



# YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

to strengthen teaching in public schools®

Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative  
2018 Volume III: Adaptation: Literature, Film and Society

---

## Filmic Adaptations of Mid-Century Bildungsromans Using *The Catcher in the Rye* and *The Bell Jar*

Guide for Curriculum Unit 18.03.11, published September 2018  
by Tara Waugh

Lights. Camera. Action. This unit will turn bored English students into enthusiastic filmmakers. Designed for 11th grade English, specifically AP Language and Composition, this unit will bring the art of film analysis and adaptation and dated, seemingly irrelevant bildungsroman together to help students share their vision of the modern world. After learning the language of film and practicing the close reading of film, students will choose either *The Catcher in the Rye* or *The Bell Jar*, coming-of-age novels from the 1950s and '60s that may seem dated to modern teens. However, both novels share themes of depression, identity, and fitting into society which will resonate with teens today. In this unit, students will have the opportunity to research historical context, practice persuasive writing, and deepen their analytical skills using visual close reading techniques. By using a filmmaker's lense, students will closely read and annotate their chosen bildungsromans and brainstorm ways to take these novels out of the dusty past into the 21st century. The unit ends with teenage filmmakers, no longer yawning, creating a modern adaptation of their chosen novel in the form a movie clip or trailer with a contemporary soundtrack -- finally breathing life back into these old-school books.

(Developed for AP English Language and Composition, grades 11-12; recommended for AP English Language, Composition, and Film, grades 11-12)

---

<https://teachers.yale.edu>

©2023 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University, All Rights Reserved. Yale National Initiative®, Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute®, On Common Ground®, and League of Teachers Institutes® are registered trademarks of Yale University.

For terms of use visit [https://teachers.yale.edu/terms\\_of\\_use](https://teachers.yale.edu/terms_of_use)