

Thoreau the Locavore Asks, “Do You Know Beans about Your Beans?”

Approaching Thoreau through today’s heated local food debate.



“Rules? I clear my throat and try to state my position. ‘I have no rules,’ I assert, ‘other than Thoreau’s advice to “live each season as it passes, breathe the air, drink the drink, taste the fruit, and resign yourself to the influence of each.”’ Unfortunately all my listeners hear is ‘resign yourself.’”

--from Gary Paul Nabhan’s *Coming Home to Eat: The Pleasures and Politics of Local Foods* (p. 35)

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American Literature Honors

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Abstract:

Is the fastest way to a student's interest and intellect through his or her stomach? This unit will find out while students reflect on their own eating habits and consider what Michael Pollan terms *The Omnivore's Dilemma*. As the first part in a lesson series on Thoreau, this unit titled "Thoreau the Locavore" focuses on his bean field "experiment" and push for local, self-sustained food production. (The other units in the series will be titled "Thoreau the Naturalist" and "Thoreau the Civil Disobeyer," looking at his relationship with nature and social stirrings, respectively.) Thoreau will be introduced as a historical figure who can easily joins today's heated food fight. Students will learn about Thoreau's bean fields and the changing agricultural/industrial times in which Thoreau lived and consider how this 150 year old experiment continues to be a hot topic today in the locavore debate. Through a selection of non-fiction readings from various perspectives of the debate, students will reflect on their own eating habits and consider what the 100-mile-diet would look like for them in Framingham, MA. However the food fight in our own classroom ends, hopefully students will know beans about their beans, or at least take an interest in where their food is coming from and how it is marketed to them.

Unit Objectives:

Students will be able to explain Thoreau's bean field experiment and how this is relevant to the current locavore debate.

Students will read several excerpts from recent non-fiction regarding the food we eat and they will weigh the arguments presented by each writer and understand the (personal) practicality of eating locally.

Students will apply these reading to various discussions, debates, and writing assignments.

* Please see individual lesson plans for specific lesson objectives.

Duration & Outline:

This unit includes 8 lesson plans for 54 minute periods; the eighth lesson will be the day our guest speaker comes. This could easily be truncated to 7 lessons if a guest speaker is unavailable.

Lesson 1: What is America's Culinary Culture?

Lesson 2: The Paradoxes: Phat French vs. Anxious Americans

Lesson 3: Thoreau Knew His Beans: Looking at Thoreau's Bean Field Experiments.

Lesson 4: An Ode to A Fruit (or Vegetable): Channeling Our Inner Poet

Lesson 5: Snackdown: M&M vs. Snickers: Building a Strong Argument

Lesson 6: Carousel Questioning: Prepwork for an Interview

Lesson 7: Supersize Me: Fast Food and the People Who Eat It + Hope for a "McSustainable Future"

Lesson 8: The Interview

Lesson Details, Materials, and State Standards:

Teacher Andrea Popp	Course/Subject American Literature	
Grade(s) 11	#students	# with IEP, 504
Date and length of class 54 minutes		
Unit/Theme/Topic(s)/ Focus Question(s) Thoreau the Locavore (Lesson 1)		
Materials/Resources Needed		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thoreau Human Bingo worksheet; Twinkies for prizes • Anderson Cooper 360° clip – Michelle Obama’s White House Garden http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ja-NgI0-B40 • Readings (see bibliography for publication information) 		
Learning Standards Addressed (from MA Curriculum Frameworks or Local Standards)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard 1: Discussion • Standard 2: Questioning, Listening, Contributing • Standard 4: Vocabulary and Concept Development • Standard 6: Formal and Informal English • Standard 8: Understanding a Text • Standard 9: Making Connections • Standard 13: Non-fiction 		
Lesson Objectives		
<p>Students will define the term “culture” and identify its component parts.</p> <p>Students will question their classmates about their eating habits and “greenness.”</p> <p>Students will consider where their food comes from.</p> <p>Students will know the difference between industrial and pastoral food chains, key terms for their understanding of the homework and unit.</p>		
Setting the Stage (Activate, Review, Generate Interest, State Objectives and Agenda)		
<p>Agenda posted: 1) bellwork 2) Human Bingo 3) The Anatomy of a Twinkie 4) Victory Gardens</p> <p>Bellwork: Ask the students to answer the question: “If you really wanted to immerse yourself in another culture, what things would you need to study to truly understand this culture?” Provide an example: art. [~3]</p> <p>Activator: Thoreau Human Bingo – Students will work to get BINGO by asking classmates about themselves. Students may ask two questions of each classmate before having to move onto another person. If a student answers “yes” to the question posed by his/her classmate, the questioner should ask him/her for details and write the answerer’s name in the box (a student’s name may appear twice on each board). [~ 12]. “Winners” will receive Twinkies. BINGO is meant to activate students’ prior knowledge about Thoreau, introduce them to words they will encounter during the unit (transcendentalism, paradox), make them conscious of their interaction with nature, and consider their relationship with food. We will discuss the boards after the game to learn more about each other. [~10].</p>		
Instructional Strategies: Acquisition and Consolidation of Skills/Knowledge (Explanation, Modeling, Checking for Understanding, Guided and Independent Practice)		
Return to bellwork question. Hopefully students will have generated language, literature, religion,		

architecture, music, sports, geography, history, and food. As this class is focused around the theme of identity, we can ask ourselves what kind of culinary identity do we have—a hot question today that many are asking. Explain that the Twinkie, the BINGO prize, is an often referenced food item in this question as people want to retrace the steps their foods have take from the table back to the soil. [~5]

