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ENG 112B

APRIL 30, 2014

UNIT OF STUDY: SCIENCE FICTION IN REALITY

I was never and still am not an avid science fiction consumer. Although, I have always been fascinated with theories of alternative realities, altered realities, and dystopias. Never being one to seek out a science fiction read or a dystopian novel; I was excited the first time *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury was dropped into my lap. I instantly fell in love with this book. The misery of a censored world and the hope found in hopelessness spoke to my high school self and became one of my favorite reads. This set me on a science fiction discovery.

I discovered Ray Bradbury's short stories and his other works; I discovered Philip K. Dick and his original and sometimes frightening ideas. I dove into George Orwell and quickly began to sense a pattern in these dystopian, science fiction texts. No matter how fantastic the story or the setting is; all the authors are trying to teach the reader about some aspect of our true reality. Could books really become banned as in *Fahrenheit 451*? Well, they have before. Can political leaders be as cruel as in *Animal Farm*? Well, they have before. Science fiction takes an entertaining, unique setting and creates parallels to our own reality. This allows the reader to make connections between our perceived reality and what really could happen if we are not critically conscious of our environment.

This unit will teach students about the parallels between science fiction novels and our reality. I will argue that there are themes in the chosen texts that address issues at the time of the publishing date and contemporary issues of the day. My centerpiece work will be *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury. This is a canonical work that is still taught in schools today. *Fahrenheit 451* creates the ideal setting because it is focused on books and is a dystopian novel written many years ago but still manages to address contemporary issues.

CENTERPIECE WORK:

Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury

EXTENDED LIST OF WORKS:

Bradbury Stories: 100 of His Most Celebrated Tales Published by William Morrow

1984 by George Orwell

Animal Farm by George Orwell

A Scanner Darkly by Philip K. Dick

Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep by Philip K. Dick

The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins

Divergent by Veronica Roth

The Taking by Kimberly Derting

LAUNCHING THE UNIT:

I will begin by asking the students to recall what science fiction or dystopian novels they have read or what they have visually seen in the media. I will ask them to write these down in a list form and then to write a couple sentences about what they learned or thought about each of their choices. If they have never read or seen any science fiction or dystopian novels or media, then I will ask them to document why and what their initial perception of this genre is. I will then discuss with the class their choices and make a list on the board. After creating the list, I will introduce *Fahrenheit 451* as the class read; I will then introduce the extended list of texts with a brief introduction. The class will be able to

choose one of the extended lists of texts to highlight. If they choose a short story, 4 to 5 will be required. After they have decided what novel they would like to highlight, I will ask the question, **what themes do we recognize in science fiction/dystopian literature that we see evidence of in our reality?**

CONTINUING THE UNIT:

The student must read *Fahrenheit 451* by the set schedule and have their individual texts completed by a certain date. Every class will begin with a journal documentation, one page, of their previous night's reading of their novel. It is up to the student to decide what to write about in their reading journal. Writing will be followed by a short class discussion with questions and story discussion. I will then provide examples of how *Fahrenheit 451* can be applied to our society.

- I. Part One: The Hearth and the Salamander
 - A. Journal documentation
 - B. Class discussion
 - C. What themes do we see examples of in our society? I will provide examples.
- II. Part Two: The Sieve and the Sand
 - A. Journal documentation
 - B. Class discussion
 - C. What themes do we see examples of in our society? I will provide examples.
- III. Part three: Burning Bright
 - A. Journal documentation
 - B. Class discussion
 - C. What themes do we see examples of in our society? I will provide examples.

After the class has completed *Fahrenheit 451*, they will begin their chosen novels. They must be completed by a determined date. The students will document their reading in a journal, one page, that I

will check every class. After they have completed these books they will then be required to write a 2 to 3 page essay answering the question that was proposed at the beginning of the unit. The students will have freedom to decide whether they would like to include both books in their essay or just one.

END OF THE UNIT:

The class will individually read the article, "Teaching Environmental Justice through *The Hunger Games*", in *The Alan Review*. We will then read the article as a class. Following the reading, there will be a class discussion about all the literature, including the article that was read. The discussion will be focused on what was learned, discovered, and enjoyable to the student. After the discussion, the student will document their final thoughts in their reading journal; which will be handed in with their essays.

WORKS CITED

- Bradbury, Ray. *Fahrenheit 451*. 1951. New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 2013. Print.
- Bradbury, Ray. *Bradbury Stories: 100 of His Most Celebrated Tales*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers Inc., 2003. Print.
- Orwell, George. *1984*. 1949. N.p.: Penguin Books, n.d. Print.
- Orwell, George. *Animal Farm*. 1945. Orlando: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1982. Print.
- Dick, Philip K. *A Scanner Darkly*. 1977. New York: First Mariner Books, 2011. Print.
- Dick, Philip K. *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* 1968. New York: Random House Inc., 1975. Print.
- Collins, Suzanne. *The Hunger Games*. New York: Scholastic Inc., 2008. Print.
- Roth, Veronica. *Divergent*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2011. Print.
- Derting, Kimberly. *The Taking*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2014. Print.
- Burke, Brianna. "Teaching Environmental Justice through *The Hunger Games*." *The Alan Review* 41.1 (2013): 53-63. Print.

SCIENCE FICTION AND DYSTOPIAS

UNIT OF STUDY

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CENTERPIECE WORK

- *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury



www.goodreads.com

interestingliterature.com

EXTENDED LISTS OF WORK

- ***Bradbury Stories: 100 of His Most Celebrated Tales*** by Ray Bradbury
- ***1984*** by George Orwell
- ***Animal Farm*** by George Orwell
- ***A Scanner Darkly*** by Philip K. Dick
- ***Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*** by Philip K. Dick
- ***The Hunger Games*** by Suzanne Collins
- ***Divergent*** by Veronica Roth
- ***The Taking*** by Kimberly Derting

THE QUESTION

What themes do we recognize in science fiction, dystopian literature that we see evidence of in our society?

THE UNIT

1. The Hearth and the Salamander
2. The Sieve and the Sand
3. Burning Bright

A. Journal documentation

B. Class discussion

C. What themes do we see evidence of in our society? I will provide examples.

ASSIGNMENT

- Reading journal, one page
 - For both books
- 2-3 page essay answering proposed question
 - both novels for examples or one

END OF UNIT

- Read “Teaching Environmental Justice through *The Hunger Games*” in *The Alan Review*
- Class discussion about the article and all the literature that was read
- What was learned, discovered, and enjoyable to the student
- Final thoughts in reading journal
- Turn in journal with essay