

War: What is it good for?
By Brant Chesser

So what is it like to be a soldier fighting for your country at war? Do they understand the reasons they are fighting? How does war change the characters involved in the literature? Why do soldiers' fight? Is it because they believe in the national cause or because they have to fight? My unit will explore the issue of war and peace. It will also take into account the role of literature. The unit will look at writer's views of wars, the war currently taking place in Iraq, the war on terror, and past wars that America has fought. Concepts that are central to this unit will be the horror and brutality/reality of war, alternatives to war, effects of war and different viewpoints on war. I want to teach this unit because we are currently sending soldiers over to Iraq and Afghanistan every day. Secondary students will soon be affected by this if they choose to enlist in the military or they might have parents/relatives who have been to war or who are currently at war. The unit will look at both sides of the coin on war and also look further into war protest stories and songs.

The first reason that for studying about war is because of the national significance it currently carries in America. The Iraq war is one of the main issues in the current presidential election. Hopefully this language arts unit can coincide with their history unit on World War II or Vietnam. The unit will then give them literature on top of the historical background from history. Whether they are for or against this war or any war it

is important to understand the significance of a country going to war and how it affects the individuals who fight in the war.

The second reason for teaching a war unit is to create civic awareness within each student. The unit will allow each student to be up to date on the current war while examining individual experiences in past wars. The unit will look at pro-war literature and pro-war songs. The unit will also look at some protest songs and ideas that show each side of a country going to war. This idea is important because it will show how students can take social action if they choose to do so. During the unit the students will study past and current articles to decipher the language of the media during war times. How is the news about the war spun? Do we ever hear of how many people we killed or just those soldiers that we lost?

A third reason for teaching this unit is that of social needs. Looking at war, the reality of war, and reasons for going to war hopefully will create awareness on the global side. It also may aid them in understanding what it is like to be in war as an individual and how they view their country's decisions. I want the students to be able to critically think about the issue of war and be able to enter the world with an opinion whether they are for or against war. The unit can also focus on the positive and negative aspects of war in the past and today. Hopefully having the students gain knowledge on war will create a better country and society in the future.

Texts that I plan to use will widely vary. Students will read, analyze and respond to fiction, historical accounts, journalism, photo-journalism, poems, songs, and film. In addition to studying the aspect of war on the individual, the class will also look at the

language of war in the texts. Students will be participating in a variety of activities such as essays, drama, songs, stories, and discussions.

Students will read two books: *The Greatest Generation and Slaughter-House Five*. Part of Kurt Vonnegut's novel *Slaughter-House Five* will be read in class upon approval. This will show an anti-war view in a creative way. It will also show the damaging effects that war can have on an individual. Historical accounts contained in Tom Brokaw's *The Greatest Generation* will be used to see individual experiences of Americans during World War II. This text will shed light upon the faces at war for our country and also provide a pro-war view from soldier who fought for America's freedom. The text should provide a positive feel and create pride in the soldiers who fought for America during the second World War. Some of today's pro-war songs and protest songs along student choices will be used in class. A variety of short stories and poems will be used in class to examine different viewpoints of war and the language of war. The first thirty minutes of *Saving Private Ryan* will be shown if allowed to give the students a feeling of the reality of war. This will show that war is not something that can be taken lightly and it can have cruel ending. Hopefully this will contribute to social needs if anyone of them ever became one of America's leaders. Various political perspectives and media perspectives will be read in order to see how others view war.

Once finished with the unit students will be positioned on either side able to take a stand on war and back it up with evidence from history. Some students may have prior knowledge of war from their parents' experience or grandparents' experience, which they may share in class if they wish to do so. The unit will engage students in a variety of activities that will not only involve reading, writing and critically analyzing, but will also

allow for students to draw, act, and sing. The unit will meet a variety of Georgia's QCC goals as set by the state. Hopefully the unit will help students to see the national significance of war and to raise civic awareness to read further into the issue of war.

Two arguments that I expect to come from parents is one of violence in war along with the politics involved with the issue of war. I will give students the option of reading books that do not contain great violence if they wish and they do not have to watch portions of the movie. My argument for discussing the violence of war is the reality of it. War is not a video game and people do die. The soldiers dying are loved by family and friends somewhere in our country. I just want to make students aware of the consequences of war.

