



## OLENTANGY SCHOOLS LITERATURE SELECTION REVIEW FORM

### LOCATION

Building(s): OBHS

Classes/Grade Level(s): English 9-12

### ABOUT THE BOOK

Selection Title/Author: *The Leaving Room* by Amber McBride

Genre: novel in verse

Lexile Reading Level:

Total number of pages: 203

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

A 17-year-old guardian of the memories of recently deceased young people questions her purpose in the latest from National Book Award finalist McBride.

The Keepers stay in their Leaving Rooms, ushering Leavers through this liminal space between life and death. Gospel, a Keeper who struggles with following rules, prides herself on providing Leavers with meals made of loving memories and cares for the souls during their precious four minutes with her. Tending to children who have just died, Gospel takes each one's "best memory," often involving a meal, and places it in one of the mason jars that line her bookshelves, which are "made from living trees." Some of the Leavers haunt Gospel, their presences creating lasting memories for her—5-year-old Maple and 8-year-old Suvi, in particular (readers later learn the reason behind their significance). As Gospel struggles

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

**-Sex:** The two main characters- Gospel and Melodee eventually begin a romance, but there is no vulgarity or direct mention. There are mentions of "soft stolen kisses- forbidden for many..." and of two girls going to their high school prom together. One memory includes Gospel's friend asking her, "Do you think girls can like girls?"

**-Death/Loss:** The whole book depicts death and loss, but it doesn't mention the gory details



with the weight of her role, Melodee, who's also a Keeper, enters her Leaving Room, breaking another rule. Their connection is instantaneous; *"I didn't know Keepers I could feel love,"* Gospel observes—and she wonders whether her existence might hold more meaning. McBride is a master of verse, weaving lines with emotion and character development, articulating pain and hope with an economy of words, and documenting Black lives with tenderness.

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

Common Sense Media: <https://www.common sense media.org/book-reviews/the-leaving-room>

Kirkus Review: <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/amber-mcbride/the-leaving-room/>

## ABOUT THE CLASS

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

The text contains many positive messages and role models and prominently features Black joy. It is a story of loss and love and told in verse, so lends itself well to the study of poetry and symbolism. It raises questions about rules versus individuality, identity, and connection. Because the entirety of the story takes place in 4 minutes, it gives us a great opportunity to talk about structure, pacing, and nonlinear. Finally, we can discuss important topics about what it means to grieve, what gives our lives purpose and meaning, and cultural identity.

**The Ohio Department of Education ELA Standards** [Link to Ohio's ELA Standards](#)

1. Textual analysis and perspective (RL 9-10.4 and RL 9-10.6)
2. Textual evidence and analysis (RL 9-10.1)
3. Comprehension and text complexity (RL 9-10.10)

## 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. *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak



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

Teacher: B. Borders Date: 08/27/2026  
ELA Department Chair: [Signature] Date: Aug. 27, 2026  
Building Principal: [Signature] Date: 8/31/24  
District Curriculum Administrator: [Signature] Date: 9/3/26