

Teacher's Rationale**School:** Arrowhead Union High School**Teacher:** Budzien / Balistreri / Judd / Frieberg**Title:** Slaughterhouse-Five**Grade or Course:** Advanced Placement English Literature**Approximate date(s) a book will be used:** Semester 1 Semester 2**This book will be (check one or more):** studied by the whole class. (But students have option to choose different text). 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:**

Kurt Vonnegut is a master of contemporary literature and has been described as "one of the best living American writers." Slaughterhouse-Five is part of the AP literary canon and makes an excellent source of material for writing on various "free response" AP Exam essay questions. It is serious literature often found or discussed in college level courses. Students will benefit inherently from this exposure to an icon of American letters.

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

Slaughterhouse-Five makes an excellent source of material for writing on various "free response" AP Exam essay questions. It covers a smorgasbord of characters, plot lines, and themes, any one of which might be appropriate in a given exam question, thus acting as an arsenal of material from which to draw essay ideas.

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

The book serves as is a powerful anti-war treatise that might be erroneously construed as an "Anti-American" text. Clearly, promoting peace is Vonnegut's agenda. Others may find descriptions of wartime violence, especially the incineration of over 135,000 Germans during the firebombing of Dresden, Germany on February 14, 1945, disturbing. Still others might find adult sexual situations and vulgar language used by combat soldiers in WW II too intense. Clearly, Vonnegut's intention is not to pander to one's prurient interests, but to create characterization and thematic development about the horrors of war and Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome. The protagonist also discovers a new religion from outer space aliens, and this might offend religious sensibilities. Certain drawings/illustrations are more cartoonish than realistic.

Some other appropriate books an individual student might read in place of this book: Catch-22 or All Quiet On The Western Front.

Summary of the book:

Protagonist Billy Pilgrim serves as Vonnegut's alter ego and traces Billy's life as an American soldier/POW in Germany during World War II, as a post-WW II optometrist civilian, and as a science fiction buff convinced that wise, outer space aliens called "Tralfamadorians" have abducted him. Vonnegut actually lived through and witnessed the 1945 firebombing of Dresden and wants to promote peace and understanding of the horrors of war through Billy's fictional persona. Billy meets and interacts with too many characters to name, but among them are his family, German Nazis, English soldiers, his military comrades, his dog, fictional fiction writers, aliens, his mate in an outer space zoo, and other zany characters in fantastical situations. Themes of hope, despair, the harsh realities of war, non-violence, fatalism, free will, and revenge are only some of the topics covered under Vonnegut's satirical pen.

Reviews and/or awards of the book or author:

1969 -- Guggenheim Fellow, Germany

1970 -- National Institute of Arts And Letters grant

1981 – Literary Lion Award, New York Public Library

1983 – Freedom to Read Award, Chicago Public Library

1985 – Emmy Award for Outstanding Children's Program, National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences; for "Displaced Persons."

Author of multiple Best--Sellers