

Union High School EN411 Senior English Topics

Summer Reading Film/Novels for Approval

Student taking EN411 Senior English Topics during the 2016-2017 school year and beyond will be required to complete a summer reading task that asks the students to choose and read one of two novels, then to watch the corresponding film and write an essay connecting the two in some way. Each pair of novels is designed to allow students to focus on either of the two semester courses they will encounter in EN411 – Gothic Literature or Film Adaptation. The essay topic is to be determined and can change with each year to allow for changes in student interest and to ensure students are completing original work.

Pair 1 – Focus on Film Adaptation

A. *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury

This novel has previously been approved by the Education Foundation and the Board of Education through the supplemental reading program at Union High School. A synopsis of the novel: "Ray Bradbury's internationally acclaimed novel Fahrenheit 451 is set in a bleak, dystopian future. Guy Montag is a fireman. In his world, where television rules and literature is on the brink of extinction, firemen start fires rather than put them out. His job is to destroy the most illegal of commodities, the printed book, along with the houses in which they are hidden. Montag never questions the destruction, returning each day to his bland life and wife, Mildred, who spends all day with her television "family." But then he meets an eccentric young neighbor, Clarisse, who introduces him to a past where people didn't live in fear and to a present where one sees the world through the ideas in books instead of the mindless chatter of television. Montag begins to question everything he has ever known. He starts hiding books in his home, and when his pilfering is discovered, the fireman has to run for his life."

B. *Fahrenheit 451*, directed by François Truffaut

Pair 2 – Focus on Gothic Literature

A. *I Am Legend* by Richard Matheson

B. *I Am Legend*, directed by Francis Lawrence

Film Approval Request

School: Union High School

Department: English

Course: EN411 Senior English Topics - SUMMER READING ASSIGNMENT

Grade Level: 12

Title: *Fahrenheit 451*

Year: 1966

Director: François Truffaut

Rating: Unrated (predates rating; would be PG-13 at the most if rated today)

Summary of Plot:

Fahrenheit 451 is a 1966 British Dystopian science fiction drama film directed by François Truffaut and starring Oskar Werner, Julie Christie, and Cyril Cusack. Based on the 1953 novel of the same name by Ray Bradbury, the film takes place in a controlled society in an oppressive future in which a fireman, whose duty it is to burn all literature, becomes a fugitive for reading. This was Truffaut's first color film as well and his only English-language film. At the 1966 Venice Film Festival, *Fahrenheit 451* was nominated for the Golden Lion. It is commonly referred to as a staple science-fiction that has remained influential within the science-fiction genre.

Language/Sexual Content:

There is no graphic language, nor is there any overt/explicit sexual content.

Rationale for Usage:

This film would be used in companion with Ray Bradbury's novel, and due to the fact that the film was unable to portray a lot of the science fiction elements of the text (mainly due to a lack of cinematic technology necessary to depict the wildly imaginative science fiction elements Bradbury presented in the narrative), it can be used in contrast for purposes of film adaptation. In the end, no matter how the film differs from the novel, it can be used as a means to reinforce students' textual examination of narrative. It could also be used as secondary source material for a comparative analysis essay. It connects both of the two semester courses and focuses on students more interested in the Film Adaptation course.

This film will be paired with *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury, a novel previously approved by the Board of Education in the Supplemental Reading Program at Union High School.

Reviewed by: Jon Tummillo

Film Approval Request

School: UHS

Department: English

Course: EN411 Senior English Topics – SUMMER READING ASSIGNMENT

Grade Level: 12

Title: *I Am Legend*

Year: 2007

Director: Francis Lawrence

Rating: PG-13

Summary of Plot:

Adapted from acclaimed author Richard Matheson's influential novelette of the same name, Constantine director Francis Lawrence's *I Am Legend* follows the last man on Earth as he struggles to survive while fending off the infected survivors of a devastating vampiric plague. A brilliant scientist who raced to discover a cure for the man-made virus as humanity came crumbling down all around him, Robert Neville (Will Smith) was inexplicably immune to the highly contagious superbug.

