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ENGL4400
December 3, 2002

The Importance of Seeking Knowledge

Rationale

America is a free nation. Because of the values that it holds it has become the enemy of other nations that do not share the same freedom. From British colonial rule to the Cold War, the American people have faced down the ideas of oppression. Now we have entered an age of terrorism. Communities of people seek to tear down the beliefs of Americans with fear and violence. How will these students stand up to this threat, how will they know what to believe when others are questioning them, and how will they defend their beliefs?

This unit will address the importance of knowledge to support one's belief. Many times children are told to do things without being explained their meaning or purpose. As they age in this democratic state, they face the challenge of participating in the elective process. They will develop certain ideas and perceptions. How can a person support an idea, belief or practice or participate in a democratic state without finding and possessing the knowledge to support their ideas. If a student accepts everything he is told without questioning that information and finding the truth for himself, then his beliefs will be weakened. Through this unit, the students will be presented with literature that maintains the overarching theme of the seeking out the truth and what happens when a person does not seek out the truth or is denied the means of doing so. By displaying these effects, I intend for the students to grasp the importance of attaining information so that they

possess the necessary knowledge to make crucial decisions and have the information to support themselves in the face of challengers.

We will begin the unit with the short work *The Children's Story* by James Clavell. This work describes a classroom of American students faced with a teacher who is there to change their beliefs because the cause to which she belongs has conquered the United States. Because the students' are uniformed, the teacher has no problem striping them of their beliefs. This book will set up the idea that beliefs without foundation are weak and are easily destroyed. Until the students question why they do the things they do and come to an understanding of them, then their practices can become meaningless. This story will display that it is necessary to possess knowledge of one's beliefs to make them strong.

The major work for this unit will be *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury. This novel portrays a world where books are illegal. Through this novel the class will raise questions about the state of the novel's society. The students will be able to see what happens when people are deprived of their means of knowledge. They will observe how the people are manipulated and taught to believe the things they believe. They will also see individuals who chose to seek out information despite the danger it puts them in. This struggle is indicative of the one that they must choose to undergo to strengthen their beliefs and ideas. This novel also will raise the issue of censorship. From the censorship in the novel, we will discuss modern censorship of all media. This work will present the idea of deprivation of knowledge and inspire students to seek out the knowledge that is available to them.

We will also discuss a poem and two songs to show how this idea of the importance of seeking out knowledge carries across genres. The poem is “The Hollow Men” by T.S. Elliot. This poem discusses life as an empty vessel. The society described is vacuous, deprived, and without substance. The two songs will be “Cry Freedom” by the Dave Matthews Band and “Redemption Song” by Bob Marley. These songs in their own way describe the struggle for mental freedom. All three works discuss people seeking and/or being denied knowledge. In the case of Elliot’s work, the lack of knowledgeable foundations for a belief system leave the people empty and silently dying. “Redemption Song” and “Cry Freedom” are appeals for intellectual freedom. They will also bring the reality of the issue back to the students, since Bradbury’s work deals mainly in the world of fiction. The students will be given the chance to connect the ideas presented in these works to the ones we have already discussed. From this discussion the students will be asked to either create their own poetic work or find a song or poem that shares these concepts. This will be a test of the students’ grasp of the concept thus far.

The final piece the students will study will be a short story by Kurt Vonnegut, “Harrison Bergeron.” This story presents a society of forced equality. Intelligence, beauty, and talent are made equal through handicapping people. The students will be asked to work through this story on their own. Then in a formal essay, dramatic performance, short story, or artistic portrayal, they will be asked to interpret how they feel about the importance of knowledge with respect to their reaction to this story.

This lesson could be interpreted as trying to make revolutionary students who question all forms of authority. This is in a way my intent. I want students to question their world to make their beliefs stronger. Only by seeking out that knowledge that will

strengthen their foundations or build new ones can students become mentally capable of functioning in a democratic society where their beliefs and ideas will be reflected in the way they try to shape their realities. I want my students to learn the importance of seeking out knowledge.

