

APPROACHING WALDEN

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Approaching Walden in the Search for Self

Unit Summary: “Approaching Walden” is a unit specifically designed for high school sophomores reading Henry David Thoreau’s *Walden*. Students at this age benefit from understanding Thoreau’s points and considering his philosophy in their daily lives. The challenge many of these students face is their ability to realize that comprehension of *Walden* is well within their means. I have found through experience teaching this work that students will connect with the writing when it is presented in a way that allows them to see its relevance to their lives. They are working at carving out their place in the world, and Thoreau has a great deal to say about this. In order for a personal connection to occur, *Walden* has to be broken into manageable sections which communicate major themes. My goal and my hope is by introducing this work in a way that engages students rather than overwhelms them they will at one point in their lives come back to *Walden* and read it in its entirety.

The unit begins by introducing students the philosophy of Transcendentalism and to Henry David Thoreau. Students will begin reading, discussing and analyzing passages after they have engaged in an activity that causes them to consider the idea. Once students make the connection between the activity and the text, they are prompted to reflect on their thought process through comprehension and analytical questions, writing assignments, and close readings. A final project calls for students to create a symbolic collage focused on a quote from “the Conclusion” or to create a CD with music that reflects the ideas in “the Conclusion.”

Objectives of this Unit

Students will:

Know the term Transcendentalism and be able to explain the core principals of Transcendentalism.

Know background information about Henry David Thoreau

Experience solitude in nature and reflect on that experience through writing

Discuss and evaluate the benefits and limitations of voluntary simplicity

Recognize, reflect, and write about the importance of individual identity

Evaluate the benefits and dangers of conformity

Recognize and reflect on the power and impact of words and writing—our own and others—on shaping identity

Consider the impact of tone and voice.

Recognize similes and metaphors in Thoreau’s writing and understand how the use of figurative language can enhance one’s understanding of an idea or concept

Make personal connections to the points raised in *Walden*

Unit Duration: Approximately two weeks

Unit Outline:

Lesson I (75mins)

Background Information on Thoreau and Transcendentalism

Lesson II (75 mins)

“Where I Lived, What I Lived For”: Considering the essentials in our lives; Understanding and recognizing the use of figurative language

Lesson III (45 mins)

“Where I Lived, What I Lived For”: Simplicity, Simplicity, Simplicity
Understanding Thoreau’s ideas about simplicity, and considering simplifier our own lives.

Lesson IV (55 mins)

Experiencing Nature for Ourselves

Lesson V (75 mins)

Studying “The Pond in Winter”; “Spring”; Examining and discussing Thoreau’s Journals

Lesson VI (90 mins)

“The Conclusion”: Reading and understanding excerpts from “the Conclusion”

Lesson Plans

Lesson 1: Thoreau and Transcendentalism

Lesson Length: (75 mins)

Materials Needed: Reading handouts: “What is Transcendentalism?”, “Concord in the Time of the Transcendentalists,” “Thoreau in Depth.” Access to computer and United Streaming by Discovery Education, LCD projector and screen, white board and markers.

- I. Introduction of Thoreau and Transcendentalist
 - A. Background Reading
 1. “What is Transcendentalism?”, “Concord in the Time of the Transcendentalists,” “Thoreau in Depth” (20 mins)
 2. Video through United Streaming Video “Great Books: Walden” (30 mins)
Great Books: Walden. Discovery Education. 1997.
Discovery Education. 10 August 2009
<http://streaming.discoveryeducation.com/>
 - B. After reading the watching background information, students will write down five key points they remember from the reading and the video. Once students have written down their list, they will pair up with another student, reviewing the points they wrote down and adding to their lists. After three-four changes in partners, we will compile a list as a class, checking for accuracy. I will add in key points not addressed. This list will serve as the essential facts sheet for background information on Thoreau and Transcendentalism. (25 mins)

Homework: Students will type up the list we compiled as a class (this will serve as a good review) and print out a copy to keep in their folder. Additionally, students must complete the following journal prompt: What do you consider to be essential in your life? In other words, what

would you say you need on a daily basis to survive? Indicate each item and explain why it is necessary for your survival. Come to class prepared to defend your choices.

Tomorrow: Keep an hour by hour detailed journal of your day. Be sure to jot down all of the important responsibilities you have to attend to over the course of a day. You should even be tracking things like eating, emails, texting, internet use, watching t.v., sports, activities, work.

Lesson 2: Essentials of Life

Duration: 75 mins

Materials needed: Students need their journals. Notes on metaphors and similes. Copies of text book containing excerpts of *Walden*. List of guiding questions for discussion.