As far as politics go I do not want to sway any student's opinion in any direction. We will discuss the pro-war views along with the anti-war views in America. Both will be given equal time and a student's view on the war will not affect their grade at all. The class will look at both sides of the war argument and each student will come to his or her own conclusion through evidence provided in the texts read during this unit. This will help the students to continue to make informed decisions for themselves.

Intro Activity for Unit “War: What is it good for?”

Opinionnaire/Survey

Each of the following statements expresses an opinion. Rate each statement from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)

1. Individuals who create power are more important than individuals who question power.
2. Soldiers are heroes in wars that you support and in wars that don't support.
3. American lives are more important than enemy lives in war.
4. Soldiers are heroes in wars we win and in wars we lose.
5. An individual should fight for America regardless of their opinion on a war.
6. War is glorified through the media.
7. War should be the solution in a worldly crisis.
8. Individuals who protest against war are not real patriots or Americans.
9. War brings America together.

I will use this introductory activity by allowing students to answer the questions and then get in groups of 3-4 people to discuss their different answers. They will meet in small groups for 25 minutes before we have a large discussion about the answers for another 25-30 minutes.

Goals and Rubrics for War What is it good for? Unit

The unit “War what is it good for” will focus on writing, reading and a project that will appeal to Gardner’s multiple intelligence theory. The first assessment will be for the student to create a CD based on the works read. The student will read “Slaughter-House Five”, “The Greatest Generation” and current articles to learn about war. One reason for having a multi-genre project is so that the “students have opportunities to generate knowledge through texts and processes that move beyond the conventional academic emphasis on analytic writing” (Smagorinsky, 130). To show what each student has learned during the war unit each student will create a CD composed of 8-12 songs, cover art for the CD and an album review paper on how the songs play into what they have read. The texts will be seen and heard through each soundtrack that each student creates. Every student is welcomed to make up their own songs in relation to war and the texts we have read for the unit as well. Each student will create a CD with the following in mind:

- The understanding of the two books along with newspaper articles read for class.
- How the books influenced each student’s view on war.
- Pro-War or protest songs to voice your own opinion on war.
- The books’ characters, people, actions and relationships.

Students will be allowed to work alone or in pairs for this project. Each student or group will give a 5-10 minute presentation on the CD they have created and how it shaped their

understanding of the texts in the unit. The songs, the album review and art work for their CD will show their stance on war. Their explanation verbally will help me to better “understand their work’s significance” (Smagorinsky, 130).

Rubric for the CD Albums

A grade of A will be awarded to CD Albums that

- Are turned in on time
- Include the minimum number of components
- The Album review is correctly written, free of any major errors
- The information is correct and documented.
- Influences of three or more texts are addressed
- Explores the idea of war and the students’ opinion of war
- Have a design and theme that is continuous throughout the album
- Clearly explain how each exhibit served as a source of significant learning about war during the presentation that is between 5-10 minutes.

A grade of B will be awarded to CD Albums that

- Are turned in on time
- Include the minimum number of components
- The Album review is correctly written, free of any major errors
- The information contains a few gaps
- Influences of just one or two texts is addressed
- Explores the idea of war and the students’ opinion of war
- Have a design and theme that is continuous throughout the album

- Clearly explain how each exhibit served as a source of significant learning about war during the presentation that is between 5-10 minutes.

A grade of C will be awarded to CD Albums that

- Are turned in on time
- Include the minimum number of components
- Album review contains errors that detract from the content
- The information has more than a few gaps
- Influences of just one or two texts is addressed
- Vaguely explores the idea of war and the students' opinion of war
- Have a design and theme that is not continuous throughout the album
- Do not clearly explain how each exhibit served as a source of significant learning about war during the presentation that is between 5-10 minutes.

A grade of D will be awarded to a CD Albums that

- Are turned in on time
- Include the minimum number of components, but that do not indicate reflection of learning.
- Album review contains errors that detract from the content
- The information has more than a few gaps
- Influences of just one or two texts is addressed
- Do not explore the idea of war and the students' opinion of war
- Have a design and theme that is not continuous throughout the album

- Do not clearly explain how each exhibit served as a source of significant learning about war during the presentation that is between 5-10 minutes.