Have students read and excerpt from Ettinger’s *Twinkie, Deconstructed* and answer the question: Why make processed foods like a Twinkie rather than a nice yellow cake with buttercream frosting without preservatives? Who benefits and why? This article notes how modern food technology goes hand in hand with the worldwide chemical industry explosion during WWII, explaining that an increased shelf-life leads to increased freshness and profit. (This seems like an important point to make because our first few readings will be vilifying processed foods; why people were doing this at all since it does sound pretty bad to add chemicals to food will be important to remark on.) Note for students that products like the Twinkie--with chemicals used somewhere in their production--are what Michael Pollan would denote as a product from the industrial food chain. [~10]

After reading about the Twinkie and the questions many are raising about its lineage, show clip of Michelle Obama’s vegetable garden. Asks student what are Mrs. Obama’s reasons for doing this project? During discussion, note that many people are interested in knowing the farmer that their food comes from or growing the food themselves—food Pollan would clump in the pastoral food chain. [~10]

Closure (Summarize, Review, Homework, Preview Next Day)

Explain that we will spend the next several lectures considering where our foods come from by reading non-fiction by authors on various points of the food debate spectrum, from those who will only eat food within 100 miles of their homes to those who want to see solutions within the big agribusiness, which produces foods like the Twinkie.

Homework: Michael Pollan’s *In Defense of Food*’s introduction, “An Eater’s Manifesto,” and excerpt from *Omnivore’s Dilemma*’s introduction, “Our National Eating Disorder,” along with reading guide.

Assessment/ Evidence of Learning

3.2.1- 3 things that you learned or that piqued your interest, 2 things you are interested in learning more about or hope to learn from this unit, 1 food you could not live without. [~5]

Thoreau the Locavore

Guided reading questions for Michael Pollan's "Our National Eating Disorder" (excerpt) from *Omnivore's Dilemma* and "An Eater's Manifesto" from *In Defense of Food*.

1. Define the following terms (as Pollan uses them):
 - a. Food
 - b. omnivore's dilemma
 - c. Nutritional Industrial Complex
 - d. French paradox:
 - e. American paradox:
2. Pollan notes that "today in America the culture of food is changing more than once a generation, which is historically unprecedented—and dizzying" (Pollan *In Defense of Food* 4). Is this true in your own family? To find out, ask a parent/guardian what he/she ate as a child and think about what you eat now. Are there any noticeable differences? For the overachieving student, give grandpa or grandma (or any "aged" relative) a call and ask him or her what he or she ate as a child. Do your findings support Pollan's claim?
3. America is a mixing pot of cultures. Does Pollan think this mixing pot that serves up the Western Diet is a good thing? Why or why not?
4. What are the three food chains Pollan recognizes?
5. If this was biology class, what would you be learning is the source of energy for a natural food chain? How does the industrial food chain alter this set-up?

Teacher Andrea Popp	Course/Subject American Literature	
Grade(s) 11	#students	# with IEP, 504
Date and length of class 54 minutes		
Unit/Theme/Topic(s)/ Focus Question(s) Thoreau the Locavore (Lesson 2)		
Materials/Resources Needed		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Magazines, scissors, glue, construction paper, magnets • Excerpt from Alisa Smith and J.B. MacKinnon’s <i>Plenty</i> • Readings 		
Learning Standards Addressed (from MA Curriculum Frameworks or Local Standards)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard 1: Discussion • Standard 2: Questioning, Listening, Contributing • Standard 4: Vocabulary and Concept Development • Standard 6: Formal and Informal English • Standard 8: Understanding a Text • Standard 9: Making Connections • Standard 13: Non-fiction • Standard 19: Writing • Standard 20: Consideration of Audience and Purpose • Standard 22: Standard English Conventions 		
Lesson Objectives (If applicable, include specific high level skills and concepts.)		
<p>Students will show their understanding of terms from the homework by placing a food product in the appropriate category: industrial, pastoral, hunter-gatherer.</p> <p>Students will support or question Pollan’s argument with anecdotal evidence they collected.</p> <p>Students will define paradox.</p> <p>Students will practice conveying a particular tone by taking on a persona and writing a piece which conveys pleasure or worry.</p>		
Setting the Stage (Activate, Review, Generate Interest, State Objectives and Agenda)		
<p>Agenda posted: 1) Bellwork 2)Paradoxical Paradoxes 3) Phat French or Anxious American?</p> <p>Bellwork: Students will cut out a picture of food or an advertisement for a food product and paste it onto a piece of construction paper. They will then post it on the board under the categories “industrial, pastoral, hunter-gatherer” based on the food chain to which they think it belongs. [~6] This will be our entry into the previous night’s reading; we will review the three food chains and make sure students understand how Pollan is defining each. Students will most likely find food that belongs to the industrial food chain; some may find “organic” foods from the pastoral chain as well. I will demonstrate what is meant by “hunting and gathering” by reading aloud an excerpt from <i>Plenty</i>. We will also review the homework—what Pollan means by food (and which, if any of their selections qualify), what the Nutritional Industrial Complex is, and what is wrong with the industrial food chain’s energy source. Students will also be able to share any anecdotal evidence they found to support or refute Pollan’s claims. [~20]</p>		
Instructional Strategies: Acquisition and Consolidation of Skills/Knowledge (Explanation, Modeling, Checking for Understanding, Guided and Independent Practice)		

Paradox is an important literary term, so we will define paradox and consider what is paradoxical about the French and American diets. Having these real-life applications of the term “paradox” will help students understand the abstract term.

