

For Years 9–12

**Authentic Projects for the English Classroom**

# LITERATURE ACTIVITIES **Teens Actually** LOVE

Beth Ahlgrim, Bill Fritz, Jeremy  
Gertzfield and Lisa Lukens

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## **Introduction v**

## **Chapter 1: Understanding 1**

**Activity 1.1:** Friending Facebook in the Classroom . . . . . 2

**Activity 1.2:** Visualising Text . . . . . 9

## **Chapter 2: Adaptation 23**

**Activity 2.1:** Graphic Novel . . . . . 24

**Activity 2.2:** Quilt as High Art . . . . . 27

**Activity 2.3:** Movie Trailer . . . . . 50

**Activity 2.4:** Allegory. . . . . 53

## **Chapter 3: Deconstruction 59**

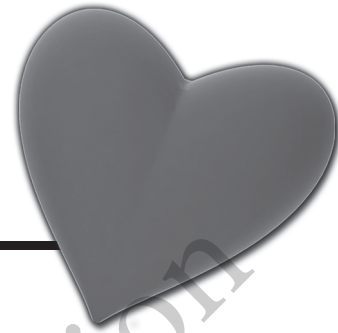
**Activity 3.1:** The Soundtrack . . . . . 60

**Activity 3.2:** The Art of Reduction. . . . . 63

## **References 73**

## **Appendix: Suggested Readings 75**

# Chapter 1



---

# UNDERSTANDING

**I**n this chapter, the activities – which can be used as common formative assessments and completed either independently or collaboratively, on a student’s first or second reading – gauge how well the students comprehend the text from a literal and inferential level. These assessments also gauge whether students can grasp emerging relationships within the texts. Furthermore, the activities work as a guide for students as they begin to identify higher-order relationships within either an author’s work, such as a novel or short story, or a student’s work, most typically an essay or speech. Because the activities in this chapter are highly visual, teachers can measure a student’s ability to create concrete analogies grounded in the text. The goal is to determine students’ readiness for deeper analysis.

Although *Fahrenheit 451* (Bradbury, 1953) serves as the sample text for both activities in this chapter, they can easily be adapted to any reading assignment that you wish.

## FRIENDING FACEBOOK IN THE CLASSROOM

## Activity 1.1:

FRIENDING FACEBOOK  
IN THE CLASSROOM

Facebook in the classroom? Aren't we trying to discourage our students from using electronic devices during class? But, as the old adage goes, "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em." By bringing Facebook into the classroom, we are meeting students at their level to bring them to ours. We are also using an accessible site to assess our students' abilities to comprehend what they read, as well as determine how well they can make inferences from the text, both literary and informational.

Sara Schmelling (2009) has created models that your students can imitate in her book *Ophelia Joined the Group, Maidens Who Don't Float*, in which she created Facebook pages for famous literary characters such as Elizabeth Bennett from *Pride and Prejudice* and Pip from *Great Expectations*.

## Learning Goals

This assessment is concerned with the following example learning goals, common across curricula.

- Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
- Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyse their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.
- Analyse the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g. where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).
- Analyse a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

## UNDERSTANDING

### FRIENDING FACEBOOK IN THE CLASSROOM

The Facebook page discussion in this activity also includes learning goals related to the commonly occurring curricular elements of Speaking and Listening:

- Work with peers to promote civil, democratic discussions and decision-making, set clear goals and deadlines, and establish individual roles as needed.
- Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.
- Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesise comments, claims and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.
- Make strategic use of digital media (e.g. textual, graphical, audio, visual and interactive elements) in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning and evidence, and to add interest.

### Materials Needed

- Student copies of *Fahrenheit 451* (or alternate assigned text)
- Handout 1.1a: Facebook Assignment
- Handout 1.1b: Facebook Template or access to Facebook

### The Process

Students can complete the activity in either of two ways. They can create an actual Facebook page at [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com), or use the template provided in Handout 1.1b: Facebook Template. This latter method helps to navigate around the barrier of Facebook being blocked on the school server.

Regardless of which method you choose, have students first create a “home page” for their assigned or chosen character. On their home page they can add the character’s birthday and interests, and upload pictures.

Once you mark the home page, students can begin posting, either on the online page they created or continuing to use a template. Through their posts, students should have “conversations” with other characters from the novel. At this point, require students to integrate textual evidence. Not only

**FRIENDING FACEBOOK IN THE CLASSROOM**

are you assessing their comprehension and inferencing of the text, but you are also formatively assessing students' abilities to choose appropriate and effective quotations and properly integrate their evidence.

So, let's bring *Fahrenheit 451* (Bradbury, 1953) into the 21st century and see what it would look like if the characters created Facebook pages and talked to each other. Would Facebook bring them closer together or farther apart? Present a copy of Handout 1.1a: Facebook Assignment to each of your students.

