OLENTANGY SCHOOLS LITERATURE SELECTION REVIEW FORM

LOCATION

Building(s): High schools
Classes/Grade Level(s): 9-12

ABOUT THE BOOK

Selection Title/Author: *Code Talker: A Novel About the Navajo Marines of World War Two* by Joseph Bruchac
Genre: Historical Fiction
Lexile Reading Level: 910L
Total Number of Pages: 240

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)
• The novel follows Ned Begay, a young Navajo man who enlists in the U.S. Marine Corps during World War II. • Ned becomes a Navajo Code Talker, using his native language to create an unbreakable military code in the Pacific Theater. • The story alternates between Ned's childhood experiences at a boarding school—where Navajo language and culture are suppressed—and his service during the war. • Themes include cultural identity, resilience, sacrifice, patriotism, and the importance of language and	**War Violence** Descriptions of combat, bombings, and casualties during Pacific battles (Chapters 10–15) **Discrimination & Racism** Navajo students punished for speaking their language in boarding school (Chapters 2–4) **Death & Loss** Death of fellow Marines in battle (Chapters 12–14) **Mild Language** Occasional military slang and mild profanity typical of war settings All content is presented in a historical and educational context and is appropriate for high

heritage. ● The novel highlights the critical yet often overlooked role of Navajo Code Talkers in securing Allied victories during World War II.	school readers when supported by guided discussion.

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

Kirkus Reviews – *Code Talker*
https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/j-patrick-lewis/the-navajo-code-talkers/

School Library Journal Review
https://www.slj.com/review/the-navajo-code-talkers

ABOUT THE CLASS

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

Code Talker is an effective high school text because it combines historical content with deep literary themes such as identity, cultural conflict, and moral responsibility. The novel encourages students to analyze how historical context shapes character development and to examine the long-term effects of discrimination and assimilation policies on Indigenous communities. The text also supports cross-curricular connections to U.S. history while promoting empathy, critical thinking, and discussion about whose stories are remembered in history. Its accessible language and first-person narration make complex themes approachable for diverse learners.

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.9–10.2 – Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary.

RL.9–10.3 – Analyze how complex characters develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.



RL.9–10.6 – Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature.

RL.9–10.10– Read and comprehend literature at the high end of the grades 9-10 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. A Long Walk to Water by Linda Sue Park

- **Themes:** Survival, resilience, the impact of war, and cultural identity.
- **Similarity to *Code Talkers*:** Both books tell the stories of individuals who face overwhelming challenges due to war and hardship. *A Long Walk to Water* focuses on the experiences of Sudanese "Lost Boys" during the Second Sudanese Civil War, much like *Code Talkers* focuses on the Navajo Code Talkers during World War II. Both novels emphasize the strength and resilience of young people forced to grow up quickly due to the circumstances they face.
- **Teaching Points:** The book offers a perspective on survival, community, and the importance of hope. It also explores the theme of cultural preservation and how identity can shape one's ability to endure and survive in difficult circumstances. Similar to the Navajo Marines, the main characters in *A Long Walk to Water* experience a journey where their cultural identity is a source of strength and survival.

2. The Night Diary by Veera Hiranandani

- Themes: Identity, cultural conflict, survival, war, and displacement.
- Similarity to *Code Talkers*: *The Night Diary* is set during the Partition of India in 1947, a time of massive upheaval and violence as British India was split into India and Pakistan. The story follows a young girl, Nisha, who writes in her diary about her experiences as her family faces the challenges of migration, war, and violence. Like *Code Talkers*, this book explores the impact of war and displacement on a young person and highlights the importance of cultural identity and language. Both books also explore how young people must adapt in the face of violence, cultural conflict, and identity challenges.
- Teaching Points: This book is a strong choice for exploring themes of resilience, the role of culture and language in survival, and the experience of young people during times of war. Similar to the Navajo Code Talkers' role in WWII, Nisha must navigate complex social

and cultural divides, which can serve as a launching point for discussions about the significance of cultural preservation and the role of language as both a tool for survival and a symbol of identity. *The Night Diary* offers opportunities to discuss personal growth in the face of adversity, historical trauma, and the enduring power of cultural pride, much like the Navajo soldiers in *Code Talkers*.

These books are strong choices because they also explore themes of cultural pride, resilience in the face of adversity, and the enduring strength of marginalized groups during times of war and oppression. They allow students to connect with the idea that identity, whether through language, family, or culture, can provide strength during difficult times.

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

Teacher: _____ Date: 4/13/26

ELA Department Chair: _____ Date: _____

Building Principal: _____ Date: 4/13/26

District Curriculum Administrator: _____ Date: 5/4/26