

Middle School Literature Analysis (EEL9) – 15 Weeks - John Ziegler

Class Schedule

Spring Session 2021, Sundays, 3:50 pm – 4:40pm; on Zoom (30 hours) Grades 7/8

Fees: \$150

Course Description

This course will encourage students to analyze two dystopian novels. We will use Carl Jung's Hero's Journey model to examine thematic and moral/ethical conflicts within the stories. Both books studied are set in alternative societies that pose a range of difficult questions which students will discuss in class and through their writing. Student will write two short essays over the duration of the course exploring these topics. The books for this course are *Fahrenheit 451*, by Ray Bradbury, and *The Maze Runner*, by James Dashner.

Weeks 1-3: *Fahrenheit 451* – Review of the Hero's Journey Cycle – The Call & Refusal

Fahrenheit 451 is a dystopian sci-fi novel for young adults which explores topics of censorship and media/thought control. This is a fertile ground for students to explore these concepts in open discussion while examining how the author creates the setting through not just time and place, but tone and how this shapes the narrative. We begin with a look at Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey model and compare/contrast 'the call' and the "refusal of the call" as well as 'threshold' to other works of literature.

Weeks 4-6: *Fahrenheit 451* – Themes and Character Development

We will examine various themes common to the dystopian sub-genre such as technology in society and censorship. Comparing these to other works in the same sub-genre, we also look at characters' role in society and issues such as dissatisfaction that may arise. Looking more deeply into the themes, we will try and understand what moral lessons the author may be trying to convey. Students write their essays.

Weeks 7-9: *The Maze Runner* – Dystopian Situation and Social Dynamics Under Pressure

This dystopian classic is a break from the critiques on society that we have been reading both in the fall and in *Fahrenheit 451*. It is more situational rather than social commentary and takes the reader through an examination of how a group of teens interact and problem-solve as they attempt to escape a situation beyond their control. Students will discuss and relate to their own lives.

Weeks 10-12 *The Maze Runner* - Communities

As the groups evolve and change through this story, a variety of ethical dilemmas are faced and provide debate and discussion. As we reflect on our own societal divisions and the morality that that entails, students discuss how each conflict and crisis that arises is solved.

Weeks 13-15 *The Maze Runner* Alternative Conclusions

There is a great deal here for students to compare and contrast between these two books. Exploring how society and groupings respond to ethical dilemmas forces us to look at “morality” through a variety of lenses. Students can write their essays about this or create alternative endings that reflect a different take on these deeper questions.

About John Ziegler

John Ziegler has been teaching at Ray Chinese School for two years and has taught a wide number of English classes to grades two through eight. Additionally, he teaches a World Affairs course and has taught Speech and SAT Prep. Prior to his work in Chicago, Mr. Ziegler taught Middle School English, High School Economics, And Algebra II for six years in various schools and programs in Thailand.