



Analyzing a Modern Take (in Film) on Vonnegut's View of the Future in "Harrison Bergeron"

Resource ID#: 48583 Primary Type: Lesson Plan

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In this lesson (part 2 in a 2-part unit), students will review crucial details present/omitted in a film treatment (2081) of Vonnegut's "Harrison Bergeron", using a Venn diagram to record their observations. Students will use their diagram to compose a one to two page objective summary of their findings, drawing parallels between the original work and the film in regard to literary elements, author's purpose, audience, etc. and their effects on the overall meaning of the works.

Subject(s): English Language Arts

Intended Audience: [Educators](#)

Instructional Time: 1 Hour(s) 30 Minute(s)

Resource supports reading in content area: Yes

Keywords: Media, Vonnegut, Allusion, Film Treatment, "Harrison Bergeron", Literary Elements, Objective Summary

Resource Collection: CPALMS Lesson Plan Development Initiative

Grade Level(s): 9, 10

Suggested Technology: Computer for Presenter, Internet Connection, LCD Projector, Speakers/Headphones, Computer Media Player

Freely Available: Yes

Instructional Component Type(s): [Lesson Plan...](#), [Assessment...](#), [Formative Assessment](#)

ATTACHMENTS

[Harrison Bergeron vs 2081 Venn Diagram.docx](#)
[Harrison Bergeron vs 2081 Venn Diagram with Sample Key.docx](#)
[Harrison Bergeron vs 2081 Venn Diagram with Sample Key.doc](#)
[Harrison Bergeron vs 2081 Venn Diagram.doc](#)
[Summative Assessment Rubric.pdf](#)

LESSON CONTENT

Lesson Plan Template: General Lesson Plan

Formative Assessment

While viewing 2081, a film adaptation of Vonnegut's "Harrison Bergeron", students will take notes using a [graphic organizer](#) to help monitor understanding of the material. Students will use the organizer to help complete a Venn diagram in the next task.

Upon viewing 2081, a film adaptation of Vonnegut's "Harrison Bergeron", students will complete a [Venn diagram](#) to help synthesize (first compare and contrast) elements from the original text and the film treatment. Students will use the Venn diagram to help them organize their notes while summarizing their comparisons of the text and the digital work.

Instructor should use the Venn diagram to help students review the text, monitoring for understanding and clarifying misconceptions if students' responses demonstrate confusion.

Prior to releasing students to complete the summative assessment (for which a complete and thorough Venn diagram is essential), instructor could ask students to share responses with a partner or within a small group, engaging in discussions and helping one another deepen their understanding of the story and film. Students could then share some of their findings/reflections in a whole-group discussion.

Feedback to Students

Throughout the lesson, instructor will provide feedback/engage in discussion to ensure:

- Appropriate comprehension of both Vonnegut's text and the film
 - Instructor should probe to verify students possess strong understanding of literary elements unique to each piece, but can also explain the relevance of commonalities. What elements are so inherent to the core of the story the film's director had no choice but to incorporate them?
- Accurate interpretation of literary devices and literary elements employed
 - For example, does the film incorporate flashbacks to clarify the story's plot or merely to create suspense? Does this differ from Vonnegut's employment of flashback?
- Correct use of Venn diagram to organize notes in a useful manner
 - Is the diagram being used as an activity or as a tool to help students grapple to find meaningful connections between two pieces and their compositions? Are students able to see beyond the obvious comparisons/contrasts (i.e., Hazel appears childish in both works)? Prompt students with questions such as "Why does it matter that Harrison in the film explains he'd been imprisoned for six years where the text notes less than a year has passed between Harrison's arrest and his escape?" Less scaffolding might be called for for more advanced students, in which case, ask students to return to the text and find evidence citing the amount of time between Harrison's arrest and his escape.
- Students are engaged, on task, and possess an awareness of the task's instructions/relevance
 - Instructor should periodically check in with students while circulating the room, asking them to clarify for instructor (or peers) the directions of the task they are working on and the reason for doing so. Provide clarification individually or to the whole group as necessary.

Summative Assessment

Using information noted on their Venn diagrams, students will create a one to two-page objective summary describing comparisons/contrasts between an original print source and a treatment of the material in film. Students will be able to draw parallels between the original work and the film in regard to literary elements, author's purpose, audience, etc. and their effects on the overall meaning of the works. Students should also examine the film for changes made from the original text, for instance, the addition of biblical allusions presented visually through the main character's appearance, or the allusion to the Colonial Revolutionaries through the bomb's inscription of "Live free or die."

