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Dr. Warner

English 112B

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Unit of Study: Utopias and Dystopias

Fahrenheit 451 A Life Without Books

Rational:

After attending my observations hours at Milpitas High School I have come to realize that the genres of utopian and dystopian literature are important to teach to young adults. During one of my observation days my host teacher, Lindsay Mohondro, introduced the novel *Fahrenheit 451* with a discussion of the definitions of utopia and dystopia. After a few questions and explanations, Ms. Mohondro asked her students if they knew of any other examples of utopias or dystopias and almost every hand shot up! The students were very engaged in the discussion because a lot of the books that they have already read fit in to the genres of utopian or dystopian literature. Because the students had previous encounters with the genres (without even knowing it) the discussion was carried beyond the books into deeper topics such as government and ethics. The enthusiasm and discussions I witnessed in Ms. Mohondro's freshman honors English class sparked my idea to focus on utopias and dystopias in a unit of study.

Specifically, I decided to prepare a unit of study on the utopian and dystopian genres because of a question formed in the discussion in Ms. Mohondro's class, "Why are today's readers so interested in these genres". This question resulted in an eruption of engaged and insightful answers from Ms. Mohondro's students. Many of the students reasoned that readers are interested in utopian and dystopian novels because they can relate to them in various ways. I

agree with the students in Ms. Mohundro's and therefore I have decided to further this discussion on utopian and dystopian literature in the form of a unit of study.

UTOPIA AND DYSTOPIA: APPRECIATING SOCIETY

UNIT OF STUDY BY LISA RAMOS

Rational:

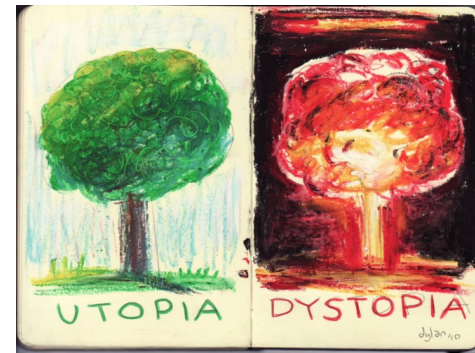
The word utopia, from the Greek root, means no place. Utopias do not exist, yet they come to life in a very real way in novels. While a utopia may seem perfect, in most cases utopias turn into dystopias. Many of the novels that young adults are reading on their own deal with utopias and dystopias. My reasoning for teaching this particular unit of study is to take advantage of that initial spark of interest in these young readers in order to expand their minds beyond texting and Facebook. Since our readers are already exposed to these genres, bringing them into the classroom should excite the students and further their learning.

LAUNCHING THE UNIT

Journal Writing

Describe your ideal society. What would the laws be? How would they be enforced? Would there be any laws? Explain how this society would be the best society for everyone.

Defining Utopias and Dystopias



What do you already know about these terms?

How would you define utopias and dystopias?
Have you encountered these terms in previous readings?

DEFINING THE TERMS

Utopias

Society	Equality of all People
View on future	Optimistic
Government	Democracy, if at all
Education	Equal and advancing
Economy	Equal distribution of goods
Legislation	Fair system of punishment for all
Atmosphere	Happy and harmonic

Dystopias

Society	Class system
View on future	Pessimistic
Government	Regime, dictator
Education	Propoganda
Economy	No middle class, rich or poor only
Legislation	Unfair and excessive punishment
Atmosphere	Melancholy

CENTERPIECE WORK: *FAHRENHEIT 451* / BY RAY BRADBURY



Guy Montag is a fireman. His job is to burn books, which are forbidden, being the source of all discord and unhappiness. Even so, Montag is unhappy; there is discord in his marriage. Are books hidden in his house? The Mechanical Hound of the Fire Department, armed with a lethal hypodermic, escorted by helicopters, is ready to track down those dissidents who defy society to preserve and read books.

<http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/17470674-fahrenheit-451>

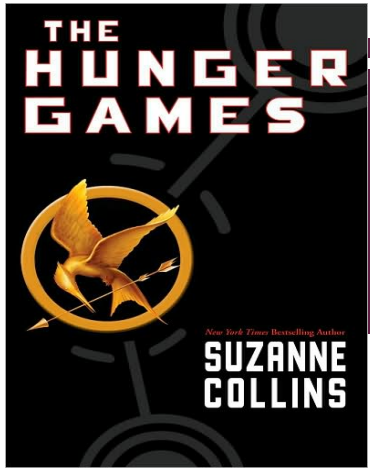
READING ALONG.....

Reading Scavenger Hunt

- Examples of censorship, entertainment(good/bad?), happiness
- Literary Allusions: Does anything sound familiar? Are any texts specifically referenced?
- Relationship to today's society: Do you see any similarities? Differences?

