

Don't Touch That: Censorship and Literature in the High School Classroom

A Six Week Thematic Unit for 11th grade American Literature Classes

Class Setup: 55 minute periods, 5 days a week

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Context for the Unit

This thematic unit is designed for an on-level or upper-level class of 11th grade students in a Gwinnett County classroom, traditionally denoted as an American literature course. The main ideas covered in the timeframe will be based on the struggle between censorship and free speech, specifically focusing on the banning or challenging of books in high school classrooms or libraries. The unit is meant to be taught relatively early in the school year, specifically in the month of September, since Banned Books Week, hosted by the American Library Association, is generally held in the last week of the month. The unit will likely take six weeks in a regularly scheduled class meeting each day for 55 minutes at a time and will begin in the last two weeks of August and conclude during Banned Books Week, a fitting closure to the theme of censorship and banned or challenged books in the high school setting (which will be the main focus of our study).

Materials

Novels:

1. Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*. My page numbers are taken from the 1991 reprinting of the novel by Radom House publishers. Page numbers will obviously vary by version.
2. Students will choose individual novels for literature circle groups. The choices will be listed from the ALA's list of 100 commonly challenged books from 2000-2009. While the books are not all written by American authors, I have edited the list to reflect the student options. That is listed at the end of the unit as Appendix I.

Poetry:

1. Students will also consider poetry by Shel Silverstein that has been considered inappropriate by others in the past. There are several online sites that list examples of these poems, along with brief explanations of the criticisms. For this class, I will use [this blog](#) and [this one](#) as well. The page also provides full text links to the poems, and we will focus on the following as a class:
 - a. "How Not To Have To Dry The Dishes"
 - b. "Dreadful"
 - c. "Little Abigail and the Beautiful Pony"
 - d. "Day After Halloween"

Other Needed Materials:

1. Computer access with projector onto board
2. Printed copies of handouts listed throughout the unit
3. White board with markers
4. Access to a computer lab where each student can use a computer individually
5. Strips printed with "pro," "con," or "jury" (1/3 of each for the number of students in your class) for the debate activity

Unit Rationale

The banning of books is not a recent phenomenon. Along with the creations of the first novels, there have also been critics available to question the presence of those texts for certain audiences. In 1660, King Louis XIV of France destroyed works by the writer Blaise Pascal; Thomas Paine found himself indicted for treason in England in 1792 for his writings as a defense of the French Revolution (Ockerbloom, n.d.). The American Library Association, one of the world's most prominent rivals of book censorship, gives examples of court cases dating back as far as 1924 in which school systems in the United States have been brought under fire for allowing students to read materials that have been questioned as suitable for young minds ("Notable Cases," 2011c). The infamous Scopes trial of 1925 was based upon controversy over Darwin's *Origin of Species* being taught in schools (Ockerbloom, n.d.). These examples of books being questioned are only a small depiction of the past our world shares with censorship, which, "in the broadest sense, refers to suppression of information, ideas, or artistic expression by anyone" ("Definitions," n.d.).

While most book challenges in today's high school systems are done by parents with the intentions of protecting their children from texts that could be considered inappropriate in their content or language, students will not benefit from being kept from these materials without some sort of opportunity to understand these decisions on a deeper level. In fact, "all of these restraints have the effect of limiting the diversity that would otherwise be available in the marketplace of ideas" ("Definitions," n.d.). This unit, based around the central ideas of censorship and banning or challenging books in high school classrooms, provides students with an open forum for critical thought and analysis.

This unit is designed for high school juniors, which is a perfect time for students to be introduced to these ideas of freedom of speech and thought. At this time, juniors find themselves in a

transitional age in which the students may finally begin to see themselves as vital parts of not only their schools and families, but as parts of their larger communities as well (Adelson, 1985). In the readings and discussions that will take place in this unit, students will be challenged to think for themselves, formulate opinions based on solid evidence after considering multiple perspectives, and then voice their opinions to others in a persuasive manner. Students must learn what it means to be an active citizen of their communities, and this unit will open with a discussion of their rights as such. The class will be given the opportunity to discuss the Bill of Rights, specifically the First Amendment, and how it relates to ideas of freedom of thought and the right to read freely. Supreme Court Justice William J. Brennan, Jr. once noted that, "if there is a bedrock principle underlying the First Amendment, it is that the government may not prohibit the expression of an idea simply because society finds the idea itself offensive or disagreeable" ("Notable Cases," 2011c). It is my hope that students will begin to see the conflicts present between the freedoms outlined to them by their government and the restrictions placed on them by others.

As such, this unit and its central texts will seek to provide the students with open opportunities to develop the skills needed to interact with, digest, and then formulate ideas on the values of these challenged texts without the influences of outside pressures. These readings, both in class and independently, will allow students to develop critical analysis skills that will serve them far beyond the walls of any high school language arts classroom. This unit will provide students with the opportunities to interact with texts that have been questioned in the past but are not currently banned in their community. Therefore, there will not be any present danger about reading the texts in a public school setting because the board has approved these novels to be taught. Also, each student will receive parent permission to study the works during this unit, and the texts will be preapproved by the school's department chair. In this manner, students will be given the ability to experience pieces of literature that have been questioned in their value but have proven their worth in an educational setting.

The opening piece of literature for this unit on banned books will be Ray Bradbury's novel *Fahrenheit 451*. This novel very much aligns itself with an 11th grade class based in American literature, and it fits perfectly in this unit for two reasons: both in text and in context. Primarily, this novel serves as an excellent introduction to the idea of censorship, specifically the restriction of books within a society. The novel's themes will allow students to begin to grasp the ideas of freedom of speech and the rejection of that freedom in a setting different from our own society, yet still somewhat similar in its themes. Students will be able to explore the possibilities of censorship through *Fahrenheit 451*'s ideas while still comparing them to our current education system. However, the novel also serves to provide students with a uniquely personal perspective on censorship due to the fact that it has been banned and challenged in several places throughout history based on its themes and language ("Banned Classics," 2011a). This introductory novel will provide students with the inherent conflicts between a democratic society and the idea of censorship; and while the novel portrays a strict view of censorship and the freedom for individuals to read freely, the teaching of this work will be done in an environment that provides the class opportunities to discuss the merits and challenges of censorship on a society. The resulting assessments that will follow this novel will allow students to show their interaction with the texts and its main themes in a free and creative manner. I will provide students with multiple choices of creative writing that will allow them to pursue their personal strengths as writers while still proving that they have come to a more complete understanding of censorship and how it is portrayed in this piece of literature.

After the completion of this novel and writing assignment, students will then be given the opportunity to form literature circles in which they choose a novel to read as a group from a list of challenged books. Again, these books will not be read without parent and department chair permission. In the literature circles, students will read through their selected novel at the same pace and be given class time to discuss the ideas in these works that could be considered questionable to some audiences.

I will not provide students with the reasons why their novels have been challenged, but I expect that they will quickly comprehend what could be considered questionable about these texts. Then, individually, students will be given the opportunity to take the discussions from their groups and turn them into formal writing pieces; students will be asked to create a persuasive piece in which they first give a definition of censorship and how it relates to the process of challenging and banning books. They will then use that definition as the base for a persuasive essay in which they will cite evidence from their novels and defend an argument about the value of their chosen novel. This assignment will allow students to decide for themselves what they consider appropriate when it comes to censoring materials from others. Groups will also take the time to present their chosen novel to the class and verbalize their opinions before their peers, another valuable skill to be developed through this unit. These literature circles will provide students with countless opportunities to exercise standards that are to be met throughout the eleventh grade curriculum: from group reading and discussion to persuasive writing that incorporates outside evidence to classroom presentation skills, students will practice expressing their thoughts in different formats.

The timing of this unit is also a carefully considered aspect; the most beneficial time for the teaching of this six-week plan would begin in the last weeks of August so that it can end during the last week of September, which happens to be National Banned Books Week, as sponsored by the American Library Association (“Banned Books Week,” 2011b). In this manner, students can end their discussions of censorship in high school classrooms and libraries on a widespread level. Students will benefit from the ability to recognize that book censorship is still an active process today and that there are resources available to counteract these attempts to keep students from reading freely; again, this addition to the unit will be entirely beneficial for the class as they will receive a proper introduction to national movements. As such, it is my hope to show the students how to interact with others both locally and nationally to support the causes they find important in appropriate, yet still effective, manners.

Students will be given the opportunity to browse the resources available on the American Library Association website to get an idea of how others react to the process of censoring literature in schools; perhaps they will be encouraged to take note from these resources and enact their own methods of support. From simply making posters that encourage their classmates to read banned books to writing letters to school administrators, the class will be given a view into activism and support in a manner that is fully backed by credible and effective sources.