Write-Pair-Share: I will transition into the next activity by sharing a study Barry Glassner cites in his book *The Gospel of Food*:

Paul Rozin, a psychologist at the University of Pennsylvania, organized a study in which 1,281 people in France, Japan, Belgium, and the United States were questioned about their attitudes toward food. Among the findings: the French view food as pleasure, while Americans worry about food. Asked what words they associate with chocolate cake, the French chose “celebration” and the Americans chose “guilt.” Asked about heavy cream, the French selected “whipped”; the American’s chose “unhealthy.” (Glassner 3)

Students will pair up with a learning buddy for this activity; one will take on the role of a Frenchman, the other an American. They will select one of their food pictures as a pair and describe this clipping in as much detail as possible using the appropriate diction. They should consciously select adjectives, verbs, and adverbs that reflect either the pleasure or anxiety they will get from this food. After about 7 minutes of writing, the partners will share, and those who would like to share with the entire group may as well. I will call on a random listener to share a word he or she found particularly powerful in conveying the emotions of the eater/tone of the piece. [~25]

Closure (Summarize, Review, Homework, Preview Next Day)

Ticket to Leave: 1) define paradox 2) provide an example food from the industrial, pastoral, and hunter/gatherer food chains. (These questions will be printed on a slip.) [~5]

Homework: Read Barbara Kingsolver’s “Call Home,” the introduction to *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle*. As a response to the reading, pretend you are part of the Kingsolver family. What would your response be to the family’s year-long plan? What do you find admirable? What would you find difficult or challenging? This should be a sizable paragraph and may be handwritten.

Assessment/ Evidence of Learning

Ticket to Leave (see above)

Teacher Andrea Popp	Course/Subject American Literature	
Grade(s) 11	#students	# with IEP, 504
Date and length of class 54 minutes		
Unit/Theme/Topic(s)/ Focus Question(s) Thoreau the Locavore (Lesson 3)		
Materials/Resources Needed		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Janet Burne’s journal prompt – see curriculum units • Readings 		
Learning Standards Addressed (from MA Curriculum Frameworks or Local Standards)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard 1: Discussion • Standard 2: Questioning, Listening, Contributing • Standard 4: Vocabulary and Concept Development • Standard 6: Formal and Informal English • Standard 8: Understanding a Text • Standard 9: Making Connections • Standard 13: Non-fiction 		
Lesson Objectives (If applicable, include specific high level skills and concepts.)		
<p>Students will compare Kingsolver’s position to Keane’s position.</p> <p>Students will argue the merits or drawbacks of becoming a locavore by justifying their position on the human barometer.</p> <p>Students will define locavore.</p> <p>Students will read Thoreau and be able to explain how a 150-year-old text is relevant to the contemporary debate we are studying.</p>		
Setting the Stage (Activate, Review, Generate Interest, State Objectives and Agenda)		
<p>Agenda posted: 1) Bellwork 2) Human Barometer 3) Thoreau the Locavore: A lesson in “Economy”</p> <p>Bellwork: Students will read the <i>Boston Globe Magazine</i> article “A Bitter Reality” and find at least one point of contention between Kingsolver and Tom Keane. As we continue to read the selected articles, it is important to see that there are clearly differing opinions and arguments. We’ll express our own opinions in the next activity... [~8 minutes]</p> <p>Human Barometer: Based on their homework response (How would you feel about the Kingsolver proposal if you were part of the family?), line up from “extremely excited and on board” to “what friend’s family will take me in and support my McDonald’s addiction” (students can take some middle ground of course). Have students share why they picked their position on the spectrum. [~12]</p>		
Instructional Strategies: Acquisition and Consolidation of Skills/Knowledge (Explanation, Modeling, Checking for Understanding, Guided and Independent Practice)		
<p>Today we’ll look at Thoreau as a locavore. First, we’ll come up with a definition of “locavore.”</p> <p>In pairs students will read the selections from <i>Walden</i> “Economy” and answer the three questions.</p> <p>10-2: After they complete this pair work, I will provide a background about the changes the railroad and the Eric Canal created in the Concord market during Thoreau’s time and the symbolism behind his first and</p>		

second year crop layouts. Students will have two minutes to process the information with their reading partner and ask any clarifying questions. [~25]

Closure (Summarize, Review, Homework, Preview Next Day)

Ticket to Leave: Return to the idea of the human barometer and ask students to place Thoreau on the spectrum. They must provide one detail from *Walden* readings to support their answer. [~5]

Homework: Janet Burne's "Thoreau Experience" journal prompt – Students will select a fresh fruit or vegetable that they will "know deeply" by the end of the evening. Students will do the "preparation" to write, taking notes on their fruit or vegetable in preparation for an in-class poetry assignment the next day. Assign unit project.

Assessment/ Evidence of Learning

Ticket to Leave – see above.

Thoreau the Locavore

Selections are from *Walden* "Economy"

Before I finished my house, wishing to earn ten or twelve dollars by some honest and agreeable method, in order to meet my unusual expenses, I planted about two acres and a half of light and sandy soil near it chiefly with beans, but also a small part with potatoes, corn, peas, and turnips. The whole lot contains eleven acres, mostly growing up to pines and hickories, and was sold the preceding season for eight dollars and eight cents an acre. One farmer said that it was "good for nothing but to raise cheeping squirrels on." I put no manure on this land, not being the owner, but merely a squatter, and not expecting to cultivate so much again, and I did not quite hoe it all once. I got out several cords of stumps in ploughing, which supplied me with fuel for a long time, and left small circles of virgin mould, easily distinguishable through the summer by the greater luxuriance of the beans there. The dead and for the most part unmerchantable wood behind my house, and the driftwood from the pond, have supplied the remainder of my fuel. I was obliged to hire a team and a man for the ploughing, though I held the plough myself. My farm outgoes for the first season were, for implements, seed, work, &c., \$14 72. The seed corn was given me. This never costs any thing to speak of, unless you plant more than enough. I got twelve bushels of beans, and eighteen bushels of potatoes, beside some peas and sweet corn. The yellow corn and turnips were too late to come to any thing. My whole income from the farm was

\$23 44.
Deducting the outgoes, . . .14 72 1/2
there are left, <u> </u> \$8 71 1/2

beside produce consumed and on hand at the time this estimate was made of the value of \$4 50, -- the amount on hand much more than balancing a little grass which I did not raise. All things considered, that is, considering the importance of a man's soul and of to-day, notwithstanding the short time occupied by my experiment, nay, partly even because of its transient character, I believe that that was doing better than any farmer in Concord did that year.