A grade of F will be awarded to CD Albums that

- Are not turned in on time
- Do not include the minimum number of components
- Album review contains errors that detract from the content
- The information has more than a few gaps
- Influences of just one or two texts is addressed
- Do not explore the idea of war and the students' opinion of war
- Have a design and theme that is not continuous throughout the album
- Do not clearly explain how each exhibit served as a source of significant learning about war during the presentation that is between 5-10 minutes.

The second major project for this war unit is a reading log. “The purpose of these journals is to encourage students to attend carefully to the language of the literature and to read reflectively, pausing to think about particular passages before moving along” (Smagorinsky 125). The entries should contain any ideas or questions the student has in relation to the text they are reading.

To keep your reading log organized follow these steps:

- Divide each page with a vertical line down the center
- On the left side of each page, record significant passages from the literature you read.

- On the right side, across from each passage, do any or all of the following:
 1. Ask questions that would help you understand the passage better
 2. Give your personal response to the passage. Do you relate?
 3. Give your personal evaluation of the passage. Would you react the same way?
 4. Think through a possible interpretation of the passage. What are some interpretations of this passage?
 - Write a minimum of three entries per week. The logs will be collected at the beginning of class each Friday.
 - Don't worry about standard English grammar. Focus on the literature and your response to the literature.

Rubric for Reading Log

A passing grade will be awarded to the reading logs that:

- Are turned in on time
- Have at least 3 entries per week and contain dialogue between the different texts.
- Address class discussions, research and/or future discussions.
- Contains at least 3 passages per entry

A failing grade will be awarded to reading logs that:

- Are not turned in on time.
- Do not have 3 entries per week and do not contain dialogue between the different texts.

- Do not address class discussions, research and/or future discussions.
- Do not contain at least 3 passages per entry.

Lesson plans for “War: What is it good for?” Unit

Day One:

Attendance; housekeeping (5 min)

Intro Activity (50 min) opinionnaire

Students will form small groups of 3-4 students and then answer the opinionnaire on their own. Once they finish answering they will discuss their opinions with their small groups for 25 minutes. We will then have a large group discussion for another 25-30 minutes following the small groups.

Stories of World War II relatives and friends (5-25 min)

I will share the story of my grandfather being a pilot in WW II and we will discuss any students relatives and friends experiences with war.

Preview Novel (1st 3 paragraphs) (20-30 min)

We will read the first three paragraphs of “Slaughter-House Five” aloud so that the students gain a feel the book.

Language Activity (10-20 min)

We will go over a lesson on action verbs and students will write sentences that contain action verbs.

Day two:

Attendance; housekeeping (5 min)

Vocabulary Activity (10-20 min)

The students will write any words they have not seen before that are in Chapter 1 of the novel on an index card. They can pick out up to 10 words from chapter 1.

Read 1st Chapter aloud (30-40 min)

Read first chapter of “Slaughter-House Five” aloud and in small groups.

Discuss 1st chapter reading in small groups of 3-4 students (20-30 min)

Discuss 1st chapter reading as a whole class (20-30 min)

Examine indications that the narrator still suffers from the aftereffects of World War II.

Summarize what this chapter reveals about the destruction of Dresden (pp. 1-11)

Analyze Mary O’Hare’s reaction to Vonnegut’s plan to call his book “The Children’s Crusade” (pp. 14-15).

Reading log on 1st chapter of SHF (20-25 min)

Go over directions for the reading log and CD activity assessments (20 min)

Pass out the rubrics and directions for the CD activity and reading logs. Each student will create a CD based on the texts we read in class and create art work, a paper explaining the rationale behind each song, and the CD with the songs on it.

Day Three:

Attendance; housekeeping (5 min)

Read “Greatest Generation” chapter aloud in small groups of 3-4 students or alone. (25-30 min)

Reading log writing (20-25min)

Short Class discussion on the chapter (10 min)

Introduce songs about War. Play “Masters of War” aloud for the students and have them respond to it by writing what the song made the students think about or feel. (30 min)

Compare the first chapters of SHF and GG. (20-30 min)

Day Four:

Attendance; housekeeping (5 min)

Language Lesson on sentence structure in the two books (20 min)

Read Chapter 2 of SHF in small groups. (30-40 min)

Reading logs and discuss in groups (30 min)

Analyze the statement, “Frames are where the money is” (p.24) and the irony of Billy’s profession.

