



SCHOOL VIOLENCE PREVENTION DEMONSTRATION PROGRAM

*AFTER*

By Francine Prose

**Teacher's Guide**

By Barbara Ashby

**Lesson Overview**

This novel opens with a Columbine-type shooting at fictional Pleasant Valley High School in western Massachusetts where five students and three teachers are killed. The actions of the three shooters ultimately bring dramatic consequences to Central High School, located some 50 miles away. As shock and dismay take hold of students, teachers, and parents, little do they know that this is only the beginning. Through the intervention of a grief and crisis counselor, students begin to lose their individual rights in the guise of protection and safety.

This lesson allows student to look closely at the rights we are guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Through journal writing, students will express their thoughts about individual rights and freedoms through the voice of one of the main characters in the story. Classroom discussions and research provide students with the opportunity to look closely at the meaning and intent of the Founders as they crafted the first ten amendments to the constitution.

**Suggested Grade Level**

Middle school and high school

**Estimated Time to Complete**

Five to seven class periods depending on the length of time available per class

**Lesson Objectives**

Students will

- use primary and secondary source materials to gather, evaluate, synthesize and utilize information to take and defend a position on the importance of individual rights;
- engage in classroom discussion relevant to events occurring in the story;
- make inferences from the text about individual rights and freedoms through daily journal entries;
- demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights by comparing events in the story with the rights and freedoms guaranteed in these founding documents.

## Materials Needed

- Class set of the novel *After* by Francine Prose (ISBN 0-06008083-3)
- Class set of *We the People: the Citizen and the Constitution*, middle or high school level text
- Access to primary and secondary source materials relevant to the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights
- Paper suitable for journal writing
- Pencils suitable for journal writing

## Before the Lesson

The teacher should read *After* by Francine Prose to

- become familiar with the text;
- choose vocabulary words to be examined;
- identify where to stop and ask for predictions;
- determine background knowledge required to fully understand the story;
- develop questions for the read aloud; and
- anticipate student responses.

Before the reading, students should have background knowledge of the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights. This can be developed through readings in the *We the People: the Citizen and the Constitution* text, through research with primary and secondary sources, and selected Internet sites.

## Lesson Procedure

1. Begin the lesson with a discussion of the individual rights and freedoms protected by the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights.
2. Working in groups, students brainstorm and record examples of how individual rights and freedoms are manifested in school. Follow this activity with a discussion of students' examples.
3. Begin the read-aloud of *After*.
4. Make a list of the main characters introduced in Chapter One. Ask students to select a character to represent in their journal writing. Students record their observations, thoughts, and ideas using the voice of the character of their choice.
5. Throughout the reading, students will maintain a chart, recording events in the story that demonstrate a violation of individual rights and freedoms and the corresponding amendment from the Bill of Rights. (See chart below.)

## Suggested discussion questions

1. Do you think the events at Central High School are a violation of individual rights? Why or why not?
2. How does fear cause us to lose our personal freedoms?
3. Where did Dr. Willner get the authority and power to make the changes at Central High School?

4. Why do you think the school administration and the town council went along with the changes made by Dr. Willner?
5. How can technology be used to take away individual rights and freedoms? In what way is technology being used in the story to deny rights and freedoms?
6. What do you think the teachers at Central High School could or should have done to stop Dr. Willner?
7. What do you think about the reaction of parents to the changes made by Dr. Willner at Central High School?
8. What do you think about how the author ended the book? Would you have ended the story differently?

## **Common Core State Standards**

### English Language Arts Standards, Anchor Standards, Reading, Grades 6–12

#### Key Ideas and Details

1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.
2. Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.
3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

#### Craft and Structure

6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

#### Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

8. Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

### English Language Arts Standards, Anchor Standards, Writing, Grades 6–12

#### Text Types and Purposes

3. Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

#### Production and Distribution of Writing

4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

#### Research to Build and Present Knowledge

7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
8. Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.
9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

### English Language Arts Standards, Anchor Standards, Speaking and Listening, Grades 6–12

#### Comprehension and Collaboration

1. Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas

- 4. Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

English Language Arts Standards, History/Social Studies, Grades 6–8

Key Ideas and Details

- 2. Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

Craft and Structure

- 4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

- 7. Integrate visual information (e.g., in charts, graphs, photographs, videos, or maps) with other information in print and digital texts.
- 8. Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.
- 9. Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic

**Correlations to SVPDP Curricula**

<b>SVPDP Curricula</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Lesson-Related Content</b>
<i>We the People: The Citizen &amp; the Constitution</i>	Middle school text Unit Four, Lessons 18 and 19 Unit Five, Lessons 23–27	United States Constitution and basic rights, Bill of Rights, reading, writing, Vocabulary
<i>We the People: The Citizen &amp; the Constitution</i>	High school text Unit Five, Lessons 27–32	Bill of Rights, individual rights and freedoms, reading, writing, vocabulary

Examples from <i>After</i> by Francine Prose	Related Amendment from Bill of Rights
Restriction on wearing the color red at school	First Amendment