OLENTANGY SCHOOLS LITERATURE SELECTION REVIEW FORM

LOCATION

Building(s): Middle Schools
Classes/Grade Level(s): ELA; grades 7/8

ABOUT THE BOOK

Selection Title/Author: *We've Got a Job: The 1963 Birmingham Children's March* / Cynthia Levinson

Genre: Juvenile Non-Fiction (Civil Rights History / Narrative Nonfiction)

Lexile Reading Level: 1020L

Total number of pages: 176

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)
• A nonfiction account of the 1963 Birmingham Children's Crusade, in which more than 4,000 Black children and teens voluntarily marched, protested, and were jailed to challenge segregation in Birmingham, Alabama. • The book follows four main youth activists—Audrey Faye Hendricks, Washington Booker III, James W. Stewart, and Arnetta Streeter—offering personal perspectives on why they joined the	**Violence:** • Descriptions of children being attacked by police dogs and knocked down by high-pressure fire hoses (e.g., Chapters 8–9). • Accounts of aggressive policing under Commissioner Bull Connor, including arrests, shouting, and pushing of youth protesters. **Racism / Discrimination:**



movement. • Provides historical context about segregation, discrimination, the role of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and the leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and Reverend James Bevel. • Describes significant events including training in nonviolent resistance, school walkouts, mass arrests, confrontations with police dogs and fire hoses, and how the children's actions led to national attention and helped accelerate desegregation. • Uses photographs and primary-source interviews to document the courage, sacrifices, and determination of the child activists.	• Racial segregation, racist laws, and overtly racist behavior by white adults and officials throughout Birmingham (entire book). **Arrests / Imprisonment of Minors:** • Graphic but age-appropriate descriptions of children being arrested, loaded into paddy wagons, and detained in overcrowded jails (Chapter 10). **Historical Trauma:** • References to bombings in Birmingham ("Bombingham"), including the general climate of racial terror and fear leading up to the marches. **Intense Emotional Content:** • Students may find scenes of fear, courage, and injustice emotionally difficult, particularly as the protagonists are the same age as many middle school readers.
Book Reviews (1-2 link(s)) *Note: teacher is not responsible for broken links* • **Kirkus Review:** "A vivid, in-depth account... Levinson weaves the four stories together with rich historical detail, resulting in a powerful narrative of courage."	

https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/cynthia-levinson/weve-got-job/

- **School Library Journal Review:** "An important addition to civil rights literature... Strongly recommended for students studying the era." https://www.slj.com/review/weve-got-a-job-the-1963-birmingham-childrens-march

ABOUT THE CLASS

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

This book provides primary-source–based insight into a pivotal moment in the Civil Rights Movement, told through the voices of young activists. It helps students understand systemic racism, civic responsibility, nonviolent resistance, and how youth can influence social change. Reading firsthand accounts deepens empathy, historical understanding, and critical thinking about justice, activism, and democracy.

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

RI.8.1 – Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text states explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

RI.8.2 – Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary.

RI.8.3 – Analyze how a text makes connections among and distinctions between individuals, ideas, or events (e.g., through comparisons, analogies, or categories).

W.8.7 – Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions for research.

W.8.9 – Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.



L.8.4 – Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words or phrases using context clues, word parts, or reference materials.

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. *Warriors Don't Cry* — Melba Pattillo Beals

- Memoir by one of the **Little Rock Nine**, the Black teenagers who integrated Central High School in 1957.
- First-person account of youth activism, danger, racism, and courage during the Civil Rights Movement.
- Closely matches in theme: real teens, real events, direct Civil Rights history

2. *They Called Us Enemy* — George Takei

- Graphic memoir about Takei's childhood in **Japanese American incarceration camps** during WWII.
- Not Civil Rights–era, but explores government oppression, racism, youth activism, and later advocacy for civil rights.
- **Close nonfiction parallel in terms of injustice, children's experiences, and historical context.**

3. *The Watsons Go to Birmingham – 1963* by Christopher Paul Curtis

- ****fictional rather than nonfictional** but direct match in setting, time period, and theme.**
- **Set *in Birmingham during the same year* as the Children's March.**
- **Though fictional, it is grounded in real Civil Rights history, including the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing.**
- **Focuses on a family with children encountering racism and violence during the Civil Rights Movement.**

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

Teacher: _ Suzanne K Ayer _____ Date:_11/25/25

ELA Department Chair: _____ Date:_____

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

District Curriculum Administrator: Elaine Ford Date: 4/15/26