Dear Parent or Guardian:

As part of our study of American history this year, we would like to show the students several theatrical movies or segments from these films from time to time. While there are many interesting and informative films available, some do carry an “R” rating for various reasons. We give a serious amount of thought as to the films we use and try to select those that give the students the most accurate view of the events they are studying.

We have listed the “R” rated films below and the reason for the rating. This is not the entire list of films and documentaries we use, just those that cover this rating. Please sign the bottom of this sheet to acknowledge that you have seen this and agree to allow your son/daughter to view these films.

1. **Last of the Mohicans**: As part of our study of the French and Indian War, we view this film which is based on the book by James Fenimore Cooper. For us it is the closest we can come to life in America in the period of 1754 – 1763. It carries and “R” rating for some violent scenes of conflict between the French and the British. Battle sequences are accurate, but graphic in places. We feel this film is worth looking at for its historical accuracy and that most students will not be offended by its content.

2. **The Patriot**: This film deals with several major events in the American Revolution. Also the central character played by Mel Gibson in the movie, is a composite of several real life people including Francis Marion, the Swamp Fox, and General “Mad” Anthony Wayne. The action centers on Charleston, South Carolina, the Battle of the Cowpens, and the British surrender at Yorktown that ends the Revolutionary War. It contains and “R” rating for some graphic battle scenes. A good overview of the struggle for independence seen through the eyes of a father and sons who participate in the war.

3. **Amistad**: This film deals with the 1820’s in the new United States. It reflects the beginnings of the struggle over the institution of slavery. This is a true story of the slave ship La Amistad, which is attempting to bring slaves to the New World. A revolt takes place on the ship and the slaves who take over end up in New England. This is a powerful courtroom battle for human rights. It contains and “R” rating for graphic scenes on a slave ship. A tremendous view of early America struggling over an issue that soon will divide the nation.

4. **Glory**: As part of our study of the Civil War, the film Glory is an adaptation of the book “One Gallant Rush” and is the story of one of the first African-American regiments in the Union Army. This film is probably one of the most authentic films to be done on this period of history. It carries and “R” rating for some realistic battle sequences and a few uses of profanity. An important film to view to look at a pivotal period in American History. Its portrayal of the ability of people to overcome adversity, and receive the dignity that should be given to all people is tremendous.

5. **Saving Private Ryan**: This is arguably the best of the World War II films to date. While the story is fictitious, it is based on the bestselling book “D-Day: June 6th 1944” by Stephen Ambrose. The first 30 minutes of this film that depict the landings at Normandy, France is the most realistic and graphic scenes in this film. It is for these scenes and the use of profanity on occasion that gives it the “R” rating. All of the beach scenes are accurate and true portrayals of what actually took place there. The film really shows why that generation is called the “greatest generation” for their sacrifice in saving the world.

6. **Band of Brothers**: Band of Brothers is an acclaimed 10-part television World War II miniseries based on the book of the same title written by historian and biographer Stephen Ambrose. It was co-produced by Steven Spielberg and Tom Hanks after their successful collaboration on the Academy Award winning WWII film, Saving Private Ryan. The miniseries first aired in 2001 on HBO and still runs frequently on different TV networks around the world. We will be watching selected clips from the mini-series to better exemplify the hardships of the European front in WWII.

7. **The Pacific**: The Pacific is a 10-part television World War II miniseries, produced by HBO, Seven Network Australia, Sky Movies, Playtone and DreamWorks, that premiered in the United States on March 14, 2010. The Pacific is a sister to the 2001 miniseries Band of Brothers. It focuses on the United States Marine Corps’ actions in the Pacific Theater of Operations within the wider Pacific War. Whereas Band of Brothers followed one Army infantry company through the European Theater, The Pacific follows three Marines (Eugene Sledge, Robert Leckie and John Basilone) in separate combat actions. The Pacific was spearheaded by Bruce McKenna (co-executive producer), one of the main writers on Band of Brothers. Hugh Ambrose, the son of Band of Brothers author Stephen Ambrose, served as a project consultant. We will be watching selected clips to better exemplify the hardships of the Pacific front in WWII.

8. **13 Days**: A 2000 docudrama directed by Roger Donaldson about the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, seen from the perspective of the US political leadership. While the movie carries the same name as the book Thirteen Days by former Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, it is in fact based on a different book, The
Kennedy Tapes: Inside the White House During the Cuban Missile Crisis by Ernest May and Philip Zelikow. It is the second docudrama made about the crisis, the first being 1974's The Missiles of October, which was based on Kennedy's book. The 2000 film contains some newly declassified information not available to the earlier production, but takes greater dramatic license, particularly in its choice of Kenneth O'Donnell as protagonist.

9. Mississippi Burning: This 1988 film based on the investigation into the real-life murders of three civil rights workers in Mississippi in 1964 paints an excellent picture of the social climate in the south during the civil rights movements of the 60’s. The movie focuses on two fictional FBI agents (portrayed by Gene Hackman and Willem Dafoe) who investigate the murders. Gene Hackman’s character is loosely based on the actions of FBI Agent John Proctor. Dafoe’s character is very loosely based on FBI agent Joseph Sullivan. This film helps show the students how hard the struggle for civil rights was in many sections of the United States. We will be tying this movie into the Birmingham Bus Boycott, the Freedom Riders, Selma Alabama voting rights and many other civil rights movements of the 60’s. The film is rated “R” for language.

10. Platoon: This film is loosely based on Oliver Stone’s experience during the Vietnam War. Although the movie is fictional history no movie better encompasses the many aspects of the Vietnam War from the point of view of a soldier. We will be tying this film with many of the historical aspects of the Vietnam War. This film is rated “R” for violence and profanity.

The above ten (10) films have been approved by our principal, Mr. Kevin Buchanan, for distribution to U.S. History (AP).

All other films and documentaries carry less than the “R” rating and are not listed here. If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to list them on this form or e-mail me for clarification.

Mr. Kevin Buchanan
Principal of Oak Park High School

Sincerely,  

Mr. Anderson, M.Ed., J.D.
U.S. History, American Democracy & Mock Trial
History/Social Science Department
Oak Park High School

I give my permission for ___________________________ to view the above-mentioned films in U.S. History class at Oak Park High School.

__________________________  __________________________
[Parent signature]          [Date]

OR

NO, I would prefer that you give ___________________________ an alternative assignment.

__________________________
[Parent signature]
[Date]