I have also already said that I will raise the sensitive issue of censorship. Some parents believe strongly in censoring the materials that their children are exposed. I am not trying to challenge these parents' beliefs. I am challenging the students to look into censorship, understand why things are censored, and decide for themselves what they believe.

It is important that students learn to question their world. Even after school, they need to be learners. They will be faced with wide ranges of issues from who the next president should be to how they should raise their kids. In this time, when outside forces are pushing down on the Americans and their way of life, it is even more important those students know the importance of knowledge. This unit will display how important knowing what and why a person believes what he believes and how lack of that knowledge can strip a person of their identity. Questions are being posed of Americans. These questions delve into our deepest beliefs and ideals. There are many people that would have these beliefs torn down and destroyed. To resist these forces, students need to know the answers to the questions. They need to understand the importance of seeking out knowledge that will help to strengthen their ideas and beliefs.

Goals and Rubrics

Reaction Writing

The students will be asked to compose a reaction on the due dates for reading. These entries will test whether the students did the reading and, at the same time, generate ideas for discussion. The students will be given a prompt and the opportunity to respond to that prompt or generate their own ideas in an open-ended ten-minute short response. In this response the student should:

- address the assigned reading for that day in the form of questions or thoughts generated by their reactions to the material
- generate questions or thoughts based on the prompt or their own reaction to the reading that show they have read the material and are thinking about it

Reaction Writing in Response to Reading

Teacher name: Stephen Lindsay

Student Name _____

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Quality of Information	Student develops excellent ideas and questions.	Student has several good ideas or questions.	Student's questions and thoughts are lacking in insight.	Student develops no good thought or questions.
Relation to the Reading	Student shows engagement with the reading assignment	Student shows some engagement with the reading.	Student shows little engagement with the reading representing lack of depth in reading.	Student does not engage the reading.

Poem/ Song assignment

This assignment will follow the class reading and discussion of the poem "The Hollow Men" by T.S. Elliot and the songs "Cry Freedom" by the Dave Matthews Band

and “Redemption Song” by Bob Marley. After reading this poem, listening to these songs, and making connections between *The Children’s Story* by James Clavell and what they have read of *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury, the students will either identify a poem or song or compose one of their own if they choose. In this assignment the student will:

- Identify the ideas represented in the works we have discussed thus far.
- Find or compose a song/poem that contains these ideas
- Present this work for the class
- Explain why it was chosen

Poetry/Song Assignment

Teacher name: Stephen Lindsay

Student Name _____

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Poem-Relevance x 2	The poem/song clearly represents the topics.	The student attempts to find/write a poem/song that relates to the topic, but is not entirely successful.	The poem/song connects only slightly to the topic.	The poem/song shows no relevance towards the topic.
Presentation-Relevance	The student does an excellent job presenting his/her poem to the class, clearly connecting it to the topic	The student's presentation is fairly clear on connecting his/her selecting to the topic.	The student's presentation is often unclear and does not establish a strong connection between his/her work and the topic.	The student's presentation fails to show a connection between the work and the topic.
Presentation-Overall	The student shows evidence of preparation.	The student's speech is fairly strong, but the student falters occasionally.	The student's speech is often weak and shows evidence of little preparation.	The student's speech is weak and shows no preparation.

Final Assessment on “Harrison Bergeron”

At the end of the unit the class will read the short story “Harrison Bergeron” by Kurt Vonnegut. Based on their reactions to this story and our discussions throughout the unit the students will be asked to create either a work of art accompanied with a minimum of a paragraph written explanation, a short story, or a formal paper. In these reactions the students are expected to:

- Respond to the ideas in “Harrison Bergeron” and those that we have discussed throughout the unit in connection with Harrison Bergeron
- Create an individual work that reflects this response
- Clearly convey these ideas in whichever format they choose

