



**THE CHOCOLATE WAR**  
**by Robert Cormier**

**Jade Dunworth-Miller  
Tania Moaton  
Yesenia Miranda**

# How Can We Disturb The Universe?





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# Unit Objectives

We will focus this unit on taking a stand against the everyday challenges and inequities of authority/power abuse. We will pay special attention to issues of conformity and nonconformity as societal mechanisms of coping, both being an extremely valid issue for high school students.



# ★ Novel Questions

1. What is Bullying?
2. Are there different types of bullying? (consider the obvious bully, Archie and the Vigils-Chapter 5)
3. Can adults be bullies/bullied? Explain. (Brother Leon and how he picked on Bailey in Chapter 6)
4. What are the effects of bullying? Are the actual bullies themselves affected in any way? (Archie, The rest of The Vigils?)
5. Do you feel safe in school? If so, do you feel your peers do as well?
6. Are teachers responsible for keeping students safe in school? If not, who is?
7. Have you ever felt excluded or socially isolated?
8. Do you belong to any exclusive clubs or groups in school? If not, is this by choice? (The Vigils, Focus on Chapters 2-5)
9. Have you ever had to fundraise for school? What was the experience like?
10. What does "the norm" mean? Is it easy to differ from "the norm"?
11. Have you ever met anyone that rejected "the norm"? What did you think of them?
12. How does one control or hold power over people? (Consider how Brother Leon got his power over the school.)
13. How do people allow themselves to be controlled?
14. Are people truly in control of their own life? Explain.
15. Does having power make someone important?
16. Should people question authority? Explain.
17. What happens when we give up on something we care about?
18. How can we disturb the universe?
19. Is disturbing the universe worth it? Explain.
20. Who has the right to ban books? Should this novel be banned? Do we have a responsibility to stop such banning?

# ★ Before Reading

- *Anticipation guide*
- *Introduction to journals*
- *Malala Yousafzai + Robert Cormier: Nonconformist reading activity + small research project*
- *Columbine activity + journal response*
- *Identifying issues in authority and control + writing assignment*

Robert Cormier

# ★ Anticipation Guide

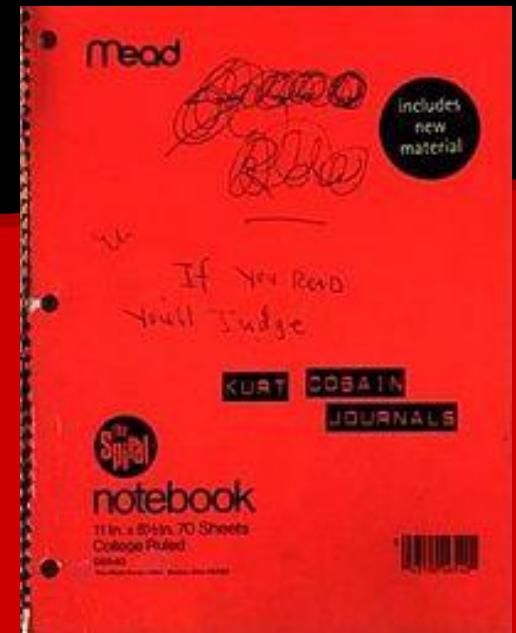
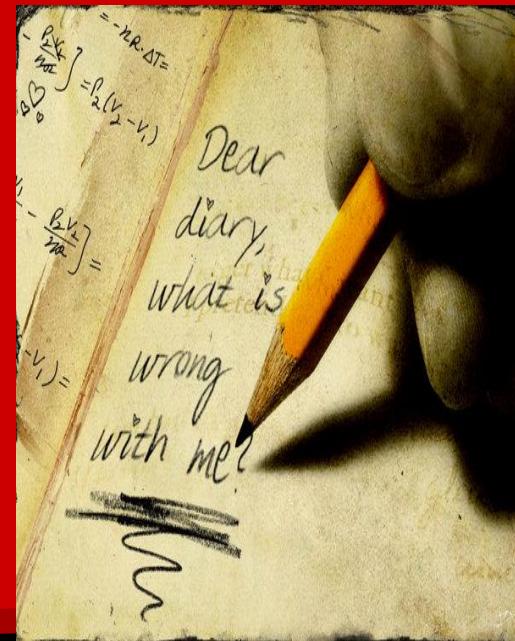
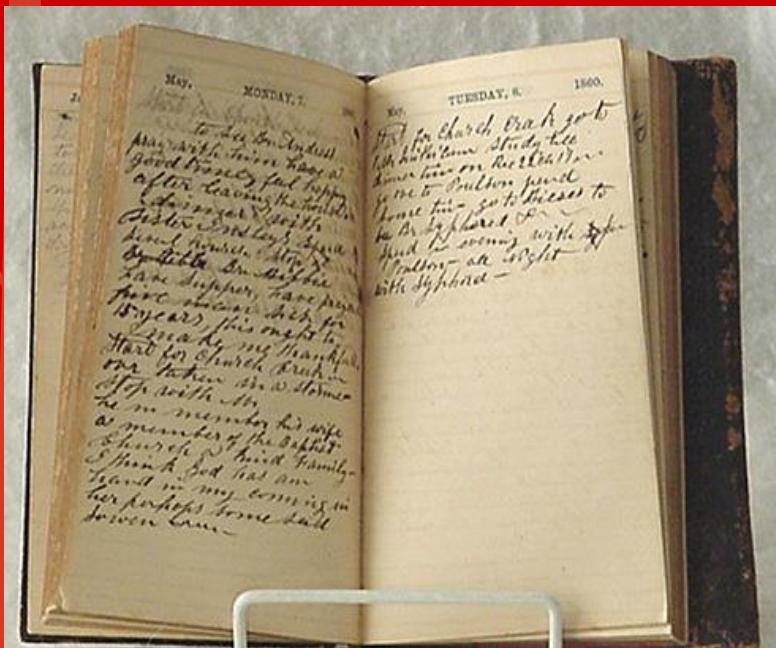
Before and after reading each student will complete an anticipation guide that relates to Robert Cormier's "The Chocolate War". This serves as an introduction to the themes that will be discussed throughout the novel as well as show how the opinions of the students change over time.

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Read the following questions and respond Agree (A) or Disagree (D) to each.

1. Violence is part of human nature.
2. Bullying is a normal part of high school.
3. Adults are capable of bullying others.
4. Nonconformists are a threat to society and should not be trusted.
5. Sometimes we have to hurt others in order to get ahead in life.
6. Teachers are always right no matter what the situation is.
7. Being powerful is more important and rewarding than being virtuous.
8. People are inherently selfish and greedy.
9. Students should always make sacrifices for the good of their school.
10. Walking away from a fight makes you look weak.
11. Manipulation does not lead to violence.

# ★ Journaling

Students will be required to keep journals for this unit. We'd really like to discover how youth feels about their safety within an institution (such as school) and how it steers their decisions. We'd also like to explore the benefits and drawbacks of conformity and how deviating from the norm isn't all too bad. The journals will be collected, and the content won't be graded, but participation and completion of prompts will hold weight. We want this journal to create a safe space for students, and it is more than acceptable if a student doesn't want us to read something.



# ★ Malala Yousafzai

Students will read the article on [Malala Yousafzai](#), a teenage Pakistani activist who was shot by the Taliban for advocating education for girls. Next, students will listen to a NPR News podcast about [Huma Khan](#), a young girl just like Malala Yousafzai who struggles just to get an education.

