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Professor Warner

English 112B T 4:30-7:30

1 May 2015

Fahrenheit 451, Censorship and Technology

My unit of study is on Dystopian fiction for young adults. The centerpiece novel that I am using is *Fahrenheit 451*. Censorship is a main theme within this novel, as well as humanities ever growing dependence upon technology. As stated in the class discussion, Common Core has provided a list of works that it suggests teachers use in their classrooms. Although Common Core clearly states that this list is not in any way comprehensive many administrators have implemented it as such. In order to have an alternative book be taught the teacher must provide a convincing argument. This is the modern day censorship that happens around the nation since the foundation of Common Core has been established (Cailouet). Students should be aware of the fact that this type of censorship occurs in this day and age. Also the issue of censorship on the internet is an incredibly relevant topic that also would be fleshed out in this unit of study. Nearly two thirds of the world's population does not have access to the internet either due to lack of finances or government censoring. The book burning that occurs in the novel *Fahrenheit 451* is meant to show the dangers of censorship. Guy Montag the main character of the novel has an complete change of mind in regards to book burning. He goes from being the one who burns the books to one of the people who works to maintain the knowledge that is in the books.

Another idea that *Fahrenheit 451* brings to the classroom is the increasing role technology is playing in people's everyday lives. The students that I will end up teaching will be young adults who have never lived in world without cell phones, ipads and laptops. All of which

have changed the world and the way human beings interact with one another. In *Fahrenheit 451* the general population is endlessly entertained by walls made of screens which is eerily similar to the way modern American's consume technology. On average American's spend in excess of eight and a half hours a day in front of some sort of screen (Short). Students should be aware of the fact that this amount of consumption lowers their ability to think critically. The character that most represents this mindless consumption is Mildred, the wife of Guy Montag. Her unwillingness to engage in real human interaction and her suicide attempt will show the dangers of over consuming technology.

Grade Level: 11-12

Launching the Unit:

At the beginning of the period I would pass out a list of the top ten songs that have been censored from the radio. This list includes "Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds" by The Beatles, "My Generation" and "Who Are You" both by The Who (Wowzenek). I would then ask if my students were surprised or not by the list. Then I would ask if they have heard any of these songs. What this would serve to do is show how ineffective censorship normally is. While the students are looking at this list of songs I will play snippets of the three songs above so if they do not know the titles of the songs but have heard them they can relate. After the juices are flowing in the class discussion I would shift from talking about the songs to *Fahrenheit 451*. In order for the students to understand the world in which *Fahrenheit 451* operates I would simply use an example from popular culture. *The Hunger Games*, *Divergent*, or *Mazurunner* would be three that I could use for the next few years.

Examining The Text:

As for getting into the meat of the text the character of Guy Montag will be the starting point of our discussion. I will talk about how Montag burns books without actually reading or understanding what he was doing. This discussion would precede the students starting the novel so that they would have a critical lens to look through as they were reading.

On the second day of the unit I will ask the students to write about the way in which Guy Montag and the society he lives in censors their general population. Once the topic of book burning is brought up I will inform the students of some of the new age ways of censorship. The common core list and the way in which administration interprets it will be one form that will be addressed. Another form of censorship that will be talked about is government censorship of the internet in various countries.

The character that I would use to introduce the idea of humanities over consumption of technology is Mildred Montag. She is a sickly woman who spends her days in front of walls made of screens. In order to introduce this theme to the class I would ask my students to describe Mildred's character. Asking them what they liked and disliked about her. I would ask them to flesh out Mildred's character on the third day of the unit. After the students have completed their journal we would have a class discussion about the way in which Mildred endlessly consumes technology. Even after she almost kills herself by overdosing on pills the only thing that she can talk about is a television show. Obviously this is unhealthy and this will be a major talking point in our discussion. Also the conversation will focus on how similar this consumption is to twenty first century life.

Throughout the rest of the novel I would have my students begin each day with a quick ten to fifteen minute journal entry on either the topic of censorship or technology consumption. Also I would assign a three to five page paper analyzing one of the themes of *Fahrenheit 451*.

This would be so the class would have something to talk about when the discussion began. Once the novel was completed, the final journal entry would be to do a brown bag of *Fahrenheit 451*. By using this brown bag technique I will be able to gauge the understanding of the novel. Also I will have the students turn in all of the journal entries so I can see how their understanding of both topics grew throughout the unit. This is how I would test the effectiveness of my unit of study.