Analyze the significance of “Billy Pilgrim h as come unstuck in time” (p. 23)

Analyze the Tralfamadorians’ philosophy and what this reflects about Vonnegut’s perspective. (pp. 25-27)

Activities: Write a name poem with Billy Pilgrim’s name or draw a caricature of Billy Pilgrim or of a Tralfamadorian.

Imitate Vonnegut’s style in SHF with a group activity in small group. (30-40 min) The students will write in Vonnegut’s style about a topic that is interesting to them. They will then read it aloud to the class if time permits.

Day Five:

Attendance; housekeeping (5 min)

Music as poetry (40-45 min)

Students will receive the lyrics to two pro-war songs and two protest songs. They will listen to songs aloud and respond to the one they feel more drawn to after listening. The songs will be the following: Toby Keith “Red, White and Blue”, Barry Sadler “Battle of the Green Berets”, U2 “Sunday Bloody Sunday”, and John Lennon “Give Peace a Chance.”

Music as poetry discussion (10-15 min)

The students will discuss the songs and their writing within their small groups. Read Stephan Crane short story “An Episode of War” (25-30 min) alone or in small groups.

Write reading logs for the short story (20 min)

Class discussion on the music and the short story (20-30 min)

How does the music we heard relate to the story? How are they similar? How are they different? Does listening to those songs give you positive feelings? Negative? Make you think about your stance on war?

Week Two

Day One

Attendance (5 min)

Poems: “Death of the Ball Turret Gunner and Losses” (5-10 min)

Use an audio tape to hear it read aloud to the class.

Respond to the poem and hold a discussion in relation to the poem and war (15-20 min)

Do you share the poet’s attitude toward war as he expresses it in “Losses”? Why or Why not? How would you describe Randall Jarrett’s view of war?

In “Death” why might the gunner view life on Earth as a dream? What does the final line reveal about the realities of war?

Language Lessons: Transitions and Transitional Phrases (10-15 min)

Reading Logs (10 min)

The students will write their responses to the poems and to the language lesson.

Cartoons about war (30 min)

We will read 5-10 comics about war and then respond to them by discussing how it contributes to our views on war. We will also look at it as a use of satire and talk about how satire can affect us.

Students bring in songs relevant to war. Play 10-15 of the students’ songs aloud and then discuss their views on the war based on the songs they brought in. (30-40 min).

Day Two

Attendance (5 min)

Read Slaughter-House Five Chapter 3 (25-30 min)

Reading Logs (10-15 min)

Discussion (20-30 min)

Analyze the irony of the deaths of the two American scouts. (p. 54)

Discuss the five German soldiers who capture Billy and Weary and what this indicates about the war. (pp. 52-55).

Analyze Billy’s travel in time to his optometry office and the significance of this section. (pp. 56-63).

Examine the Germans' treatment of the American prisoners and the prisoners' survival techniques. Discuss the Germans' use of propaganda. (pp. 64-70).

Retell the story in Chapter 3 from a different perspective. (25 min)

Get in small groups and rewrite a part of Chapter 3 from the point of view of a different character.

Present the retold Chapter 3 to the class. (as a group or one member of the group). (20 min.)

Day Three

Attendance (5 min)

Read the poem "War is Kind" by Stephen Crane

Do not weep, maiden, for war is kind.
Because your lover threw wild hands toward the sky
And the affrighted steed ran on alone,
Do not weep.
War is kind.
*Hoarse, booming drums of the regiment,
Little souls who thirst for fight,
These men were born to drill and die.
The unexplained glory flies above them,
Great is the battle-god, great, and his kingdom --
A field where a thousand corpses lie.*
Do not weep, babe, for war is kind.
Because your father tumbled in the yellow trenches,
Raged at his breast, gulped and died,
Do not weep.
War is kind.
*Swift blazing flag of the regiment,
Eagle with crest of red and gold,
These men were born to drill and die.
Point for them the virtue of slaughter,
Make plain to them the excellence of killing
And a field where a thousand corpses lie.*
Mother whose heart hung humble as a button
On the bright splendid shroud of your son,

Do not weep.
War is kind.

