OLENTANGY SCHOOLS LITERATURE SELECTION REVIEW FORM

LOCATION

Building(s): OLMS
Classes/Grade Level(s): 6,7,8

ABOUT THE BOOK

Selection Title/Author: Whale Eyes / Jame Robinson
Genre: Memoir
Lexile Reading Level: 880L
Total number of pages: 304

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)**
WINNER OF THE SCHNEIDER FAMILY BOOK AWARD • AN ORBIS PICTUS RECOMMENDED BOOK • A BEST BOOK THE YEAR: School Library Journal, NPR, BCCB, New York Public Library, and Chicago Public Library **Told through an experimental mix of intimate anecdotes and interactive visuals, this book immerses readers in James's experiences growing up with strabismus, allowing them to see the world through one eye at a time.** **Readers will get lost as they chase words. They'll stare into this book while taking a vision test. They'll hold it upside down as they practice "pretend-reading"...and they'll follow an unlikely trail toward discovering the power of words.** **With poignant illustrations by Eisner Award–nominated artist Brian Rea, James's story equips readers of all ages with the tools to confront their discomfort with disability and turn confused, blank**	**Violence:** None **Strong Language:** Once the author around page 100 refers to reading in a classroom as being trapped in a "hellhole" **Sexual Themes:** None

stares into powerful connections.	

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

Ages 10+: Parents need to know that the award-winning memoir Whale Eyes: A Memoir About Seeing and Being Seen is written by Emmy Award-winning filmmaker for the New York Times James Robinson and illustrated by Brian Rea. The book describes in detail the author's experience living with strabismus, an eye condition that doesn't allow his eyes to work well together. The content is dense with a lot to take in, so best for older tween and teens, but it's a worthy invitation to understanding and compassion. Whale Eyes is interactive, offering readers visual experiences that suggest those of a person with strabismus. Robinson describes how, with maturity, his frustration, confusion, disappointment, isolation, and self-doubt morph into excitement, clarity, success, connection, and self-acceptance. Robinson is acutely aware of how people stare at him and his misaligned eyes, and his goal is to help readers confront their discomfort with disability and "turn confused, blank stares into powerful connections."

Common Sense Media
https://www.commonsensemedia.org/book-reviews/whale-eyes-a-memoir-about-seeing-and-being-seen#modal

In this memoir, an outgrowth of his documentary of the same title, Emmy-winning filmmaker Robinson recounts how he changed others' perceptions of his disability. Born with anomalous retinal correspondence, a form of strabismus that prevents his eyes from focusing simultaneously, Robinson found reading a time-consuming "obstacle course." Worse than the shame of falling behind his classmates was when strangers stared at his outward-turned eyes, feelings captured in pointed notes and Rea's cartoon illustrations. When Robinson reached middle school, his architecture professor mother took time off to home-school him and his dyslexic older brother. Under her tutelage, Robinson discovered helpful reading strategies—and a passion for documentary films, which ultimately led to his studying film at Duke University. In 2021, the New York Times published his autobiographical short film, Whale Eyes (titled after his own term for his condition), affirming visually disabled people and enabling nondisabled people to better understand Robinson—and themselves. Robinson (who presents white) candidly explores numerous topics, including disability tropes, privilege, and ways to turn "out-trigue"—the discomfort we feel with the unfamiliar—into empathetic connections. Myriad interactive visuals immerse readers in Robinson's perspective. Backgrounds switch from white to black, sentences spiral, and words and letters scatter across the pages, which often need to be turned sideways or upside down. Unfortunately, these effects may overwhelm some neurodivergent or print-disabled readers, reducing the very connections Robinson strives to make.
Frank, unusual, and insightful. (note on surgery, resources) (Memoir. 11-18)

-Kirkus Review
https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/james-robinson/whale-eyes/

ABOUT THE CLASS

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

This book will be taught to the entire class as a model for memoir writing. It has many literary layers despite being non-fiction. By closing examining the themes and craft of the writing, students will learn how to write with voice, structure, and purpose. We'll be pairing this novel with several short stories about identity and perception.

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. RI.8.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative, and technical meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.RL.7.6 Analyze how an author uses the point of view to develop and contrast the perspectives of different characters or narrators in a text.
2. RI.8.10 By the end of the year, read and comprehend literary nonfiction at the high end of the grades 6-8 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. All The Broken Pieces
2. American Born Chinese

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

Teacher: M Shepherd Date: 5/4/26
Department Chair: Kathy Bach Date: 05/04/2026
Building Principal: Wendie Grant Date: 5/4/26
District Curriculum Administrator: [signature] Date: 5/20/26

Nate
Bachman