Creative Work: Final Project

Teacher name: Stephen Lindsay

Student Name _____

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Originality/ Creativity x 3	The work reflects an exceptional degree of student creativity in their creation and/or display.	Several of the aspects of the work reflect the student's creativity in his/her creation and/or display.	The work is made by the student, but is lacking in creativity.	The work does not reflect any originality on the part of the student.
Relevance x 3	The work is completely related to the topic and gives excellent insight into the topic. *Artwork write up clearly explains the student's intention.	The work is related to the topic and mostly gives insight. *Artwork write up attempts to shed light on work and is mostly successful.	The work is related to the topic but does not give insight. *Artwork write up is unclear and shares little insight on the topic.	The work is not related to the topic. *Artwork write up shares no useful information on the work.
Spelling and Punctuation	There are few to no errors that detracted from meaning.	There are several errors but overall meaning is still fairly clear.	There are many errors that hurt the overall meaning of the piece.	The piece is full of errors making reading difficult and unclear.
Write up - Neatness	The final draft of the write up is in ink, readable, clean, neat and attractive. It is free of erasures and crossed-out words. It looks like the author took great pride in it.	The final draft of the write up is readable, neat and attractive. It may have one or two erasures, but they are not distracting. It looks like the author took some pride in it.	The final draft of the write up is readable and some of the pages are attractive. It looks like parts of it might have been done in a hurry.	The final draft is not neat or attractive. It looks like the student just wanted to get it done and didn't care what it looked like.

- not relevant for short stories

Formal Paper: Final Project

Teacher name: Stephen Lindsay

Student Name _____

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Quality of Information x3	Information clearly relates to the main topic. It includes several supporting details and/or examples.	Information clearly relates to the main topic. It provides only a few supporting details	Information clearly relates to the main topic. No details and/or examples are given.	Information has little or nothing to do with the main topic.
Amount of Information x2	The student thoroughly explores the topic.	The student develops his ideas well, but lacks some depth.	The student's thoughts are short and lacking in depth.	The student does not attempt to thoroughly discuss the topic.
Spelling and Punctuation	There are few to no errors that detracted from meaning.	There are several errors but overall meaning is still fairly clear.	There are many errors that hurt the overall meaning of the piece.	The piece is full of errors making reading difficult and unclear.
Neatness	The final draft of the story is in ink, readable, clean, neat and attractive. It is free of erasures and crossed-out words. It looks like the author took great pride in it.	The final draft of the story is readable, neat and attractive. It may have one or two erasures, but they are not distracting. It looks like the author took some pride in it.	The final draft of the story is readable and some of the pages are attractive. It looks like parts of it might have been done in a hurry.	The final draft is not neat or attractive. It looks like the student just wanted to get it done and didn't care what it looked like.

* Rubistar was used to make theses Rubrics.

Materials

The Children's Story by James Clavell

Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury

“The Hollow Men” by T.S. Elliot

“Cry Freedom” by the Dave Matthews Band

“Redemption Song” by Bob Marley.

“Harrison Bergeron” by Kurt Vonnegut

Introductory Activity

On the first day of the unit, I will change my room around. All of the cabinets and bookshelves will be covered so that no one can see or obtain what is inside. All written material will be put away. Electronic devices, radios, TVs, etc., will be unplugged and put away or setup so the students cannot use them. When the students come in, I will take their bookbags and lock them in a closet or outside the room. Then, when the students are seated, I will inform them that the school has officially changed and we no longer need to study or read; information is not that valuable, and instead we will just socialize and relax. I will also begin to inform them about how there is no place called the United States, the world is flat, and other ideas that challenge the students beliefs. This will provoke the students to question and challenge me. I will calmly differ their questions due to lack of proof and tell them that I am the authority whose authority comes from a higher power that has told me all these facts, and we all should accept them as true. After I have frustrated the students because they cannot access the resources that would help them prove me wrong, I will stop the demonstration. The time period will vary due to how long I can string the students out. I will then open the floor up so the students can share how the situation made them feel and what they were thinking. I will let the students discuss until there is about 20 minutes of class left or I can feel the discussion winding down. I will then introduce the unit and give a brief overview of the works we will be discussing, along with a more in-depth introduction of *The Children's Story* so that we can begin reading and discussing it the next day.