Discuss how the what feelings the poem evokes (5-10 min)

Compare the poem to Slaughter-House Five (5 min.)

Read the short story “First Base” or “Homecoming” in small groups. (20 min)

Discuss how our country viewed soldier in Vietnam. How would you feel as a soldier?

Would you go if you knew your country would look at you like it does? Would you flee?

Are those who protest the war as patriotic? Where would you have stood in your view of the Vietnam war? (15 min)

Read “Greatest Generation” Chapter 4 (20-25 min)

Reading Log (10 min)

Discuss: How do Brokaw and Vonnegut compare to each other? Which do you tend to side with more? (10 min)

Meet in small groups to work on CD project (20 min)

Day Four

Attendance (5 min)

Show the documentary “Dear America: Letters Home from Vietnam.” (60 –70min.)

Have a discussion on what the students’ thoughts were about the film. (5-10 min)

Work on the sheet in small groups or alone. (15 min)

Respond to Dear America in essay form for in-class writing today. Turn in before the end of class. (20-25 min)

Give to a peer to edit if there is time (5-10 min)

Day Five

Attendance (5 min)

Read the poem “Coming Home” (5 min)

Discuss what they thought what the poem was about and how would they feel if they were the soldier in the poem (5-10 min)

Write a composition in which they explain the generalization or comment the poem makes them feel about the Vietnam War and explain through effective use of evidence from the poem. (25-35 min.)

Read Slaughterhouse-Five Chapter 4 (25 min)

Reading logs on SHF (10 min)

Discuss Chapter 4 (20-25 min)

Examine Billy’s travel in time after his arrival at the POW camp and contrast the Tralfamadorians’ philosophy about free will with that of Earthlings. (pp. 80-86).

Analyze the irony of the deaths of the hobo and Weary.

Examine the possibility of Billy’s mid-life crisis (pp. 72-77).

Week Three

Day One

Attendance (5 min)

Read Slaughterhouse-Five Chapter 5 (25 min)

Reading logs on SHF (10 min)

Discuss Chapter 5 (20-25 min)

Contrast the arriving American prisoners with the English prisoners who have been at the camp for four years. Discuss the welcome the English prisoners prepare for the Americans and its effect on Billy. (pp.124-126).

Examine what is revealed about Billy's life in his time travel to the mental hospital after the war. (pp. 99-111).

Analyze the irony of the candles of soap the Americans receive in the prison camp. (p. 96).

Compare-Contrast exercise in small groups (25-40 min). Draft to prepare for project due in 2 weeks or so. Draft in small groups and then draft alone (10 min).

Poem to end the day from Poetry 180 (5 min) I will read the poem aloud and what the students' think of the poem.

Day Two

Attendance (5 min)

Show first ½ hour of "Saving Private Ryan" (30 min)

Discuss the cruel and gruesomeness of war. (10-15 min)

How did the segment of the movie affect your view on war?

Would you be willing to fight in that environment?

Play "Fortunate Son" (5 min)

Do they agree with Fogerty? If so, why? If not, why? Give reasons. Compare his view of the war with another singer of their choice. Use it as an example for their CD project and back it up with evidence.

Compare/Contrast for the war and one of books. Get in small-groups, produce a draft and revise so that they can work on it for their project. (50-60 min)

Day Three

Attendance (5 min)

Read Slaughterhouse-Five Chapter Six (25-30 min)

Reading Logs (10 min)

Discuss in small groups over the four topics (25-30 min)

Characterize Paul Lazzaro and discuss his significance to the story.

Examine the Englishman's philosophy about surviving in prison. Discuss whether students agree or disagree with this philosophy. (pp.145-146).

Analyze the irony on the Englishman's envy of and encouragement for the American to be taken to Dresden (p.150)

Discuss Vonnegut's use of dark humor. (pp. 93-98,144-145,149-151).

Class Discussion of one or more of the topics (5 min).

Allow time for students to work on CD project (20 min)

Play "Masters of War" from Bob Dylan (5 min)

Discuss on how does he view war? Who do you think the song is addressing? How does this compare to the novels we are reading? Do you think the people making money off the war should be forgiven? If so, why? (10-15 min)

Day Four

Attendance (5 min)

Read Slaughterhouse-Five Chapter 7 (25 min)

Reading Logs (10 min)

Discuss as a concept map of the novel so far (25 min)

Meet in small groups to discuss the SHF in concept map format.