In class, students will use the internet to find other examples of teenagers who dared to disturb the universe and come up with a list of five questions they would ask that person.

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-Samar Minallah



# ★ Columbine



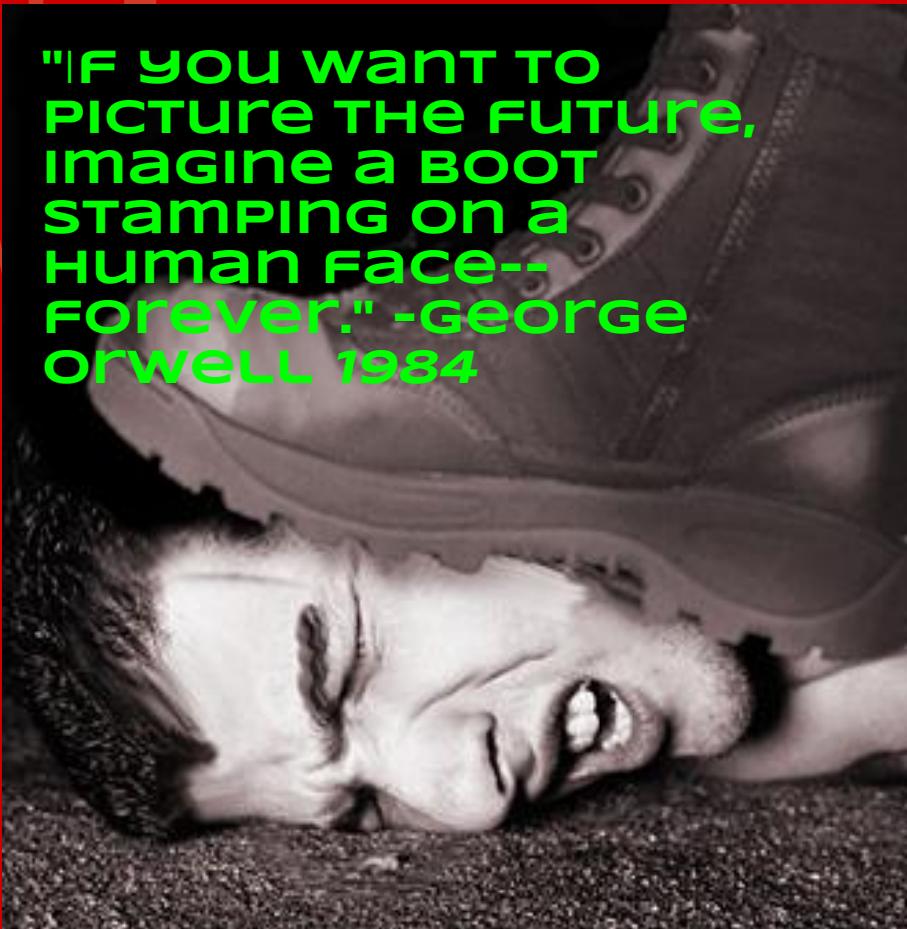
Students will watch this short video recounting the events of the Columbine tragedy and journal write for 5 using the following prompts; they're just prompts and do not need to be answered verbatim:

- Have you ever felt socially isolated? Explain?
- Do you feel safe in school?
- Describe the effects of bullying, for students and adults (consider the range of the most extreme cases to something that may seem minor)
- Have you ever been excluded?
- Do you belong to any clubs or groups? Are they exclusive?

After journaling, there will be time for discussion and sharing feelings about the graphic images they witnessed.

# Writing Prompts: Identifying Issues in Authority & Control

"**I**F YOU WANT TO PICTURE THE FUTURE, IMAGINE A BOOT STAMPING ON A HUMAN FACE-- FOREVER." -GEORGE ORWELL 1984



Students will draw/write responses in their journals. Later, we will relate it to historic, present and even predict future instances of power abuse and how it affects society.

Consider the quote from *1984*.

- Do you agree? If so, what are figurative face stompers in your life?
- Can you find examples of this in current political conditions?
- Can you find instances of a boot stamping on Jerry's face? What are they?
- Does brother Leon abuse his power? How so? (provide examples from the text.)

# ★ DURING READING

- Novel Response Groups: \*ONGOING ACTIVITY\* Group discussions
- Another Brick in the Wall: Listening activity + writing response
- How to be a Nonconformist: Reading activity/discussion + creating a guide
- Final project introduced

# ★ Mini-Lessons

1. How do people use blackmail?
2. How can groups become gangs?
3. What is manipulation?
4. How does violence in school affect your education?
5. Examples of conformity
6. What is non-conformity?
7. How to be a Nonconformist
8. A history on Muckrakers
9. Google drive + embedding videos  
(for final project)



# ★ Another Brick in the Wall Lyrics

## Another Brick in the Wall Lyrics - Part 2

(Waters) 3:56

When we grew up and went to school, there were certain teachers who would hurt the children anyway they could

by pouring their derision upon anything we did exposing every weakness however carefully hidden by the kids.

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All in all you're just another brick in the wall.



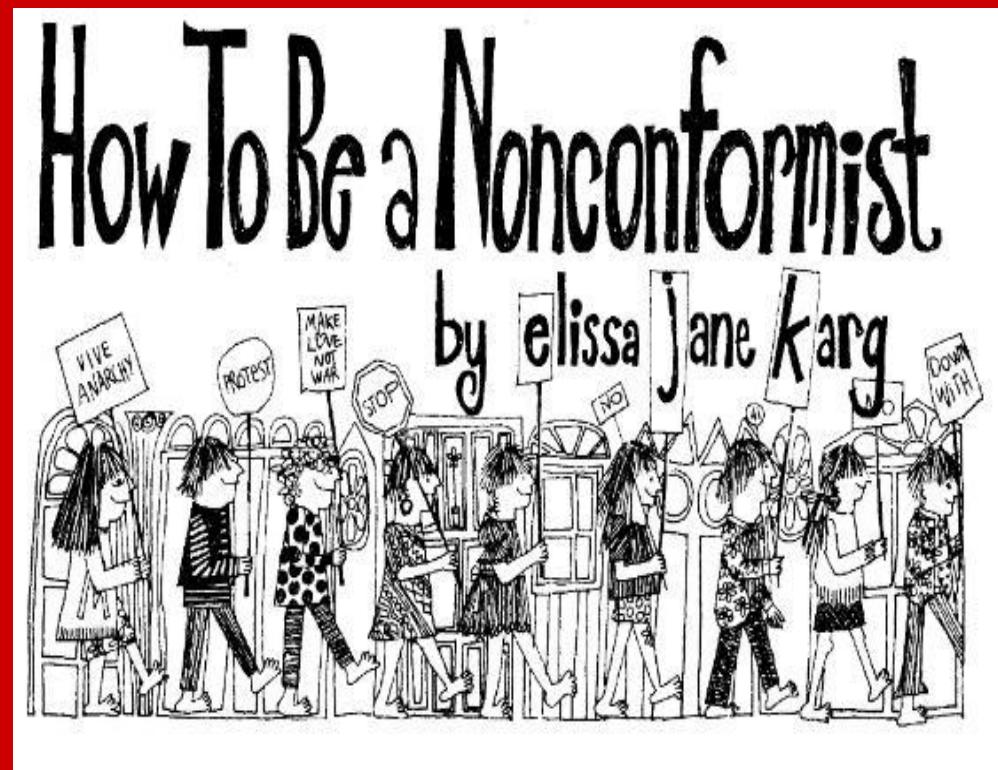
Watch this music video and discuss what it means to be "Another Brick..."