Possible Expanded Activity:

I could break the class up into three different groups and assign each of the groups to one third of the novel. Conveniently the novel is written in three parts so each groups would have to produce their part of the novel (The Hearth and the Salamander, The Sieve and the Sand, Burning Bright) in the form of a graphic novel. At the end of the project I would combine all three group's work into one cohesive novel produced by the class. Not only will this be a sentimental piece but it will also boost class pride and unity. Also by synthesizing the novel into a series of images will show me that the class understood the themes of *Fahrenheit 451*. Students will be able to use their creativity and boost their critical thinking skills at the same time.

Possible Supplemental Texts:

1. *Feed* By M.T. Anderson: This text would be for the students who really enjoy the theme of humanities over consumption of technology. In this novel people are connected directly to the internet. Although it has a somber tone it has a powerful message about the dangers of human beings reliance upon technology. Also it is a dystopian novel which fits in perfectly with *Fahrenheit 451*.

2. *Americus* by MK Reed Jonathan David Hill: This is a graphic novel that deals with the theme of censorship. Written in 2011 this book deals with Christian activists who are trying to get a novel banned based on immoral content and heresy. Students will connect to this novel because it carries a more contemporary presentation of the issue of censorship.
3. *The Sledding Hill* by Chris Crutcher: Another novel that deals with the theme of censorship. In this novel a book titled *Warren Peace* is being banned. This novel would appeal to the students who enjoy comedy and irony.
4. *I, Robot* Issac Asimov: Humanities dependence upon technology is the centerpiece of this series of short stories. Students that enjoy the Portal video game series or the movie by the same name would enjoy this novel.
5. An online source of poetry titled teenink which is a crowd sourced teen literature website. Link: <http://www.teenink.com/poetry/all/article/425912/The-Social-Network-The-Modern-Monster/> This particular thread is to a poem about the dangers of overusing social networks and technology in general. This would be perfect for a student who is creative that not only wants to read poetry but add too it.

Works Cited

- Bradbury, Ray. *Fahrenheit 451*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967. Print.
- Caillouet, Ruth, and Amy Davis Sanford. "Facing Our Dragons: Wrestling with the Canon Censorship and Common Core through YA Literature." *The ALAN Review* 41.Three (2014): 62-70. Print.
- Short, James E. "USC Marshall School of Business." *How Much Media?* University of Southern California, 2013. Web. 05 May 2015.

Wowzenek, Bryan. "Top 10 Censored Rock Songs." Ultimate Classic Rock. N.p., n.d. Web. 04 May 2015.

Top Ten Censored Rock Songs

10. "Kick Out The Jams" MC5
9. "Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds" The Beatles
8. "My Generation" The Who
7. "Eve of Discussion" Barry McGuire
6. "Lola" The Kinks
5. "You Don't Know How It Feels"
4. "Money For Nothing" Dire Straits
3. "God Save the Queen" Sex Pistols
2. "Lets Spend The Night Together" The Rolling Stones
1. "Louie, Louie" The Kingsmen