Outside the Classroom

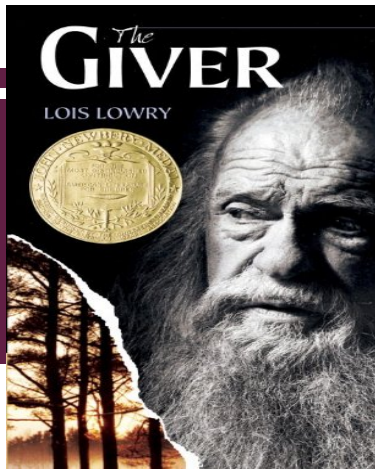
- Go one full day without technology, honestly. Can you do it?
- Go one full day without reading but keep track of all of the texts you remember throughout this day
- Compare *Fahrenheit 451* with another utopian book or movie you have encountered and today's society. Do you see any recurring themes?



In a dark vision of the near future, a terrifying reality TV show is taking place. Twelve boys and twelve girls are forced to appear in a live event called the Hunger Games. There is only one rule: kill or be killed.

When sixteen-year-old Katniss Everdeen steps forward to take her sister's place in the games, she sees it as a death sentence. But Katniss has been close to death before. For her, survival is second nature

http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/2767052-the-hunger-games?from_search=true

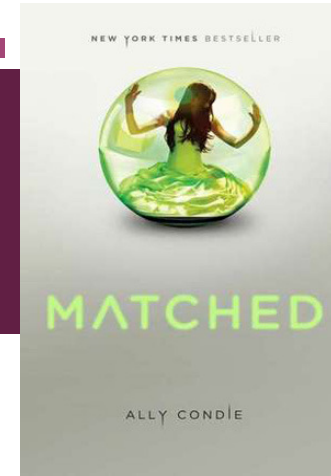


Jonas' world is perfect. Everything is under control. There is no war or fear or pain. There are no choices. Every person is assigned a role in the Community. When Jonas turns twelve, he is singled out to receive special training from The Giver. The Giver alone holds the memories of the true pain and pleasure of life. Now, it is time for Jonas to receive the truth. There is no turning back.

http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/3636.The_Giver?from_search=true

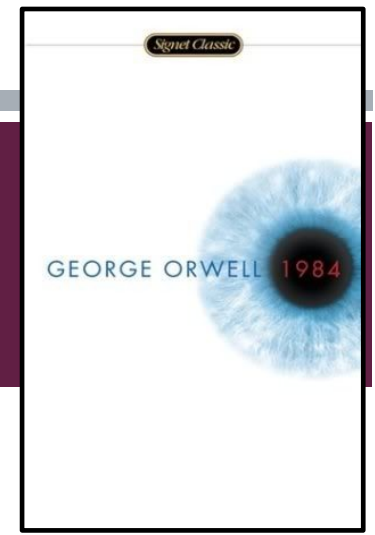
EXPANDING THE UNIT

These novels provide a wide variety of societies. I believe it is important for teens to be exposed to as many different utopian and dystopian constructions to be able to make a better and more complete comparison with their own societies. I would not make it mandatory to read all or any of these novels. However, I would strongly suggest each of these novels for leisure reading.



Cassia has always trusted the Society to make the right choices for her: what to read, what to watch, what to believe. So when Xander's face appears on-screen at her Matching ceremony, Cassia knows with complete certainty that he is her ideal mate... until she sees Ky Markham's face flash for an instant before the screen fades to black. The Society tells her it's a glitch, a rare malfunction, and that she should focus on the happy life she's destined to lead with Xander. But Cassia can't stop thinking about Ky, and as they slowly fall in love, Cassia begins to doubt the Society's infallibility and is faced with an impossible choice: between Xander and Ky, between the only life she's known and a path that no one else has dared to follow.

http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/7735333-matched?from_search=true



http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/5470.1984?from_search=true

In George Orwell's 1984, Winston Smith wrestles with oppression in Oceania, a place where the Party scrutinizes human actions with ever-watchful Big Brother. Defying a ban on individuality, Winston dares to express his thoughts in a diary and pursues a relationship with Julia. These criminal deeds bring Winston into the eye of the opposition, who then must reform the nonconformist. George Orwell's 1984 introduced the watchwords for life without freedom: BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU.

<http://www.cliffsnotes.com/literature/n/1984/1984-at-a-glance>

FINAL THOUGHTS...

After reading *Fahrenheit 451*, I would ask my students to:

- Journal about their experience as they read the novel. Did they notice any truths in the novel?
- Pick another utopian or dystopian that they have read, or would like to read, to compare (they could look up the secondary novel online if they would like) to *Fahrenheit 451*. They would then use the novel they chose to construct an essay.
- Essay topic:
Knowing what life is like in today's world, and now having a few ideas of possibilities for our future, which society do you think is better? Explain your choice in society over the others using examples from the text that support your claim.