The next year I did better still, for I spaded up all the land which I required, about a third of an acre, and I learned from the experience of both years, not being in the least awed by many celebrated works on husbandry, Arthur Young among the rest, that if one would live simply and eat only the crop which he raised, and raise no more than he ate, and not exchange it for an insufficient quantity of more luxurious and expensive things, he would need to cultivate only a few rods of ground, and that it would be cheaper to spade up that than to use oxen to plough it, and to select a fresh spot from time to time than to manure the old, and he could do all his necessary farm work as it were with his left hand at odd hours in the summer; and thus he would not be tied to an ox, or horse, or cow, or pig, as at present. I desire to speak impartially on this point, and as one not interested in the success or failure of the present economical and social arrangements. I was more independent than any farmer in Concord, for I was not anchored to a house or farm, but could follow the bent of my genius, which is a very crooked one, every moment. Beside being better off than they already, if my house had been burned or my crops had failed, I should have been nearly as well off as before.

Question 1: What changes does Thoreau make during his first and second years of farming? Why does he make these changes?

I learned from my two years' experience that it would cost incredibly little trouble to obtain one's necessary food, even in this latitude; that a man may use as simple a diet as the animals, and yet retain health and strength. I have made a satisfactory dinner, satisfactory on several accounts, simply off a dish of purslane (*Portulaca oleracea*) which I gathered in my cornfield, boiled and salted. I give the Latin on account of the savoriness of the trivial name. And pray what more can a reasonable man desire, in peaceful times, in ordinary noons, than a sufficient number of ears of green sweet-corn boiled, with the addition of salt? Even the little variety which I used was a yielding to the demands of appetite, and not of health. Yet men have come to such a pass that they frequently starve, not for want of necessaries, but for want of luxuries; and I know a good woman who thinks that her son lost his life because he took to drinking water only.

The reader will perceive that I am treating the subject rather from an economic than a dietetic point of view, and he will not venture to put my abstemiousness* to the test unless he has a well-stocked larder.

Bread I at first made of pure Indian meal and salt, genuine hoe-cakes, which I baked before my fire out of doors on a shingle or the end of a stick of timber sawed off in building my house; but it was wont to get smoked and to have a piny flavor. I tried flour also; but have at last found a mixture of rye and Indian meal most convenient and agreeable. In cold weather it was no little amusement to bake several small loaves of this in succession, tending and turning them as carefully as an Egyptian his hatching eggs. They were a real cereal fruit which I ripened, and they had to my senses a fragrance like that of other noble fruits, which I kept in as long as possible by wrapping them in cloths. I made a study of the ancient and indispensable art of bread-making, consulting such authorities as offered, going back to the primitive days and first invention of the unleavened kind, when from the wildness of nuts and meats men first reached the mildness and refinement of this diet, and travelling gradually down in my studies through that accidental souring of the dough which, it is supposed, taught the leavening process, and through the various fermentations thereafter, till I came to "good, sweet, wholesome bread," the staff of life. Leaven, which some deem the soul of bread, the *spiritus* which fills its cellular tissue, which is religiously preserved like the vestal fire, -- some precious bottle-full, I suppose, first brought over in the Mayflower, did the business for America, and its influence is still rising, swelling, spreading, in cereal billows over the land, -- this seed I regularly and faithfully procured from the village, till at length one morning I forgot the rules, and scalded my yeast; by which accident I discovered that even this was not indispensable, -- for my discoveries were not by the synthetic but analytic process, -- and I have gladly omitted it since, though most housewives earnestly assured me that safe and wholesome bread without yeast might not be, and elderly people prophesied a speedy decay of the vital forces. Yet I find it not to be an essential ingredient, and after going without it for a year am still in the land of the living; and I am glad to escape the trivialness of carrying a bottle-full in my pocket, which would sometimes pop and discharge its contents to my discomfiture. It is simpler and more respectable to omit it. Man is an animal who more than any other can adapt himself to all climates and circumstances. Neither did I put any sal soda, or other acid or alkali, into my bread. It would seem that I made it according to the recipe which Marcus Porcius Cato gave about two centuries before Christ. "Panem depsticium sic facito. Manus mortariumque bene lavato. Farinam in mortarium indito, aquae paulatim addito, subigitoque pulchre. Ubi bene subegeris, defingito, coquitoque sub testu." Which I take to mean -- "Make kneaded bread thus. Wash your hands and trough well. Put the meal into the trough, add water gradually, and knead it thoroughly. When you have kneaded it well, mould it, and bake it under a cover," that is, in a baking-kettle. Not a word about leaven. But I did not always use this staff of life. At one time, owing to the emptiness of my purse, I saw none of it for more than a month.

Every New Englander might easily raise all his own bread-stuffs in this land of rye and Indian corn, and not depend on distant and fluctuating markets for them. Yet so far are we from simplicity and independence that, in Concord, fresh and sweet meal is rarely sold in the shops, and hominy and corn in a still coarser form

**abstemiousness* – restraint shown especially in the consumption of food or alcohol

are hardly used by any. For the most part the farmer gives to his cattle and hogs the grain of his own producing, and buys flour, which is at least no more wholesome, at a greater cost, at the store. I saw that I could easily raise my bushel or two of rye and Indian corn, for the former will grow on the poorest land, and the latter does not require the best, and grind them in a hand-mill, and so do without rice and pork; and if I must have some concentrated sweet, I found by experiment that I could make a very good molasses either of pumpkins or beets, and I knew that I needed only to set out a few maples to obtain it more easily still, and while these were growing I could use various substitutes beside those which I have named, "For," as the Forefathers sang, --

"we can make liquor to sweeten our lips
Of pumpkins and parsnips and walnut-tree chips."