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CENSORSHIP

**PROTECTING YOU
FROM REALITY**

Sample Songs

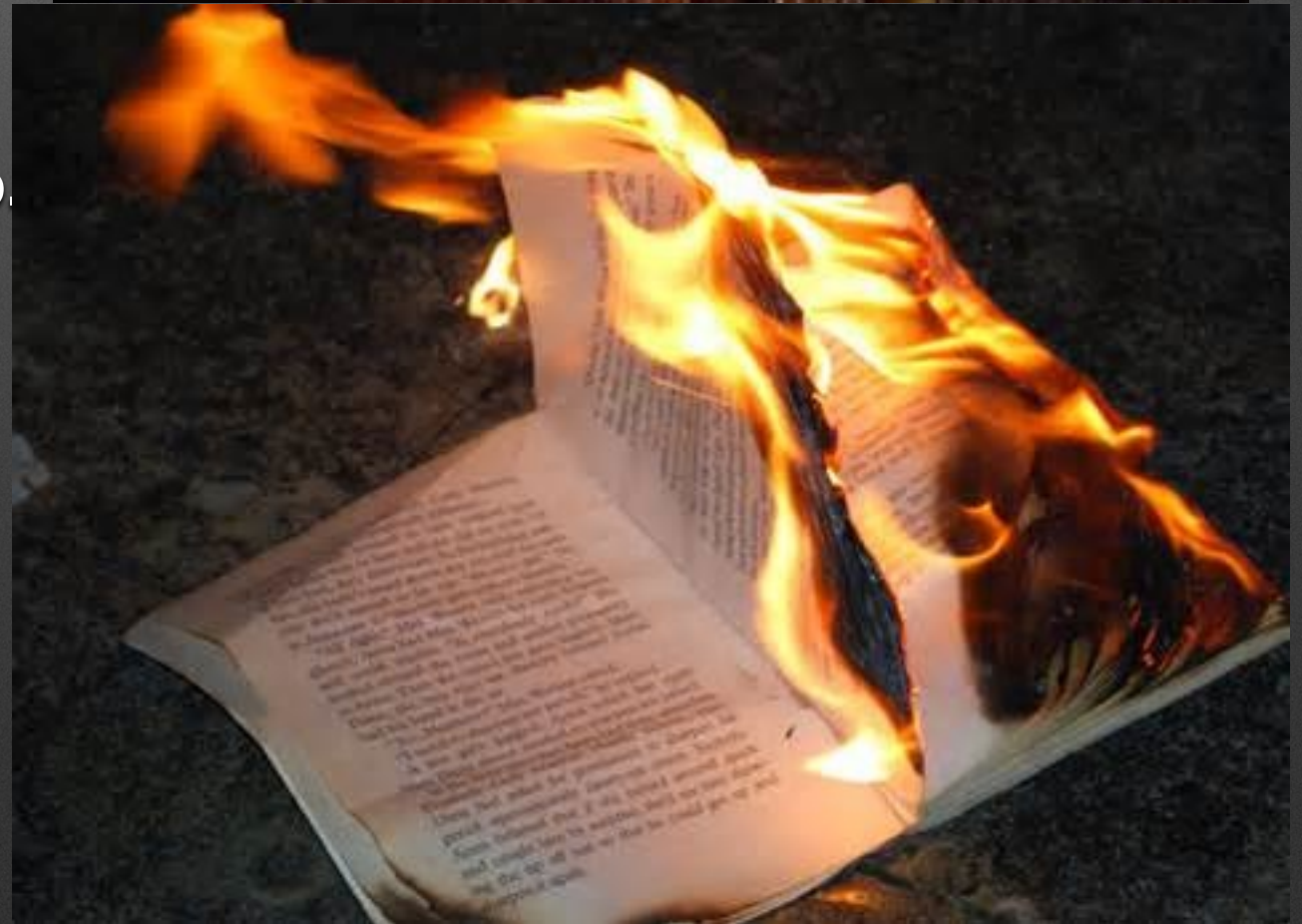
- The Who “Who Are You”
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r5kmCgVhADY>
- The Beatles “Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds”
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yDI0qPfkSRw>
- The Who “My Generation”
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qN5zw04WxCc>



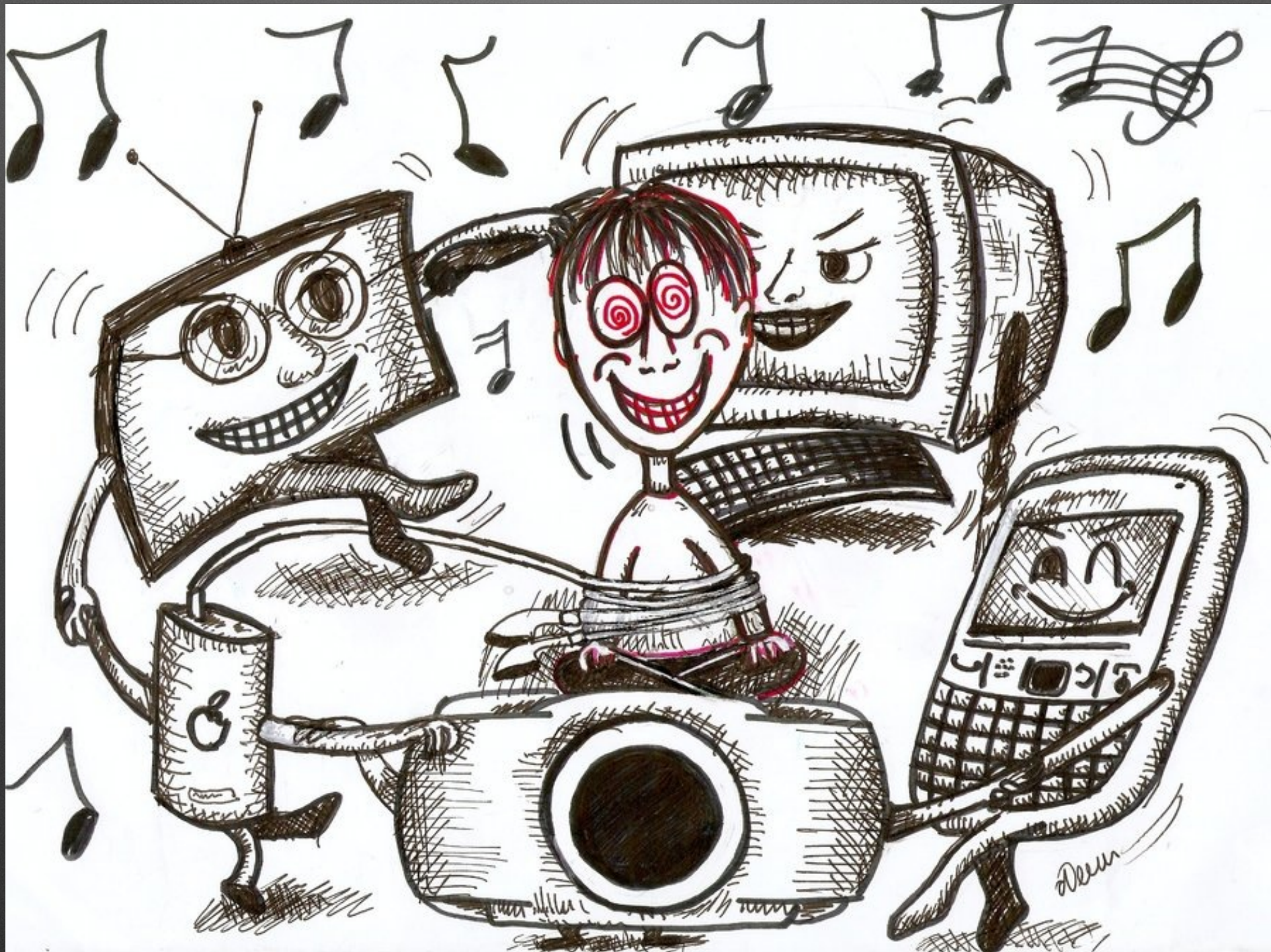
Guy Montag

The character that would help in
fleshing out the theme of Censorship.

Transforms from a book burner to a
book reader



Dangers of Technology





Mildred Montag

Personification of humanities over
consumption of technology

Watches show after show on her
walls made of screens



Journals, Brown Bag, Essay

- Students will be required to write journal entries at the beginning of every class on the themes of the novel
- After the novel is finished students will do a brown bag entry
- Also a short essay will be assigned on one of the themes of the novel.

Expanded Activity

- Break the class into three groups and assign them one of the three parts of the novel (The Hearth and the Salamander, The Sieve and the Sand, Burning Bright)
- Groups will be in charge of the drawing a graphic novel for their assigned part
- Combine all three and form a class graphic novel.

Supplemental Texts

- *Feed* M.T. Anderson (Consumption of Technology)
- *Americanus* MK Reed (Censorship)
- *The Sledding Hill* Chris Crutcher (Censorship)
- *I, Robot* Isaac Asimov (Consumption of Technology)
- *Teenink*

<http://www.teenink.com/poetry/all/article/425912/The->

[Social-Network-The-Modern-Monster/](#) (Consumption of
Technology)

Works Cited

Bradbury, Ray. Fahrenheit 451. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967. Print.

Caillouet, Ruth, and Amy Davis Sanford. "Facing Our Dragons: Wrestling with the Canon Censorship and Common Core through YA Literature." *The ALAN Review* 41.Three (2014): 62-70. Print.

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