Students' summary can be assessed using this [rubric](#).

Learning Objectives: What should students know and be able to do as a result of this lesson?

Students will be able to use evidence from the short story "Harrison Bergeron" to support their analysis of the work's central point or theme. They will be able to compare and contrast the theme from the short story to the film version 2081.

Students will be able to explain the effects of parallel plots and time manipulation (flashbacks) on the reader/audience, interpreting the author's intentions through the use of these elements.

- For example, students should understand these features are present to heighten suspense, help to produce characters that are "less flat" (thusly more relatable), and lead to a more dramatic ending.
- While comparing and contrasting Vonnegut's short story to the film adaptation, students will be able to describe:
- How an "author's" (director's) background, interests, or purpose can affect their treatment of source material.
- In what ways a film adaptation of a text enhances a director's abilities to tell a story.
- What is lost when a film adaptation seeks to limit the allegorical elements of the source material.
- What specifically is absent or emphasized in each work, and the impact it has upon the work. Students will be able to explain how source material is transformed in the film.
- Students may draw parallels between Harrison and Biblical figures based on the director's depiction of the character's appearance/actions, citing this as a deliberate allusion.

At the end of the lesson, students will be able to write a one to two page objective summary describing comparisons/contrasts between an original print source and a treatment of the material in film. Students will use evidence from the film 2081 and the short story "Harrison Bergeron" throughout their summary.

Guiding Questions: What are the guiding questions for this lesson?

What makes us individuals?

How does the director's depiction of the work's setting help to evoke a hopeless mood in a utopian society?

What is lost when a film adaptation attempts to create a more realistic view of the future?

Evaluate whether the title of the film itself is an allusion.

Are the terms "protagonist" and "hero" interchangeable in these works? Should they be?

Prior Knowledge: What prior knowledge should students have for this lesson?

In lesson one of the two-part unit, students should have previously read/analyzed Vonnegut's short story "Harrison Bergeron."

Students should be familiar with the relationship between setting, conflict, plot, and mood in certain texts, in particular that:

- Time period (as an element of setting) can drive plot in unique ways
 - A story set in New York City in the 1700s would likely be quite different than a story set in the same city in the year 2350A.D.
 - A story set in the past might also create conflict for certain characters who would not experience the same conflict in contemporary society (think women's suffrage movement)
- Such conflict helps plot progress (plot is dependent on conflict; without a problem, we have no story)
- Setting can have a direct impact on a text's mood
 - For example, the setting of a story in which the main character finds himself on a deserted island creates a tense, desperate mood.

Students should understand what allusions are, and that authors often incorporate allusions to draw attention to symbolic representations in their works or help readers activate background knowledge/engage in the work.

Students should be familiar with how to identify a theme in a literary work, understanding the concept of universal themes (i.e., "Love conquers all," "Beauty is on the inside," etc.)

Students should recall that to compare involves analyzing similarities between studied pieces, whereas to contrast focuses on analyzing only differences.

Teaching Phase: How will the teacher present the concept or skill to students?

Bell Work:

In preparation for a viewing of a film adaptation of Vonnegut's "Harrison Bergeron", instructor will ask students to review/recall literary elements present in the short story related specifically to characterization, conflict, setting, plot and theme, explaining the relationships these elements possess in the text. Instructor could permit students to refer to their "[Literary Elements graphic organizer](#)" from the previous lesson (completed while reading the short story).

- This can be accomplished by simply engaging students in whole-group review discussion, small-group table discussions, or a writing prompt instructor can analyze by peering over students' shoulders while walking around the room.
 - Whichever method is utilized, the goal should be for the instructor to help students access their prior knowledge of the text, monitoring for, and correcting, any misconceptions prior to progressing with the day's activities.