Student interest should not be a problem within this unit. It seems inevitable that teenagers have a love of the forbidden. When faced with the opportunity to read a book that has been considered dangerous or ill-suited for adolescents of their age, students will often be more tempted to read it for the simple fact of its questionable status. Take, for instance, the recent story of a teenage girl in a Catholic school that has a strict policy on its available texts to students. The girl, who anonymously goes by the name Nekochan, runs a secret library from her locker that offers over sixty texts considered inappropriate by her school board. She noted in a recent blog post that “a boy in my English class asked if he could borrow [*The Catcher in the Rye*] because he heard it was very good AND it was banned! This happened a lot and my locker got to overflowing with the banned books, so I decided to put the unoccupied locker next to me to good use” (K.A., 2011). Her days quickly became filled with secretly loaning other banned books to students who were not only eager to see what should be considered off-limits to them, but were also surprised at how valuable they found these texts once they had actually completed them. Students should respond similarly to the texts covered in my unit. While it may be the thrill of the forbidden that draws them in, I hope it is the value that they remember at the end and keep with them as they continue on in life.

However, parent and administrative support might be somewhat less enthusiastic in this unit. While some onlookers may obviously question the benefits of their students reading texts that have

been questioned by adults in the past, it is vital that the focus be kept on the students when considering this unit. As a teacher, I intend to treat the teaching of this unit with the respect and sensitivity that it deserves, but I also intend to challenge students to go beyond a baseline reading of a text. Throughout this unit, my students will not be asked to accept opinions that have been placed on them by others; rather, they will be expected to engage with their own thoughts in a way that allows them to understand why they feel the way they do about such critical issues like censorship. This thinking is beneficial to the students on multiple levels, beyond what they read, in that it will teach them ways of thinking and analyzing that they can continue to develop throughout their future. This universal skill is one that will serve them well in their lives and is one that is best suited for being learned through a unit such as this one.

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Goals and Assessments

A detailed outline of the course of the unit. Each of the major assessments are detailed and grading scales or rubrics are included.

Texts:

- The opening text for this unit will be *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury; the novel is both age and subject appropriate for the 11th grade American literature course, and it serves as a fitting introduction to the theme of censorship of literature. This text will allow students to begin to formulate thoughts on controlling texts in life and how it can affect themselves and those around them.
- Students will also form literature circles of about 4-5 students per group and will decide on another American novel that has been frequently challenged throughout history in its need to be taught in schools. I will provide students with a list of these novels (based on the “Top 100 Banned/Challenged Books: 2000-2009” list provided by the ALA -- http://www.ala.org/ala/issuesadvocacy/banned/frequentlychallenged/challengedbydecade/2000_2009/) and allow them to choose, with parent and department chair permission, which book they would like to read as a group.
- Other short materials will be used for in-class discussion, including short stories and poems, such as Hemingway’s “Hills Like White Elephants” and Stephen King’s “Survivor Type,” both of which have been challenged in school systems. We will also discuss written reactions to censorship in general in various forms, such as poems by Elaine Magliaro or editorials written online regarding the issue of keeping certain books out of classrooms. Students will also likely spend a class reading the Bill of Rights and discussing how banning books relates to those rights as students.

Goals:

- The final, culminating project for this unit on censorship will be a persuasive writing piece based upon the students’ lit circle books that are chosen as a group. Although the novels will be read as a group, students will individually produce essays in which they seek to persuade their readers on either the benefit or the harm of permanently banning their novel from the high school classroom. Students will be asked to define their view of censorship and then provide an argument with evidence from the novel whether or not their text is one that needs to be kept from students their age. This assignment will be the final formally graded work of the unit.
- There will also be a less structured writing assignment that will be due after the completion of our first text as a class, *Fahrenheit 451*. In this assignment, students will be asked to choose from a list of more creative topics regarding the novel and produce a writing piece that shows their interaction with the text and its themes.

- Students will also participate in regular journal writing based on their reactions to the novels read in their literature circles. These journals will be graded primarily for completion and effort, not for technical correctness, and a list of considerations has been included to replace a traditional rubric. The considerations have been taken from Peter Smagorinsky's text *Teaching English by Design: How to Create and Carry Out Instructional Units* (p. 85).
- Finally, students will be given small, participatory daily grades based on attendance and participation in class discussions, in-class free writes, and other daily assignments that will be included within the unit. These grades will be compiled into one final participation grade, and students will have ample opportunity to earn extra points in this category based on their attendance and genuine participation in daily classroom opportunities.

Goal 1: Persuasive Writing

After reading your group's chosen novel from the banned/challenged list, you will work individually to write an essay in which you persuade your readers (in this case, the Board of Education) whether or not the novel deserves to be placed on a permanently banned list from high school language arts classrooms or libraries. Based on the text and its themes, language, ideas, etc., you will create an essay of about 3-4 pages (750-1000 words) in which you create *and support* an argument about the status of this questionable book. For this assignment, your only need for an outside source will be the text itself—it will need to be present in your arguments so that your audience can fully understand its contents (I expect at least one quote for each of your main points).

I want you to begin this essay with your own definition of censorship and what it means to control what others can read. From that definition, you will then build your argument about whether or not your text deserves to be removed from high school bookshelves.

Be sure to address the counterargument of your main idea at some point in your essay. Obviously, this issue is not one that will be easily decided, so you need to be prepared to acknowledge the opposite stance of your argument.

This rubric serves as a guide to help you in your writing and includes some of the important issues that need to be present in your essays.

Rubric For Persuasive Assignment

CATEGORY	4 - Above Standards	3 - Meets Standards	2 - Approaching Standards	1 - Below Standards	Score
Attention Grabber: Including Definition of Censorship	The introductory paragraph has a strong hook or attention grabber that is appropriate for the audience. This could be a strong statement, a relevant quotation, statistic, or question addressed to the reader.	The introductory paragraph has a hook or attention grabber, but it is weak, rambling or inappropriate for the audience.	The author has an interesting introductory paragraph but the connection to the topic is not clear.	The introductory paragraph is not interesting AND is not relevant to the topic.	
Position Statement: To Ban or Not to Ban?	The position statement provides a clear, strong statement of the author's position on the topic.	The position statement provides a clear statement of the author's position on the topic.	A position statement is present, but does not make the author's position clear.	There is no position statement.	
Support for Position	The work includes 3 or more pieces of evidence (facts, statistics, examples, real-life experiences) that support the position statement. The writer anticipates the reader's concerns, biases or arguments and has provided at least 1 counter-argument.	The work includes 3 or more pieces of evidence (facts, statistics, examples, real-life experiences) that support the position statement.	The work includes 2 pieces of evidence (facts, statistics, examples, real-life experiences) that support the position statement.	The work includes 1 or fewer pieces of evidence (facts, statistics, examples, real-life experiences).	
Source: Using Text as Evidence	The text is used properly, backed and explained through warranting and is cited correctly.	The text is used, some claims are paired with warrants, and most are cited correctly.	The text is referenced, most claims are lacking warrants or are not cited correctly.	The text is not referenced, claims are not warranted and are not cited correctly.	
Closing Paragraph: Your Last Chance to Sway	The conclusion is strong and leaves the reader solidly understanding the writer's position. Effective restatement of the position statement begins the closing paragraph.	The conclusion is recognizable. The author's position is restated within the first two sentences of the closing paragraph.	The author's position is restated within the closing paragraph, but not near the beginning.	There is no conclusion - the paper just ends.	
Technical Issues	Author makes minimal errors in grammar, spelling, or structure that distract the reader from the content.	Author makes more frequent errors in grammar, spelling, or structure that distract the reader from the content.	Author makes prevalent errors in grammar, spelling, or structure that distract the reader from the content.	Author's errors in grammar, spelling, or structure severely distract the reader from the content.	