Specific Lessons and Activities

(Based on 50 minute periods)

Week 1

Day 1

15 minutes: For the introductory activity, I will change my room around. All of the cabinets and bookshelves will be covered so that no one can see or obtain what is inside. All written material will be put away. Electronic devices, radios, TVs, etc., will be unplugged and put away or setup so the students cannot use them. When the students come in, I will take their bookbags and lock them in a closet or outside the room. Then, when the students are seated, I will inform them that the school has officially changed and we no longer need to study or read; information is not that valuable, and instead we will just socialize and relax. I will also begin to inform them about how there is no place called the United States, the world is flat, and other ideas that challenge the students beliefs. This will provoke the students to question and challenge me. I will calmly differ their questions due to lack of proof and tell them that I am the authority whose authority comes from a higher power that has told me all these facts, and we all should accept them as true. After I have frustrated the students because they cannot access the resources that would help them prove me wrong, I will stop the demonstration. The time period will vary due to how long I can string the students out.

15 minutes: The students can share, as a large group, how the situation made them feel and what they were thinking.

20 minutes: I will introduce the unit and give a brief overview of the works we will be

discussing, along with a more in-depth introduction of *The Children's Story* so that we can begin reading and discussing it the next day.

Day Two

10 minutes: This will be time to do some house keeping and tie up any loose ends from the previous days introductions to the literature.

10 minutes: During this time I will give a pledge quiz. This quiz will be ungraded but will be used in a later activity. The questions will be:

- (1) Who wrote the Pledge of Allegiance? (Answer: Francis Bellamy)
- (2) What were the original opening words to the pledge? (Answer: I pledge allegiance to my flag)
- (3) What words were added in 1923? (Answer: under God)
- (4) What did the Supreme Court rule in 1943 concerning the pledge? (Answer: No one could be made to say the pledge)

30 minutes: I will now take this class time to read *The Children's Story* aloud. I will give the students the option of listening to a recording, having me read it aloud, or having alternating student readers.

Day Three

20 minutes: This time will be set aside to finish *The Children's Story*. I will, once again, give the students the option of listening to a recording, having me read it aloud, or having alternating student readers.

30 minutes: Now that we have finished the story we will discuss it. To begin our discussions I will call the students' attention to the Pledge quizzes. Using their answers we will see how knowledgeable they are of their own pledge. We will

discuss the story in light of the quiz. I will then ask them why they think I chose to teach this story first. I will then open the floor to discuss any issues they wish to raise (ex. communism, brain washing).

Homework: The students will be asked to have started *Fahrenheit 451* by tomorrow and to have read the first twenty-five pages by Friday.

Day Four

30 minutes: I will now take time to connect *The Children's Story* to the unit theme of the importance of seeking knowledge. I will consider some of the issues the class raised yesterday when I asked them why I chose to teach this story first. I will also ask them what kind of expectations they now have of the unit considering our first lessons.

20 minutes: During this time I will introduce *Fahrenheit 451*. We will talk some about the author, and delve into a little of the controversy it has raised in the past, including a story about how an edited version was sold for sometime without Bradbury knowing. I will also ask the students to share their initial reaction to what they have read thus far.

Homework: The students are expected to finish the first twenty-five pages of the novel.

Day Five

15 minutes: This time will be set aside for the student's to compose their first reaction writing to the first twenty-five pages of *Fahrenheit 451*.

35 minutes: As a class we will discuss the issues the students raised in their reaction

writings. We will also talk about the state of society in the novel and the attitude of the people as the students have perceived it them thus far. We will also go ahead and make connections with *The Children's Story*.

Homework: The students need to read to page 60 for Tuesday.

Week 2

Day 6

5 Minutes: I will introduce today's lesson. We will be discussing what makes good questions because there is such a thing as a bad question. Because this unit is about seeking knowledge and thus knowing how to ask good questions, we will spend four days using student questions to stimulate discussion. It will be important that students know how to ask questions for their reaction writings that will be used to generate discussions.

20 Minutes: During this time we will go over the qualities of good questions as I learned them in Dr. Faust's class. I will share with them the five parts of a good question:

- (1) It is focused.
- (2) It is open-ended.
- (3) It is meaningful to the inquirer.
- (4) It is clearly worded and exact.

As a class we will give some examples and address questions about these points.