Questions to consider when reviewing might include:

- What details can you provide regarding the short story's setting? - Depending on the answers students provide, discussion might need to clarify that the elements of setting are two-fold, that is, time period and place are essential to the work. Then, ask students to explain to what degree the story's setting impacts the conflict(s) present.
- Is more than one conflict present in the text? - Allow students to politely assert/debate their thoughts on this, but insist they support their opinions with evidence from the text. For instance, make a student prove there are sufficient details present to support character vs. fate external conflict.
- Which moment represents the story's climax? - Again, insist students return to the text, drawing evidence to support their propositions.
- What can we infer about the traits of the main characters based on their handicaps? - Students should respond that the ballerina who becomes Harrison's "Empress" is very beautiful (perhaps brave, based on her actions?). They should also note that George is both strong and intelligent (as indicated by the weights of buckshot around his neck and his earpiece, respectively), and that Hazel (who is not handicapped at all) is of average intelligence, beauty, and strength. When discussing Hazel in this regard, ask students whether Hazel seems to be of below-average intelligence. Follow this by asking if Vonnegut is making a statement about the future of American society - is he promoting the phenomena dubbed the "dumbing down of society"?
- Is Harrison a heroic figure? Let students debate this while presenting plot-based evidence (i.e., Harrison stands up for his convictions/frees others from oppression in the form of their handicaps, etc.). Then ask students if his actions will lead to lasting change, or if his death was simply in vain. (If students struggle to form a response, review the story's ending. Did anything really change for George and Hazel in their tiny house? Sure, Hazel saw the murder of her own son on television, but she's without the mental capacity to remember it within a few seconds of it occurring. Will George and Hazel therefore remain under the control of the restrictive government? What will happen if someone else tries to rise up in the manner of Harrison (assuming, of course, someone else as above-average as Harrison actually exists)?
- Instructor should ask students to share responses with a partner or within a small group, engaging in discussions and helping one another deepen their understanding of the text. Students could then share some of their findings/reflections in a whole-group discussion.

Pre Film:

I do: Instructor should preface the film 2081 is an adaptation from Vonnegut's "Harrison Bergeron" and that while many of the story's original elements were transferred from page to film, the director may have added their own ideas or omitted some details. Ask students to be cognizant of such changes as they view the film, and ponder the significance of such changes. Refer to the drawings students created of Harrison based on Vonnegut's detailed description from the previous lesson, reminding students that even specific word choice can lead to varying interpretations. Emphasize perhaps some changes in the film are thusly the result of the director's view of the source material.

Distribute copies of the "[Literary Elements Chart: 2081](#)", asking students to refer to the "[Literary Elements Chart: Harrison Bergeron](#)" created when reading the text during the previous lesson. Inform students their goal is to take notes while analyzing the film treatment of Vonnegut's text to refer to later when filling out a Venn diagram comparing/contrasting elements of both works. The Venn diagram will then be used to help students complete their summative assessment (objective summary).

Using the gradual release method, instructor will model appropriate use of the "Literary Elements Chart: 2081" to help students organize features present in the film. Instructor should pause the film after the introduction (voice over) and discuss with students observations to include in their "Literary Elements" charts. Instructor should model appropriate use of the chart to note elements related to the film's setting, as those details are provided in the voice over. Instructor should continue to model expected procedures through think-alouds, also demonstrating rereading portions of the text to gather evidence/clarify misconceptions. For instance, instructor could poll the class to determine if they are familiar with the term "voice over", modeling how to reexamine the text to determine if the same background information related to setting (the time period and place) are present, and what technique Vonnegut used to present the information. Instructor should also remind students to proceed filling out the remainder of the chart in a fashion similar to that employed when filling out the "Literary Elements: Harrison Bergeron" chart during the previous lesson. Give students the option to use the blank boxes on the second sheet of the chart to record "miscellaneous notes" while viewing.

Post Film:

I do: Using the gradual release method, instructor will model appropriate use of Venn diagram graphic organizer to note elements unique to Vonnegut's text and the film treatment of it, as well as shared elements. Teacher will model expected procedures through think-alouds, also demonstrating rereading portions of the text to gather evidence/clarify misconceptions. ***Note: this means students will be working with both the text and their organizers in front of them.** For example, instructor might model referring back to the text to correctly confirm the suspicion that, unlike in the film, Vonnegut placed Hazel in the living room watching the events unfold on television, not her husband. If students request, review key scenes to clarify possible misconceptions.

- When modeling filling out Venn diagram, instructor should clarify the goal of the diagram is to help organize information from two sources to be used later on (summative assessment). An organizer that is not organized isn't of much use, so instructor should stress the importance of keeping elements parallel.
 - For instance, if students wish to discuss the age of Harrison in the text on the left side of the Venn diagram, the element directly across from it on the right side (noting unique characteristics of the film) should note the apparent age of Harrison in 2081, rather than present a unique characteristic of the film not related to his age.

Guided Practice: What activities or exercises will the students complete with teacher guidance?