Language/Sexual Content:

Rated PG-13 for mild/implied sexual references, mild language, and horror violence.

Rationale for Usage:

Students will have the option of reading *I Am Legend* as their summer reading assignment for the course and pairing the film with the novel for comparison and analysis. It connects both of the two semester courses and focuses on students more interested in the Gothic Literature course.

Reviewed by: Andy Kenny

Novel-Review Checklist

Title: *I Am Legend*

Author: Richard Matheson

SUMMER READING ASSIGNMENT

Grade Level: 12

Reviewer(s): Andy Kenny

Content/Scope/Theme of the Novel:

In this novel, the protagonist, Robert Neville, is seemingly the only survivor of a plague that has converted the rest of humanity to vampires. Robert's mission is to destroy "the others" before they can infect him. It is said that the pandemic was caused by a war, and that it was spread by dust storms in the cities and an explosion in the mosquito population. The narrative details Neville's daily life in Los Angeles as he attempts to comprehend, research, and possibly cure the disease, to which he is immune. Neville's past is revealed through flashbacks; the disease claimed his wife and daughter, and he was forced to kill his wife after she seemingly rose from the dead as a vampire and attacked him.

Point of view or bias of the author:

The story is told in the third person from the point of view of Robert Neville, the protagonist. Throughout the novel, the reader sees what he sees and shares his thoughts and moods. We gradually learn how the state of affairs came to be through flashbacks that Robert recalls. There was the war that brought the plague in its wake, the insect bite he received from the vampire bat, his friendship with Ben, and the last days of his wife and daughter. When Robert meets the dog and later Ruth, he is afraid they are vampires, and we view these characters through Robert's eyes. We are given the same information Robert has, and we base our opinion on whether the character is trustworthy from that.

Accuracy and documentation:

It is a playful take on an old archetype, the vampire. Matheson goes to great lengths to rationalize the vampire myth, transforming supernaturalism to medical causation. With *I Am Legend*, Matheson instituted the germ theory of vampirism.

Ethnic/culture/gender representation:

The protagonist is Robert Neville, a 36-year-old blond-haired, blue-eyed man who is the sole survivor of a plague that has killed or transformed the rest of humanity to vampires. He has lost his wife and only child to the disease, and he has responded by barricading himself in his house and escaping through art, classical music, reading, drinking, and gallows humor. It is not clear what profession Robert was in, but he seems to be well educated and well rounded; he enjoys the arts, is a capable medical researcher as well as a carpenter and all around handyman.

Language/Sexual Content:

The tone is Gothic, dark and dramatic. The language is straightforward with few implied sexual references and no sex scenes.

Is it for the beginner with no background in the subject? **Yes**
No (If extensive background in the subject is required, please note this):

Style

Is the writing **Clear** **Confusing** **Lively**
Dry

Is there oversimplification to the point of being unclear, inaccurate or misleading **Yes No**

Is the organization logical: **Yes**
No

Quality of the index and/or cross-references: **Yes**
No

Is the information readily accessible **Yes No**

Comparison

Does this book present new material for this grade range: **Yes**
No

Does it cover basic material better than extant standard works: **Yes**
No

Briefly describe the potential appeal to intended audience:

I Am Legend showed that it was possible to return to older genre traditions thought dead and revitalize them, as authors Stephen King and Anne Rice did a generation later with the vampire myth. *I am Legend* is arguably the greatest short horror novel ever written, and its influence on the horror genre has been profound. Stephen King and many other of today's masters rank this book highly in their personal top ten lists of favorites. It is a short novel that can be read in one sitting; it is hard to put down, building in intensity from start to finish. Matheson creates an entirely new type of vampire fiction. Transcending the traditional vampire tale, he adds science fiction elements to produce a refreshing new interpretation of Stoker's legend.

Recommendation

FOR GENERAL PURCHASE FOR SCHOOL **Yes No**

Final Rational/Comments/Areas of Concern:

Andy Kenny

2/23/16

Signature of Reviewer

Date