- What lines really stood out to you?
- What does "the norm" mean? Is it easy to differ from the norm?
- How is Jerry's relationship with authority figures (Brother Leon, the football coach, his father, etc) similar to the children's in the video?

# ★ Mini-lesson: Conformity and Nonconformity

## How to be a Nonconformist

- We will read this guide as a class and discuss the following topics:
  - Is it ever good to conform?
  - Consider name brands, advertisements and fads: all forms of conformity. Good or bad?
  - Is there anything on the list that you already do?
  - What would be most difficult to do?
  - What does it mean to be "a contrarian"?
- Then, students will create their own How to be a Nonconformist guide using art supplies, magazines for collage, etc.



# ★ Novel Response Groups

At the end of every week students will discuss the chapters they have read in small groups and each student will provide the class with a one sentence statement about the novel. This statement can be a reaction to an event, a questions about a character or even a rant about something that happened in the book that they did not agree with. This activity aims to check for comprehension of the chapters, discuss whatever we might have missed during the week and improve on students presentation/participation skills.



# ★ Robert Cormier: A Disturber of the Universe

*"I feel like I must have done something right. There wouldn't have been all these concerns from an ineffective book."*

-Robert Cormier



Chocolate War author  
battles effort to ban book

Students will read the article above about Robert Cormier's fight to keep *The Chocolate War* off the banned books list.

Students will discuss the significance of Cormier's fight in relation to our theme of disturbing the universe.

# AFTER READING

- *"The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"* by T.S. Eliot
- *The Muckrakers*
- *Character Chart*
- *How far would you go to disturb the universe?*
- *Project: What would you do?*
- *Create-A-Quiz*
- *Writing Prompt*
- *Movie Poster*
- *Final Project/Reflection*

# ★ "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" by T.S. Eliot

## The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock

We will discuss these topics and do some choral reading.

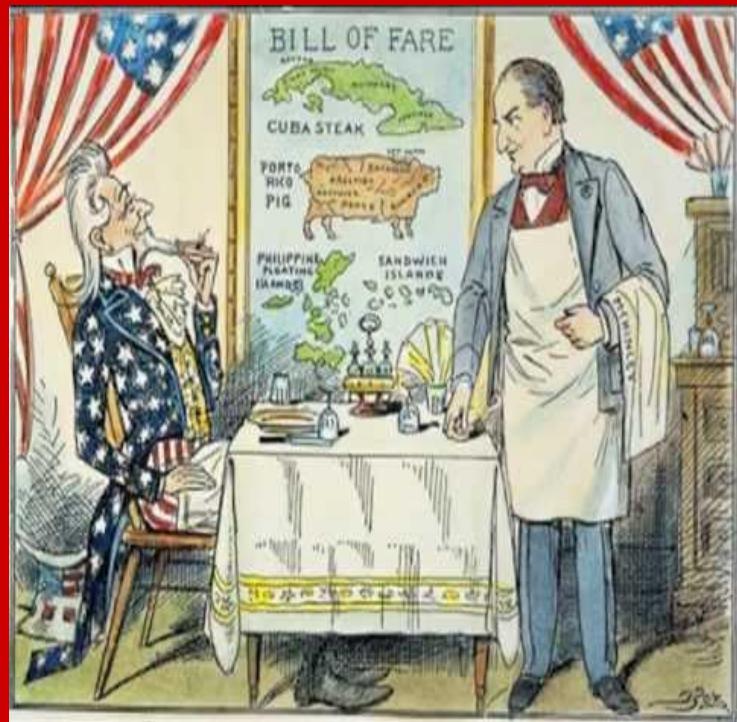
- Jerry experienced the perils of indecision when it came to selling the chocolates and standing up to authority figures. How does the speaker of "Prufrock" handle indecision?
- Is it worth it to disturb the universe? How would you answer this as Jerry at the end of the novel? How would you answer this if you were the speaker in "Prufrock"?
- What language in the poem convinces you that disturbing the universe is worthwhile? What discourages disturbance?

*And indeed there will be time  
To wonder, "Do I dare?" and, "Do I dare?"  
Time to turn back and descend the stair,  
With a bald spot in the middle of my hair—  
40  
[They will say: "How his hair is growing thin!"]  
My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the  
chin,  
My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a  
simple pin—  
[They will say: "But how his arms and legs are  
thin!"]  
*Do I dare  
Disturb the universe?  
In a minute there is time  
For decisions and revisions which a minute will  
reverse.**

# ★ Mini-lesson on Muckrakers

- Muckrakers were humanist writers, artists, journalists, activists, etc concerned with powerful institutions and political figures rendering unfair and unlivable conditions for the commonwealth.
- Key Figures: Nelly Bly (*Ten Days in the Madhouse*), Upton Sinclair (*The Jungle*), Wil Irwin (*The City That Was*), Ida Tarbell (*Standard Oil muckracker*), Jacob Riis (*How the Other half Lives*)

We will watch the video and discuss modern day "muckrakers" (Michael Moore, Bill Maher) and how to rake the muck in their communities to prepare for the final project.



# Book Activity: Character Chart

Chocolate War Character Chart

|   | Jerry | Brother Leon | Archie | The Goober | Jerry's Mom |
|---|-------|--------------|--------|------------|-------------|
| <b>Adjective describing the character</b>           |       |              |        |            |             |
| <b>What is their main issue with conformity?</b>    |       |              |        |            |             |
| <b>A symbol for the character</b>                   |       |              |        |            |             |
| <b>Something the character would never risk</b>     |       |              |        |            |             |
| <b>How another character would describe him/her</b> |       |              |        |            |             |

# ★ How far would you go to disturb the Universe?

*What issues (i.e. political, social, economical etc...) are worth disturbing the Universe for?*

- Students will list issues on post-it paper and comment on each other's ideas
- Students will also write a short essay expanding upon the idea that they contributed explaining what issue they feel is worth disturbing the universe for, and how far they would go to change it.

# ★ What Would You Do?

- In groups, create a scenario that addresses an important issue that is relevant to teenagers and that high schoolers would respond to.
- Students will act out this scenario around campus. They will film the reactions of the people around them, show the video in class and comment on the varying reactions.
- For each video, every student will write a short response in their journals based on their reactions to the videos.

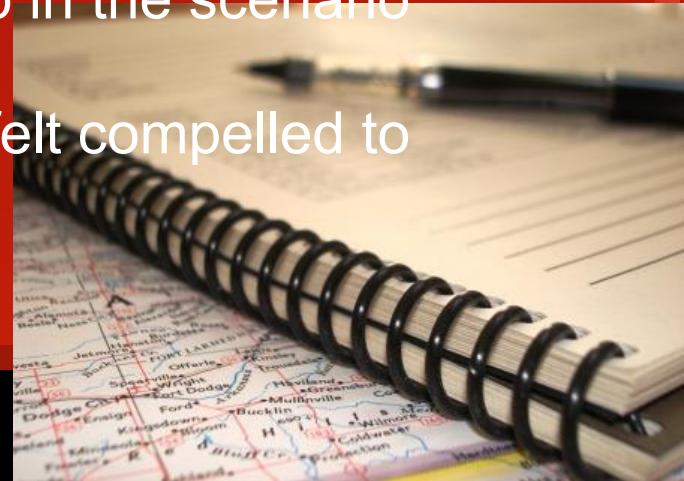


# ★ Writing Prompt: What Would You Do Project Response

After watching your peers' videos, students will have 10 minutes to write a journal response about each video.