During Film:

We do: Using the gradual release method, continue with the film, but incorporate a healthy balance of viewing and note taking. Do not play the film in its entirety without stopping and allowing time for discussion, reflection, and digestion of material. There are simply too many visual elements and subtle cues students won't be able to pick up on if they are rushing to keep up with their notes. Remind students to examine the film as an independent work, looking for the elements noted on their charts, but to bear in mind the next task will require them to align comparisons/contrasts between the film and the text. Some suggested stopping points and discussion prompts include:

- Hazel's mention of the "ball-peen hammer" sound. Ask students who can hear the noise in the text and whether it's significant that the noise meant to handicap George is so loud his wife can hear it. Ask students if this detail should be noted anywhere in their charts, perhaps in the "Mood", "Conflict", or "Characterization" boxes. Discuss how this change impacts the audience's interpretation/understanding of the film's setting if students demonstrate confusion.
- Hazel's declaration she'd "hate it" if George removed his handicaps. Ask students why Hazel (in the film) would not want her husband to be handicapped. Does this reveal something about her character students could include in their notes? Does this reveal something about her character that differs from how Vonnegut portrays her in the

text? Is she jealous of her husband? Is something revealed about George's character through his refusal to tamper with his handicaps? Does this show he loves his wife? What is the relevance of the omission of the discussion of George being imprisoned and fined for tampering with his handicaps in the film? Ask students to debate which piece is more satisfying in this regard. (A loving George and an envious Hazel or a fearful George and Hazel controlled by governmental threats?)

- What is the purpose of the news bulletin? What is revealed about Harrison's past that differs from the original text? Predict: how might these details affect the film's plot? Have students review the news bulletin scene in the text and directly compare/contrast the two treatments.
- Why is the element of a bomb included in the film? To entertain the audience? To heighten conflict?
- Students should see the elements of visual clues (flashing to the bomb, close-ups of character's faces at key moments) as well as sound effects/music create suspense/foreshadow events yet to come.
- At film's end: Vonnegut's narrator claims Harrison "waved [two musicians in the air] like batons" (lines 169-70) and also that he and the ballerina "remained suspended in air inches below the ceiling...for a long, long, time", yet in the film, Harrison merely yells at the musicians and he and the ballerina kiss with their feet firmly planted on the ground. Do such changes add to or detract from the overall theme of the work? In the film adaptation, does Harrison remain a superhero type figure or is he merely an average person with convictions who is too stubborn to submit to the government's control?
- Instructor should prompt students to examine the effect of adding the character who serves as an "assistant" to the antagonist (Diana Moon Clampers). Does this character weaken or limit the antagonist's authority in the film? If so, is this necessarily a bad thing? Perhaps the character enhances the theme mentioned in the voice over that "everybody was finally...equal [in] every which way"? Does the inclusion of the character act as a "second antagonist"?

At the end of the film, encourage students to share their observations/reflections in small groups or aloud to the class. Ask, "Does Harrison want something different in the film than in the text? How does this affect the theme of the film?". Ask students to assess which ending is more satisfying.

Post Film:

We do: Using the gradual release method, instructor will monitor students' progress with completing the Venn diagram. If asking students to complete the process in small groups, instructor could ask each group to discuss the similarities/differences between the two works they've established independently and select the best examples to share with the class. Large Kagan boards and dry erase markers present interactive tools for students to collaborate and display information to help instructor easily monitor progress.

- While monitoring for student progress, instructor should ensure students are making connections that are both relevant and sufficient in detail.
 - For instance, instructor should guide students away from making basic comparisons such as "The main character in both the story and the film is named Harrison." Explain that a Venn diagram is an organizational tool with limited space, so only the best/biggest/most important traits should be noted in it.

Independent Practice: What activities or exercises will students complete to reinforce the concepts and skills developed in the lesson?

Post Film:

You do: Using the gradual release method, instructor will direct students to continue noting observations using the Venn diagram independently. If students do not seem to have a thorough amount of characteristics on their diagrams, suggest they add details regarding relevancy, forming connections between the diagram and the guiding questions to help answer the "So What?" question.

- While monitoring for student progress, instructor should ensure students are making connections that are both relevant and sufficient in detail.
- If students seem to be struggling with the concept of the Venn diagram, in particular keeping like elements parallel, ask students to quickly work with you to model a separate Venn diagram comparing/contrasting more familiar/easily accessible items (for instance, two favorite restaurants or music genres). Ask them to apply the same skills to the diagram focusing on the text and film.
- As students demonstrate an appropriate level of understanding (the Venn diagram is complete with relevant details; students can explain their interpretations verbally), they should proceed with the summative assessment.