Discuss the plane crash and Billy's ensuing time travel, including his memories of Howard Campbell (pp. 154-165).

Have the groups present each of their concept maps (10 min)

Talk about the CD projects and allow time for them to work on them in class (30-35 min)

Day Five

Attendance (5 min)

Read Slaughterhouse-Five Chapter 8 (25 min)

Reading logs (10-15 min)

Discussion in small groups and as a class (30 min)

Analyze the effect on Billy of the barbershop quartet that performs for his and Valencia's eighteenth wedding anniversary party.

Discuss the bombing of Dresden, how the American prisoners survive, the destruction caused by the bombing, and what happens to the Americans. (pp. 177-181).

Examine the significance of Kilgore Trout and his effect on Billy. Elicit student response as to why they think Vonnegut includes this character (pp. 166-174).

Play Pearl Jam's "Last Soldier" (5 min)

Discussion about the view from a soldier (5-10 min)

How do you view the soldier compared to Vonnegut's soldiers?

Do you have sympathy for the soldier? Understand his position?

Have students write their own song/poem on their view of war (20 min)

Students read their product aloud voluntarily (10 min)

Week Four

Day One

Attendance (5 min)

Read "Greatest Generation" Chapter 7 (25-30 min)

Reading Logs (10 min)

Discuss the Chapter as a class (10 min)

How does it compare to SHF? TO your view?

How do you see the heroes? Would it change if they were your grandfather?

Allow time for research on computers for the compare/contrast essay (50-60 min)

Discuss what they found on the war they are researching (5-10 min)

Day Two

Attendance (5 min)

Read Slaughterhouse-Five Chapter 9 (25-30 min)

Reading Logs (10 min) for the chapter

Discuss in small group format as a movie (20-30 min)

Pick who would play each character and why.

Design a poster based on the novel.

Pick a director and producer.

Present your poster to the class (15 min)

Play “War, What is it good for?” (5 min)

Describe why I picked that song for the unit.

Do they think war is good for our country or bad? Why?

Do you think it was an effective song for the Vietnam era?

Would it still have the same effect today? (15 min)

Allow time to work on compare/contrast essay (15 min)

Day Three

Attendance (5 min)

Language Lesson (10 min)

How to properly use subject-verb agreement. Use sentences from the novel for examples.

Met in small groups to debate the JFK quotation and class discussion: (20 min)

“The men who create power make an indispensable contribution the nations greatness, but the men who question power make a contribution just as indispensable, especially when that questioning is disinterested, for they determine whether power uses us or we use power.”

Do you agree with the statement? If so, why? If not, why?

How does the statement compare to the novel? View on war?

Read Slaughterhouse-Five Chapter 10 (25 min)

Reading Log (10 min)

Discussion on Chapter 10 and book (30 min)

Examine the significance of Rumfoord, the irony of his opinion of Billy, and Billy’s eventual importance to him (pp. 190-193,197-198).

Discuss Valencia's death and its effect on Billy (pp 182-183,190).

Examine the symbolism of the Christmas carol (p. 197)

Examine Vonnegut's summation of the events in Dresden immediately following the bombing (pp. 212-214).

Using the character chart, discuss other characters in the book.

Write if you liked or disliked the book and why. Would you recommend I use it again in a war unit or not and why. (20 min) Discussion on the use of the book again.

Day Four

Attendance (5 min)

Research further for compare/contrast essay (50 min) and work on a draft

Write a draft for the following week (50 min) and work on CD project.

Day Five

Attendance (5 min)

CD Presentations (105 min)

Students play a song from their CD and explain what they put on it. Students will be given 5-10 min each.

Week Five

Day One

Attendance (5 min)

CD Presentations (40-50 min)

Finish up CD presentations from the day before.

Time to work on compare/contrast essay (40-50 min)

Play 5 songs from the students' selections (25 min)

List why I picked those songs in relation to Slaughterhouse-Five. (5 min)

Day Two

Attendance (5 min)

Turn in essays (5 min)

Talk about the war unit and the projects involved (20 min)

Start a new unit.....