Here are a few questions to think about.

- 1) Did you feel that the onlookers responded appropriately to the situation they observed?
- 2) Why/ why not?
- 3) Do you think the issues being brought up in the scenario warranted their reactions?
- 4) Can you understand why the onlookers felt compelled to intervene?
- 5) What would you have done?



# ★ Book Activity: Quiz Creation

In groups, students will create 5 question quizzes about the book for the rest of the class to take based on prompts:

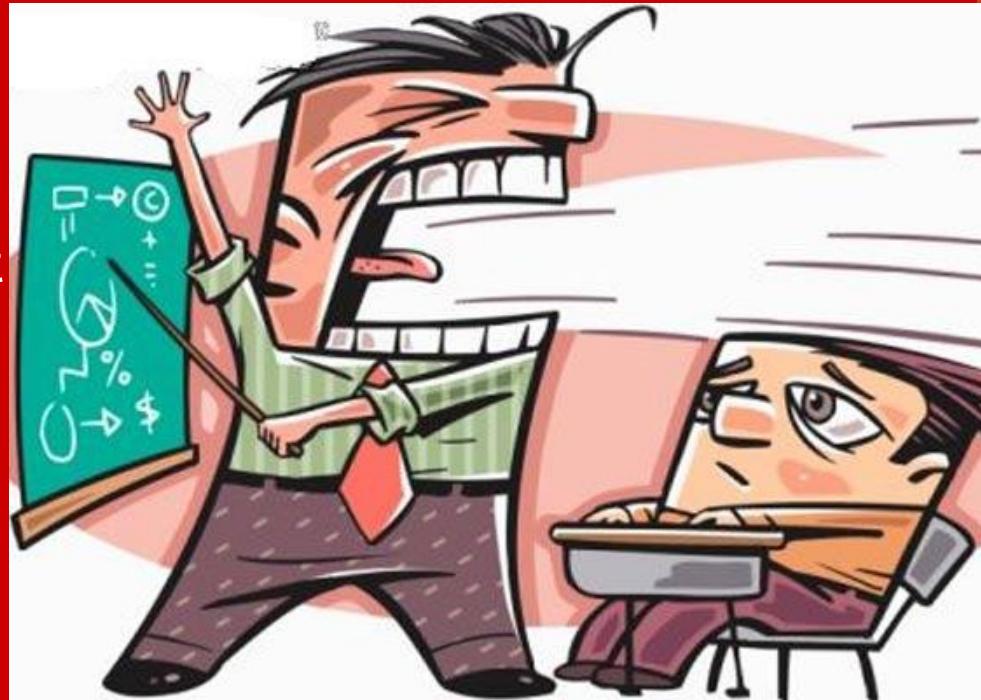
- 1) Re-occurring themes
- 2) Plot
- 3) Characters
- 4) Lines + Dialogue

## Example Questions:

- Who does Brother Leon ask to get "behind the sale"? (Chapter 4)
- What is "The Goober" assigned to do by The Vigils? (Chapter 5)
- What was Brother Eugene's reaction to the "assignment" that took place in Room 19? (Chapter 11)
- What happens when someone says "environment" in Brother Jacques' classroom? (Chapter 20)
- Name a theme that best describes the novel.

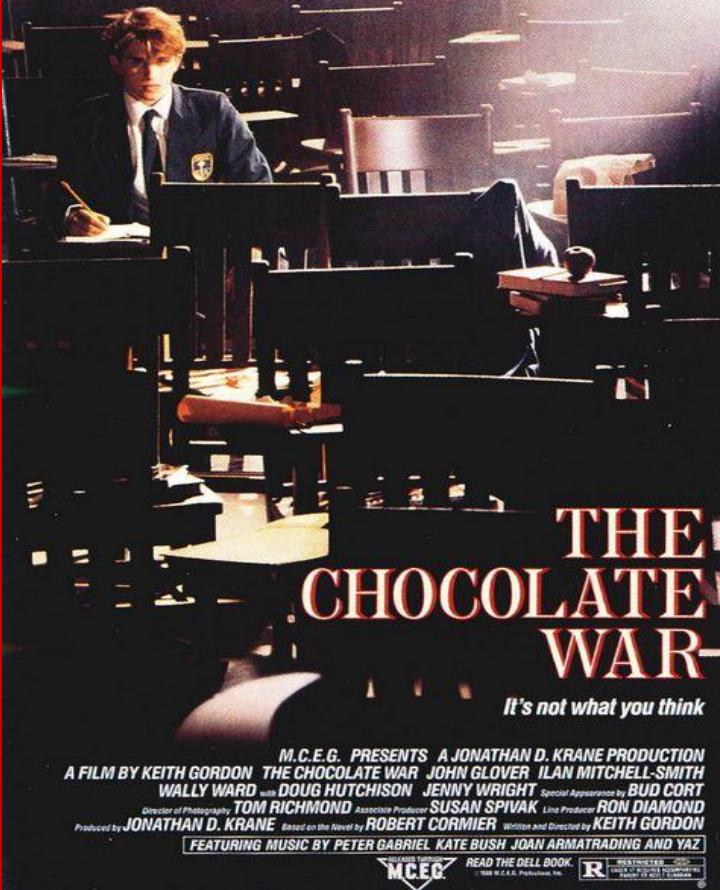
# ★ Writing Prompt

Even though Brother Leon is in a position of authority he often abuses his power and does not exhibit the characteristics of a good leader. Using a scene from the novel present a situation that demonstrates the misuse of power by Brother Leon. Next, If you could write a letter to Brother Leon explaining to him what you think a good leader is what would you say? Be sure to include a list of at least five characteristics a good leader should have.

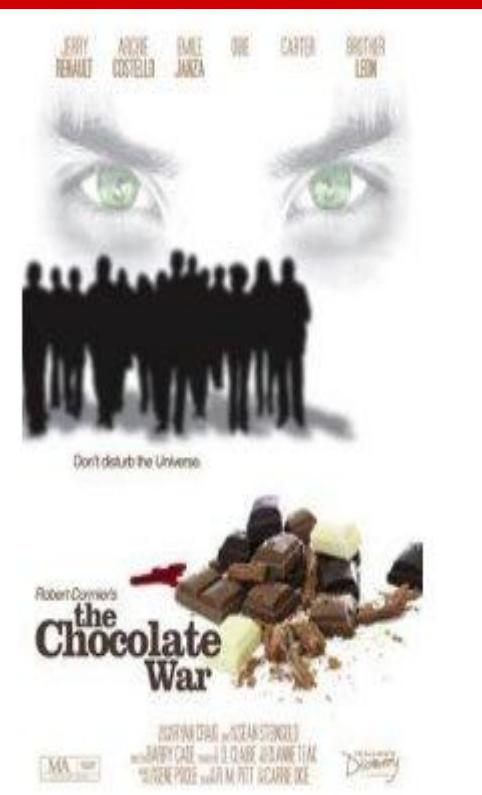


# ★ Movie Poster Activity

Millions have read the provocative novel. Now this controversial story of a young man's struggle against a secret society comes to the screen.



After finishing "The Chocolate War", students will design a POSTER and TAGLINE for the novel. This allows students to show their understanding of the novel through a creative lens.