Goal 2: Creative Writing Piece

As a class, we have read and discussed the issues of censorship and free speech raised in Ray Bradbury's novel *Fahrenheit 451*. This assignment allows you to develop your own ideas in a sophisticated manner, but it also allows you to show me how you've interacted with the text in your own way. You have several options of how you can show me that you've taken the time to consider the themes found in this novel and how they are still present in today's society. Because this assignment is individualized, no standard rubric will be used, but there are still central requirements that must be met with each effort. For each of these choices, you have the option to work in a pair or group of 3, or you may choose to work on your own. Your grade for the assignment will be given individually: part will be based on my guidelines for your assignment, and part will be a grade given to you by your group members based on your participation and effort. Below are your choices for this task:

- Write a sequel to this novel: For this task, you will write the opening chapter to the sequel of *Fahrenheit 451*. In about 3-4 pages (750-1000 words), set up an opening to a new novel following the original; in it, explain what has happened since the original novel ended. How have the characters, the setting, the conflicts, etc. changed? How is the idea of censorship still in play in this new setting? You can choose to open your novel in the very same day as the close of the last one, or hundreds of years in the future—as long as you still prove the connections between the two works. In this attempt, be sure to pay special attention to the writing style of Bradbury, as you'll be writing the sequel as him.
- Write a section of this novel from a different character's perspective: For this task, you will choose a pivotal scene in *Fahrenheit 451* and rewrite it from the perspective of another character. In about 3-4 pages (750-1000 words), provide a description of the event from the point of view of someone other than the narrator or character given in the text. How would this other character view this event? What would he/she be thinking? What are his/her ideas on censorship and the need to protect others from certain ideas? Take the reader into the thoughts of this new narrator in your writing, but, again, pay special attention to Bradbury's writing style and work to incorporate it with your own.
- Genre Transformation: In this task, you have the opportunity to be creative in how you reproduce this text. Choose a scene or section of the novel to recreate in a different genre. How would the opening pages of this book be told if it were a children's fairytale? How would the ending be written as a rap song? You can choose any moment of *Fahrenheit 451* and any other genre to reproduce, as long as you prove that you've carried through the main concepts and themes of free speech and censorship as found in the original work. In this option, length requirements will obviously vary depending upon the genre chosen to create. Poems or songs should include at least 6 verses, and stories should run about 750-100 words (children's books may be shorter, but remember, illustrations are a vital characteristic of these tales). Any other questions should be directed to me for clarification.

As stated before, this type of assignment obviously doesn't warrant a generic rubric that can cover each of these choices. However, I do still expect your writing to adhere to the general standards that we've discussed in class so far. Below are two sets of criteria I will consider when grading your pieces—one is for the first two choices, and the second is for the genre transformation option.

Options One and Two

- Your writing should adhere to general conventions of Standard English as we've learned in class. Limited grammatical and structural mistakes should be present. It should fit in the length suggested above (3-4 typed pages).
- Your writing should mirror both the style and the tone of the original novel. Whether you're writing the sequel or rewriting the scene from a new perspective, your assignment should fit in with the feel of *Fahrenheit 451*. Do your best to emulate Bradbury's style while still incorporating your original ideas.
- Your pieces should also work to incorporate the major themes of the novel, specifically censorship and how it relates to books. Your assignments should reflect that you understand how censorship is portrayed in this novel.
- If you decide to work together, group members should equally contribute to the creation of this piece. You have the option to work alone, but if you chose not to, this needs to be an equal collaboration. Remember my grading of this assignment is listed in the description.

Option Three

- This option needs to come from a specific moment in the text—you need to focus on a particular scene. It would be unrealistic for you to recreate the entire novel into another genre.
- Length for this assignment is dependent on your choice, but I listed in the description of the task some general guidelines to follow.
- While some genres don't call for Standard English conventions, your writing should still be appropriate to that genre. Poems don't necessarily have to be written in complete sentences, but word choice and rhythm are critical. Sentences in children's novels will be simple, but full of detail and imagery. Whatever genre you choose, follow those conventions.
- Illustrations may be included, and are encouraged, when applicable.
- If you decide to work together, group members should equally contribute to the creation of this piece. You have the option to work alone, but if you chose not to, this needs to be an equal collaboration. Remember my grading of this assignment is listed in the description.

Goal 3: Literature Circle Journals

In groups of either 4 or 5 students, you will choose a novel written by an American author that has been challenged in high schools across the country in the past. If the novel you choose has been one debated recently or in the state of Georgia, you may need to have your parents sign off allowing you to read the novel in class. As a group, you will read through these challenged novels and discuss the characteristics

of these works that would make others question its need to be taught to teenagers. Remember the examples of literature or other texts that we've talked about in class and the different reasons for why they have been questioned.

As you read, you will participate in keeping an individual journal that will be turned in upon the completion of your text. While these journals will be graded, I don't want you to worry about writing perfectly—these will NOT be graded based upon technical perfection, but they WILL be graded on participation, reflection, and thought.

You'll be given time in class to discuss your novels, and I want you to keep a record of your reactions to the text as well as your group's discussions as you go through the novel. What questions do you have about the text? What connections do you see between it and other pieces we've read in class? How do you see this novel's themes reflected in your own lives? Feel free to share your entries with the other members of your group when you feel comfortable—your sharing will only better your understanding of the novel.

At the end of the literature circle time, your journal entries will be graded, and I'm going to consider the following factors as I do so:

- Your journal does not need to follow the conventions of textbook English. Rather, the purpose is to think about the class and text without worrying about the form your thoughts take.
- Do not simply summarize the novel you're reading in your group. While you will probably refer to the text in your entries, the primary purpose of your journal is to think about your response to it. Your journal should focus on how you've engaged with the literature.
- You are welcome, although not required, to reflect on personal issues that occur to you in consideration of your novel.
- Your journal should include a minimum of 500 words of writing (about 2 typed pages) per week. For each entry, put the date of the writing at the beginning.
- Keep in mind that *I am required to share any thoughts or suggestions of violence, suicide, substance abuse, family abuse, or other harmful behavior with the school counselors.*
- If there are any pages in your journal that you do not want me to read, just mark them with an X at the top of the page. Your participation will still be counted.

At the end of this literature circle period, groups will take turns making presentations to the class about their selected novel. Below are a set of criteria that I will consider when giving your groups a grade:

- Presentations should be between 10 and 15 minutes—no more and no less.
- Each group member should take at least one turn speaking during the presentation.
- Groups should present the following concepts in their turn:
 - A general summary of the book and its main concepts
 - Selected pieces of evidence that would make others challenge its place in high schools
 - Language, themes, ideas, characters, etc.

- Your group's decision of whether or not the challenge was appropriate: does this book deserve to be banned? Why or why not? Why would it either be harmful or beneficial for students your age to read this piece?
- General good speech skills
 - Volume, pace of speaking, limited fidgets or "ummm's", eye contact with audience, etc.

Goal 4: Daily Grades

As always, attendance and participation are two vital aspects of your success in this class. Throughout this unit, you will be asked to be prepared and willing to participate in various activities. On various days, we may read articles on censorship in class, write letters to library officials about the importance of censorship in the high school classroom, read short stories or poems placed on the banned/challenged list, or any other sort of engaging activity. It is your responsibility as a successful student to be active in this classroom, and you will receive points for your participation in class. While I do understand that this is not always possible, I have set up a system that allows you to have a few "off" days. It is still possible to do well in this category.

This unit is six weeks long, giving us 35 class days. In order to receive all your points in this category, you must earn at least 30 checks. These checks will be given at the end of each class period based on your active engagement with the class, and if you earn at least 30 of them by the end of the unit, you will receive full credit in for participation in this unit. Anything less than this will result in a reduction of your participation grade.

Unit Introductory Activity

This activity is to be completed on the first day of the new unit; its design is to begin the students' thought processes about issues regarding censorship and freedom of speech.

Class Outline (55 minute period)

5 minutes: enter, attendance, housekeeping

15 minutes: scenario reading and reaction

25 minutes: partner and whole class discussion

5-7 minutes: transition into introduction into the idea of censorship

2-5 minutes: homework, questions, and dismissal

This activity is designed specifically to get the students thinking about the ideas of censorship in a broad format. I will begin the first day's class by giving students a brief scenario in which they will become librarians in a high school dealing with parents who want the *Harry Potter* books removed for their dangerous ideas.

Students will be given about 15 minutes to read, consider, and then react to the scenario individually. From there, I will give them 5 minutes to share their ideas with a partner, and then we will continue the discussion as a whole class, talking about the scenario and then relating it to the issue of censorship and the banning of books in high schools.

As a part of this last segment of whole-class discussion, I will show students a list of the 100 most commonly challenged books from the American Library Association website (http://www.ala.org/ala/issuesadvocacy/banned/frequentlychallenged/challengedbydecade/2000_2009/index.cfm), and ask students which of these they have read or are familiar with, and I will ask about their thoughts regarding the appropriateness of these works.

I suspect that the activity and following discussion will take up about 40 minutes of class time, leaving about 10 minutes at the end of the period for me to transition into an introduction of the main theme of our unit: censorship. I'll have students begin to think of their beginning definitions censorship as a class, and, for homework, have them make a list of places where they see censorship in everyday life. Students will then have time to ask any questions and prepare to leave in the last couple of minutes of the period.

