

**Teacher's Rationale**

School: Arrowhead

Teacher: Balistreri/Budzein/Freeberg/Judd

Title: Shoeless Joe

Grade or Course: Modern Lit

Approximate date(s) a book will be used:

\_\_\_\_\_ Semester 1

\_\_\_X\_\_\_ Semester 2

This book will be (check one or more):

\_\_\_X\_\_\_ studied by the whole class. (But students are allowed to read an alternative.)

\_\_\_\_\_ studied by small groups.

\_\_\_\_\_ placed on a reading list.

\_\_\_\_\_ placed in a classroom library.

\_\_\_\_\_ recommended to individual students.

\_\_\_\_\_ part of a larger study of (explain):

\_\_\_\_\_ other (explain):

**Ways in which the book is especially appropriate for student in this class:**

It's a book about sport.

It's a book about male dreams and aspirations.

It's about family.

It's great to teach in the spring, when baseball starts.

**Ways in which the book is especially pertinent to the objectives of this course or unit:**

The main character, Ray Kinsella, kidnaps J.D. Salinger, one of the giants of 20<sup>th</sup> century literature, so the book explores the power literature can have on someone's life, and introduces a great writer to the class.

Because it's written from a peculiarly male perspective, it reaches out to some of the reluctant readers in class.

It's an example of Magic Realism, a modern literary movement.

**Special problems that might arise in relation to the book and some planned activities that handle this problem:**

Baseball is presented as a kind of religion in this book. A few kids have found that disturbing. However, the 20<sup>th</sup> century "worshipping" of athletes and teams is a worthy topic for discussion. Also, one essay option is to discuss whether the book is sacrilegious. This allows the student to explore his or her religiosity.

**Some other appropriate books an individual student might read in place of this book:**

Bang The Drum Slowly - Mark Harris

**Summary of the book:**

An Iowa farmer is guided by voices to build a ballpark in his cornfield for the ghosts of baseball players. The voices then prompt him to kidnap a famous author and to

“resurrect” an old obscure ball player. As he follows his dreams, Ray Kinsella, the farmer, finds meaning and peace in a soulless corporate world.

**Reviews and/or awards of the book or author:**

W.P. Kinsella was born in 1935, 60 miles west of Edmonton, Alberta. Kinsella worked in the business world for 20 years before earning his B.A. in creative writing from the University of Victoria (1974) and a M.F.A. from the University of Iowa's Writer's Workshop (1978). From 1978 until 1983 when he began to write full-time, Kinsella taught creative writing and modern literature at the University of Calgary. Kinsella's novels occur in two types of settings: stories situated in the world of Native reserves in southern Alberta and baseball-inspired fictions set in the American Midwest. His best-known baseball-inspired novel is *Shoeless Joe Jackson Comes to Iowa* (1980), which was later adapted as the film *Field of Dreams* (1989). Stories with Native characters are included in the collections: *Dance Me Outside* (1977), *The Thrill of the Grass* (1984), and *Brother Frank's Gospel Hour* (1994). Among other awards, Kinsella won the prestigious Houghton-Mifflin Award and the Books in Canada first novel award for *Shoeless Joe*, as well as the Stephen Leacock Memorial Medal for Humour in 1987 for *The Fencpost Chronicles*. He was made an Officer of the Order of Canada in 1994.

**(<http://www.collectionscanada.ca/9/12/p12-269-e.html>)**