Finally, as for salt, that grossest of groceries, to obtain this might be a fit occasion for a visit to the seashore, or, if I did without it altogether, I should probably drink the less water. I do not learn that the Indians ever troubled themselves to go after it.

Thus I could avoid all trade and barter, so far as my food was concerned, and having a shelter already, it would only remain to get clothing and fuel. The pantaloons which I now wear were woven in a farmer's family, -- thank Heaven there is so much virtue still in man; for I think the fall from the farmer to the operative as great and memorable as that from the man to the farmer; -- and in a new country fuel is an encumbrance. As for a habitat, if I were not permitted still to squat, I might purchase one acre at the same price for which the land I cultivated was sold -- namely, eight dollars and eight cents. But as it was, I considered that I enhanced the value of the land by squatting on it.

There is a certain class of unbelievers who sometimes ask me such questions as, if I think that I can live on vegetable food alone; and to strike at the root of the matter at once, -- for the root is faith, -- I am accustomed to answer such, that I can live on board nails. If they cannot understand that, they cannot understand much that I have to say. For my part, I am glad to hear of experiments of this kind being tried; as that a young man tried for a fortnight to live on hard, raw corn on the ear, using his teeth for all mortar. The squirrel tribe tried the same and succeeded. The human race is interested in these experiments, though a few old women who are incapacitated for them, or who own their thirds in mills, may be alarmed.

Question 2: What does Thoreau eat? Where does he get his food?

Question 3: What would he think of Kingsolver's proposal or the 100-mile diet? What makes you think this?

Taken from Janet Burne's Curriculum Unit:

"Meanwhile my beans, the length of whose rows, added together, was seven miles already planted, were impatient to be hoed, for the earliest had grown considerably before the latest were in the ground. . . What shall I learn of beans or beans of me? My auxiliaries are the dews and rains which water this dry soil, and what fertility is in the soil itself, which for the most part is lean and effete. My enemies are worms, cool days, and most of all woodchucks.... When I was four years old, as I well remember, I was brought from Boston to this my native town, through these very woods and this field, to the pond. . . The pines still stand here older than I; or, if some have fallen, I have cooked my supper with their stumps, and a new growth is rising all around, preparing another aspect for new infant eyes. Almost the same johnswort springs from the same perennial root in this pasture. . . it was only about fifteen years since the land was cleared, and I myself had got out two or three cords of stumps, . . . but in the course of the summer it appeared by the arrowheads which I turned up in hoeing, that an extinct nation had anciently dwelt here and planted corn and beans ere white men came to clear the land. . . As I drew a still fresher soil about the rows with my hoe, I disturbed the ashes of unchronicled nations who in primeval years lived under these heavens, and their small implements of war and hunting were brought to the light of this modern day.. . It was a singular experience that long acquaintance which I cultivated with beans, what with planting, and hoeing, and harvesting, and threshing, and picking over and selling them, -- the last was the hardest of all, -- I might add eating, for I did taste. I was determined to know beans.

Walden, (pp. 107 - 111)

A. Preparation to write -- Determine to **know** something deeply and variously. Choose your favorite *fresh* fruit or vegetable. Get one. Sit with it for a period of time without touching it. Put it in your hand, close your eyes, and "know" it through your fingers. Smell it for at least one full minute. Take a bite, if it's edible in its raw state. Go to a gardening resource and gather facts about its cultivation or growing habits. What conditions does it require? What are its enemies? How many varieties are there? Research its uses. Research its past - has it always been used as it is today? (For example, in the early 1800's, apple pie was not served as a dessert, but rather as part of the entree.) How far back in time is there evidence of its consumption? Is it linked to any cultural traditions? Check several cookbooks and determine how many ways it can be prepared. Does it always belong to one or another part of the meal, such as a side vegetable, or can it also appear in the bread, the appetizer, the dessert? Check the isles of the supermarket. In how many forms can this fruit or vegetable be purchased? Talk to family members or friends to find out what they know of this food.

B. Journal -- How does knowing about something in depth alter your perception of that item? Use the above activity as illustration of your insights and conclusions. What other things besides foodstuffs do you think would benefit from our knowing in depth?

Thoreau the Locavore

Final Project

Please select one of the activities below to complete as a capstone to our unit. You may submit your own project idea for approval (do not wait until the night before to do so!).

Intelligence	Activity
Verbal-Linguistic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Write up the interview with Mr. O'Brien for the school paper; include reading suggestions for students who may be interested in pursuing the topic further. Read one of the books we read an excerpt from in its entirety and write a book review.
Visual-Spatial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look at various product advertisements or packaging. What techniques is the company using to sell its product (think about color, photography, words, etc). Create a poster that "exposes" these techniques. Watch a documentary like <i>Supersize Me</i> or <i>Fast Food Nation</i> and write a review of the film.
Musical-Rhythmic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create and perform a jingle for your favorite food. Compile a collection of food related poems. As the editor of the collection, explain your selection. Bind your collection and include a cover. Create a play list of food/eating related songs and explain how each song fits the theme on the track list. Design an album cover.
Logical-Mathematic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a log of the food you eat in a single day. Using googlemaps, calculate the average distance your food has traveled to get from its place of origin to your table. What traveled farthest? Came from nearby? Present in a visual.
Bodily-Kinesthetic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepare a two or three course meal that sticks to the 100 mile-diet. Provide recipes, pictures of the action, and a description of the challenges you faced in creating this meal. You may want to film this as a mock cooking show.
Intrapersonal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a grocery list of 20 items you would normally purchase. If you were to stick to the 100-mile diet, which items could you purchase, which items would have to be sacrificed? If you are looking for a specific brand that is outside the zone, can you substitute another brand? Which items could you not live without? Create a visual to report your findings.
Interpersonal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct a blind taste test between a non-organic and organic version of the same food item. Explain the set-up of the test and report your findings.
Naturalist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a pamphlet of local farmers' markets and restaurants that serve local products. Visit one and write a feature about it. Plan a garden for FHS. What would you grow? When would you plant each plant? How much would supplies cost? Draft a proposal for Mr. Welch.

Teacher Andrea Popp	Course/Subject American Literature	
Grade(s) 11	#students	# with IEP, 504
Date and length of class 54 minutes		
Unit/Theme/Topic(s)/ Focus Question(s) Thoreau the Locavore (Lesson 4)		
Materials/Resources Needed		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Janet Burne’s journal prompt completed • Access to computer lab • Readings 		
Learning Standards Addressed (from MA Curriculum Frameworks or Local Standards)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard 1: Discussion • Standard 2: Questioning, Listening, Contributing • Standard 6: Formal and Informal English • Standard 8: Understanding a Text • Standard 14: Poetry • Standard 15: Style and Language • Standard 19: Writing • Standard 20: Consideration of Audience and Purpose 		
Lesson Objectives (If applicable, include specific high level skills and concepts.)		
<p>Students will briefly analyze two poems about food and will discuss strengths of the authors’ style and language.</p> <p>Students will write a poem that incorporates their observations and research from their homework.</p> <p>Students will use imagery and literary devices highlighted in discussion in their own poems.</p>		
Setting the Stage (Activate, Review, Generate Interest, State Objectives and Agenda)		
<p>Agenda posted: 1) bellwork 2)Computer Lab to write poems</p> <p>Bellwork: Students will read two poems: Alfred Corn’s “Wonderbread” and Jack Prelutsky’s “Deep in Our Refrigerator.” After reading, they should pick a favorite word, image, detail, etc. from each. Some students will share their selections. [~10]</p>		
Instructional Strategies: Acquisition and Consolidation of Skills/Knowledge (Explanation, Modeling, Checking for Understanding, Guided and Independent Practice)		
<p>Students will spend the rest of the period in the computer lab creating poems about the fruit or vegetable they got to know the night before. They will incorporate imagery as well as their research in the poem. They will be reminded to borrow stylistic devices from the poets we just read. [~40]</p> <p>Technology boost/filler: Students who finish early will learn to add a watermark of their fruit/vegetable to their poem.</p>		
Closure (Summarize, Review, Homework, Preview Next Day)		
<p>Homework: Read Barbara Kingsolver’s “Stalking the Vegetannual” from <i>Animal, Vegetable, Miracle</i>, Bill McKibben’s “A Grand Experiment” from <i>Gourmet</i> magazine, and Camille Kingsolver’s “Getting It While You Can.” Based on your understanding of Kingsolver’s vegetannual and McKibben’s month-by-month</p>		

eating, figure out what stage of the vegetannual—leaf, flower, young fruit, ripe fruit, hard-shelled fruit, or root—the fruit or vegetable you wrote your poem about would be considered.

Assessment/ Evidence of Learning

Students will turn in poems at the end of the period.

Teacher Andrea Popp	Course/Subject American Literature	
Grade(s) 11	#students	# with IEP, 504
Date and length of class 54 minutes		
Unit/Theme/Topic(s)/ Focus Question(s) Thoreau the Locavore (Lesson 5)		
Materials/Resources Needed		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Magnets • Chart paper and marker; Snickers and M&Ms • Readings 		
Learning Standards Addressed (from MA Curriculum Frameworks or Local Standards)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard 1: Discussion • Standard 2: Questioning, Listening, Contributing • Standard 3: Oral Presentation • Standard 6: Formal and Informal English • Standard 8: Understanding a Text • Standard 9: Making Connections • Standard 13: Non-fiction 		
Lesson Objectives (If applicable, include specific high level skills and concepts.)		
<p>Students will demonstrate their understanding of the homework reading and the vegetannual concept by placing their selected fruits/vegetables on the vegetannual plant.</p> <p>Students will build an argument when given a side to debate.</p> <p>Students will refute the other side's claim by exposing faulty logic or otherwise weak points.</p>		
Setting the Stage (Activate, Review, Generate Interest, State Objectives and Agenda)		
<p>Agenda posted: 1) bellwork 2)Snackdown: M&Ms v. Snickers</p> <p>Bellwork: On a large sheet of paper I will attempt to replicate the vegetannual: leaves, mature leaves and flowers, young fruit, mature/ripened fruit, hard-shelled fruits, and roots. Students will tack up their poems next to the place where this food would fall on the vegetannual (this will become a display on the bulletin board).</p> <p>The bellwork sets up a review of the homework. This will give students a sense of what months they would expect to find their favorite foods in New England. I will again ask students who would try the locavore lifestyle knowing they would have a select window in which to eat their beloved fruit or vegetable. Students who would like to share their poems may at this time. Any questions or comments from the homework can be addressed at this time as well. [~20]</p>		
Instructional Strategies: Acquisition and Consolidation of Skills/Knowledge (Explanation, Modeling, Checking for Understanding, Guided and Independent Practice)		
<p>M&M/Snickers Debate (activity created by Inna London): All of the readings we have done thus far are from the pro-locavore school; the next two readings bring agribusiness into the debate, not as something that can or should be toppled but something that needs to be included. Students will also notice that these next two writers will reference people they have already encountered--Glassner references Michael Pollan and Kamp references Alice Waters and Pollan. The M&M and Snickers activity not only gives students a chance at advertising (something Glassner is quite interested in), but also a chance to see how to build a strong argument, whether they're arguing the merits of one candy over another, one food chain over another, or one literary</p>		

interpretation over another (as students will be doing throughout the year in analytical papers).

Direct students to pick up either a Snickers or package of M&Ms (teacher lays out equal numbers of both, with enough for each student to get one). Snickers should sit on one side, M&M on the other. Each group will be given a piece of chart paper and a marker. First, the groups must come up with at least 8-10 reasons why their candy is a superior candy. They cannot trash the other candy bar; instead, they must focus on the merits of their candy. When time is called, each side will present their arguments to the class. After this, chart papers will be exchanged and the teams will look for the 3-4 weakest points in the other side's argument. They will present what they find faulty or illogical about the original team's argument after small group debate. [~30]

Closure (Summarize, Review, Homework, Preview Next Day)

By the end of the activity students will understand that careful, thoughtful reader will consider the strengths of an argument but also question the validity of the points made so that they are not just passively absorbing what is being told to them. When writing an analytical paper, literary critics are looking for a new angle to come at a much written about text—they are going to acknowledge what has come before them, but, at the same time, make way for their own arguments by finding holes in their predecessors' arguments. We'll celebrate this knowledge by eating our chocolate.

Homework: Read Barry Glassner's "Promises of the Father" from *The Gospel of Food* and guided reading questions.

Assessment/ Evidence of Learning

Rather than a formal assessment, I will monitor learning by circulating through the groups as they generate their arguments to make sure all students are on task and understand. I will also use the informal oral presentations as evidence.

Thoreau the Locavore

Guided reading questions for Barry Glassner's "Promises of the Fathers: How the Food Industry Sells Its Wares" from *The Gospel of Food*

1. What "added value" does Glassner find in organic food?
2. What does Glassner think the organic PR firms need to stop advertising and why?
3. Why would you take what you read at QuornComplaints.com with a grain of salt?
4. According to Pollan, what are the positives and negatives of agribusiness giants selling organic products?
5. To what growing/shipping conditions would Pollan like the "organic" label to be limited?
6. Does Glassner believe that Big Food is serving "king consumer's" desires? What evidence does he provide?
7. What would Glassner think of the 100-mile diet and eating only what is seasonally available off the vegetannual?
8. Provide an example of false advertising.
9. What is more nutritious: fresh or frozen vegetables—why? (Consider what variables may change this.)
10. On the back of this sheet, create a rough timeline of the history and popularity of canned/prepared food.

Teacher Andrea Popp	Course/Subject American Literature	
Grade(s) 11	#students	# with IEP, 504
Date and length of class 54 minutes		
Unit/Theme/Topic(s)/ Focus Question(s) Thoreau the Locavore (Lesson 6)		
Materials/Resources Needed		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-Its • Chart paper posted throughout the room and markers • Readings 		
Learning Standards Addressed (from MA Curriculum Frameworks or Local Standards)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard 1: Discussion • Standard 2: Questioning, Listening, Contributing • Standard 6: Formal and Informal English • Standard 8: Understanding a Text • Standard 9: Making Connections • Standard 13: Non-fiction • Standard 19: Writing • Standard 22: Standard English Conventions 		
Lesson Objectives (If applicable, include specific high level skills and concepts.)		
Students will generate and revise questions in preparation for a guest speaker and draw on their knowledge from previous readings.		
Setting the Stage (Activate, Review, Generate Interest, State Objectives and Agenda)		
Agenda posted: 1)bellwork 2) Carousel Questions		
<p>Bellwork: Censogram poll – Assume you are alone on a desert island for one year and you can have water and one other food. Pick the food that you think would be best for your health (this is exactly what Paul Rozin presented to a diverse sample of Americans; see Glassner 14). Seven choices will be written on the board: corn, alfalfa sprouts, hot dogs, spinach, peaches, bananas, and milk chocolate. Students will place a post-it next to their choice creating a bar graph. We will discuss the rationale behind their selections; students will probably be surprised to learn that hot dogs and milk chocolate are the best choices because of the fat and other nutrients they contain (fewer than 1 in 10 in Rozin’s study chose these two options). Students will understand that they need to make informed decisions rather than jump to conclusions. We will discuss what conclusions Glassner does not want us to jump to from the previous night’s reading, for example agribusiness organics are “bad” or we can trust product labels. [~15]</p>		
Instructional Strategies: Acquisition and Consolidation of Skills/Knowledge (Explanation, Modeling, Checking for Understanding, Guided and Independent Practice)		
<p>We will be having a guest speaker and need to prepare for an interview (I hope to get the Food Director for Framingham Schools in to speak with the class; he has made many changes to the menu in the past two years, and I have heard him speak about trying to get more local produce into the cafeteria). In groups, students will generate questions for this guest based on the readings they have done. We will generate these through carousel brainstorming. Chart paper will be hung in various spots in the room with the following headings: Pollan, Kingsolver, Keane, McKibben, Glassner, and You. On the paper, each group must write a question for our guest speaker that is either a question the writer might ask or a question the writer made them want to ask a</p>		

person who could reply. For example, they may ask “how practical would the 100-mile diet be for a school district that needs to feed thousands of students?” The “You” chart is for whatever questions they may have specifically related to their own experiences with the cafeteria food. After each group has made it to the different papers, we’ll consider the questions and pick the best to ask during the interview. [~35]

Closure (Summarize, Review, Homework, Preview Next Day)

Homework: Read David Kamp’s “Toward a McSustainable Future” from *The United States of Arugula: How We Became A Gourmet Nation* (final chapter) and write a paragraph about what Kamp sees as the shortcomings of someone like Alice Waters and the steps he sees America has made toward a “McSustainable Future.” This may be handwritten.

Assessment/ Evidence of Learning

Questions generated based on the specific readings during carousel brainstorming will allow me to see if students actually understand the different arguments and address any misunderstandings.