# ★ Anticipation Guide Revisited

- 1. Violence is part of human nature.**
- 2. Bullying is a normal part of high school.**
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# ★ Final Project

## Interviewing a Disturber of the Universe

For their final project, students will be placed into groups and asked to find a person who has disturbed the universe who will be accessible for them to interview face-to-face and create a short film to present to the class.

[Final project assignment outline](#)

- 1) Students will come up with 10 interview questions
- 2) The interview will be filmed in person
- 3) The groups will film their reaction to the interview as part of the short film
- 4) The groups will present their short film to the rest of the class in a 20-25 minute presentation including 5 minutes for class participation and questions.



# ★ Final Project : Reflection

As a group, students will be required to produce a short and creative reflection piece based on the final project they have just completed. The reflection piece should not be a simple essay but a creative and collaborative piece of work that will demonstrate how important it is to disturb the universe.

Examples:

Short Poem/Song

Collage

Short Group Video

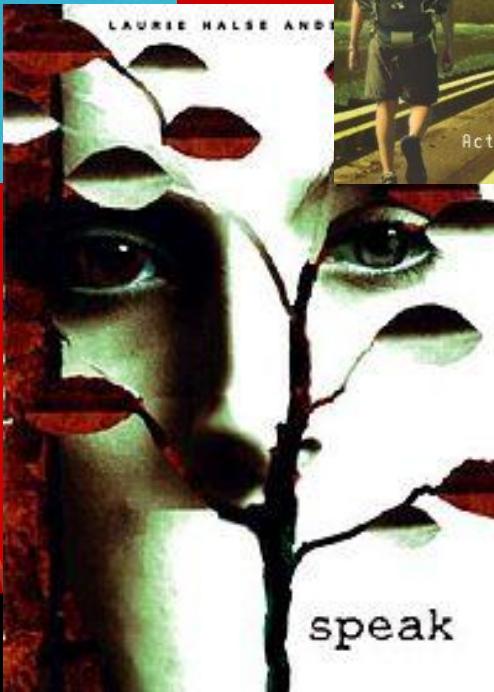
Art Piece

Poster



# Recommended Reading

JERRY SPINELLI



speak

paul fleischman



Actions have consequences.

A Novel by Todd Strasser

the  
wave

ROBERT  
CORMIER

THE SEQUEL TO  
THE CHOCOLATE WAR  
BEYOND THE  
CHOCOLATE WAR



# ★ Common Core Standards

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.2** Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.3** Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.3** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.6** Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology's capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1** Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.2** Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source.

# ★ Sources

<http://www.d.umn.edu/~lmillerc/TeachingEnglishHomePage/TeachingUnits/ChocolateWar.htm>

<http://www.musicnmovies.com/metromaza/2011/04/bbc-zero-hour-the-massacre-at-columbine.html>

<http://www.ushistory.org/us/42b.asp>

<http://www.bartleby.com/198/1.html>

"Grand Universe" by ANTIFAN-REAL <http://antifan-real.deviantart.com/art/Grand-Universe-17189369>

