

Teacher's Rationale

School: Arrowhead

Teacher: Budzien/Judd/Freebrug/Stoffel/Vacek

Title: *Jailbird*

Author: Kurt Vonnegut

Grade or Course: Modern Literature

Approximate date(s) book will be used:

- **Semester 1**
- Semester 2**
- Both Semesters Both**
- The entire class will study this book, but students may choose an alternative.**
 - Alternate book: *The Big Book of Little Criminals: 63 True Tales of the World's Most Incompetent Jailbirds* by E. Taggart (editor)
- Ways in which the book is especially appropriate for students:**

Jailbird discusses morality in politics, relationships, and war. These are topics that are currently of interest and applicable to the students' lives here at Arrowhead.
- Way in which the book is especially pertinent to the objectives of this course or unit:**

This book is appropriate for students at Arrowhead in Modern Literature because the book was written post 1970 as well as by award winning author Kurt Vonnegut. Students are interested in and able to relate to the novel because of its connections to American history with events like labor unions, communism, and Watergate.
- Special problems that might arise in relation to the book and some planned activities that handle these problems:**

Students with a poor background in history may have a hard time keeping up with the allusions in the story. When needed, a brief historical account can be done to help clarify situations. It was suggested that students could also watch *All the Kings Men* for further insight into the politics mentioned in the story. There is one brief episode of sexually explicit language. This is not the focus of the novel; therefore, discussion of the language is not necessary.
- Some other appropriate books an individual student might read in place of this book:**

Player Piano, *Timequake*, and *Hocus Pocus* all by Kurt Vonnegut
- Summary of the book:**

Jailbird takes us into a fractured and comic, pure Vonnegut world of high crimes and misdemeanors in government. . .and in the heart. This wry tale follows bumbling bureaucrat Walter F. Starbuck from Harvard to the Nixon White House to the penitentiary as Watergate's least known co-conspirator. But the humor turns dark when Vonnegut shines his spotlight on the cold hearts and calculated greed of the mighty, giving a razor-sharp edge to an unforgettable portrait of power and politics in our times. (Publisher's summary)
- Awards/ Reviews:**

Vonnegut has been the recipient of the Literary Lion Award from the New York Public Library and The Freedom to Read Award from the Chicago Public Library. He was also the New York State Author from 2001-2003.