Teacher Andrea Popp	Course/Subject American Literature	
Grade(s) 11	#students	# with IEP, 504
Date and length of class 54 minutes		
Unit/Theme/Topic(s)/ Focus Question(s) Thoreau the Locavore (Lesson 7)		
Materials/Resources Needed		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Film: <i>Super Size Me</i> • AB Review • Readings 		
Learning Standards Addressed (from MA Curriculum Frameworks or Local Standards)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard 1: Discussion • Standard 2: Questioning, Listening, Contributing • Standard 6: Formal and Informal English • Standard 8: Understanding a Text • Standard 9: Making Connections • Standard 13: Non-fiction 		
Lesson Objectives (If applicable, include specific high level skills and concepts.)		
<p>Students will stereotype those who are part of the hunter-gatherer/pastoral food chains and those who are part of the industrial food chain.</p> <p>Students will be able to explain how race, gender, and social class affect a person's eating habits.</p> <p>Students will define key terms from the unit through a pair review.</p>		
Setting the Stage (Activate, Review, Generate Interest, State Objectives and Agenda)		
<p>Agenda posted: 1) bellwork 2) Supersize Me 3)Supersize Who? 4) Review</p> <p>Bellwork: Generate a question for our guest speaker based on last night's reading by Kamp. Once everyone has settled in, students should share what they wrote for homework (think-pair-share). [~10]</p>		
Instructional Strategies: Acquisition and Consolidation of Skills/Knowledge (Explanation, Modeling, Checking for Understanding, Guided and Independent Practice)		
<p>Watch the first five minutes of <i>Supersize Me</i>. Discuss the benefits Kamp sees coming out of a movie like this. [~10]</p> <p>Generate stereotypes of the people who would be locavores vs. those who would be supersizing their meals. Reveal the demographic information of the two female plaintiffs mentioned in <i>Supersize Me</i> (two minority teenagers, living in the Bronx, where one girl was homeless at the time). Ask students: why would minority, urban, poor females be eating so much fast food? Generate ideas. [~15]</p>		
Closure (Summarize, Review, Homework, Preview Next Day)		
<p>AB Partner Review terms of the unit [~15] – Students pair up. One partner gets a French fry list, the other gets an organic produce basket list. Students must give clues/definitions to try and get their partner to guess the term from their list.</p> <p>Preview: tomorrow guest speaker!</p>		

Homework: Work on projects. – Make sure to clarify any questions.

Assessment/ Evidence of Learning

Students will be assessed through class discussion.

The following are points made by law professor Regina Austin in her paper “Super Size Me and the Conundrum of Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and Class for the Contemporary Law-Genre Documentary Filmmaker.” She was disappointed that Spurlock did not acknowledge the race, gender, and class issues in his documentary film, but rather the effects on a generic (i.e. white male) American physique.

<<http://feministlawprofs.law.sc.edu/?p=1962>>

- (1) The incidence of obesity and obesity-related illnesses is greater in minority communities, especially among women.
- (2) Obesity is associated with poverty and food insecurity, though that connection is not often made. This may produce a general misunderstanding about the sources of the obesity of the inhabitants of low-income minority communities.
- 3) Fast-food restaurants have a special nutritional significance in communities with a scarcity of grocery stores and supermarkets and a dearth of restaurants of other kinds. Fast-food outlets also have a special social significance as sites of entertainment and amusement. The poor, the elderly, and the homeless particularly benefit from these advantages. However, after a slow start, influenced by what some regard to be racism, fast food chains have established franchises in such numbers that local ordinances are being considered to regulate their presence in communities like the Bronx.
- (4) Furthermore, given the emphasis on fried fare, fast food greatly resembles soul food. Fast food is also served in a relaxed, informal setting that is conducive to the good fellowship blacks associate with eating soul food. The linkage between soul food and fast food is problematic, however, as both are associated with food-related chronic conditions like hypertension and diabetes.
- (5) Controlling weight or even determining what is a healthy weight is a culturally loaded subject for black women, among other minority women. On the one hand, black cultural norms appreciate curvaceous women; this may be salutary for their self-esteem but leaves them carrying more weight than is good for their health. On the other hand, black culture, in addition to mainstream culture, denigrates large, sassy women who speak their minds; this stereotype is bad for black women’s psyches, although it does challenge the conceit that respect is a matter of size. General admonitions to heavy black female teenagers to eat healthy and watch their weight may not be as effective as those aimed at young white women who do not have to negotiate the same sort of middle course between acceptance and ill-health.
- (6) Finally, the residents of poor minority urban communities may also have difficulties controlling their weight with exercise. Restraints on leisure have a number of sources including cultural norms that limit physical exertion by women, governmental barriers to access, and the lack of private investment in recreational space in poor and minority communities.



pastoral food chain

100-mile diet

locavore

American Paradox

vegetannual

Twinkie

beans

Agribusiness

Nutritional Industrial Complex

Omnivore's Dilemma

French Paradox

Hunter-gatherer

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B	I	N	G	O
Has been to Walden Pond	Has read a nutrition label	Eats meals predominantly influenced by a single culture	Has been to France or Italy	Eats fast food at least one day a week
Can define "paradox"	Can name what Thoreau, Gandhi, and MLK, Jr. have in common	Knows someone who owns a hybrid car	Has been to a local farm market	Has watched an episode of Captain Planet
Misses fries in the cafeteria	Composts or would like to compost	Can provide one fact about Henry David Thoreau	Uses reusable bags at the grocery store	Can spell "transcendentalism" without looking at this paper
Planted a garden this summer	Is a member of the environmental club	Shops at Whole Foods	Has gone camping	Is a vegetarian or vegan
Does not like fruits and/or vegetables	Spent the summer landscaping	Has been to Alaska	Can name a diet or diet supplement	Has eaten a fruit in winter