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Robert Cormier

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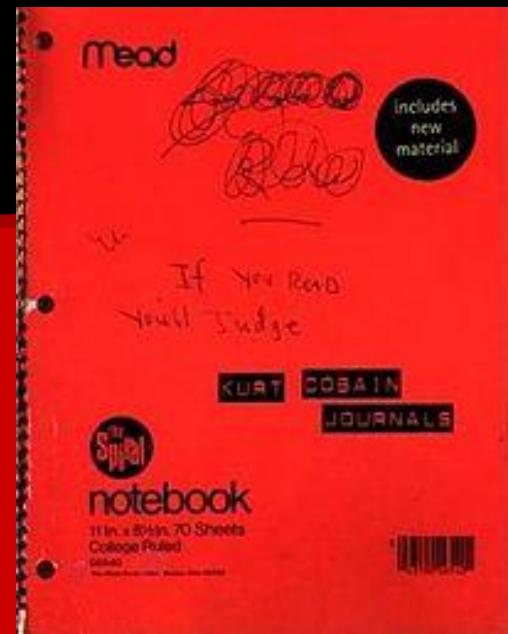
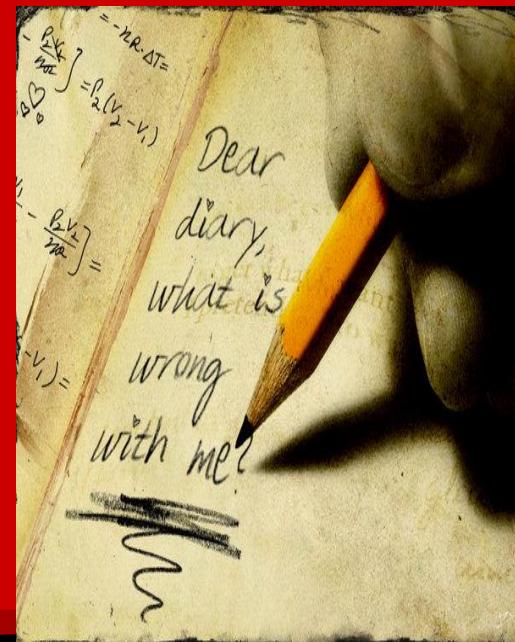
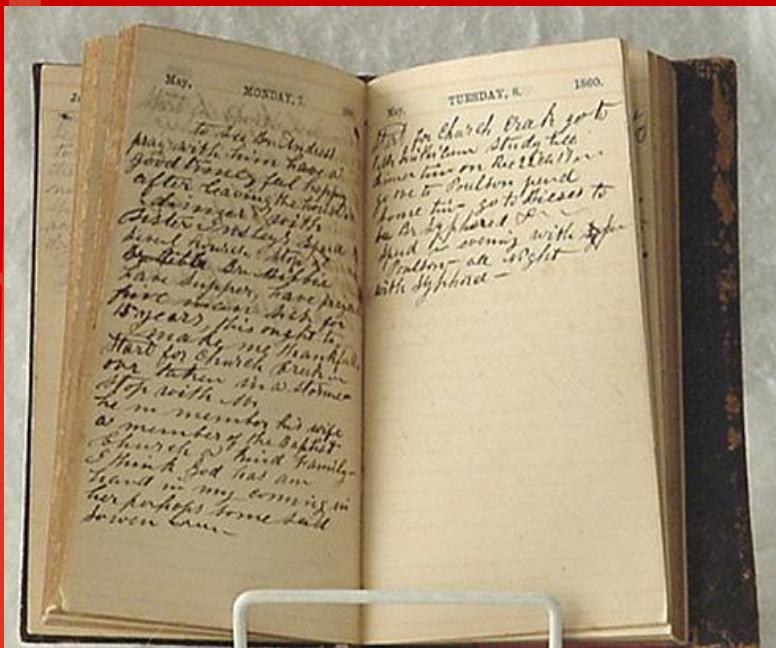
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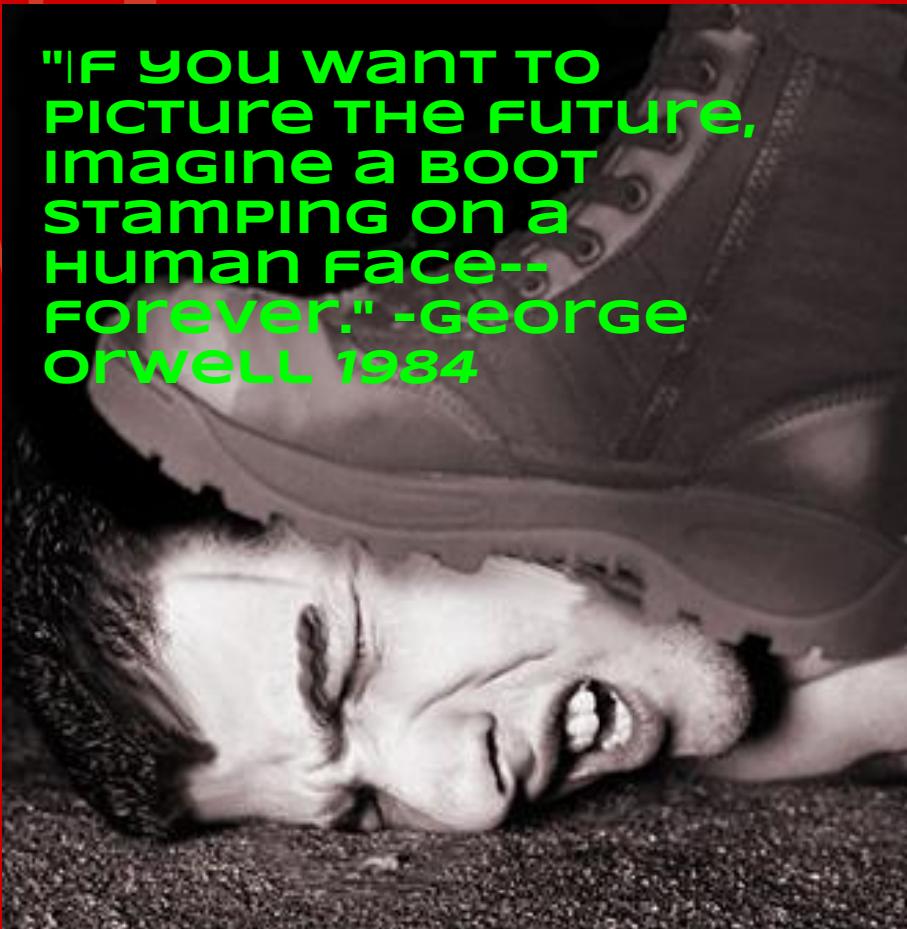
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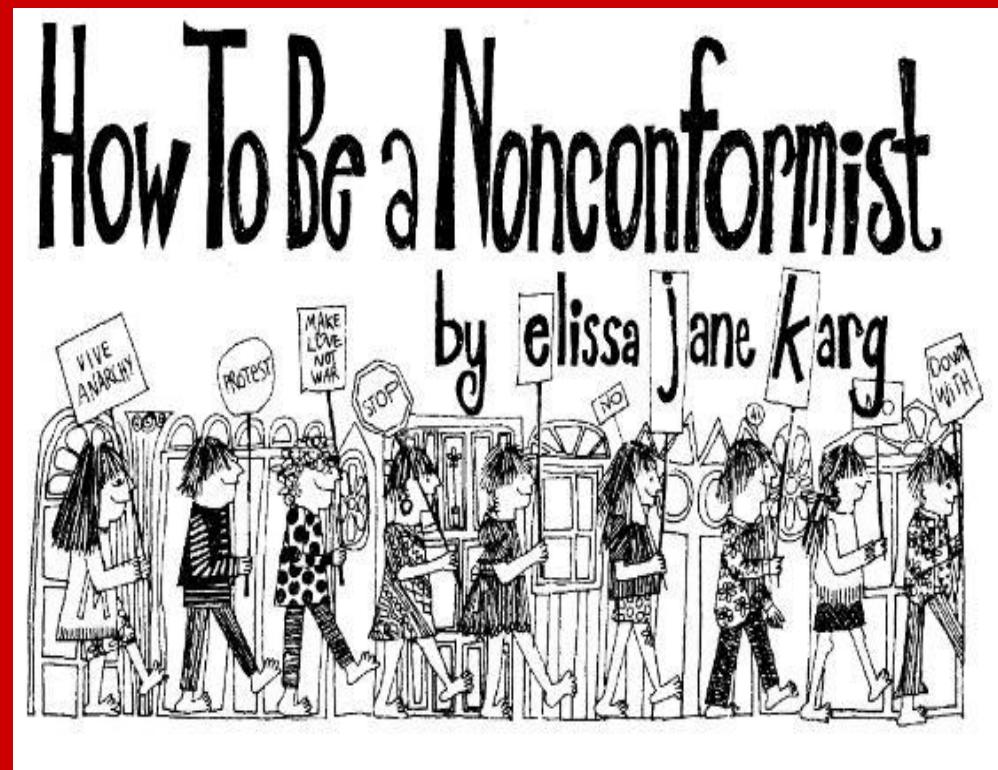
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  - What does it mean to be "a contrarian"?
- Then, students will create their own How to be a Nonconformist guide using art supplies, magazines for collage, etc.



# ★ Novel Response Groups

At the end of every week students will discuss the chapters they have read in small groups and each student will provide the class with a one sentence statement about the novel. This statement can be a reaction to an event, a questions about a character or even a rant about something that happened in the book that they did not agree with. This activity aims to check for comprehension of the chapters, discuss whatever we might have missed during the week and improve on students presentation/participation skills.



# ★ Robert Cormier: A Disturber of the Universe

*"I feel like I must have done something right. There wouldn't have been all these concerns from an ineffective book."*

-Robert Cormier



Chocolate War author  
battles effort to ban book

Students will read the article above about Robert Cormier's fight to keep *The Chocolate War* off the banned books list.

Students will discuss the significance of Cormier's fight in relation to our theme of disturbing the universe.

# AFTER READING

- *"The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"* by T.S. Eliot
- *The Muckrakers*
- *Character Chart*
- *How far would you go to disturb the universe?*
- *Project: What would you do?*
- *Create-A-Quiz*
- *Writing Prompt*
- *Movie Poster*
- *Final Project/Reflection*

# ★ "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" by T.S. Eliot

## The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock

We will discuss these topics and do some choral reading.

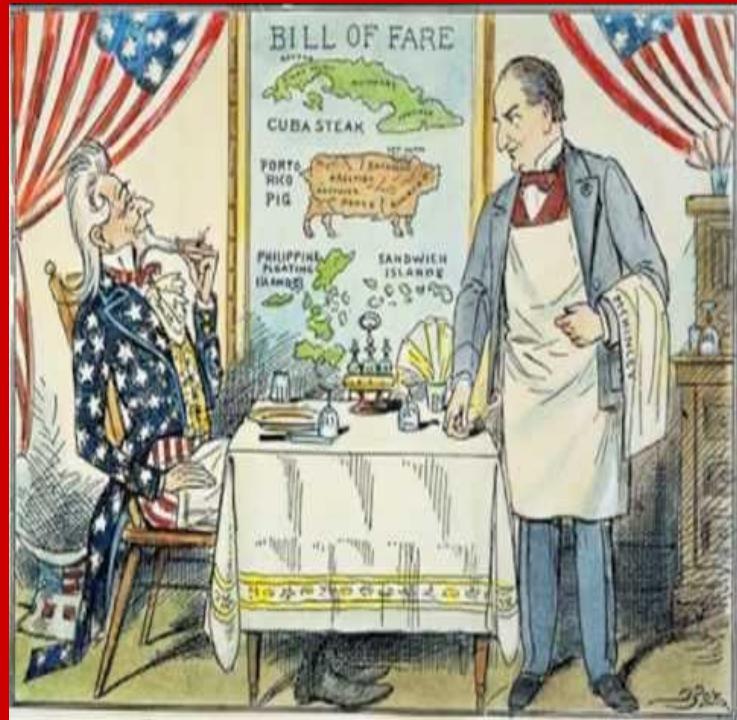
- Jerry experienced the perils of indecision when it came to selling the chocolates and standing up to authority figures. How does the speaker of "Prufrock" handle indecision?
- Is it worth it to disturb the universe? How would you answer this as Jerry at the end of the novel? How would you answer this if you were the speaker in "Prufrock"?
- What language in the poem convinces you that disturbing the universe is worthwhile? What discourages disturbance?