Closure: How will the teacher assist students in organizing the knowledge gained in the lesson?

Students can respond to an Exit Slip asking which work's society they'd rather live in, justifying their responses with evidence from both works. Students might be prompted to explore whether doing so is effectively choosing the "lesser of two evils," discussing whether our modern society still trumps the views of the future presented in the works.

ACCOMMODATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Accommodations:

Best practice even for those not needing accommodations: If it appears students miss a critical contrast as it is presented in the film (or have become too engrossed in the film and stopped taking notes), pause, and probe students to see if they merely overlooked the detail or failed to see the relevancy and engage further discussion as appropriate.

Chunk information into digestible bites for students, providing the background necessary (if it appears some students do not possess such prior knowledge) to allow students to access the lesson.

- For instance, probe with a key idea/essential question about individual choice/freedom. Ask whether our society/government seems to advocate individuality or adherence to the status quo. Explain that in the perspective of the government in both works, Harrison is a criminal for failing to conform to regulations stripping him of individuality. Ask students whether the works want the audience/readers to view Harrison's law-breaking behavior as a heroic or criminal act.

If students seem to be struggling with the concept of the Venn diagram, in particular keeping like elements parallel, ask students to quickly work with you to model a separate Venn diagram comparing/contrasting more familiar/easily accessible items (for instance, two favorite restaurants or music genres). Ask them to apply the same skills to the diagram focusing on the text and film.

Provide students with a [transcript of the film](#).

Extensions:

Students could develop and examine theories surrounding gender roles in the futuristic societies of both works, presenting their findings in writing or a brief report (perhaps using multimedia presentation tools, i.e., [Prezi](#)/PowerPoint presentations).

- A guiding prompt for exploration might be: Does Vonnegut attempt to make a statement about contemporary gender roles that the film's director attempts to explore further or undermine?

Suggested Technology: Computer for Presenter, Internet Connection, LCD Projector, Speakers/Headphones, Computer Media Player

Special Materials Needed:

Instructors will need access to technology necessary to display the film. As the film is available to stream online as well in DVD format, a TV/DVD player or computer/projector setup is possible.

When modeling the use of the graphic organizers, it is generally helpful to display the think-aloud process using a document camera or SmartBoard for the students. The same effect could be created by drawing the diagrams on a whiteboard or chart paper.

Further Recommendations:

Cross curricular connections with social studies teachers would certainly enhance students' understanding of the concepts addressed in the works. A prior understanding of United States government/economics would help students examine possible statements Vonnegut and the film's director make in their works.

At the end of the film's first showing, review key scenes for the students, asking them to examine certain media-specific elements (for instance, music, costumes, or camera techniques) and discuss their effects on the work's theme, again helping to debate authorial intent. Ask students to look for symbolism in the ballet being performed (ask, "What's the title?" and "What comments does George make about it?"), and the significance of the cello player (he is, after all, the last to stop playing).

Additional Information/Instructions

By Author/Submitter

Sources: Vonnegut, Kurt, Jr. "Harrison Bergeron" 1961. Lexile: 1050. Tuttle, Chandler. 2081. 2009. Rating: Not Rated; Length: 25 mins. Lesson requires students to have previously read/analyzed Vonnegut's "Harrison Bergeron."

SOURCE AND ACCESS INFORMATION

Contributed by: Wayne Beck

Name of Author/Source: Wayne Beck

District/Organization of Contributor(s): St. Johns

Is this Resource freely Available? Yes

Access Privileges: Public

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Related Standards

Name	Description
LAFS.910.W.4.10:	Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.
LAFS.910.RL.1.2:	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.
LAFS.910.RL.2.5:	Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.
LAFS.910.RL.3.7:	Analyze the representation of a subject or a key scene in two different artistic mediums, including what is emphasized or absent in each treatment (e.g., Auden's "Musée des Beaux Arts" and Breughel's Landscape with the Fall of Icarus).
LAFS.910.W.3.9:	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research. a. Apply grades 9–10 Reading standards to literature (e.g., "Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work [e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare]"). b. Apply grades 9–10 Reading standards to literary nonfiction (e.g., "Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is valid and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; identify false statements and fallacious reasoning").
LAFS.910.RL.3.9:	Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work (e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare).