

# Life is a Journey and This much I know for sure...

An Interdisciplinary Unit on Social Justice, Nature, Identity  
and  
the Meaning of *Life as a Journey*

By Barbara McCoy

I tramp a perpetual journey, . . .  
Not I, not any one else can travel that road for you,  
You must travel it for yourself.

~ Walt Whitman  
*Leaves of Grass*

# Life is a Journey and This much I know for sure . . .

by Barbara McCoy

Unit Title: - Life is a Journey and This much I know for sure . . .
Name: - Barbara McCoy
Duration - 8-10 Weeks
School - Eastport South Manor High School
School City & State - Manorville, NY 11749
Number of Lessons in Unit - 5
Subject(s) - English
Related Subjects - Science, Social Studies, Art
Grade Level(s) - Grade 12
Date Submitted - August 21, 2007

## Short Abstract of Curriculum Unit (3-6 sentences):

Designed for use in 12<sup>th</sup> grade English Language Arts as part of a semester spent on reflecting about *Life as a Journey*. As seniors, their formal school journey is coming to an end and their journeys into adulthood are beginning. This multidisciplinary will use social studies, science, art and descriptive/figurative writing to explore the theme *Life is a Journey*. Students will *Meet Mr. Thoreau*, the philosopher, poet/writer, social conscience, and naturalist through the exploration of Thoreau's writings. Students will develop understandings of the complexities of life: not a single journey but as multiple journeys combined. Life is a Highway presents a metaphor that illustrates that life is filled with smooth and rough times, endless possibilities and roadblocks and that the detours we decide to take, our decisions, affect not only the present, but the future as well. The goal of this unit is twofold (a) heighten their awareness of the power of thinking; and (b) expose the importance of their thinking about ideas and issues in relation to themselves and others.

## List of Reading Materials:

### *Walden Chapters:*

- "Economy:
- "Where I lived and What I Lived For"
- "Sounds"
- "Solitude"
- "Conclusion"
- "The Ponds"

### *Other Thoreau Writings:*

- "Walking"
- "Civil Disobedience"
- "Autumnal Tints"

### *Other Sources:*

- Introduction I to Myself
- Excerpts from "Nature," "Self-Reliance," & "The Oversoul" by Ralph Waldo Emerson

## List of Equipment (ie technology, scientific measurement tools, etc):

Journals                      TV/VCR                      Computers/Internet  
*Films:* Star Wars: Return of the Jedi      Inherit the Wind

## Unit Essential questions:

The following questions are designed to assist students in the investigation and exploration of the metaphor *Life is a Journey*. Essential questions are open-ended and call upon our best thinking as they touch upon matters that define what it means to be human. In effect, essential questions help us to make meaning out

of the events and circumstances of our lives. The goal of the following essential questions was to confront participants with the literal and figurative ideas of *Life is a Journey*. These questions will be explored throughout the unit allowing for individual ideas and themes to emerge throughout the unit.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| What is a journey?   | Why do people go on journeys?                 |
| What do people experience on journeys?   | How is a journey like a person's life?        |
| What does it mean to be a leader on a journey?                                     | How is learning something new like a journey? |
| How do we know when we are on a journey?   | What factors influence us most on a journey?  |
| What is the purpose of a journey?  |   |
| Can a journey be mental or emotional? -give examples                               |   |
| How do people decide what road to take on their journey?                           |   |
| How do choices and influences affect the present as well as the future?            |   |
| How does a journey help define and redefine who we are?                            |   |
| In what ways are a collection of journeys wrapped up in <i>Life is a Journey</i> ? |   |

**NOTE:**

The following has been explained, modeled and experienced in my classroom and are familiar with class procedures for:

- (a) Journal writing
- (b) Literature Circles
  - ~ understanding that each student is to act in EACH of the 5 roles within this Unit Lesson.
  - ~ Assignment Sheet will be used to record each students Job for a particular reading

Groups will be designed heterogeneously and pre-determined by teacher.

Group assignments will remain in place for the duration of the unit for those lessons requiring group work.

Group assignments will be posted on the wall for student reference.

Class periods are 42 minutes in duration.