*And indeed there will be time  
To wonder, "Do I dare?" and, "Do I dare?"  
Time to turn back and descend the stair,  
With a bald spot in the middle of my hair—  
40  
[They will say: "How his hair is growing thin!"]  
My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the  
chin,  
My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a  
simple pin—  
[They will say: "But how his arms and legs are  
thin!"]  
*Do I dare  
Disturb the universe?  
In a minute there is time  
For decisions and revisions which a minute will  
reverse.**

# ★ Mini-lesson on Muckrakers

- Muckrakers were humanist writers, artists, journalists, activists, etc concerned with powerful institutions and political figures rendering unfair and unlivable conditions for the commonwealth.
- Key Figures: Nelly Bly (*Ten Days in the Madhouse*), Upton Sinclair (*The Jungle*), Wil Irwin (*The City That Was*), Ida Tarbell (*Standard Oil muckracker*), Jacob Riis (*How the Other half Lives*)

We will watch the video and discuss modern day "muckrakers" (Michael Moore, Bill Maher) and how to rake the muck in their communities to prepare for the final project.



# Book Activity: Character Chart

Chocolate War Character Chart

|   | Jerry | Brother Leon | Archie | The Goober | Jerry's Mom |
|---|-------|--------------|--------|------------|-------------|
| <b>Adjective describing the character</b>           |       |              |        |            |             |
| <b>What is their main issue with conformity?</b>    |       |              |        |            |             |
| <b>A symbol for the character</b>                   |       |              |        |            |             |
| <b>Something the character would never risk</b>     |       |              |        |            |             |
| <b>How another character would describe him/her</b> |       |              |        |            |             |

# ★ How far would you go to disturb the Universe?

*What issues (i.e. political, social, economical etc...) are worth disturbing the Universe for?*

- Students will list issues on post-it paper and comment on each other's ideas
- Students will also write a short essay expanding upon the idea that they contributed explaining what issue they feel is worth disturbing the universe for, and how far they would go to change it.

# ★ What Would You Do?

- In groups, create a scenario that addresses an important issue that is relevant to teenagers and that high schoolers would respond to.
- Students will act out this scenario around campus. They will film the reactions of the people around them, show the video in class and comment on the varying reactions.
- For each video, every student will write a short response in their journals based on their reactions to the videos.

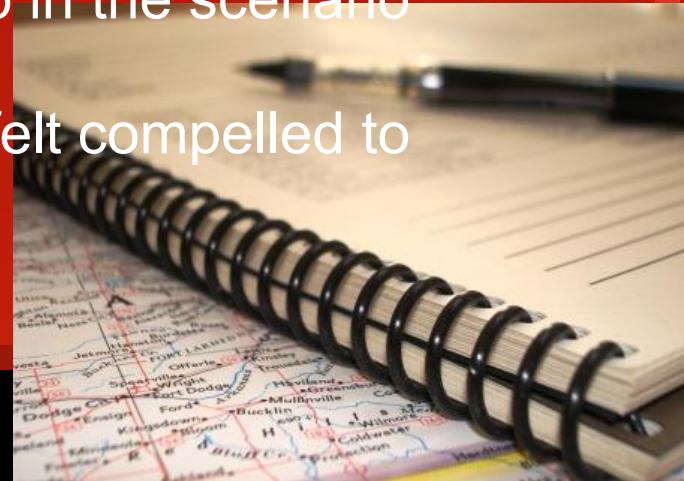


# ★ Writing Prompt: What Would You Do Project Response

After watching your peers' videos, students will have 10 minutes to write a journal response about each video.

Here are a few questions to think about.

- 1) Did you feel that the onlookers responded appropriately to the situation they observed?
- 2) Why/ why not?
- 3) Do you think the issues being brought up in the scenario warranted their reactions?
- 4) Can you understand why the onlookers felt compelled to intervene?
- 5) What would you have done?



# ★ Book Activity: Quiz Creation

In groups, students will create 5 question quizzes about the book for the rest of the class to take based on prompts:

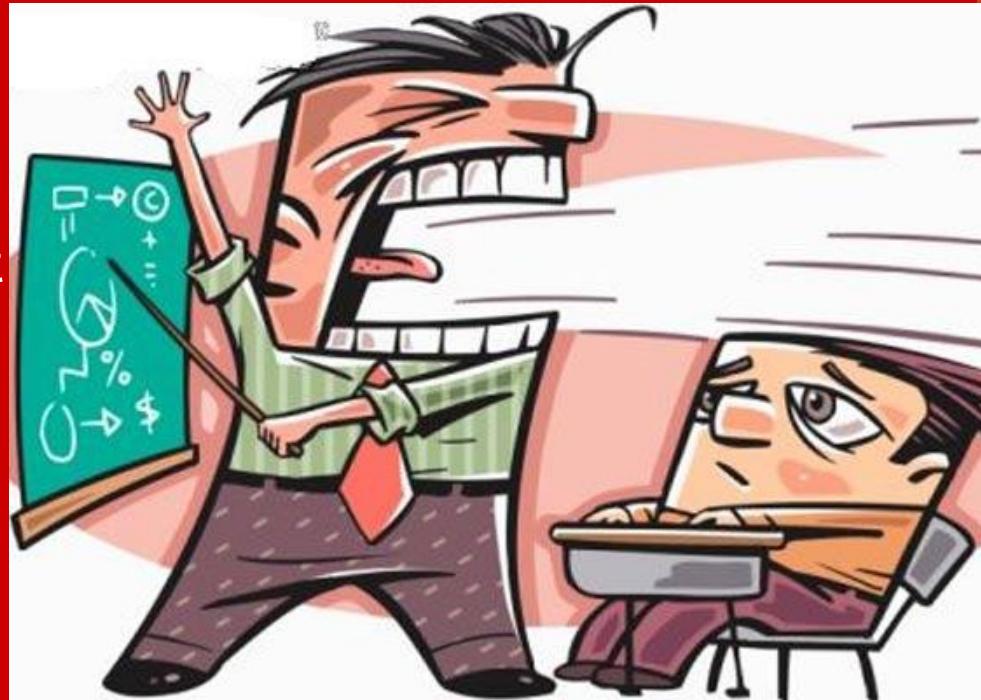
- 1) Re-occurring themes
- 2) Plot
- 3) Characters
- 4) Lines + Dialogue

## Example Questions:

- Who does Brother Leon ask to get "behind the sale"? (Chapter 4)
- What is "The Goober" assigned to do by The Vigils? (Chapter 5)
- What was Brother Eugene's reaction to the "assignment" that took place in Room 19? (Chapter 11)
- What happens when someone says "environment" in Brother Jacques' classroom? (Chapter 20)
- Name a theme that best describes the novel.