Below is the scenario as it will be presented to the students:

Directions: Take a few moments to read and consider the following scenario. Then, on your own, spend about 10 minutes writing about how you would handle this situation. Don't worry about spelling, grammar, etc. Just get your ideas down on paper, as we will be discussing your opinions with the class later.

Scenario:

Congratulations! You've just been hired as the new head media specialist for Rough Creek High School! As media specialist, you are in charge of ordering and selecting which books get put on the shelves for your 9th-12th grade students. As the librarian for the high school, you think it's important that your students have plenty of choice in the books that are available to them.

However, you've just received a few angry notes from some concerned parents of your students. They've just noticed that you have a whole section in your media center dedicated to the *Harry Potter* series, and they're not happy about it. The letters they've written to you state that these books are filled with ideas that are dangerous for students in high school to be reading: things like evil spirits, dark magic, and death. This isn't the first time that these complaints have happened, either. The librarian who just retired from this position before you mentioned that she also got into some trouble with the books that she chose for the library: books like the *Goosebumps* series (for being too scary) or the *Gossip Girl* series (for being too sexual) were all put under fire by parents who didn't want their students having access to these works.

You know that your students love reading the *Harry Potter* books—there's almost always a waiting list of students hoping to read the newest one from the school library. But you certainly don't want to upset any parents by ignoring their letters. They've threatened to take the issue to the school board if you don't take the books out of the library right away.

So what can you do? Do you obey the parent's wishes and take the books out of your media center? Or do you ignore their threats and keep the books—even if that might mean trouble for your new job? What is the benefit in choosing one side over the other—why did you choose to keep or get rid of the books? Is there any way to make both parties happy in this situation? Is it ever okay for someone else to tell you what you can and cannot read? These are all questions to consider as you formulate your response.

Daily Lesson Plans

(I've skipped a detailed outline of Day One, since it's just been described in the Introductory Activity section.)

Week One, Day One (Monday—Intro Activity)

- 5 minutes: enter, attendance, housekeeping, introduce that we're starting a new unit today
- 15 minutes: scenario reading and reaction (Scenario listed in above section)
- 25 minutes: partner and whole class discussion
 - As a part of this last segment of whole-class discussion, I will show students a list of the 100 most commonly challenged books from the American Library Association website (http://www.ala.org/ala/issuesadvocacy/banned/frequentlychallenged/challengedbydecade/2000_2009/index.cfm), and ask students which of these they have read or are familiar with, and I will ask about their thoughts regarding the appropriateness of these works.
- 5-7 minutes: transition into introduction of the idea of censorship
 - What do students already know about the word/idea of censorship?
- 2-5 minutes: homework, questions, dismissal
 - Homework: Compile a list of real world examples you've experienced regarding censorship: where have you seen this take place? In your home, your school, your job, your neighborhood? With what mediums? Music, television, books, clothing?

Week One, Day Two (Tuesday)

- Today's class will take place in the computer lab.
- 2-3 minutes: enter, attendance, housekeeping
 - Set up that today's focus is the history of censorship.
- 7 minutes: show video clips
 - 3 mins on history: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JbLDrnnRBBM>
 - 2.5 mins puppets banned books: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eLprbWmd8mM>
- 40 minutes: for the rest of class, students will work in groups of 2 or 3 on this assignment:
 - They will begin by reading the First Amendment, which I will provide for them: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." In their groups, students will then read through some of the notable First Amendment cases listed on the [American Library Association website](#) and choose one to

focus on (making sure no pairs repeat cases). They will be asked to share this information with the class tomorrow.

- As a group, they should work to answer the questions on a handout (listed below).
- 2-3 minutes: log off, questions, homework, dismissal
 - Homework: If you didn't finish answering any of the questions, try to get those done. Be prepared to share your answers in class tomorrow.

1st Amendment Activity

Directions: As a group, work together to answer the following questions regarding censorship and the First Amendment. In your group, read through the First Amendment that I have provided for you—consider how it relates to what freedoms citizens are allowed.

Then, as a group, choose one of the cases listed on The American Library Association's website. Each of these cases has taken place throughout American history and involve a fight for or against freedom of speech.

Read through your group's case and answer the following questions in the space provided below.

Questions

What's going on here? Give us a basic overview, including: year, state, parties involved, and a brief summary.

What was the outcome of the case?

How does this case represent a conflict against the First Amendment?

How does this represent work against or for censorship in our country?

Be prepared to share your responses with the class tomorrow as a group. Decide how you will split up the information between your partners into the following parts: a summary of the case, its outcome, how it relates to the issue of freedom of speech, and if it still impacts our thoughts on censorship today.

Week One, Day Three (Wednesday)

- 2-3 minutes: enter, attendance, housekeeping
- 35 minutes: have student groups present their findings to the class, each giving a brief summary of the case and its relation to the topic of censorship and the First Amendment.
 - After all groups have gone, ask class for connections they see between the cases.
- 15 minutes: Ask students to refer back to their homework from Monday night about the list of personal experiences with censorship and have a few students read entries from their list.
 - Explain that the novel they're about to read deals with similar issues, and introduce first novel to students through an anticipation guide (listed below—the guide is adapted from two websites, with guides found [here](#) and [here](#)).
 - Students will work individually on this, and then discuss their answers in groups (and with the whole class if time allows).
- 2-3 minutes: last minute questions, homework, dismissal
 - Homework: Be thinking of your responses to the guide for tomorrow's class.

Fahrenheit 451 Anticipation Guide

Directions: Read each statement carefully and circle the number that you feel best represents your opinion (1= Completely Disagree, 5= Completely Agree). In the space provided, explain your answer.

1= Completely Disagree 2= Disagree 3= Neutral/No Opinion 4= Agree 5= Completely Agree

1. It is important for everyone to read books.

1 2 3 4 5

2. If books have ideas/language/themes that aren't appropriate for everyone, no one should be able to read them.

1 2 3 4 5

3. Laws are always written and made for the protection of citizens.

1 2 3 4 5

4. If it were against the law to read books, I would break the law and read anyway.

1 2 3 4 5

5. It is important to remember our history because the saying is true that "history repeats itself."

1 2 3 4 5

6. There are some things so important in life that they are worth risking your life for.

1 2 3 4 5

7. People who follow society's laws and rules are always people of higher moral character than those who break the rules because of their personal beliefs.

1 2 3 4 5

8. It is impossible to be close friends with people who think different from you.

1 2 3 4 5

9. In today's world, writers and artists are not as important to society as scientists and engineers.

1 2 3 4 5

10. Books are written solely to get you to think.

1 2 3 4 5

**After answering these questions on your own, be prepared to share your responses with a partner. **

Week One, Day Four (Thursday)

- 2-3 minutes: enter, attendance, housekeeping
- 30 minutes: Begin *Fahrenheit 451*. Ask for any remaining questions based on yesterday's anticipation guide that may not have been answered in class.

- Then, begin with a brief presentation (probably a powerpoint) with info about Ray Bradbury and the novel itself. I'll include a brief plot summary with introductions to the main characters, including a video of Bradbury discussing the book, [here](#)(about 2 mins long).
- 20 minutes: Introduce the novel by reading the first 10 pages of the novel out loud to the class to set the tone.
- 4-5 minutes: Students can use the remainder of the time to ask questions about those first pages or get started on their homework for the night, which is to continue reading.
 - questions, homework, dismissal
 - Homework: Read from page 10-32.

Week One, Day Five (Friday)

- 2-3 minutes: enter, attendance, housekeeping
- 15 minutes: Open journaling time with this prompt:
 - In the section you read for class today, you were introduced to the character of Clarisse. Consider the following questions as you take a moment to write: As the only young person in this novel, how does she differ from Montag? How does he react to her, and what does that tell us about him? What are your impressions of her so far? How does she rebel against the norms of society in this novel? How do you think her character will continue to affect the novel throughout the rest of the text?
- 20 minutes: group and class discussion of thoughts from journals. In the whole class discussion portion, I will attempt to draw a connection between Clarisse's rebellion against society and [this article's](#) heroine. In this article, a girl in a strict Catholic school runs a secret banned book library for her classmates, since they aren't allowed to read many novels in their classes.
- 15 minutes: I'll ask students to return to their journals and respond to this article with questions like:
 - How are these two girls similar? Do you know any young people like this in your lives? What dangers are involved in going against society in each of these situations? They will then form the same groups and discuss their second entries.
- 2-3 minutes: questions, homework, dismissal
 - Weekend homework: Read from page 32-68.

