

The Symbolic Significance of Place in a Narrative
By Laura Kerr

Title of Unit: The Symbolic Significance of Place in a Narrative
Name: Laura Kerr
Duration of Unit: Intermittently throughout the entire year
School: Walpole High School
School City & State: 275 Common Street, Walpole, MA 02081
Number of Lessons in Unit: Six lessons
Subject: English
Related Subject: Literary Criticism
Grade Level: Freshman Honors
Date: August 7, 2013

Curriculum Unit Abstract:

This curriculum unit explores the symbolic significance of place in various literary works. The goal for the unit is for students to consider the deeper meaning of place, location, details of the exterior and interior landscape and its function in a narrative. For each text, students will ponder and reflect upon the following overarching essential questions: How do the settings of a literary work inform the identities of the characters and the narrative itself? How does the narrator manipulate the setting to express the symbolic meaning of the narrative? The students will respond to these questions in a journal that I will hold onto throughout the year and then return to them prior to their final assessment. Individual lesson objectives will vary for each literary work (please see lesson plans). The unit will span the entire year and will culminate in an analytical essay that asks students to compare and/or contrast the significance of place in two works from the year. One of the two works that they choose must be one for which we did not explicitly analyze the significance of place – i.e. a literary work that is not included in this unit.

List of Reading Materials:

The literary works include: Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place*, Jack London's "To Build a Fire", Sandra Cisneros' *The House on Mango Street*, Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*, George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, and Henry David Thoreau's *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*.

List of Equipment:

I will use a classroom projector to show the text and certain handouts to the entire class, but teachers without classroom projectors can simply make copies for every student. I will also provide each student with a journal where they will record their analysis of place for each literary work. No other technology is necessary.

Laura Kerr
The Symbolic Significance of Place in a Narrative
Lesson #1
“A Small Place”: Introduction to Analysis of Place
70 minutes

Abstract: In this lesson, students will be introduced to the important literal and figurative role that place plays in a narrative by reading an excerpt (chapter one) from Jamaica Kincaid’s literary work, *A Small Place*. Kincaid sets her work in Antigua, where she was born, and she focuses on the tragic history and modern poverty of the Caribbean Island to condemn British colonization and show its brutalizing effects. The excerpt that the students will read is told in second person from the point of view of a western tourist who comes to Antigua for a holiday and does not understand, nor care to understand, the identity of the place or the native Antiguan, which in turn identifies the tourist as ignorant, careless, and exploitative. The students will read the excerpt for homework and take notes about place without guided questions prior to this lesson. My goal for this lesson is to broadly introduce the students to the ways in which place informs a narrative and then to focus on different concepts in particular for the successive lessons.

Lesson Goal & Objectives:

Students will identify the setting of the work with textual evidence.
Students will identify the point of view of the work and connect it to the setting and authorial intent.
Students will identify the symbolic meaning of the work with textual evidence.
Students will express orally in a class discussion and in a cohesive paragraph their response to the following essential questions: How does the setting of Antigua inform the identity of the tourist and the Antiguan natives? How does the narrator manipulate the setting to express the symbolic meaning of the narrative?

Procedure/ Lesson Plan: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html>

Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks – Subject: English Language Arts & Literacy

- A. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- B. Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.

Lesson Agenda:

1. Activator (15 minutes)
2. Think/Pair/Share (15 minutes)
3. Class discussion (30 minutes)
4. Closer (10 minutes)
5. Homework & Assessment

Lesson Core:

1. My activator will be to have the students analyze the following quote by paying close attention to the role of place and its relationship to who is meant by “you” and “they”:

“(Isn’t that the last straw; for not only did we have to suffer the unspeakableness of slavery, but the satisfaction to be had from ‘we made you bastards rich’ is taken away too), and so you needn’t let that slightly funny feeling you have from time to time about exploitation, oppression, domination develop into full-fledged unease, discomfort; you could ruin your holiday. They are not responsible for what you have; you owe them nothing; in fact, you did them a big favour, and you can provide one hundred examples. For here you are now, passing by Government House. And here you are now, passing by the Prime Minister’s office and the Parliament Building, and overlooking these, with a splendid view of St. John’s harbour, the American Embassy. If it were not for you, they would not have Government House, and Prime Minister’s office, and Parliament Building and embassy of powerful country” (Kincaid 10-11).

The students will work on the activator individually and then we will discuss it as a class and share our initial analytical ideas. I will guide the students to notice the connection between place (the buildings that represent western oppression and wealth) and tone (the narrator’s anger, bitterness, sardonic resentment), and place (the contrast between the western buildings and the rest of Antigua) and characterization (the colonizers and tourists “*you*” versus the native Antiguan “*they*”).

2. The students will perform a think/pair/share to analyze the text by completing the following:

-think: define colonization and give examples that you know from history

-pair: find a partner

-share: share your thoughts and take notes on what your partner says then share and define as a class

3. The students will circle up and we will have a class discussion to discuss the following with explicit textual evidence:

- the setting of Antigua (Caribbean Island, exports, island getaway, etc.)
- the effects of colonization on Antiguan & Antigua (lack of identity & individual culture)
- the narrator (a native Antiguan), point of view (first & second person), & tone (angry, sardonic)
- authorial intent/message & the connection of place (colonization meant subjugation of place and people which robbed the Antiguan of any “natural” history or culture; their lack of identity is directly connected to their lack of autonomy over their own land)

4. For the closer, students will be asked to analyze the quote from the activator in light of our class discussion and add to their earlier response. They will turn in their responses before they leave.

5. Homework & Assessment:

In their journals, students will write a cohesive paragraph that synthesizes the different components from our class discussion and answers the following essential questions WITH NEW INFORMATION:

How does the setting of Antigua inform the identity of the tourist and the Antiguan natives? How does the narrator manipulate the setting to express the symbolic meaning of the narrative?

These journal responses will be graded as a 10 point homework grade.

10 points = answered the questions correctly with appropriate textual evidence

5 points = response and/or textual evidence needs improvement

0 points = did not answer correctly and/or did not use any and/or enough textual evidence

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The Symbolic Significance of Place in a Narrative
Lesson #2
“To Build A Fire” : Place Informs Plot
70 minutes

Abstract: In this lesson, students will read Jack London’s “To Build A Fire” and focus on the way in which the setting of the story directly informs the narrative. In the story, the nameless protagonist freezes to death while trying to hike the Yukon trail because he does not adequately appreciate the power of Mother Nature nor heed the advice of others who say he should refrain from hiking in such frigid temperatures. The students will read the story for homework and answer the following questions:

- Where in the story does the man first become aware of the danger of the cold? How does this awareness affect his later actions? If he had realized the danger earlier and more fully, what might he have done differently?
- In introducing the man, London describes him as being “quick and alert,” but “without imagination.” How does this lack of imagination mislead him?
- The dog’s equivalent of human imagination is evidently its instinct. How does the dog’s instinct enable it to escape the man’s fate?
- What does the story suggest about humanity’s place in nature? What purpose do you think the author might have had in not giving his character a name?

My goal for this lesson is to really focus the students on the way in which place informs the plot of a narrative.

Lesson Goal & Objectives:

Students will identify the setting of the work with textual evidence.

Students will identify the key plot points of the narrative with textual evidence.

Students will express orally in a class discussion and in a cohesive paragraph their response to the following essential questions: How does the setting of the Yukon trail inform the sequence of events in the narrative discourse? How does Jack London depict the setting in such a way as to determine and heighten the suspense, internal and external conflicts, and theme of the story?

Procedure/ Lesson Plan: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html>

Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks – Subject: English Language Arts & Literacy

A. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

B. 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.

Lesson Agenda:

1. Activator (15 minutes)
2. Plot Diagram with pictures & textual evidence (30 minutes)
3. Class discussion (20 minutes)
4. Closer (5 minutes)

Lesson Core:

1. My activator will be to have the students analyze the following quote for the relationship between place and plot:

“He was angry, and cursed his luck aloud. He had hoped to get into camp with the boys at six o'clock, and this would delay him an hour, for he would have to build a fire and dry out his foot-gear. This was imperative at that low temperature—he knew that much; and he turned aside to the bank, which he climbed. On top, tangled in the underbrush about the trunks of several small spruce trees, was a high-water deposit of dry fire-wood—sticks and twigs, principally, but also larger portions of seasoned branches and fine, dry, last-year's grasses. He threw down several large pieces on top of the snow. This served for a foundation and prevented the young flame from drowning itself in the snow it otherwise would melt. The flame he got by touching a match to a small shred of birch-bark that he took from his pocket. This burned even more readily than paper. Placing it on the foundation, he fed the young flame with wisps of dry grass and with the tiniest dry twigs” (London 420).

The students will work on the activator individually and then we will discuss it as a class and share our initial analytical ideas. I will guide the students to notice the connection between place and plot, and place and authorial intent.

2. The students will create a plot diagram entirely in pictures that illustrates the following:

- exposition
- narrative hook
- rising action
- climax
- falling action
- resolution (dénouement)

The students will then exchange their plot diagrams with a partner who will find the *best* quote from the text to represent each image. Students will write the quotes below the images on their partner's paper. After the partners have finished adding text to their diagrams they will answer the following question together on the back of both pieces of paper:

What connection do you see between place and plot?

3. The students will circle up and we will have a class discussion to discuss the following with explicit textual evidence:

- the setting of the story (Yukon trail, frigid temperatures, etc.)
- the plot (man freezes to death, etc.)
- the way in which the setting drives the linear sequence of cause & effect (the author's feet get wet, he needs a fire to dry them because of the freezing temperatures, snow extinguishes his fire, etc.)
- authorial intent & the text's message (despite modern advances, nature remains omnipotent)
- the way in which the author uses nature to destroy the nameless protagonist and thus prove his message of the power of Nature and the frailty of man

4. For the closer, students will be asked to analyze the quote from the activator again in light of our class discussion. They will turn in their responses before they leave.

5. Homework:

In their journals, students will write a cohesive paragraph that synthesizes the different components from our class discussion and answers the following essential questions WITH NEW INFORMATION:

How does the setting of the Yukon trail inform the sequence of events in the narrative discourse? How does Jack London depict the setting in such a way as to determine and heighten the suspense, internal and external conflicts, and theme of the story?

These journal responses will be graded as a 10 point homework grade.

10 points = answered the questions correctly with appropriate textual evidence

5 points = response and/or textual evidence needs improvement

0 points = did not answer correctly and/or did not use any and/or enough textual evidence

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Lesson #3

The House on Mango Street: Place Informs Characterization

70 minutes

Abstract: In this lesson, students will analyze the way in which an author uses place to inform and depict his or her characters. Students will have read Sandra Cisneros' novella *The House on Mango Street* prior to this discussion. My goal for the lesson is for students to be able to provide in words and in images textual evidence of instances where place symbolically represents a character.

Lesson Goal & Objectives:

Students will identify the setting of the work with textual evidence.

Students will identify the characterization of multiple characters with textual evidence

Students will explain the way the setting symbolically reflects the characters' characterization with textual evidence.

Students will express orally in a class discussion and in a cohesive paragraph their response to the following essential questions: How does the setting inform the characterization of Esperanza and others in her neighborhood? Why is place effective in reflecting these characters?

Procedure/ Lesson Plan: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html>

Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks – Subject: English Language Arts & Literacy

A. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

B. Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.

Lesson Agenda:

1. Activator (15 minutes)
2. Characterization Pictures (30 minutes)
3. Class discussion (20 minutes)
4. Closer (5 minutes)
5. Homework & Assessment

Lesson Core:

1. My activator will be to have the students analyze the following question:

What is Esperanza's characterization? Give three responses with textual evidence for support.

The students will answer the question individually and then share with the class. I will compile a list of responses and quotes on the board.

2. After the activator, I will hand students a blank piece of computer paper and they will do the following:

- Find an image of one of the pieces of physical landscape that Esperanza uses to describe herself.
- Draw the image.
- Write 3-5 sentences with integrated quotations to explain HOW the landscape characterizes her. Be explicit; she is characterized as _____.

After the students have completed their images, we will discuss them as a class. Then, the students will turn their papers over and do the same activity for another character in the book (Darius, Sally, Elenita, the three sisters, etc.)

3. The students will circle up and we will have a class discussion to discuss the following with explicit textual evidence:

- the setting of the novel (Chicago, poor neighborhood)
- the characterization of the main characters
- the way in which place symbolically reflects the characters (Esperanza and the skinny trees, the house on Mango Street, Darius and the clouds, etc.)
- the reason why these images are effective (Esperanza has very little material possessions; the natural world is something that is there for her even if it is limited in the city).

4. For the closer, students will be asked to identify a major theme of the novel and use the characterization of a character (as depicted by the physical landscape) to support the theme. They will turn in their responses before they leave.

5. Homework & Assessment:

In their journals, students will write a cohesive paragraph that synthesizes the different components from our class discussion and answers the following essential questions WITH NEW INFORMATION:

How does the setting inform the characterization of Esperanza and others in her neighborhood? Why is place appropriate to reflect these characters?

These journal responses will be graded as a 10 point homework grade.

10 points = answered the questions correctly with appropriate textual evidence

5 points = response and/or textual evidence needs improvement

0 points = did not answer correctly and/or did not use any and/or enough textual evidence

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Lesson #4

A Tale of Two Cities: Place Informs Symbolism

70 minutes

Abstract: In this lesson, students will analyze the way in which an author uses place to develop symbols in the text. In class, we will read aloud the beginning of chapter 5 “The Wine-Shop” in book one, which describes the scene in the poor neighborhood of San Antoine, France when a cask of wine drops in the street and the poverty-stricken French peasants rush to drink it. We will stop reading at the bottom of the second page in the chapter before the narrator explicitly states that the wine in the dirty streets symbolizes (and foreshadows) blood. My goal for the lesson is for students to be able to prove in words and in images the way in which the exterior details of the place (the dirty and disheveled streets and the wine) symbolize the future lives and characters of the French peasants during the French Revolution (impoverished and blood-thirsty).

Lesson Goal & Objectives:

Students will identify the setting of the work with textual evidence.

Students will identify the symbolism of the setting with textual evidence.

Students will explain why the setting is appropriate to create the symbols.

Students will express orally in a class discussion and in a cohesive paragraph their response to the following essential questions: How does the setting inform the symbols in “The Wine-Shop”? Why is place appropriate to create these symbols? (Discuss the novel title)

Procedure/ Lesson Plan: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html>

Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks – Subject: English Language Arts & Literacy

A. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

B. 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.

Lesson Agenda:

1. Activator (15 minutes)
2. Symbolism Pictures (20 minutes)
3. Class discussion (30 minutes)
4. Closer (5 minutes)
5. Homework & Assessment

Lesson Core:

1. My activator will be to have the students analyze the characterization of the French peasants of San Antoine with textual evidence. The students will answer the question individually and then share with the class. I will compile a list of responses and quotes on the board. My goal is to connect to their previous knowledge (i.e. Esperanza's characterization as symbolizes by the place).

2. After the activator, I will hand students a blank piece of computer paper and one red colored pencil. While I read the beginning of chapter 5 aloud, they will:

- Draw and color with the red pencil what they hear and see in their books
- Write 3-5 sentences with integrated quotations to explain what the landscape symbolizes. I will remind them to be explicit; _____ symbolizes _____ because..

After the students have completed their images, they will share them with a partner to discuss similarities and differences.

3. The students will circle up and we will have a class discussion to discuss the following with explicit textual evidence:

- the setting of San Antoine, France
- the characterization of the French peasants (starving, driven by need to survive)
- the way in which the exterior details of the place are symbols (the wine symbolizes blood, etc.)
- the way in which the symbol also foreshadows the Revolution
- the reason why these images are effective (the people are as downtrodden as their surroundings, and their oppression results in war).

4. For the closer, students will be asked to analyze (for symbolism, characterization, foreshadowing, etc.) the following quote from later in chapter 5:

“And now that the cloud settled on Saint Antoine, which a momentary gleam had driven from his sacred countenance, the darkness of it was heavy -- cold, dirt, sickness, ignorance, and want, were the lords in waiting on the saintly presence -- nobles of great power all of them; but, most especially the last. Samples of a people that had undergone a terrible grinding and regrinding in the mill, and certainly not in the fabulous mill which ground old people young, shivered at every corner, passed in and out at every doorway, looked from every window, fluttered in every vestige of a garment that the wind shook. The mill which had worked them down, was the mill that grinds young people old; the children had ancient faces and grave voices; and upon them, and upon the grown faces, and ploughed into every furrow of age and coming up afresh, was the sigh, Hunger. It was prevalent everywhere. Hunger was pushed out of the tall houses, in the wretched clothing that hung upon poles and lines; Hunger was patched into them with straw and rag and wood and paper; Hunger was repeated in every fragment of the small modicum of firewood that the man sawed off; Hunger stared down from the smokeless chimneys, and started up from the filthy street that had no offal, among its refuse, of anything to eat. Hunger was the inscription on the baker's shelves, written in every small loaf of his scanty stock of bad bread; at the sausage-shop, in every dead-dog preparation that was offered for sale. Hunger rattled its dry bones among the roasting chestnuts in the turned cylinder; Hunger was shred into atomics in every farthing porringer of husky chips of potato, fried with some reluctant drops of oil” (Dickens 34).

5. Homework & Assessment:

In their journals, students will write a cohesive paragraph that synthesizes the different components from our class discussion and answers the following essential questions WITH NEW INFORMATION:

How does the setting inform the symbols in “The Wine-Shop”? Why is place appropriate to create these symbols? (Discuss the novel title)

These journal responses will be graded as a 10 point homework grade.

10 points = answered the questions correctly with appropriate textual evidence

5 points = response and/or textual evidence needs improvement

0 points = did not answer correctly and/or did not use any and/or enough textual evidence

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The Symbolic Significance of Place in a Narrative

Lesson #5

***Animal Farm*: Place Informs Literary Genre (Dystopian novels)**

70 minutes

Abstract: In this lesson, students will analyze how the evolving setting of Manor Farm and Animal Farm directly reflects the change from a brief utopia (when the animals initially gain power) to a dystopia (when Napoleon becomes the tyrant). My goal for the lesson is for students to be able to prove in words and in images the way in which setting directly contributes to a narrative’s genre; in the case of *Animal Farm*, we will view the narrative as a dystopian novel.

Lesson Goal & Objectives:

Students will identify the farm as a brief utopia and the farm as a dystopia.

Students will contrast the two settings with textual evidence.

Students will explain how the evolving setting reflects the dystopian genre.

Students will express orally in a class discussion and in a cohesive paragraph their response to the following essential questions: What are the changes in the novel’s setting and why are these changes important? How does the setting reflect the dystopian genre? How does the setting contribute to the novel’s message/meaning?

Procedure/ Lesson Plan: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html>

Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks – Subject: English Language Arts & Literacy

A. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

B. 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.

Lesson Agenda:

1. Activator (15 minutes)
2. Dystopian Pictures (25 minutes)

3. Class discussion (25 minutes)
4. Closer (5 minutes)
5. Homework & Assessment

Lesson Core:

1. My activator will be to have the students find the moment in chapter two when the farm briefly becomes a utopia (use textual evidence as proof) and then identify the moment that ruins this perfect society. The students will answer the question individually and then share with the class. I am looking for the students to identify the following section as the description of the utopia:

“But they woke at dawn as usual, and suddenly remembering the glorious thing that had happened, they all raced out into the pasture together. A little way down the pasture there was a knoll that commanded a view of most of the farm. The animals rushed to the top of it and gazed round them in the clear morning light. Yes, it was theirs — everything that they could see was theirs! In the ecstasy of that thought they gambolled round and round, they hurled themselves into the air in great leaps of excitement. They rolled in the dew, they cropped mouthfuls of the sweet summer grass, they kicked up clods of the black earth and snuffed its rich scent. Then they made a tour of inspection of the whole farm and surveyed with speechless admiration the ploughland, the hayfield, the orchard, the pool, the spinney. It was as though they had never seen these things before, and even now they could hardly believe that it was all their own” (Orwell 8).

I would want the students to identify the moment when Napoleon steals the cow’s milk as the incident that disrupts the utopia and as the catalyst that changes the farm from a utopia to a dystopia.

2. After the activator, I will hand students a blank piece of computer paper and they will do the following:

- Find a description of the farm that proves that the farm has become a dystopia.
- Draw the image.
- Write 3-5 sentences with integrated quotations to explain HOW the landscape depicts a dystopia. Make sure you are explicit.

After the students have completed their images, they will share them with a partner to discuss similarities and differences.

3. The students will circle up and we will have a class discussion to discuss the following with explicit textual evidence:

- the changes in the setting
- the characterization of the animals (majority are ignorant while pigs take advantage)
- the way in which the land is exploited in the same way that the pigs exploit the animals
- the reason why these images are effective (the land is worked as hard as the animals)
- the way in which the dystopia genre proves the novel’s message (people must become educated in order to prevent those in power from exploiting them)

4. For the closer, students will be asked to analyze (for symbolism, characterization, foreshadowing, etc.) the following quote from later in chapter 5:

“The farm was more prosperous now, and better organised: it had even been enlarged by two fields which had been bought from Mr. Pilkington. The wind-mill had been successfully completed at last, and the farm possessed a threshing machine and a hay elevator of its own, and various new buildings had been added to it. Whymper had bought himself a dogcart. The windmill, however, had not after all been used for generating electrical power. It was used for milling corn, and brought in a handsome money profit. The animals were hard at work building yet another windmill; when that one was finished, so it was said, the dynamos would be installed. But the luxuries of which Snowball had once taught the animals to dream, the stalls with electric light and hot and cold water, and the three-day week, were no longer talked about. Napoleon had denounced such ideas as contrary to the spirit of Animalism. The truest happiness, he said, lay in working hard and living frugally. Somehow it seemed as though the farm had grown richer without making the animals themselves any richer — except, of course, for the pigs and the dogs” (Orwell 49).

5. Homework & Assessment:

In their journals, students will write a cohesive paragraph that synthesizes the different components from our class discussion and answers the following essential questions WITH NEW INFORMATION:

What are the changes in the novel’s setting and why are these changes important? How does the setting reflect the dystopian genre? How does the setting contribute to the novel’s message/meaning?

These journal responses will be graded as a 10 point homework grade.

10 points = answered the questions correctly with appropriate textual evidence

5 points = response and/or textual evidence needs improvement

0 points = did not answer correctly and/or did not use any and/or enough textual evidence

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Lesson #6

Walden, or Life in the Woods: Independent Application of Place

70 minutes

Abstract: In this lesson, students will apply the skills that they have learned in the previous five lessons and independently analyze the sense of place in Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden*. The lesson will occur at the beginning of the *Walden* unit; therefore, students will not have seen the quotations in the lesson before nor will they understand their context. My reason for introducing the students to certain quotations out of context is to show them how much they have improved their analytical skills when it comes to determining the significance of sense of place. My goal for the lesson is for students to independently analyze the purpose of place (characterization, symbolism, textual meaning, authorial purpose, transcendentalism, etc.) in *Walden*. I am hopeful that students will arrive at different responses so that I can show them that the goal of literary analysis is not to arrive at *one* answer, but to adequately support the answer that they have.

Lesson Goal & Objectives:

Students will paraphrase the quotation from *Walden*.

Students will analyze the quotation for its figurative meaning.

Students will express orally in a class discussion and in a cohesive paragraph their response to the following essential questions: Why is the sense of place so significant in terms of the quotation's figurative meaning? How does "place" function in this brief narrative?

Procedure/ Lesson Plan: <http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html>

Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks – Subject: English Language Arts & Literacy

A. Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

B. 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.

Lesson Agenda:

1. Activator (15 minutes)
2. Independent Place Analysis (30 minutes)
3. Share responses (15 minutes)
4. Closer (10 minutes)
5. Homework & Assessment

Lesson Core:

1. My activator will be to have the students review information from the previous class by answering the following question:

Define Transcendentalism in your own words.

My goal for the activator is to stimulate prior knowledge and give them a context for *Walden* as we will have already studied Emerson, Romanticism, and Transcendentalism.

2. After the activator, I will hand assign each student one of the following quotes from *Walden*:

A. The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation. What is called resignation is confirmed desperation. From the desperate city you go into the desperate country, and have to console yourself with the bravery of minks and muskrats. A stereotyped but unconscious despair is concealed even under what are called the games and amusements of mankind. There is no play in them, for this comes after work. But it is a characteristic of wisdom not to do desperate things. (78)

B. I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practise resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion. (135)

C. A lake is the landscape's most beautiful and expressive feature. It is earth's eye; looking into which the beholder measures the depth of his own nature. The fluvial trees next the shore are the slender eyelashes which fringe it, and the wooded hills and cliffs around are its overhanging brows. (233)

D. Thus it seemed that this one hillside illustrated the principle of all the operations of Nature. The Maker of this earth but patented a leaf. What Champollion will decipher this hieroglyphic for us, that we may turn over a new leaf at last? This phenomenon is more exhilarating to me than the luxuriance and fertility of vineyards. True, it is somewhat excrementitious in its character, and there is no end to the heaps of liver lights and bowels, as if the globe were turned wrong side outward; but this suggests at least that Nature has some bowels, and there again is mother of humanity. This is the frost coming out of the ground; this is Spring. It precedes the green and flowery spring, as mythology precedes regular poetry. I know of nothing more purgative of winter fumes and indigestions. It convinces me that Earth is still in her swaddling clothes, and stretches forth baby fingers on every side. Fresh curls spring from the baldest brow. There is nothing inorganic. These foliaceous heaps lie along the bank like the slag of a furnace, showing that Nature is "in full blast" within. The earth is not a mere fragment of dead history, stratum upon stratum like the leaves of a book, to be studied by geologists and antiquaries chiefly, but living poetry like the leaves of a tree, which precede flowers and fruit,—not a fossil earth, but a living earth; compared with whose great central life all animal and vegetable life is merely parasitic. Its throes will heave our exuviae from their graves. You may melt your metals and cast them into the most beautiful moulds you can; they will never excite me like the forms which this molten earth flows out into. And not only it, but the institutions upon it, are plastic like clay in the hands of the potter. (356-357)

E. Simplify, simplify. Instead of three meals a day, if it be necessary eat but one; instead of a hundred dishes, five; and reduce other things in proportion. Our life is like a German Confederacy, made up of petty states, with its boundary forever fluctuating, so that even a German cannot tell you how it is bounded at any moment. The nation itself, with all its so called internal improvements, which, by the way, are all external and superficial, is just such an unwieldy and overgrown establishment, cluttered with furniture and tripped up by its own traps, ruined by luxury and heedless expense, by want of calculation and a worthy aim, as the million households in the land; and the only cure for it as for them is in a rigid economy, a stern and more than Spartan simplicity of life and elevation of purpose. It lives too fast. Men think that it is essential that the *Nation* have commerce, and export ice, and talk through a telegraph, and ride thirty miles an hour, without a doubt, whether *they* do or not; but whether we should live like baboons or like men, is a little uncertain. If we do not get out sleepers, and forge rails, and devote days and nights to the work, but go to tinkering upon our *lives* to improve *them*, who will build railroads? And if railroads are not built, how shall we get to heaven in season? But if we stay at home and mind our business, who will want railroads? We do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us. (136)

For their assigned quotation, the students will complete the following assignment:

- Paraphrase the quotation (be *thorough*...ha)
- Analyze the significance of place in your quote. Does the sense of place inform the narrator's characterization, a symbol, authorial intent, textual meaning, the literary genre or philosophy (Transcendentalism), etc? Explain with textual support.

3. After the students have completed their assignment, they will first meet with the other students who were assigned the same quotation. They will share their responses and take notes on what others said. After they have discussed their quotes, they will turn their journals in to me.

4. For the closer, students will answer the following questions:

What have you learned about the analytical significance of place in a narrative throughout the year?
What questions do you still have about sense of place in a narrative?

5. Homework & Assessment:

In their journals, students will write a cohesive paragraph that analyzes one of the remaining four quotations from class that they did not analyze already.

These journal responses will be graded as a 10 point homework grade.

10 points = answered the questions correctly with appropriate textual evidence

5 points = response and/or textual evidence needs improvement

0 points = did not answer correctly and/or did not use any and/or enough textual evidence

Name:
Mrs. Kerr
Freshies
Date:

A Sense of Place: Final Assessment

For your final 100-point major assessment, you will write a compare and/or contrast analytical essay that analyzes the figurative purpose of place in two of the literary works that we have read this year.

Essay Structure:

Isolated Thesis Statement: Introduce authors, titles, **the explicit comparison or contrast**, and two literary terms for support ***Thesis should be **1 OR 2** sentences only!

Body Paragraph One: Use a literary term to prove the comparison or contrast **in both pieces of writing**
Supporting point one: compare or contrast both works
Supporting point two: compare or contrast both works
*** **Each point will be slightly different! 4 quotes total**

Body Paragraph Two: Use a different literary term to prove the comparison or contrast **in both pieces**
Supporting point one: compare or contrast both works
Supporting point two: compare or contrast both works
*** **Each point will be slightly different! 4 quotes total**

Example Essay Structure for a Comparison Essay:

Isolated Thesis Statement:

In _____ and _____ place functions similarly to _____.

Body Paragraph One: Place informs characterization

Supporting Point One- In each work, place characterizes the narrator
Example 1 compared to example 2

Supporting Point Two- In each work, place characterizes the minor characters
Example 1 compared to example 2

Body Paragraph Two: Place informs authorial intent

Supporting Point One- In each work, place evolves to change meaning
Example 1 compared to example 2

Supporting Point Two- In each work, the changes in place reflect the authorial intent
Example 1 compared to example 2

Rubric:

Proper Format

Proper heading, original proper title

Double-spaced

One line in between heading, title, and all paragraphs

/5

Content

Thesis is strong argument that answers question

Accurate, explicit literary term choices

/70

Topic sentences state purpose of paragraph only with a clear argument

Topic sentences have clear transitions

Clear context clues are apparent

Body paragraphs contain clear supporting points that DIFFER

Body paragraphs contain clear supporting details to provide context

Analysis focuses on what **DOES** happen and **AVOIDS** speculation

All quotations are embedded into analysis and cited properly

Quotations use brackets [] to achieve coherence

Quotations are **BEST** examples to prove points

Transitions within paragraph are effective (i.e. avoid "Another example...." ...BORING!)

Paragraphs avoid and/or acknowledge repetition

Connections to TS and thesis are self-evident or directly stated

Analysis is sufficient and **SHOWING** without just **TELLING**

Use synonyms and transitions effectively

/25

Grammar & Mechanics

Follows writing rules

Avoids run-ons and fragments (even with quotation embedding)

AVOIDS PASSIVE VOICE!!!!

Proper grammar, mechanics, and syntax

Sophisticated vocabulary

Total & Comments

/100

The Symbolic Significance of Place in a Narrative
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