



Spring 2010

Cadet: _____ Period _____

print last name, first name

Dear Parents and Guardians:

I will be showing the following films in class over the next 9 weeks. Each film will be accompanied by a viewing guide that *I* have created for the film, which reinforces the lessons each film teaches. ***I chose each of these films for a very specific reason – because I feel that the overall quality of the film teaches or reinforces a vital lesson in U.S. history in a particularly effective way.***

If you choose not to have your cadet participate in this educational activity, ***I will provide an alternate assignment on the same topic, which will involve three or four days of independent research and a written assignment. This is the same amount of time the class will spend watching each film, since I stop these films frequently to point out and discuss salient points.*** Your cadet's written assignment will fulfill the assignment requirements of the written viewing guide and class discussion that the other students who've watched these films will be completing.

The films are:

MISSISSIPPI BURNING with Gene Hackman and Willem Dafoe – rated “R”. My own father was an active participant in the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, and I'm proud to say that he was arrested with Martin Luther King, Jr. and Ralph Abernathy in St. Augustine, FL in the early summer of 1964. That's the same time period this film explores. My father tells me that this film is one of the most accurate he's ever seen in terms of displaying the overt hostility shown to civil rights workers by many Southern whites, as well as in its depiction of the constant underlying threat of violence that blacks and civil rights workers faced daily in the struggle to achieve voting rights for southern blacks. While I personally deplore some of the foul language used in the film, I have noticed that most kids don't even register some of the profanity, because they are so caught up in this terrible true story.

A MAN CALLED HORSE starring Richard Harris – rated PG-13 originally but upgraded to “R” in the last few years. This film does an outstanding job of portraying how very different traditional Indian life was from that of most white Americans. Much of the film is not in English (it's about an English aristocrat who is captured by a group of Sioux), and it is an educational experience in itself to watch students slowly begin to follow the Indian dialect. I've seen numerous documentaries on Indian life, but none have the impact this film does on my students. And even better, this film doesn't fall into the too common trap of portraying white men as evil and Indians as noble savages. I wish someone would remake this film using actual Amerindian actors, but so far this is one of the best depictions of Indian life I've ever seen.

THE SECRET HISTORY OF THE KU KLUX KLAN – a documentary by The History Channel. This documentary is not rated “R” but I want to give parents and guardians a heads-up that the word “nigger” is used frequently in this scrupulously accurate and well-researched documentary. If I could, I would make this film a mandatory part of every high school's U.S. history curriculum, for its meticulously researched presentation and its well-documented coverage of the Klan's creation and resurgence.

All the above films meet the following Florida Department of Education Social Studies benchmarks:
SS.912.A.1.1 – describe the importance of historiography, which includes how historical knowledge is obtained and transmitted when interpreting events in history.
SS.912.A.1.2 – use a variety of primary and secondary sources to identify author, historical significance, audience and authenticity to understand a historical period.
SS.912.A.1.4 -- analyze how images, symbols, objects, cartoons, graphs, charts, maps, and artwork may be used to interpret the significance of time periods and events from the past.
SS.912.A.1.5 – evaluate the validity, reliability, bias, and authenticity of various sources
SS.912.A.1.7 – describe various socio-cultural aspects of American life including arts, artifacts, literature, education, and publications

Please sign and have your cadet return this letter to me by March 19 if you WILL PERMIT your cadet to watch these films. If you choose to withhold your permission, please send me a signed and dated note with your cadet’s name (PRINTED) and the name or names of the films you do not wish your cadet to see.

Thank you!
Major Wasserman
Chair, History Department



My cadet, _____ DOES have
print LAST name, FIRST name
my permission to watch the films listed above.

parent signature (in ink)

date