20 Minutes: The students will break into pairs (one group of three if necessary) and discuss good questions. They will each write three questions, and then have their partner evaluate them. I will then pass out the reaction writings from last week and have the students evaluate their questions on the points I have provided.

5 minutes: We will come back together as a whole class. This will be time for the class to share their reactions to my thoughts on questions.

Day 7

15 minutes: This time will be set aside for the student's to compose their reaction writing for the material up to page 60 of *Fahrenheit 451*.

20 Minutes: The class will be divided into groups of four (one group of five if necessary).

I will assign groups. In these groups the students will be asked to discuss their questions and points from the reaction writing. As they discuss, each group will be responsible for choosing one question to share with the entire class. At the same time I will be moving around the class, making notes of interesting issues I want to raise.

15 minutes: The class will come back together. One member from each group will tell me his group's question and I will write it on the board. As a class we will address these questions shortly and I will raise any issues that I felt were particularly important.

Homework: The students need to read to page 95 by Thursday.

Day 8

15 Minutes: We will go outside as a class. The class will make a square around four people. The class will begin yelling at each other as loud as they can around these four people, who will be encouraged to try and engage their classmates who will be instructed not to respond to them directly, recreating Mildred's program from the book.

20 minutes: Back inside we will set up a question-answer session. The four members of

the class will sit in front of the room as they are experts on what Mildred experienced. The class and myself will question them on their experience, how it felt, whether they enjoy it like Mildred did, etc.

15 minutes: As a class we will discuss what this scene says about Mildred and her society. I will ask them what they think about a program like this and if our world has anything comparable. We will talk about why they think Bradbury included it in his novel.

Homework: The students need to read to page 95 by Thursday.

Day 9

15 minutes: This time will be set aside for the student's to compose their reaction writing for the material up to page 95 of *Fahrenheit 451*.

20 Minutes: The class will be divided into groups of four (one group of five if necessary). I will assign groups. In these groups the students will be asked to discuss their questions and points from the reaction writing. As they discuss, each group will be responsible for choosing one question to share with the entire class. At the same time I will be moving around the class, making notes of interesting issues I want to raise.

15 minutes: The class will come back together. One member from each group will tell me his group's question and I will write it on the board. As a class we will address these questions shortly and I will raise any issues that I felt were particularly important.

Homework: The students need to read to page 130 by Wednesday.

Day 10

10 minutes: I will open class by talking about how, even though we have read only a novel and a short story, the themes we are dealing with stretch throughout literature. Therefore we will be doing some work with poetry over the next few days.

35 minutes: As a class we will read the poem “The Hollow Men” by T.S. Elliot. We will also listen to “Cry Freedom” by the Dave Matthews Band and “Redemption Song” by Bob Marley. After we have read or listen to each work we will take several minutes to discuss our reactions to these poems as a class in light of what we have read. I will ask why they think I choose these works to share, and whether they think it is appropriate to the unit and why.

5 minutes: This will be time for me to go over the poetry assignment. They will be asked to collect one song or poem to share with the class that relates to the unit.

Monday they will present these poems and why they relate to the unit on the importance of seeking knowledge in about a three to five minute presentation.

Homework: The students need to prepare their poems and presentations for Monday. The students also need to read to page 130 by Wednesday.

Week 3

Day 11

50 minutes: The entire day will be set aside for student presentations to the class on the poetry assignment. I do not expect to finish the presentations today. I will be taking notes during the presentations on specific points students make that I want to raise again.

Homework: The students need to read to page 130 by Wednesday.

Day 12

35 minutes: We will use this time to finish the poetry presentation. I will continue to take notes of student work that I want to refer to in our discussion.

15 minutes: This will be time to sum up our poetry lesson. I will raise the issues I noted during presentations and allow students to comment on these and on their own thoughts after the presentation. If they have any favorite poems, they can bring those back up.

Homework: The students need to read to page 130 by Wednesday.

Day 13

15 minutes: This time will be set aside for the student's to compose their reaction writing for the material up to page 130 of *Fahrenheit 451*.

20 Minutes: The class will be divided into groups of four (one group of five if necessary). I will assign groups. In these groups the students will be asked to discuss their questions and points from the reaction writing. As they discuss, each group will be responsible for choosing one question to share with the entire class. At the same time I will be moving around the class, making notes of interesting issues I want to raise.

15 minutes: The class will come back together. One member from each group will tell me his group's question and I will write it on the board. As a class we will address these questions shortly and I will raise any issues that I felt were particularly important.

Homework: The students need to bring coloring utensils if they have them and read to page 165 by Friday.

Day 14

20 Minutes: Today I am going to read a scene from the novel and have the students capture how they see it. I will pass out white construction paper to the class, and coloring utensils to those who need them. I will instruct them to listen to me as I read and to draw what they hear. I will then precede to read the scene where Montag has to cross the road from the line “And here was the gas station ...” on page 125 to “... air all about it, gone.” on page 129. After I finish reading, the students will have the remainder of the twenty minutes to finish there drawing.

20 minutes: The class will break into groups of four to share their pictures. In their groups I want them to talk about why they drew what they drew. I also want them to compare their drawings and find similarities, differences in the drawings, and explore why these occurred.

10 minutes: We will reconvene as a class. The students can share some of the things they found out from their pictures. We will also talk about what this scene says about the society in the novel. We will also talk about why Bradbury included this scene in the novel.

Homework: The students need to read to page 165 by Friday.

Day 15

15 minutes: This time will be set aside for the student’s to compose their reaction writing for the material up to page 165 of *Fahrenheit 451*.

10 Minutes: The class will be divided into groups of four (one group of five if necessary). I will assign groups. In these groups the students will be asked to discuss their questions and points from the reaction writing.

20 minutes: The class will come back together. Together we will read “Harrison Bergeron” by Kurt Vonnegut. I will give the class the option of listening to a recording, having me read it, or having alternating readers.

5 minutes: During this time I will explain to them their final project of creating a short story, work of art, or formal paper to express their thoughts on this story in combination with everything they have learned during this unit that they want to use. The project will be due next Thursday, and I will give the three days of class time to work on it. They will have access to a computer lab. If a student finishes his project early he is expected to bring something to read or write. This is a unit on seeking out knowledge and they can use this time to do exactly that.

Homework: The students need to work on their final projects and bring either their work to work on or something to read if they completely finish their project for school Monday.

Week 4

Day 16

50 minutes: The class will have access to a computer lab and floor space to work on their final projects. They will be allowed to consult other members of the class, but need to focus on their work. Because this is a unit on seeking knowledge, students who finish early will be allowed to seek knowledge by reading or writing silently.

Homework: The students need to work on their final projects and bring either their work to work on or something to read if they completely finish their project.

Day 17

50 minutes: The class will have access to a computer lab and floor space to work on there final projects. They will be allowed to consult other members of the class, but need to focus on their work. Because this is a unit on seeking knowledge, students who finish early will be allowed to seek knowledge by reading or writing silently.

Homework: The students need to work on there final projects and bring either their work to work on or something to read if they completely finish there project.

Day 18

50 minutes: The class will have access to a computer lab and floor space to work on there final projects. They will be allowed to consult other members of the class, but need to focus on their work. Because this is a unit on seeking knowledge, students who finish early will be allowed to seek knowledge by reading or writing silently.

Homework: The students need to work on there final projects and bring either their work to work on or something to read if they completely finish there project.

Day 19

50 minutes: Today will be set aside for class presentations. Presentations are not required, but those that wish to read their stories, or a section if it is too long, share their art works, or share ideas form their papers will be encouraged to share. I will make notes from these presentations for our final discussion.

Day 20

35 minutes: The class will organize into a fishbowl discussion. Four volunteers will start

at the center of the room. Whenever somebody wants to join the conversation they will tap another member out. The group will be talking about why it is important to seek out knowledge. They will be allowed to refer to any of the works or projects that we have used in this unit as well as personal experiences and thoughts.

15 minutes: This will be my time to lecture to the class on some closing thoughts for the unit. I will talk about their discussion, as well as the notes I made from yesterday's presentations. I will sum up my motivations for teaching this unit and what I hope and think they got out of it.