Week Two, Day One (Monday)

- 2-3 minutes: enter, attendance, housekeeping
- 15 minutes: Begin class by re-reading a section from their weekend assignment: pages 57-68 where Montag's boss from the fire station explains to him why censorship is necessary and how it protects the citizens.

- 15 minutes: the ALA website lists the most common [reasons for challenging books](#) in high school libraries. Have the students look over these and compare them to the reasons listed in the section from 451 that I just reread. What similarities exist? Differences?
- 10 minutes: Have students practice writing letters as parents who are concerned about a certain book/song/movie/etc. They'll attempt to write a page-long letter explaining why they want to protect their children in hopes of convincing the librarian/music store owner/movie theater manager/etc. that the material needs to be removed (Prompt listed below).
- 10 minutes: Students can use the remainder of the time to get started on their homework for the night, which is to continue reading.
- 2-3 minutes: questions, homework, dismissal
 - Homework: Read from page 71-93.

Persuasive Letters

Directions: Pretend for a moment that you are a parent of a child who's your age. As the parent of a teenager, you want to make sure that they are protected at all costs. Sometimes, that protection includes keeping your son or daughter away from certain materials that may be dangerous or harmful to him/her, including things like books or movies.

Take a moment and think about something that could be considered dangerous or inappropriate for a student your age: this could be a book, a song, a movie, a play, anything. Then, write a letter to an appropriate person in charge (i.e., the bookstore owner or librarian, the radio station producer, the movie theater manager, and so on) in an effort to persuade him or her to remove that material from the public.

As you're writing, think of specific examples of why this material might be harmful to students. Be as specific as possible because it will make your argument stronger.

Week Two, Day Two (Tuesday)

- 2-3 minutes: enter, attendance, housekeeping
- 25 minutes: Ask for about 4 or 5 students to volunteer to read some of their letters. After all the letters have been read, talk a bit about persuasion and the characteristics that were present in each of the letters. What characteristics make a letter persuasive? What works and what doesn't? How do you pay attention to your audience, and why does that matter?
- 25 minutes: Spend the rest of the class reading aloud, either by me, an audio recording, or student participation (based on whatever the class wants). In class, read up to page 110, and if

time remains, students will have the opportunity to get started on their reading for homework as well.

- 2-3 minutes: questions, homework, dismissal
 - Homework: Read from page 113-136.

Week Two, Day Three (Wednesday)

- 2-3 minutes: enter, attendance, housekeeping
- 20 minutes: Students will journal to the following prompt:
 - In the section you read for homework last night, you encountered Montag's decision about books and their importance (starting on p. 118). Were you surprised by his reaction? Do you think you would have done the same thing? What do you think was the most important action for Montag that led to him making this decision? Was it a character interaction with Clarisse, Faber, or his wife? His own beliefs? His reading of the books? Which do you think had the most impact on this moment? I'll give the students an opportunity to ask questions to the whole class based on their reactions in their journals.
- 30 minutes: In class reading of *451* through different methods (teacher, audio, or student readings). Try to get up to page 154 in class.
- 2-3 minutes: questions, homework, dismissal
 - Homework: Read from page 154-165 (end of the book).

Week Two, Day Four (Thursday)

- 2-3 minutes: enter, attendance, housekeeping
- 25 minutes: As they end the novel today, students will reflect on what *451* shows about censorship and the banning of books.
 - To get students thinking about this, hand out another copy of the anticipation guide that was given to them at the start of the novel. Once they fill it out again, return their original guides to see how their opinions have changed. Ask for volunteers to show where their thoughts have shifted the most and where they'll stay the same. Explain that we're about to start a creative project on this novel but that this theme will continue throughout the remainder of the unit.
- 25 minutes: explanation of Project One. Go over assignment sheet (listed below—rubric not shown here, but already created—found under Goals and Assessment segment), explaining each of the three options, and answer any questions regarding the assessments.
 - In the back of the book, in the Afterword, Bradbury himself gives an extra scene between Montag and his boss Beatty. Read this section to the students as an example of this type of writing (pages 167-173).

- 2-3 minutes: questions, homework, dismissal
 - Homework: Begin to think of ideas for your project. Which option appeals to you most?
-

Creative Writing Assignment

As a class, we have read and discussed the issues of censorship and free speech raised in Ray Bradbury's novel *Fahrenheit 451*. This assignment allows you to show me how you've interacted with the text in your own way. You have several options of how you can show me that you've taken the time to consider the themes found in this novel and how they are still present in today's society. Because this assignment is individualized, no standard rubric will be used, but there are still central requirements that must be met with each effort. For each of these choices, you have the option to work in a pair or group of 3, or you may choose to work on your own. Your grade for assignment will be given individually: part will be based on my guidelines for your assignment, and part will be a grade given to you by your group members based on your participation and effort. Below are your choices for this task:

- Write a sequel to this novel: For this task, you will write the opening chapter to the sequel of *Fahrenheit 451*. In about 3-4 pages (750-1000 words), set up an opening to a new novel following the original; in it, explain what has happened since the original novel ended. How have the characters, the setting, the conflicts, etc. changed? How is the idea of censorship still in play in this new setting? You can choose to open your novel in the very same day as the close of the last one, or hundreds of years in the future—as long as you still prove the connections between the two works. In this attempt, be sure to pay special attention to the writing style of Bradbury, as you'll be writing the sequel as him.
- Write a section of this novel from a different character's perspective: For this task, you will choose a pivotal scene in *Fahrenheit 451* and rewrite it from the perspective of another character. In about 3-4 pages (750-1000 words), provide a description of the event from the point of view of someone other than the narrator or character given in the text. How would this other character view this event? What would he/she be thinking? What are his/her ideas on censorship and the need to protect others from certain ideas? Take the reader into the thoughts of this new narrator in your writing, but, again, pay special attention to Bradbury's writing style and work to incorporate it with your own.
- Genre Transformation: In this task, you have the opportunity to be creative in how you reproduce this text. Choose a scene or section of the novel to recreate in a different genre. How would the opening pages of this book be told if it were a children's fairytale? How would the ending be written as a rap song? You can choose any moment of *Fahrenheit 451* and any other genre to reproduce, as long as you prove that you've carried through the main concepts and themes of free speech and censorship as found

in the original work. In this option, length requirements will obviously vary depending upon the genre chosen to create. Poems or songs should include at least 6 verses, and stories should run about 750-1000 words (children's books may be shorter, but remember, illustrations are a vital characteristic of these tales). Any other questions should be directed to me for clarification.

Week Two, Day Five (Friday)

- Today's class will take place in the computer lab
- 2-3 minutes: enter, attendance, housekeeping
- 15 minutes: Explain to students that they are about to divide into groups of four or five that will last for the remainder of the unit (so choose wisely). Briefly introduce what will happen after the creative pieces are done:
 - Students will form literature circle groups and choose a novel to read together based on the [100 most commonly challenged books](#) as stated by the American Library Association (Consider placing an asterisk beside American authors in order to making sure to fit the theme of the course).
 - Be prepared to offer suggestions of books for student groups, who likely will not have read or encountered many of these titles. Once students have formed these groups of 4-5, have them look over the list and choose the novel they'd like to read and, eventually, write about for the unit.
 - Explain that they're choosing these novels now because they'll need them by Monday of the week after next. Show them options for finding: libraries at school or home, book stores, online bargain sites, etc.
- 35 minutes: Students will have the rest of the class to work on their creative pieces on the computers in the lab. Circulate to answer any questions they may have.
- 2-3 minutes: log off, questions, homework, dismissal
 - Homework: Start to look for a copy of your group's literature circle choice. Let me know if you have any problems finding a copy.

Week Three, Day One (Monday)

- Today's class will take place in the computer lab
- 2-3 minutes: enter, attendance, housekeeping
- 45 minutes: Students will have time to work on their creative pieces in the lab again today.
 - Stress that they need to try and complete the first draft, since peer conferences will be coming up soon. Have students refer to the rubric for their specific assignment while they're working to ensure that they incorporate the most important elements into the draft.

- 5 minutes: log off, questions, homework, dismissal
 - Make any final changes to your draft tonight. Have a completed, printed copy ready for revision in class by tomorrow.