1	5-6 days	<b>Introduction of thematic unit:</b> What is a Journey? How can a journey be a metaphor for life?	<i>Life is a Highway</i> (song) Rascal Flatts  <i>Ulysses</i> Alfred Lloyd Tennyson	Journal Writing  Literature Circle Job Sheets
2	3-4 Days	<b>Metacognition &amp; Metaphors and their hidden messages</b>	<i>Inherit the Wind</i> (film clip) Various Excerpts from Thoreau's Writings	Journal Writing  Pictures
3	4-6 Weeks	<b>Meet Mr. Thoreau the . . .</b> Poet/Writer Philosopher/Transcendentalist Social Conscience Naturalist	Various Thoreau Readings & Excerpts	Literature Circle Job Sheets Team Presentations
4	3 days	<b>Final Project</b> <i>Life is a Journey and this much I know for sure . . .</i>	(a) <i>My Life is A Journey</i>  (b) <i>My Life Lessons</i>	Varies...see <i>Final Project</i>

## Lesson #1: Life is a Journey

*Duration 5 days*

### ***Abstract:***

Designed to inspire dialogue about the metaphor *Life is a Journey*, students will engage in reading, writing, reflecting and discussing both individually and in groups, essential questions about “journeys.” Developing personal opinions about journeys will facilitate students to connect with Henry David Thoreau’s life’s journey as writer/poet, philosopher/transcendentalist, social conscience, and naturalist and begin to explore that the journey helps us define and redefine ourselves.

### ***Goals/Objectives:***

- ~ To introduce the idea of a journey as both literal and figurative.
- ~ To begin to understand that a journey can be a metaphor for life.
- ~ To identify metaphors in writing and dig for the deeper meaning.
- ~ To investigate how a journey helps us define and redefine who we are.

### **Procedures:**

#### ***Day 1:***

##### *Activate Prior Knowledge:*

- \* Journal Write ~ In your journal respond to the question: What is a journey?
- \* Have students share their thoughts and ideas. (\*Think-Pair-Share)
- \* Have a student act as scribe using (\*List-Group-Label)

*List Group Label will be mounted on class wall for ongoing revisions and additions*

#### ***Days 2-3:***

Present the following questions for discussion:

*(Assign a scribe to collect key points on the board – employ List-Group-Label and add any new meanings to concepts, add new concepts, revise organization of meanings and concepts)*

Why do people go on journeys?

What are some things they might experience?

Using Literature Circles, have students read Alfred Lloyd Tennyson’s “Ulysses” and complete the Literature Circle Job Sheets. Groups will pair up and compare and contrast responses. Groups will be expected to visit wall and add or revise to the class’s List-Group-Label.

#### ***Day 4:***

Lyrics will be distributed to students prior to listening to the Rascal Flatts remake of *Life is a Highway* will be played in class.

The following questions are to be posted on the board:

List the “life experiences” of the speaker in this song?

Is this journey physical, mental and/or emotional?

– give examples from the song

***Homework:*** Write/type a well-developed written response to the following questions:

(a) Can a journey be mental or emotional? – give examples

(b) What factors influence us on a journey?

Be sure to support your responses . . .

– using references from either or both of these readings or your personal life

*Day 5:*

**ASSESSMENT:**

Students will write a 1-page compare and contrast essay using both readings on the following question:

What qualities about a physical journey differ from an emotional journey?

What qualities does a physical journey share with an emotional journey?

*Be sure to provide examples to prove your point!*

*. . . continue to following page for Lesson #2*

## ***Lesson #2: Metacognition /Metaphors and their hidden messages***

***Duration 3-4 days***

### ***Abstract:***

This lesson is designed to promote metacognition; not merely thinking, but being conscious about our thinking. Metacognition involves a purposeful reflection upon a concept, a way of acting, or a way of seeing. With Henry David Thoreau, the philosopher, present at all times, whether in nature, in society, or in his writing, thinking was a conscious process, a willful act on his behalf.

This lesson will again serve as an anchor lesson when we “Meet Mr. Thoreau.” Designed to inspire dialogue about *Life is a Journey*, students will engage in reading, writing, reflecting and discussing both individually and in groups essential questions about “journeys.” Personal opinions about journeys will continue to be explored.

### ***Goals/Objectives:***

- ~ Develop students’ awareness of thinking as a deliberate act
- ~ Understand metacognition is the process of reflecting on essential questions
- ~ Use discussions and journaling to communicate and record reflections
- ~ Create an awareness between literal and figurative language.
- ~ Understand that a journey can be a metaphor for life.
- ~ Identify metaphors in writing and dig for the deeper meaning.
- ~ Investigate how a journey helps us define and redefine who we are.

### ***Procedures:***

#### ***Day 1:***

Students will view a clip from the film *Inherent the Wind*. The clips illustrate the difference about thinking and being conscious about thinking; metacognition. Metacognition refers to learners' automatic awareness of their own knowledge and their ability to understand, control, and manipulate their own cognitive processes. Metacognitive skills are important not only in school, but throughout life because awareness of thought processes helps us develop greater understandings about the world we live in.

Metacognition is important for students’ understanding Mr. Thoreau. For Thoreau, walking the Wild (nature) then reflecting on what he saw (experienced) were important to his existence. He writes in “Walking” . . . *my desire to bathe my head in atmospheres unknown to my feet is perennial and constant.* Metacognition is part of the process of reflecting on the essential questions and journaling and discussions are ways to explore and communicate our understanding of the essential questions.

- What types of things can we learn from a journey?
- How do we learn from a journey?
- In what ways can we record the experiences of a journey?
- Does it matter if we share the experiences of a journey?

### Day 2-3:

Because HDT's writings are rich in figurative language (most especially his use of metaphors), this mini-lesson serves as an anchor to refer back to throughout the readings with students struggling to make meaning from some of the texts.

#### Mini-lesson

- \* **Figurative Language** is a tool that an author employs (or uses) to help the reader visualize (or see) what is happening in a story or poem. This language is used to emphasize a point and is not usually meant to be taken literally. It requires us to think deeply about the comparison or idea or image that the author is trying to convey.
- \* **Simile:** is a comparison of two unlike or dissimilar things.  
The comparison is made by using *like* or *as*.  
*Example: "Her skin was like that old paper . . ." Jane Yolen "Birthday Box"*
- \* **Metaphor:** is a comparison of two unlike or dissimilar things.  
The comparison DOES NOT use *like* or *as*. Rather, the comparison is made by saying the two unlike objects ARE each other (is or are; was or were)  
*Example: "And life for me ain't been no crystal stairs" Langston Hughes*

*Homework:* Students to complete Simile/Metaphor Handout requiring students to:

- (a) read sentences or passages lifted from the upcoming HDT readings
- (b) identify if it is a simile or metaphor
- (c) explain how they came to their conclusion
- (d) provide a written explanation what the simile and or metaphor means -literarily / -physically

### Day 4:

**ASSESSMENT:** reflective journal writing:

- How do you feel about learning something new?
- Using the song *Life is a Highway* explain the literal meaning of life. Then think about your thoughts and reflect on the deeper ideas involved with life as a *Highway*. What type of highway? What can happen along the highway? How might the journeyman be experiencing the highway? Where does the highway lead?
- Using either of the film clips discuss what new understandings the character(s) came to through the act of metacognition; thinking about their thoughts.
- Consider the connection between the act of thinking about thinking and journaling & discussions as ways to communicate and recording our understandings. **QUOTE:**  
*Often I can give the truest and most interesting account of any adventure I have had after years have elapsed, for then I am not confused, only the most significant facts surviving in my memory. Indeed, all that continues to interest me after such a lapse of time is sure to be pertinent, and I may safely record all that I remember.* Henry Thoreau's Journal (Mar 27 1857)
- How is learning something new like a journey?

## *Lesson #3: Meet Mr. Thoreau*

*Duration 4 weeks*

### *Abstract:*

This lesson will use reading strategies, nature walks, United States historical events, journal writing and creative projects to *Meet Mr. Thoreau*. This 4-5 week lesson will allow students to *Meet Mr. Thoreau* as philosopher, writer/poet, social conscience, and naturalist. The goal of this lesson is to help students recognize that *Life was Journey* both literally and figuratively for Thoreau and that he did not discriminate between these identities; rather he was all these identities at all times. However, to appreciate the multi-faceted nature of his essence, we will meet Mr. Thoreau

As a result of this multi-disciplinary section of this unit, students will come to know Mr. Henry David Thoreau as the combination of these identities at all times. The aim is to expose students to the social, political, economic, and interpersonal issues in their lives and develop an awareness of their ability to participate in life's journey not just go along for the ride.

Designed to inspire dialogue about *Life is a Journey*, students will engage in reading, writing, reflecting and discussing both individually and in groups, essential questions about "journeys." Personal opinions about journeys will continue to be explored.

### *Goals/Objectives:*

- ~ develop metacognition skills through strategies such as essential questions/journaling, and List-Group-Label
- ~ work in groups to develop language and social skills
- ~ using nature walks and community observations, students will explore their views on nature, spirituality, and the relationship between and among social issues, nature, philosophy and ways to record these ideas
- ~ reflect upon the importance of understanding our identities are multiple and part of who are; one does not stand apart from the other.
- ~ be able to see how Thoreau was not political activist, or writer, or naturalist, or philosopher; rather he was all these at all times to differing degrees.



Procedures:

**WEEK 1: Meet Mr. Thoreau the philosopher; the transcendentalist.**

*Duration 4-5 days*

- Aim:**
- develop a working knowledge of “philosophy” and “transcendentalism”
  - apply these understandings to excerpted readings to *Meet Mr. Thoreau* the philosopher
  - use essential questions to develop metacognition; questions assist us to think about our ideas or social, political, interpersonal or environmental issues

**Day 1-2:**

- Power point presentation introducing Henry David Thoreau and Transcendentalism.
- A mini lesson that presents a visual, therefore, more tangible understanding of Transcendentalism will be conducted (Based on Carla Beard’s mini-lesson presented *Approaching Walden* course).

*Divine life is a force that exists in all things; an oversoul. If I am divine and all things are divine then I myself and all of existence with reverence and respect.* Students use their journals to draw pictures that illustrate the oversoul.

This mini-lesson will use clips from *Star Wars* infamous line “May the force be with you.” The character Obi-wan Kenobi, a Jedi Knight states: "The Force is what gives the Jedi his power. It's an energy field created by all living things. It surrounds us and penetrates us. It binds the galaxy together."

The principle: This force is a source of the universe and it IS the universe.

Source: <http://exn.ca/starwars/taoism.cfm>

Excerpts from Ralph Waldo Emerson’s “Nature,” “ Self-Reliance,” and “The Oversoul” will be used to further support ideas of transcendentalism.

- Students will take notes on the following definition / explanation of philosophy. The understandings of Transcendentalism and as we read Thoreau’s writings, we will seek to meet him as Philosopher.

The word philosophy is of Greek origin: *philos*- friend or lover and *sophia*-wisdom.

Therefore, the philosophy concerns itself with wisdom. In general, wisdom is looked at his or her ideals and principles that govern all actions and decisions. Applications of personal wisdom include one's ethical and social guidelines in life that determines one’s unique style of personality, the particular nature of short and long-term goal(s) pursued in life (spiritual or materialistic for example), perspective on life, social attitudes, etc.

- With philosophy as a discipline that is concerned with question of how one should live (ethics); what sorts of things exist and what are their essential natures (metaphysics); what counts as genuine knowledge (epistemology); and what are the principles of reasoning (logic), The following essential questions are designed to understand more fully the idea of philosophy and its relationship to living:

How can thinking help us personally?

How can our thinking help others?

In what ways does thinking help address questions raised through living?

What is existence? . . . what role does intelligent design play in existence?

. . . what role does Darwin’s theory of evolution play in existence?

- In assigned groups, students will read: “Thoreau on Seeing and Learning” ~ 4 October 1859, Journal XII: 371-72 and explore the following questions:

What does “seeing” mean to Thoreau?

What does the following quote suggest about thinking and questioning?

*You must be aware that no thing is what you have taken it to be.*

According to Thoreau, how are words similar to science specimens?

*In the one case, you take a sentence and analyze it, you decide if it is printed in large primer or small pica; if it is long or short, simple or compound, and how many clauses it is composed of; if the i’s are all dotted, or some for variety without dots; what color and composition of the ink and the paper; and it is considered a fair or mediocre sentence accordingly, and you will assign its place among the sentences you have seen and kept specimens of.*

In what words, phrases, or sentence(s) can we find the idea of the “oversoul” - the interconnectedness of all things?

### Day 2 -3:

- Students will meet in groups and have 15 minutes or so to wrap up their conversations and explorations of the questions presented previous day.

\* **ASSESSMENT:** *purpose of this journal writing is to assist students in developing the strategy of thinking as a tool for comprehension.*

After group discussions, students are to independently respond to the any one of the questions presented in this lesson. Students may also use the opportunity to present any questions or confusions they have with regard to philosophy, Transcendentalism, and / or Thoreau.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

- Reading packets will be distributed to students that include multiple selections that focus on Thoreau as a philosopher and Transcendentalist. Packets will be excerpted from:

“Civil Disobedience”                      “Walking”                      “Life Without Principle”

*Walden:* “Economy” ~ “Sounds” ~ “Solitude”

Essential questions to be explored:

How does a journey help define and redefine who we are?

What does it mean to be a leader on a journey?

How do individuals decide what road to take on their journey(s)?

In groups, students will select one reading passage from each of the four works. The purpose of their reading is to identify how these writings help us *Meet Mr. Thoreau* as a philosopher / Transcendentalist. Students will need their notes from the previous lessons.

Students will use the List-Group-Label to assist them in identifying relationships between words and critical thinking skills. This is a strategy that builds metacognition / comprehension.

While reading, students will present to one another evidence from each passage that illustrates Mr. Thoreau as a philosopher / Transcendentalist.

### Day 4-5:

\* **Week 1 ASSESSMENT:**

Presentations introducing *Mr. Thoreau the philosopher and transcendentalist.*

After reading, discussions and individual group List-Group-Label activity, each group will introduce *Mr. Thoreau* as a philosopher / Transcendentalist through their text-based evidence.

## **WEEK 2: Meet Mr. Thoreau the writer and poet.**

**Duration 4-5 days**

- Aim:**
- identify the purposes of writing
  - explore the way figurative language is used to create multiple levels of meaning
  - with the understanding that poetry is *vivid images and emotions*...examine Thoreau's poetic writing characteristics
  - identify vivid images and emotions (passions) exhibited in his writing

### **Day 1:**

- This section will start with a mini lesson illustrating the influences of figurative language in writing. The use of metacognition, thinking about ways in which to uncover the messages coded in the descriptive and figurative language helps us comprehend more fully.
- *Activate Prior Knowledge:* students will use their journals to display their understandings of each of the following questions:
  - What is a poet?
  - What is a writer?
  - What types of writing can help record the experiences of a journey? How?
  - How does our recording of experiences help ourselves? Others?
- Using Walt Whitman's *O Me! O Life!* from "Song of Myself" students will explore how poetry, a succinct form of writing can pack important and powerful meanings.

Students will respond to the following question:

How do Whitman's final lines of the poem provide the *Answer* and the problem of living?

### **Days 2-3:**

- Reading packets will be distributed to students that include multiple selections that focus on Thoreau as a writer and poet will be excerpted from:
  - "Civil Disobedience"                      "Walking"                      "Life Without Principles"
  - Walden* "Where I Lived and What I Lived For"                      "Wild Apples"
- Essential questions to be explored:
  - How does Thoreau's writing provide a window into what his mind sees?
  - Why is his writing important to his life's journey? to others?
  - What is the purpose of Thoreau's writing journey?
  - In what way does Thoreau's descriptive and poetic style of writing through figurative language help us to understand him as a human being?

In groups, students will select one reading passage from each of the four works. The purpose of their reading is to identify how these writings help us *Meet Mr. Thoreau* as a writer and poet. Emphasis on their readings and discussions are placed identifying figurative language and then digging below the surface to identify the *vivid emotions or images* ... the messages Thoreau has woven into his writing. Students will need their notes from the previous lessons.

Students will use the List-Group-Label to assist them in identifying relationships between words and critical thinking skills. This is a strategy that builds metacognition / comprehension.

While reading, students will collect evidence from each passage that illustrates Mr. Thoreau's ability to use figurative language to create deeper meanings.

*Day 4-5:*

\* **Week 2 ASSESSMENT:**

Each student is to select one key quote that uses figurative language from each of the reading selections (5 in all). Students are to identify what type of figurative language is used and how this language creates a vivid image or emotion for them or helps them to see through Mr. Thoreau's mind's eye.

*... continue to following page for Lesson #3 / Week 3*

**WEEK 3: Meet Mr. Thoreau one of New England's social consciences**

**Duration 5-6 days**

- Aim:**
- identify how Thoreau's philosophical ideas exposed social issues
  - explore ways in which Thoreau put ideas into action
  - develop understandings about how living in simplicity helps us view the world differently
  - demonstrate the ability to see how our different identities influence our life journeys

**Day 1:**

- Students share personal experiences or situations witnessed where they or another individual or group felt their treatment to be unfair.

After a brief discussion the words "Social Injustice" will be placed on the board. Students will be asked to explain, in their own words what this means.

A power point presentation illustrating social injustices such as poverty, pollution, discrimination, etc . will be viewed.

- Armed with the understandings about social injustice that we develop as a class, students will add to our List-Group-Label wall displays. Students will be informed that the purpose of their readings this week is to focus on *Meeting Mr. Thoreau* as one of New England's social conscience.

Essential questions:

- What is empathy?
- How do our behaviors and choices affect the present as well as the future?
- What is the purpose of a journey?
- In what ways are a collection of journeys wrapped up in *Life is a Journey*?
- What is a social conscience?
- Why might it be important to develop one?

**Days 2-3:**

- Reading packets will be distributed to students that include multiple selections that focus on Thoreau as a writer and poet will be excerpted from:

"Civil Disobedience" "Walking" "Life Without Principles" "A Plea for John Brown:  
*Walden*: "Where I Lived and What I Lived For" "Economy" "Wild Apples"

- Essential questions to be explored:
  - How does Thoreau's writing provide a window into what his mind sees?
  - What does Thoreau's mind see?
  - Why is his writing important to his life's journey? to others?
  - What is the purpose of his Thoreau's writing journey?
  - In what ways does Thoreau's descriptive and poetic style of writing through figurative language help us to understanding as a human being?

In groups, students will select one reading passage from each of the seven works. The purpose of their reading is to identify how these writings help us *Meet Mr. Thoreau* the social conscience. In other words, how can we see the world through Mr. Thoreau's mind's eye. Emphasis on their readings and discussions are placed on identifying issues that Thoreau felt the community-at-large should be made aware of. In addition, list any text-based evidence that provides the way in which Thoreau feels the particular issues might be addressed.

**Day 4:**

- Students will explore social issues in our community through:
  - ~ personal experiences
  - ~ witnessed experiences within the community
  - ~ newspaper articles
  - ~ internet research

Students will be encouraged to think like a transcendentalist; as possessing an over soul . . . all things connected.

The goal of this work is to collect pictures, newspaper clippings, advertisement, etc., that illustrate a social conscience.

*Day 5-6:*

\* ***Week 3 ASSESSMENT:***

Students will work in their assigned groups to create community-centered collages; collages that represent the social issues. They are to include Thoreau quotes in their poster that connect his 19<sup>th</sup> century thinking to our modern-day community.

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## ***WEEK 4: Meet Mr. Thoreau the naturalist***

**Duration 4-5 days**

- Aim:**
- identify how Thoreau's is "one with nature"
  - explain the importance of nature
  - explore Nature as Literature
- 
- develop understandings about how living in simplicity helps us view the world differently
  - demonstrate the ability to see how our different identities influence our life journeys

### ***Day 1-2:***

\* This lesson used with permission from Bill Schechter

- An Exercise in Writing & Sauntering. . . Nature as Literature

Thoreau is considered one of our greatest and earliest nature writers. His ability to describe the nature around him derives equally from his power of observation and the power of his pen.

This exercise has two parts:

- 1) Please describe for others in the class, a place that is very special and familiar to you, concentrating on its natural setting. The place can be as close as your backyard or as far as a thousand miles away.
  - 2) We are then going to take a walk. You are to take notes as we go. We will write down what we saw.
- After our walk and subsequent writing, students will use Think-Pair-Share-Square to explore the following essential questions:
    - What is nature?
    - What is a naturalist?
    - How often do we stop to observe nature?
    - Can our observations of nature raise our awareness of the importance to treat nature with reverence and respect?
    - How do our behaviors and decisions affect others as well as nature?
    - Why might it be important to be concerned with our community's nature?

Students will add to our List-Group-Label wall displays based on class developed understandings about nature. The purpose of their readings this week is to focus on *Meeting Mr. Thoreau* - the naturalist.

### ***Days 2-4:***

- Reading packets will be distributed to students that include multiple selections that focus on Thoreau as a writer and poet. Selections will be excerpted from:
  - “Civil Disobedience”      “Walking”      “Life Without Principles”      “Wild Apples”
  - “A Plea for John Brown”      “Autumnal Tints”
  - Walden*: “Where I Lived and What I Lived For”      “Economy”
- Essential questions to be explored during and after reading:
  - How does Thoreau's writing provide a window into what his mind sees?
  - What does Thoreau's mind see?
  - What role did nature play in his life's journeys?
  - How does his ability to write both scientifically and linguistically help his readers recognize his passion for nature?

- In groups, students will select one reading passage from each of the eight works. The purpose of their reading is to identify how these writings help us *Meet Mr. Thoreau* the naturalist. In other words, how can we see the world through Mr. Thoreau's mind's eye. Emphasis on their readings and discussions are placed on identifying Thoreau's beliefs about the importance of nature. In addition, students are to list any text-based evidence (quotes, excerpts) that help them *Meet Mr. Thoreau*.

\* ***Week 4 ASSESSMENT:***

*The Great Fallen Leaf Project:* (lesson used with permission of Bill Schechter)

Your Own "Autumnal Tints"

This assignment will take you back to those carefree years of elementary school, when your biggest worry was coloring rather than SATs. In 1862, two years before he died, Thoreau wrote an essay called "Autumnal Tints." It is considered a classic of nature writing. In it, he describes New England's greatest harvest: the falling of our autumnal leaves. Thoreau tried to capture in words the vivid colors that continue to astound foreign tourists to this area. He expressed a wish that he could have found a way to preserve the leaves so that he might use them as illustrations in the essay.

**Your assignment:** Collect between 5 and 10 autumn leaves affix them with pride in a book of your making. On the same page, try to "see" the leaf as for the first time and briefly (a paragraph or two) describe it in words. Consider this an exercise in nature-writing. You can choose prose or poetry to express yourself.

**LESSON 3 ASSESSMENT:**

Students are to individually create posters that illustrate their encounter with *Mr. Thoreau*: philosopher, poet/writer, social conscience and naturalist. Thoreau quotes should be displayed on the posters. Essentially, their posters should reflect the Thoreau he or she met. The poster/collage must include a variety of pictures, news clippings, nature/scientific information about our community, as well as quotations appearing as news headings. The poster should represent students understanding of how life is not but a single journey but a collection of journeys with success and mistakes, happiness and sadness, contentment and frustration.

*. . . continue to following page for Lesson #4*



## Lesson #4: Final Project . . . *Life is a Journey* and This Much I Know for Sure . . .

Duration 4-5 Days

### Abstract:

Students are completing their final year of K-12 schooling. They are transitioning from childhood into adulthood. Their journeys are to become more and more compiled as they develop into young adults with interdependent identities that help them view themselves and the world around them. *Meet Mr. Thoreau* students developed an understanding and awareness not only about Mr. Thoreau, but also about nature, community, the importance of communication both verbal and written as well as the importance of thinking about the way we mentally engage in life. In other words, students have come to a greater sense of self-awareness.

There are two aspects to the final project for this unit:

- (A) Involves the documenting of a greater self-awareness about their *Life is a Journey*
- (B) What they have learned about themselves, others, or their community.

Both Projects are required – Project A will be assigned informing students their insights and discoveries collected in this project will be used in Project B.

### Project A: *My Life is a Journey.*

Students are to choose 3 of the following quotes or any other Thoreau quotes.

The purpose of reflecting on these quotes is to explore their life's journeys; where they have been and where they wish to go.

Students are to reflect upon each quote separately then, using the essential questions we addressed in this unit (a comprehensive list will be provided for students) record their thoughts about the quote and their lives. The record of their thoughts can include drawings, photos, news clippings, magazine pictures, news headings. Each response is to present the reader with the opportunity to see through the individual student's mind's eye.

*If you want to succeed, you should strike out on new paths rather than travel the worn paths of accepted success.*

~ John D. Rockefeller

*Wherever I sat, there I might live, and the landscape radiated from me accordingly.*

~ Henry David Thoreau

*We can't rely on anyone but ourselves to define our existence, to shape the image of ourselves.*

~ Spike Lee

*The greatest genius will never be worth much if he pretends to draw exclusively from his own resources. What is genius but the faculty of seizing and turning to account everything that strikes us.*

~ Johanna Wolfgang von Goethe

*I live a sort of border life.*

~ Henry David Thoreau

*Half the walk is retracing our steps.*

~ Henry David Thoreau

*When you discover your mission, you will feel its demand. It will fill you with enthusiasm and a burning desire to get to work on it...*

~ W. Clement Stone

*I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life by a conscious endeavor . . . millions are awake enough . . . but only one in a million is awake enough for effective intellectual exertion . . . To be awake is to be alive.*

~ Henry David Thoreau

*Every morning was a cheerful invitation to make my life of equal simplicity, and I may say innocence, with Nature herself.*

~ Henry David Thoreau

**Project B:** Presentation to 9<sup>th</sup> graders ~ *Life is a Journey and This much I know for sure. . .*

Philosophy employs wisdom; using experiences and knowledge to direct choices. As the outgoing class of 2008, these seniors are to create a project they can present to the incoming 2007-2008 Freshman class. The presentation is to be created with the theme, *Life is a Journey and This much I know for sure . . .*

Each project must:

- (a) include individual life lessons for your life's journey
  - (b) school journey and a map for the future
  - (c) must include quotations that have particular meaning to the individual students
  - (d) illustrate that life is not a single journey but a collection of journeys
  - (e) demonstrate that *Life is a Highway* with bumps in the road and endless possibilities
  - (f) must be creative (Wow ! me)
1. Draw a map . . . this much I know for sure . . .  
School journey . . . the map for tomorrow  
Life lesson(s) from your Life's journey
  2. Brown bag - the essential for *Life is a Journey*
  3. Write a song or a poem
  4. Draw a picture or create a collage inclusive of captions and wisdoms
  5. Create a video or power point
  6. Photo Journal
  7. Reflective journal

## Comprehension Strategies

These strategies are used with permission from Missouri Department of Education:

### Think-Pair-Share-Square

[http://www.dese.mo.gov/divimprove/curriculum/ModelCurriculum/LifelsAJourney/lesson\\_four\\_edited.doc](http://www.dese.mo.gov/divimprove/curriculum/ModelCurriculum/LifelsAJourney/lesson_four_edited.doc)

The Think-Pair-Share-Square is a problem solving strategy that promotes social interaction and critical thinking.

In groups of four, use the questions provided below in Discussion Questions to complete the following activity:

- **Think** - Think about each question. Write down your response in your journal.
- **Pair, Share** - Turn to your partner and share your responses.
- **Square** - Turn to the other partner and share your responses.

Be ready to represent your square by orally sharing your response with the class

### List-Group-Label [http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/curriculum/ModelCurriculum/LifeIsAJourney/lesson\\_one.htm](http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/curriculum/ModelCurriculum/LifeIsAJourney/lesson_one.htm)

Purpose: List-Group-Label challenges students to . . .

- list key words (especially unclear and/or technical terms) from a reading selection.
- group these words into logical categories based on shared features.
- label the categories with clear descriptive titles.
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Procedure: Steps to List-Group-Label

- Select a main topic or concept in a reading selection.
- Students list all words they think relate to this concept. Write student responses on the chalkboard. **Note:** Since the concept is presented without a specific context, many of the student suggestions will not reflect the meaning of the concept in the reading selection.
- Divide the class into groups of three or four students. Groups join together related terms from the larger list. Have the teams provide "evidence" for this grouping—that is, require the students to articulate the common features or properties of the words collected in a group.
- Student groups suggest a descriptive title or label for the collections of related terms. These labels should reflect the rationale behind collecting the terms in a group.

Students read the text selection carefully and then review both the general list of terms and their collections of related terms. Students eliminate terms or groups that do not match the concept's meaning in the context of the selection. New terms from the reading should be added, when appropriate. Terms should be “sharpened” and the groupings and their labels revised, when necessary.

**Concept Wall:** (I modified the Word Wall concept to expand its thematic concepts)

**Word Walls:**

[http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/curriculum/ModelCurriculum/LifeIsAJourney/lesson\\_one.htm](http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/curriculum/ModelCurriculum/LifeIsAJourney/lesson_one.htm)

- support the teaching of important principles about words and how they work
- foster reading and writing
- provide reference support for students during their reading and writing
- promote independence on the part of students as they work with words in reading and writing
- provide a visual map to help students remember connections between words and the characteristics that will help them form categories
- develop a growing **vocabulary** that becomes part of reading and writing

**Suggested Guidelines**

- Add words gradually, five a week.
- Make words accessible by placing them where every student can see them.
- Write words in big, black letters; use a variety of background colors so that the most often confused words (there, their; what, when) are different colors.
- Limit addition of words to common words which students use frequently in writing.
- Practice words by chanting and writing.
- Have a variety of activities to provide practice so that words are read and spelled instantly and automatically.
- Make sure that Word Wall words are spelled correctly in any writing students do.

*His journals should not be permitted to be read by any, as I think they were not meant to be read. I alone might read them intelligently. To most others they would only give false impressions. I have never been able to understand what he meant by his life. Why did he care so much about being a writer? Why did he pay so much attention to his own thoughts? Why was he so dissatisfied with everyone else, etc.? Why was he so much interested in the river and the woods and the sky, etc.?*

*Something peculiar, I judge.*

~ Ellery Channing, friend of Thoreau's

*QUOTE: The future belongs to those who see possibilities before they become obvious. – John Sculley*

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The Adventure Continues!

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