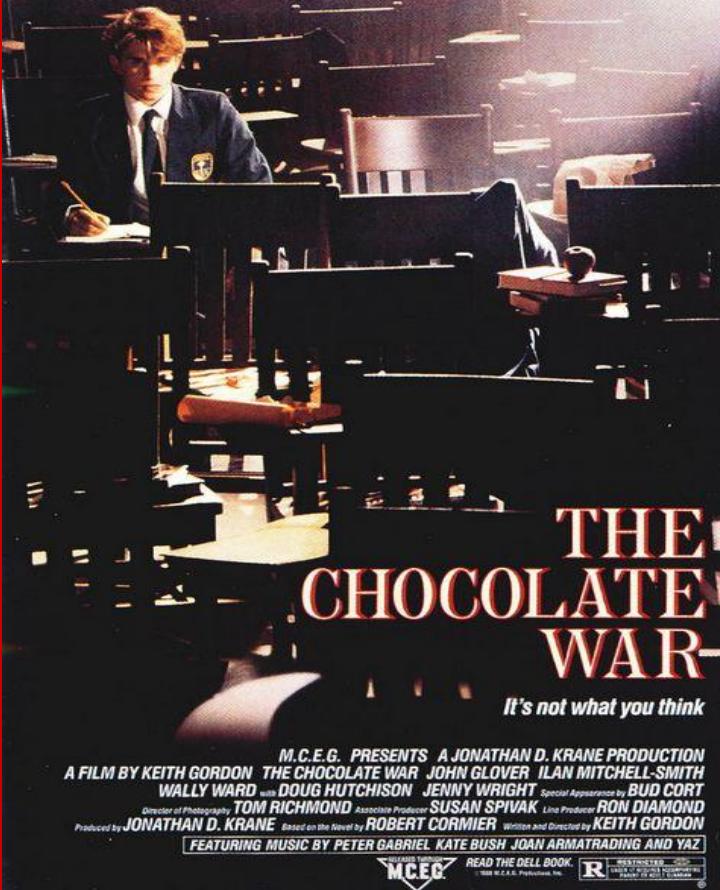
# ★ Writing Prompt

Even though Brother Leon is in a position of authority he often abuses his power and does not exhibit the characteristics of a good leader. Using a scene from the novel present a situation that demonstrates the misuse of power by Brother Leon. Next, If you could write a letter to Brother Leon explaining to him what you think a good leader is what would you say? Be sure to include a list of at least five characteristics a good leader should have.

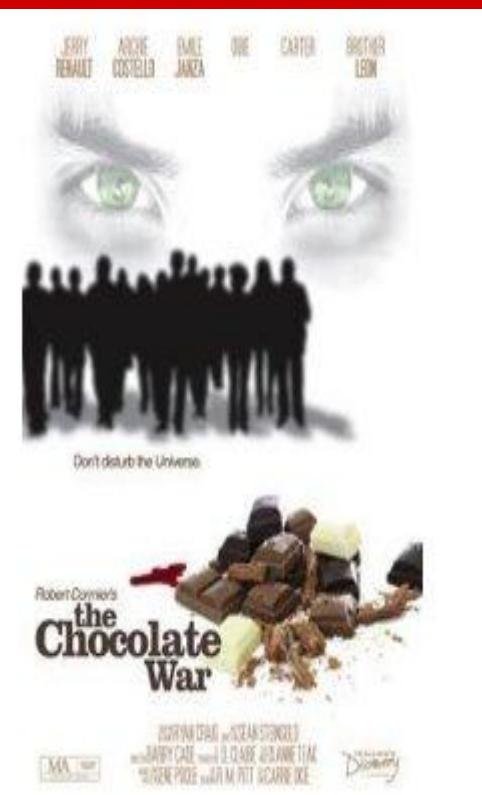


# ★ Movie Poster Activity

Millions have read the provocative novel. Now this controversial story of a young man's struggle against a secret society comes to the screen.



After finishing "The Chocolate War", students will design a POSTER and TAGLINE for the novel. This allows students to show their understanding of the novel through a creative lens.



# ★ Anticipation Guide Revisited

1. Violence is part of human nature.
2. Bullying is a normal part of high school.
3. Adults are capable of bullying others.
4. Nonconformists are a threat to society and should not be trusted.
5. Sometimes we have to hurt others in order to get ahead in life.
6. Teachers are always right no matter what the situation is.
7. Being powerful is more important and rewarding than being virtuous.
8. People are inherently selfish and greedy.
9. Students should always make sacrifices for the good of their school.
10. Walking away from a fight makes you look weak.
11. Manipulation does not lead to violence.

# ★ Final Project

## Interviewing a Disturber of the Universe

For their final project, students will be placed into groups and asked to find a person who has disturbed the universe who will be accessible for them to interview face-to-face and create a short film to present to the class.

[Final project assignment outline](#)

- 1) Students will come up with 10 interview questions
- 2) The interview will be filmed in person
- 3) The groups will film their reaction to the interview as part of the short film
- 4) The groups will present their short film to the rest of the class in a 20-25 minute presentation including 5 minutes for class participation and questions.



# ★ Final Project : Reflection

As a group, students will be required to produce a short and creative reflection piece based on the final project they have just completed. The reflection piece should not be a simple essay but a creative and collaborative piece of work that will demonstrate how important it is to disturb the universe.

Examples:

Short Poem/Song

Collage

Short Group Video

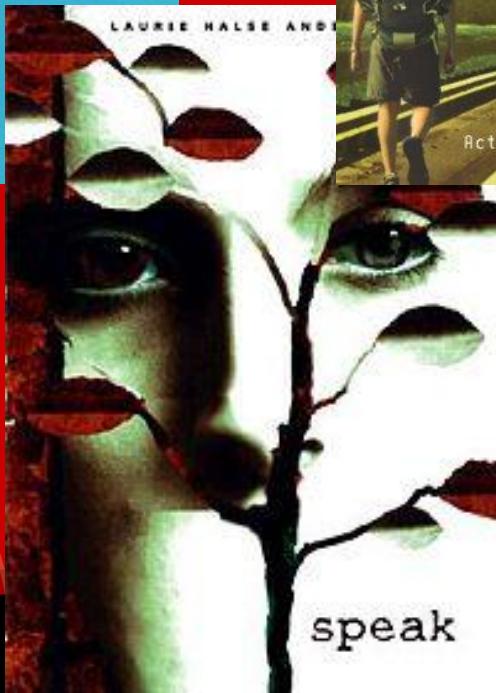
Art Piece

Poster



# Recommended Reading

JERRY SPINELLI



speak

paul fleischman



Actions have consequences.

A Novel by Todd Strasser

the  
wave

ROBERT  
CORMIER

THE SEQUEL TO  
THE CHOCOLATE WAR  
BEYOND THE  
CHOCOLATE WAR

# ★ Common Core Standards

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.2** Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.9-10.3** Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.3** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.9-10.6** Use technology, including the Internet, to produce, publish, and update individual or shared writing products, taking advantage of technology's capacity to link to other information and to display information flexibly and dynamically.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.1** Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

**CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.9-10.2** Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source.

# ★ Sources

<http://www.d.umn.edu/~lmillerc/TeachingEnglishHomePage/TeachingUnits/ChocolateWar.htm>

<http://www.musicnmovies.com/metromaza/2011/04/bbc-zero-hour-the-massacre-at-columbine.html>

<http://www.ushistory.org/us/42b.asp>

<http://www.bartleby.com/198/1.html>

"Grand Universe" by ANTIFAN-REAL <http://antifan-real.deviantart.com/art/Grand-Universe-17189369>