Week Three, Day Two (Tuesday)

- 2-3 minutes: enter, attendance, housekeeping
- 45 minutes: Introduce the concept of peer conferencing with a modeling session. Have ready an old copy of a previous student's paper (with the name removed) to use as an example for revision.
 - Have students look at copies of the rubric for that particular assignment, and give them a few minutes to consider what seem to be the most important aspects of the piece. Ask for suggestions and create a list of the most common responses on the board. Let students know that these will be the things you'll look for during the revision process.
 - Project the paper on the board at the front of the class. Begin to read through the paper out loud, stopping periodically to ask students for suggestions about revision. Prompt them to give suggestions based on the rubric and the criteria they mentioned earlier.
 - After the paper has been revised according to the content, tell students that the next step would be to do a bit of editing. Ask students for any suggestions they might have for improving minor things like spelling or grammar. However, make sure the students realize that this is not the focus of the revision process—content is the more important issue.
 - Begin a brief conversation on rules of politeness during peer editing. Ask students what they would like to hear from a peer review partner and what they wouldn't like to hear. Suggest that students keep in mind that positive comments are almost always more effective than negative ones.
 - Remind students that they will be doing this process tomorrow in groups. State that this needs to be a serious occurrence, and that students should put in the kind of effort and thought that they'd want to be put into their paper by peers as well.
- 2-3 minutes: questions, homework, dismissal
 - Make sure that you have a completed draft printed out with you when you come to class tomorrow. Be prepared to participate in a group peer review session.

Week Three, Day Three (Wednesday)

- 2-3 minutes: enter, attendance, housekeeping
- 5 minutes: Have students divide themselves into groups of approximately four based on their choice of assignment.

- Try to ensure that each group has chosen to work on the same writing option so they are more familiar with the expectations of that piece. Groups may need to be made larger or smaller based on the number of students who chose each option for the paper.
- 5 minutes: Set up the group peer review process.
 - Tell students that they will have the rest of the class to work as they wish.
- 35 minutes: Students participate in peer conferences. Circulate to answer any questions that groups may have.
 - Students can read their own paper out loud to the group, they can silently read each other's in the group and pass them around, or they can divide the group into partners to have conversations and then switch partners. Allow them to choose whatever makes them feel most comfortable as long as it's a productive choice.
 - Remind them that the main focus is on the content of the work and how it aligns with the criteria listed in the rubric, but, if time allows, some editing suggestions are always welcome.
- 2-3 minutes: questions, homework, dismissal
 - Consider the comments you received from your peers today. Think of some questions you have for them about their suggestions to you.

Week Three, Day Four (Thursday)

- Today's place will take place in the computer lab
- 2-3 minutes: enter, attendance, housekeeping
- 15 minutes: Have students meet again in their peer review groups.
 - Have them use this time to ask any questions about yesterday's conference or to finish up any last minute conference issues that were not covered yesterday.
- 35 minutes: Allow students to use the rest of the period to make changes to their papers on the computers. Stress that their final drafts will be due tomorrow, so they should spend this time wisely.
- 2-3 minutes: log off, questions, homework, dismissal
 - Bring a printed copy of your final draft tomorrow, ready for submission.

Week Three, Day Five (Friday)

- 2-3 minutes: enter, attendance, housekeeping
- 10 minutes: Students will journal about the following reflection:
 - How was this peer review process for you? In what ways do you feel like your paper benefitted from the student conferences? Is this something you'd like to continue to do?
- 35 minutes: Students will share from their final drafts of the creative pieces.
 - While each child is not required to share, ask that they at least read a brief excerpt from the paper if they don't feel like reading the entire piece. Encourage each student to participate as much as he/she is willing to do.

- 5 minutes: Remind students about their book choices for the literature circle project, which will begin on Monday. They'll need to have a copy of the book with them for class.
- 2-3 minutes: questions, homework, dismissal
 - Bring your group's lit circle book with you to class on Monday.

Week Four, Day One (Monday)

- 2-3 minutes: enter, attendance, housekeeping
- 35 minutes: Introduce literature circles and protocol.
 - Begin by reminding students of their choice of book and why it's included in this unit. Explain that the literature circles will be done with a goal in mind: both a presentation and a final paper. However, students will also keep journals throughout this process in regards to their reading. These instructions are listed below.
 - Ask for any questions regarding the journaling and presentation process.
 - Then, briefly mention the final paper and its subject so that students can begin to think of ideas, but remind students that you'll discuss that in more detail at a later time.
- 15 minutes: Separate students into lit groups.
 - Allow the students to begin to look through their novels as a circle and create a reading schedule. Tell them that they will have the next three full class periods and at least 30 minutes in each subsequent class period for the next seven days, so to plan to have the book completed by Tuesday of next week. Ask for a written copy of the reading schedule for each group to ensure that the divisions are possible.
 - They can begin reading if they finish this schedule early.
- 2-3 minutes: questions, homework, dismissal
 - From now on, you have a part in assigning your own homework. If you need outside class time to complete your lit circle novels, begin that now.

Literature Circle Journals

As you read, you will participate in keeping an individual journal that will be turned in upon the completion of your text. While these journals will be graded, I don't want you to worry about writing perfectly—these will NOT be graded based upon technical perfection, but they WILL be graded on participation, reflection, and thought.

You'll be given time in class to discuss your novels, and I want you to keep a record of your reactions to the text as well as your group's discussions as you go through the novel. What questions do you have about the text? What connections do you see between it and other pieces we've read in class? How do you see this novel's themes reflected in your own lives? Feel free to share your entries with the other

members of your group when you feel comfortable—your sharing will only better your understanding of the novel.

At the end of the literature circle time, your journal entries will be graded, and I'm going to consider the following factors as I do so:

- Your journal does not need to follow the conventions of textbook English. Rather, the purpose is to think about the class and text without worrying about the form your thoughts take.
- Do not simply summarize the novel you're reading in your group. While you will probably refer to the text in your entries, the primary purpose of your journal is to think about your response to it. Your journal should focus on how you've engaged with the literature.
- You are welcome, although not required, to reflect on personal issues that occur to you in consideration of your novel.
- Your journal should include a minimum of 500 words of writing (about 2 typed pages) per week. For each entry, put the date of the writing at the beginning.
- Keep in mind that *I am required to share any thoughts or suggestions of violence, suicide, substance abuse, family abuse, or other harmful behavior with the school counselors.*
- If there are any pages in your journal that you do not want me to read, just mark them with an X at the top of the page. Your participation will still be counted.

At the end of this literature circle period, groups will take turns making presentations to the class about their selected novel. Below are a set of criteria that I will consider when giving your groups a grade:

- Presentations should be between 10 and 15 minutes—no more and no less.
- Each group member should take at least one turn speaking during the presentation.
- Groups should present the following concepts in their turn:
 - A general summary of the book and its main concepts
 - Selected pieces of evidence that would make others challenge its place in high schools
 - Language, themes, ideas, characters, etc.
 - Your group's decision of whether or not the challenge was appropriate: does this book deserve to be banned? Why or why not? Why would it either be harmful or beneficial for students your age to read this piece?
- General good speech skills
 - Volume, pace of speaking, limited fidgets or "ummm's", eye contact with audience, etc.

Week Four, Day Two (Tuesday)

- 2-3 minutes: enter, attendance, housekeeping
- 45 minutes: Journaling and literature circle day.
 - Have students begin the period with the following journal prompt:

- What are your expectations for this project? How do you feel about reading a novel that has been considered dangerous at some place and time? What elements do you expect to be controversial based on your knowledge of the book at this point?
 - Then, allow students to work on literature circle information in whatever form they choose. Groups can read aloud to each other, read silently and then discuss at certain points, or however else they feel will be most productive for them. Circulate to answer any questions regarding the process.
- 2-3 minutes: questions, homework, dismissal
 - Continue your lit circle process in whatever way you need.

Week Four, Day Three (Wednesday)

- 2-3 minutes: enter, attendance, housekeeping
- 50 minutes: Literature circle progress.
 - Again, allow students to journal, read, and discuss their novels in whatever form they choose to try. Circulate to answer any questions.
- 2-3 minutes: questions, homework, dismissal
 - Continue your lit circle process in whatever way you need.

Week Four, Day Four (Thursday)

- 2-3 minutes: enter, attendance, housekeeping
- 50 minutes: Literature circle progress.
 - Again, allow students to journal, read, and discuss their novels in whatever form they choose to try. Circulate to answer any questions.
- 2-3 minutes: questions, homework, dismissal
 - Continue your lit circle process in whatever way you need.

Week Four, Day Five (Friday)

- 2-3 minutes: enter, attendance, housekeeping
- 25 minutes: Literature circle progress.
 - Allow students to journal, read, and discuss their novels in whatever form they choose. Circulate to answer any questions.
- 25 minutes: Lesson on other forms of censorship.
 - Explain to students that novels aren't the only forms of writing that are challenged in classrooms today. Poems are often questioned in schools just as novels are, and tell

students that you'll spend some time discovering this through a poet that most students should not expect to be deemed "dangerous."

- On the board, project blog posts from [this site](#) and from [this one](#) as well. These are blogs that show examples of Shel Silverstein poems that have been challenged for different reasons, most of them pretty ridiculous.
 - Read the brief posts aloud and then have students view the short poems. Allow them to voice their opinions on the challenges.
- 2-3 minutes: questions, homework, dismissal
 - Read some more of the Shel Silverstein poems and think about your opinion of his poetry. Write a paragraph on whether or not you think these poems deserve to be challenged.

Week Five, Day One (Monday)

- 2-3 minutes: enter, attendance, housekeeping
 - Check for completion on last night's paragraph for homework. Just as long as it's clear the student has put effort into the piece, it will be counted for credit.
- 20 minutes: Literature circle progress.
 - Allow students to journal, read, and discuss their novels in whatever form they choose. Circulate to answer any questions.
- 30 minutes: Censorship pushback lesson.
 - Remind students that we've been able to find a lot of information online about banned books and censorship, and that a lot of the information has come from the American Library Association's website.
 - Explain to students that the ALA is one of the biggest advocates for spreading information about the censorship of books. Have students view the [ALA's website on Banned Books Week](#) on the board and show them the [activities](#) listed on this participation page.
 - One of the examples listed is to write a letter to someone in charge (the site gives several examples) in an effort to convince them for the need to "[support] the freedom to read." Have students begin writing one of these letters that will be used in class tomorrow—advise that it doesn't need to be too long, only about a paragraph or so for now. Tell them not to worry about perfection just yet, that tomorrow's class will be focused on the art of persuasion.
- 2-3 minutes: questions, homework, dismissal
 - If you didn't finish your letter in class today, complete your ideas by class tomorrow. The letter doesn't have to be typed, just printed legibly.

Week Five, Day Two (Tuesday)

- 2-3 minutes: enter, attendance, housekeeping
- 15 minutes: Literature circle progress.
 - Allow students to journal, read, and discuss their novels in whatever form they choose. Circulate to answer any questions.
- 25 minutes: Persuasion introduction.
 - Have students open to their persuasive letters from yesterday. Ask for three or four volunteers to share their paragraphs with the class.
 - As a class, ask for students to create a list of similarities that they found among the letters read and theirs.
 - Prompt students to give any answers that don't immediately appear (have ideas ready like: audience is taken into consideration, facts are used to back up arguments, counterarguments are addressed, etc.). Discuss how these key characteristics are aspects of persuasion that you'll be looking into more in depth throughout the rest of the unit.
- 5 minutes: Introduce final persuasive paper.
 - Hand out the assignment sheet for the final paper and show how it relates to the activity above because of the need to persuade a certain audience through certain tools. Ask for any questions about the assignment (rubric not listed here, but included under "Goals and Assessments" segment).
- 2-3 minutes: questions, homework, dismissal
 - Although we won't begin drafting the paper tomorrow, begin to think of ideas for your paper. You'll have class time next week to work on it more in depth.

Persuasive Final Paper

After reading your group's chosen novel from the banned/challenged list, you will work individually to write an essay in which you persuade your readers (in this case, the Board of Education) whether or not the novel deserves to be placed on a permanently banned list from high school language arts classrooms or libraries. Based on the text and its themes, language, ideas, etc., you will create an essay of about 3-4 pages (750-1000 words) in which you create *and support* an argument about the status of this questionable book. For this assignment, your only need for an outside source will be the text itself—it will need to be present in your arguments so that your audience can fully understand its contents (I expect at least one quote for each of your main points).

I want you to begin this essay with your own definition of censorship and what it means to control what others can read. From that definition, you will then build your argument about whether or not your text deserves to be removed from high school bookshelves.

Be sure to address the counterargument of your main idea at some point in your essay. Obviously, this issue is not one that will be easily decided, so you need to be prepared to acknowledge the opposite stance of your argument.

Week Five, Day Three (Wednesday)

- 2-3 minutes: enter, attendance, housekeeping
- 15 minutes: Literature circle progress.
 - Allow students to journal, read, and discuss their novels in whatever form they choose. Circulate to answer any questions.
- 35 minutes: Introduce persuasion activity.
 - Tell the class that they'll be putting into action the keys of persuasion that they've been reading about so far. Explain that they'll take part in a debate tomorrow regarding an issue of censorship.
 - There will be three sections to divide students in: the pros, the cons, and the jury. Explain to students that the pros and cons will create arguments in an attempt to persuade the jury to their side. While the groups will be assigned, quiet students won't need to worry about being placed in a pro or con group—they can act as authors and not presenters. Have strips with each of the three sections printed on them for students to draw from for the activity.
 - For the debate, students will return to the ideas drawn from the introductory journaling activity. In it, students will be reminded of the controversy regarding *Harry Potter* books being placed in a high school media center. The pro group will fight for the book's right to stay, the con group will fight for its need to leave, and the jury will act as a school board, consisting of the principal, assistant principals, and school superintendent.
 - Allow students to use any remaining time to split into groups and brainstorm ideas. Explain that they'll have time to prepare before the activity tomorrow.
- 2-3 minutes: questions, homework, dismissal
 - Prepare for your debate tomorrow. Gather your ideas and organize them into logical thoughts.

Week Five, Day Four (Thursday)

- 2-3 minutes: enter, attendance, housekeeping
- 15 minutes: Preparation for debate.
 - Allow students to split into their three groups and finalize their tactics for the debate. While the pros and cons will have obvious work to do, encourage the jury to make a list of arguments they're hoping to hear from both sides. Tell them that they can use that as a sort of checklist while they listen to each side.

- 35 minutes: Conduct debate
 - Set up the protocol for the debate. Have the jury sit in the back of the room, facing the front so that each side will approach them during the process. Have the pros and cons sit on opposite sides of the room and explain that they'll each have 5 minutes to speak at a time without interruption. Each group will get to speak twice: an opening statement and a rebuttal to the other side's first argument. Encourage respect for each side as they speak.
 - As the groups present their arguments, allow the jury to take notes. At the end of each group's presentations, give the jury 5 minutes to step into the hall and make their final decision. They get to announce the winner of the debate, but they need to be prepared to explain their decision to the class.
- 2-3 minutes: questions, homework, dismissal
 - Consider what you've learned about persuasion today and how it can relate to your final paper. Tomorrow, we'll be working in our literature circles again to prepare for our presentations to the class.

Week Five, Day Five (Friday)

- 2-3 minutes: enter, attendance, housekeeping
- 50 minutes: Group presentation preparations.
 - At the beginning of the class, send around a sign-up sheet for group presentations. That will be followed next week.
 - In their literature circle groups, allow students to use the class period to prepare their information for the presentations on Monday and Tuesday. Remind them to consult their assignment sheets and rubrics to ensure that they're including all the necessary information in the presentation and that it's being divided properly among group members. Circulate to answer any questions
- 2-3 minutes: questions, homework, dismissal
 - Be prepared to present next week!

Week Six, Day One (Monday)

- 2-3 minutes: enter, attendance, housekeeping
- 5 minutes: Set up presentation protocol.
 - Student groups will take turns presenting their information about their literature circle experience. To ensure that all students are paying attention, have them answer the questions on a worksheet regarding each group's presentation (listed below).
- 45 minutes: Groups present
 - Follow the order written on the sign-up sheet that was passed around last week.

- Have students respond to presentations on handouts.
- 2-3 minutes: questions, homework, dismissal
 - Be prepared to be a good audience again tomorrow.

Group Presentation Reactions

Directions: As groups present, jot down your answers to the following points. Your responses will be graded on participation, but don't forget that I'll be watching for your attentiveness during the presentations as well. Part of this participation grade will be based on how you respect the other students while they're presenting.

Responses

Group members:

Book title and author:

Brief summary of the book:

Reasons for challenging:

Group's decision for banning:

Do you agree?

Any notes on the group's presentation? Things you really liked?

Be prepared to turn this into me at the end of the period for a participation grade.

Week Six, Day Two (Tuesday)

- 2-3 minutes: enter, attendance, housekeeping
- 45 minutes: Group presentations continued.
 - Have the rest of the groups present today, and have the students complete responses during presentations. Collect the responses at the end of the period.
- 5 minutes: Remind students that tomorrow will be a peer review session for their final persuasive papers, and that they'll need a draft ready for group sessions.
- 2-3 minutes: questions, homework, dismissal
 - Have a draft of your paper complete for peer review tomorrow.