The sample student Facebook page (see Figure 1) created for Guy Montag clearly shows the student's comprehension of who the character is, as well as how he relates to other characters. The symbols for the characters also show the student moving toward creating analogies or metaphorical representations of the characters in the novel.

The character Facebook page serves as a formative assessment for the summative assessment. You can provide timely feedback for students in order to move them toward mastery. As you probably know, many curricular goals and standards integrate reading and writing. The Facebook page helps students integrate the writing and reading skills while avoiding being overwhelmed by a long literary analysis assignment. The quick feedback you can provide on the frequent postings will help you see where your students require extra support and areas where they need reteaching. From this, you gain the knowledge required to differentiate your classroom activities.

If you have a small group of students who have yet to master the basic comprehension, you can create a group class period activity. To differentiate, have students who are unable to grasp the basic comprehension reread the text together and record what they notice about the character, the setting and the conflict. Also direct them to stop at a certain passage to make predictions that are based on what they have read. With the differentiated groups, you know that although all students are completing the Facebook assessment, some may have a deeper analysis of character. This deeper analysis would appear on the Facebook feed as a conversation between two characters or as a status update. If you have a group that is ready to move to analysis of character, they continue to move toward complex thinking. With the Facebook assessment you can easily incorporate the theory of Vygotsky's zone of proximal development prior to the summative assessment.

If your school server permits students to log into Facebook at school, you can have students "friend" each other's characters and use the Facebook site live. You too can friend the characters and read the online discussion that the students are having as they post as their character. Not only does this

# UNDERSTANDING

## FRIENDING FACEBOOK IN THE CLASSROOM

The image shows a simulated Facebook profile for 'Guy Montag'. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'facebook' and links for 'Home', 'Profile', 'Friends', 'Inbox', 'Guy Montag', 'Settings', 'Logout', and a search box. The profile picture is a black and white photo of a man in a fireman's cap. The bio says 'Wishes his wife would turn off the T.V. and talk...' with a 'Share' button. Below is an 'Information' section with fields for 'Relationship Status: Married', 'Birthday: Too long ago...', and 'Occupation: Fireman; need a change'. The 'Recent Activity' section shows several posts: Granger recommending a book, Guy Montag looking forward to a meeting, Clarice McClellan hiking, Guy Montag asking to join a hike, Mildred Montag wanting to watch 'Lost', Guy Montag checking out a website, Professor Farber finding a better way to communicate, and Guy Montag finding mobile phones at Best Buy.

**Figure 1.** Sample student Facebook page for Fahrenheit 451 character.

show that students understand the character, but it also shows their ability to use the implications from the text to enter into a conversation.

As students converse with each other via their characters' Facebook pages, they are required to integrate textual evidence on the Facebook feed to support their posts. This helps students focus on the importance of selecting the most relevant and effective evidence. Often students will choose a quotation simply because they were instructed to do so, but they may not look at all the complexities of choosing salient and purposeful passages. The repeated

**FRIENDING FACEBOOK IN THE CLASSROOM**

practice of selecting effective evidence for many short and frequently assessed posts will enable them to hone this skill.

The Facebook page assessment could also be adapted for informational text. As you move toward increasing literacy for all curricular areas, you can share this assignment with other disciplines. When creating a Facebook page for informational text, you may not have characters to analyse. Students may create a Facebook page to shed light on the essay or article's claim. For example, when examining the role that race plays in American society, you could ask your students to read Hua Hsu's article, "The End of White America?" (Hsu, 2009). This piece is an excellent companion for a study of *The Great Gatsby* (Fitzgerald, 1925), particularly for students in Australia who will not automatically be familiar with some of the concepts that book touches upon.

While analysing Hsu's article, students work to identify her claim, the strengths of her argument and the limitations. They can then create a Facebook page that reveals the complexities of race in America. Students state Hsu's claim and ask classmates to comment, beginning with whether they agree or disagree. At this point, it is imperative that students stay grounded in the text. Avoid student reader responses. You could ask students to respond to the page as a character from the novel may respond to the article. Students take on the persona of one of the major or minor characters in *The Great Gatsby* and use textual evidence to support their character's response.

The pairing of texts is the beginning of asking to students to synthesise evidence. Once you know that they can analyse, you want them to show how the texts essentially "talk to each other". This critical thinking is the practice your students need to prepare them for life beyond secondary school. It also provides a platform for students to discuss particular issues, some controversial, in an appropriate objective tone.

The use of the social networking site can help your students keep up with all of the reading they complete throughout the year, along with all of the analyses they complete. Facebook creates an organised space for critical thinking, a space that students may need to revisit in order to prepare for a summative assignment.