Reflective of realistic stress and social tensions;



post-9/11 America. • Link to summary (Barnes & Noble)	no explicit violence or inappropriate content.

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

- *School Library Journal* review

  The Hossain family, immigrants from Bangladesh, have been living in New York illegally for many years after their tourist visas expired. Nadira, a shy 14-year-old, has always been jealous of her overachieving older sister, Aisha. But her self-absorbed feelings seem inconsequential after the girls' father, Abba, is arrested at the U.S.–Canadian border shortly after 9/11 for having an expired visa. While their mother remains in a Canadian homeless shelter, the girls return to Queens to stay with relatives and await Abba's fate. The threat of deportation always looms. Certain that she can convince the government that their father's arrest was a mistake, Aisha begins a letter-writing campaign. But when it becomes clear that these efforts are in vain, Aisha's confidence crumbles and she gives up—on everything. It's up to Nadira to be the glue that holds her family together. When Abba's trial begins, Nadira calls upon an inner strength she didn't realize she possessed. Marina Budhos's novel (Atheneum, 2006) paints a compelling portrait of what it was like to be a Muslim teen living in the United States following 9/11. The characters are believable and well-rounded, especially Nadira, who grows from a naive and whiny teenager into a mature, level-headed young woman. Abby Craden's softly accented voice brings to life the emotional turmoil felt by the sisters, and she portrays male and female characters equally well. An excellent listen and an important addition to the study of the immigrant experience.–Alissa Bach, Oxford Public Library, MI

- *Kirkus Reviews* review

Undocumented sisters learn a lot about themselves when their family faces deportation in this compelling contemporary drama. Immigrants from Bangladesh, Nadira, her older sister Aisha and their parents live in New York City with expired visas. Fourteen-year-old Nadira describes herself as "the slow-wit second-born" who follows Aisha, the family star who's on track for class valedictorian and a top-rate college. Everything changes when post-9/11 government crack-downs on Muslim immigrants push the family to seek asylum in Canada where they are turned away at the border and their father is arrested by U.S. immigration. The sisters return to New York living in constant fear of detection and trying to pretend everything is normal. As months pass, Aisha falls apart while Nadira uses her head in "a right way" to save her father and her family. Nadira's need for acceptance by her family neatly parallels the family's desire for acceptance in their adopted country. A perceptive peek into the lives of foreigners on the fringe.

ABOUT THE CLASS

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

This novel offers a relatable, accessible narrative that opens discussion on immigration, identity, and justice. It provides middle-grade and early-high-school students an opportunity to analyze character motivation, point of view, and social context through a contemporary lens. The story connects to social studies and civics topics and helps students build empathy by examining real-world challenges faced by immigrant families.

The text also supports writing and discussion about current events and personal identity, encouraging critical thinking and cross-cultural understanding.

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.8.1:** Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly and inferences drawn from the text.

2. **W.8.9:** Draw evidence from literary texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

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. *10 Things I Hate About Me* by Randa Abdel-Fattah

- Features a Muslim teen in Australia balancing two cultural identities — very similar in tone and theme to *Ask Me No Questions*.
- Explores prejudice, identity, and the pressure to "hide" one's background to fit in.
- Nearly identical themes of **cultural assimilation, family loyalty, and self-acceptance**.

2. *Inside Out & Back Again* by Thanhhà Lai

- Follows a Vietnamese refugee family adapting to life in America after the fall of Saigon.
- Themes of displacement, immigration, and perseverance echo those in Budhos's novel.
- Similar emotional and cultural challenges to *Ask Me No Questions*.

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

Teacher: Suzanne R Ng Date: 11.11.25

ELA Department Chair: _____ Date: _____

Building Principal: Erin B Inthof Date: 11/11/25

District Curriculum Administrator: Elaine Ford Date: 11/21/25