Week Six, Day Three (Wednesday)

- 2-3 minutes: enter, attendance, housekeeping.
 - During this time, collect the student's final literature circle journals.
- 5 minutes: Peer review refresher.
 - Have students list the aspects of peer review that they remember from the first assignment. Stress the importance of support and positivity, and the priority of content over grammar or minor inconsistencies.
- 45 minutes: Peer review conferences.
 - Have students divide into groups of about 4 or 5 and complete a peer review process. Remind them that the most important factors of this group work include the content of the paper and its adherence to the rubric.
 - Have a copy of the rubric available for each group during the process so that students can align the drafts with the requirements set forth in the assignment.
 - Also remind students that, if time allows, any suggestions regarding spelling or mechanics are welcome.
- 2-3 minutes: questions, homework, dismissal
 - Think about today's peer review process. Come prepared to class tomorrow with any questions for your group members you may have regarding their suggestions.

Week Six, Day Four (Thursday)

- Today's class will take place in the computer lab.
- 2-3 minutes: enter, attendance, housekeeping
- 15 minutes: Have students meet again in their peer review groups.
 - Have them use this time to ask any questions about yesterday's conference or to finish up any last minute conference issues that were not covered yesterday.
- 35 minutes: Allow students to use the rest of the period to make changes to their papers on the computers. Stress that their final drafts will be due tomorrow, so they should spend this time wisely.
- 2-3 minutes: log off, questions, homework, dismissal
 - Bring a printed copy of your final draft tomorrow, ready for submission.

Week Six, Day Five (Friday)

- Last day of the unit. Today's class will take place in the computer lab.
- 2-3 minutes: enter, attendance, housekeeping
- 25 minutes: Have students journal to the following prompt:
 - As we come to a conclusion of this unit, take a moment to reflect on the themes we've considered throughout this unit. Consider some of the following questions in your response: What does it mean to censor something? How is it seen in the United States even today—especially in schools—, and how are people working against it? Who has the right to tell somewhat else what they can or cannot view/read/listen to/etc.? What do you feel is your responsibility to do in this situation?
 - Have students get in groups of two or three to discuss their responses.
 - Then, if time allows, work as a class to discuss some of the similarities that have arisen in student opinions. Explain that, even though a new unit will be starting on Monday, they should still be looking for these themes in all areas of their lives.
- 25 minutes: Allow students to use the rest of the period to make changes to their papers on the computers. Stress that their final drafts will be due Monday, so they should spend this time wisely.
- 2-3 minutes: questions, homework, dismissal
 - Have your completed draft ready for submission on Monday.

Appendix I

Top 100 Banned/Challenged Books: 2000-2009

Taken from American Library Association (bolded titles are American authors)

1. *Harry Potter* (series), by J.K. Rowling
2. ***Alice* series, by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor**
3. ***The Chocolate War*, by Robert Cormier**
4. ***And Tango Makes Three*, by Justin Richardson/Peter Parnell**
5. ***Of Mice and Men*, by John Steinbeck**
6. ***I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, by Maya Angelou**
7. ***Scary Stories* (series), by Alvin Schwartz**
8. *His Dark Materials* (series), by Philip Pullman
9. ***ttyl; ttfn; l8r g8r* (series), by Myracle, Lauren**
10. ***The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, by Stephen Chbosky**
11. ***Fallen Angels*, by Walter Dean Myers**
12. ***It's Perfectly Normal*, by Robie Harris**
13. ***Captain Underpants* (series), by Dav Pilkey**
14. ***The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, by Mark Twain**
15. ***The Bluest Eye*, by Toni Morrison**
16. ***Forever*, by Judy Blume**
17. ***The Color Purple*, by Alice Walker**
18. ***Go Ask Alice*, by Anonymous**
19. ***Catcher in the Rye*, by J.D. Salinger**
20. *King and King*, by Linda de Haan
21. ***To Kill A Mockingbird*, by Harper Lee**
22. ***Gossip Girl* (series), by Cecily von Ziegesar**
23. ***The Giver*, by Lois Lowry**
24. ***In the Night Kitchen*, by Maurice Sendak**
25. ***Killing Mr. Griffen*, by Lois Duncan**
26. ***Beloved*, by Toni Morrison**
27. ***My Brother Sam Is Dead*, by James Lincoln Collier**
28. ***Bridge To Terabithia*, by Katherine Paterson**
29. ***The Face on the Milk Carton*, by Caroline B. Cooney**
30. ***We All Fall Down*, by Robert Cormier**
31. ***What My Mother Doesn't Know*, by Sonya Sones**
32. ***Bless Me, Ultima*, by Rudolfo Anaya**
33. ***Snow Falling on Cedars*, by David Guterson**
34. ***The Earth, My Butt, and Other Big, Round Things*, by Carolyn Mackle.**
35. *Angus, Thongs, and Full Frontal Snogging*, by Louise Rennison
36. *Brave New World*, by Aldous Huxley

37. *It's So Amazing*, by Robie Harris
38. *Arming America*, by Michael Bellasiles
39. *Kaffir Boy*, by Mark Mathabane
40. *Life is Funny*, by E.R. Frank
41. *Whale Talk*, by Chris Crutcher
42. *The Fighting Ground*, by Avi
43. *Blubber*, by Judy Blume
44. *Athletic Shorts*, by Chris Crutcher
45. *Crazy Lady*, by Jane Leslie Conly
46. *Slaughterhouse-Five*, by Kurt Vonnegut
47. *The Adventures of Super Diaper Baby*, by George Beard
48. *Rainbow Boys*, by Alex Sanchez
49. *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, by Ken Kesey
50. *The Kite Runner*, by Khaled Hosseini
51. *Daughters of Eve*, by Lois Duncan
52. *The Great Gilly Hopkins*, by Katherine Paterson
53. *You Hear Me?*, by Betsy Franco
54. *The Facts Speak for Themselves*, by Brock Cole
55. *Summer of My German Soldier*, by Bette Green
56. *When Dad Killed Mom*, by Julius Lester
57. *Blood and Chocolate*, by Annette Curtis Klause
58. *Fat Kid Rules the World*, by K.L. Going
59. *Olive's Ocean*, by Kevin Henkes
60. *Speak*, by Laurie Halse Anderson
61. *Draw Me A Star*, by Eric Carle
62. *The Stupids* (series), by Harry Allard
63. *The Terrorist*, by Caroline B. Cooney
64. *Mick Harte Was Here*, by Barbara Park
65. *The Things They Carried*, by Tim O'Brien
66. *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*, by Mildred Taylor
67. *A Time to Kill*, by John Grisham
68. *Always Running*, by Luis Rodriguez
69. *Fahrenheit 451*, by Ray Bradbury
70. *Harris and Me*, by Gary Paulsen
71. *Junie B. Jones* (series), by Barbara Park
72. *Song of Solomon*, by Toni Morrison
73. *What's Happening to My Body Book*, by Lynda Madaras
74. *The Lovely Bones*, by Alice Sebold
75. *Anastasia* (series), by Lois Lowry
76. *A Prayer for Owen Meany*, by John Irving
77. *Crazy: A Novel*, by Benjamin Lebert
78. *The Joy of Gay Sex*, by Dr. Charles Silverstein
79. *The Upstairs Room*, by Johanna Reiss
80. *A Day No Pigs Would Die*, by Robert Newton Peck

81. ***Black Boy*, by Richard Wright**
82. ***Deal With It!*, by Esther Drill**
83. ***Detour for Emmy*, by Marilyn Reynolds**
84. *So Far From the Bamboo Grove*, by Yoko Watkins
85. ***Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes*, by Chris Crutcher**
86. ***Cut*, by Patricia McCormick**
87. ***Tiger Eyes*, by Judy Blume**
88. ***The Handmaid's Tale*, by Margaret Atwood**
89. ***Friday Night Lights*, by H.G. Bissenger**
90. *A Wrinkle in Time*, by Madeline L'Engle
91. ***Julie of the Wolves*, by Jean Craighead George**
92. ***The Boy Who Lost His Face*, by Louis Sachar**
93. ***Bumps in the Night*, by Harry Allard**
94. ***Goosebumps* (series), by R.L. Stine**
95. *Shade's Children*, by Garth Nix
96. ***Grendel*, by John Gardner**
97. *The House of the Spirits*, by Isabel Allende
98. *I Saw Esau*, by Iona Opte
99. ***Are You There, God? It's Me, Margaret*, by Judy Blume**
100. ***America: A Novel*, by E.R. Frank**