Opening Activity (>10 mins): The lesson will open with a quick check of student homework and questions pertaining Thoreau and the Transcendentalists. This will serve as a review of the information students went over in the previous lesson. (>10 mins.)

Activity #1 (10-15 mins): In groups of 4-5 students will discuss their journal entry from the night before. Each student must share his or her entry and explain what makes the items they listed “essential.” Once the groups have finished sharing their ideas, the class will briefly discuss what items were considered essential.

Activity #2 (5-10 mins): Figurative Language: Review of metaphors and similes. *See attachment A.*

Activity #3 (40 mins): Each student will open to the passages from *Walden* located in the literature anthology *Timeless Voices, Timeless Themes: The American Experience*, Prentice Hall. We will begin by reading together the section that comes from “Where I Lived, and What I Lived For.” Attention will be focused on a close reading of Thoreau’s reason for going to Walden Pond. As the class reads this section, key questions will be: (*See Attachment B for passage—first two paragraphs. See attachment C for a handout of the questions below*)

- 1) What does it mean to live deliberately?
- 2) What do you think Thoreau meant by the essential facts of life? Why?
- 3) What does Thoreau mean when he says, “and not when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.”
- 4) What is resignation?
- 5) What does Thoreau mean by the following:
 - a) I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life.
 - b) To live sturdily and Spartan-like.
 - c) To cut a broad swath and shave close.
 - d) To drive life into a corner and reduce it to its lowest terms.
 - e) We live meanly like ants.

Are they metaphors? Similes? How do they help to illustrate the writer’s point?

Through this close reading of a short passage, students will gain a deeper understanding of Thoreau’s points. Many of the ideas would be passed over by students if the teacher did not stop and raise questions. It is an understanding of fewer key points like these that will enrich a student’s comprehension of *Walden*.

Summarizer for lesson (5 mins): In your journal, write 3-5 sentences that capture the core meaning of the excerpt we read in class today. What did Thoreau tell the reader?

Homework: Review the handout and make sure you can understand the points we discussed today. If there are any questions, be sure to raise them at the beginning of class tomorrow. Make sure you continue with your detailed journal for the day until you go to bed.

Lesson #3: Simplify, Simplify, Simplify

Duration of Lesson: 65 mins

Materials needed: Students detailed schedule from the previous day and questions for the opening activity (Attachment D). Copies of *Walden*. Handout on metaphors and similes.

Opening Activity (10 mins): Open to your schedule from yesterday. Look at what you did with your time. Consider the following: 1) Is this a typical day and use of your time? 2) What did you spend the most time doing? 3) What activity did you enjoy the most? The least? 4) What is one event you can eliminate from your regular schedule—even if it was not on your schedule yesterday—in order to create more free time. What would be gained with this time? What would be lost?

Discussion: After students have had time to reflect on their daily schedules, we will discuss their responses to the questions posed. As a class we will reflect on “details that fritter our life a way.”

Activity #1 (30 mins): Read from “Where I Lived and What I Lived For” focusing on Thoreau’s ideas about simplicity. Begin with the line, “Still we live meanly like ants...” End with “We do not ride on the railroad, it rides on us...” (See Attachment B)

Activity #2 (25 mins): In groups brainstorm: Apply the idea of the railroad to today’s society. If Thoreau were alive today, what aspect of society would he say “rides us”? Why? Come up with as many ideas as you can. Again, consider what would be lost and what would be gained by not having this “thing.” This will lead to a larger class discussion on this topic.

Homework: Look over the passage we read in class today. Highlight the similes and metaphors Thoreau uses. Choose one simile or metaphor and use the handout provided to reflect how the idea better illustrates the writer’s point. (See attachment E)

Lesson 4: Experiencing Nature

Duration of Lesson: 55 mins.

Materials needed: Students need their journals and a writing instrument

For this lesson, you need a place in nature for quiet observation.

Copies of “The Pond in Winter” and “Spring”

Opening Activity: (15 minutes): Students will begin with a journal entry in which they will reflect on their experiences in nature. Specific prompts: Do you typically observe nature when you are in it? If you do, what types of things do you notice? If you do not, why not? Do you have *any* memories of specific observations in nature? What are they?

This prompt will only last five minutes. The intention is to have students begin thinking about observation and what it means to observe nature. After students have reflected, the teacher will discuss the approach to nature walk. 1) Students must bring their journal 2) It is a silent nature walk. Anyone who is not silent will be asked to return to the school and wait for the class in the vice-principals office 3) Students must stay with the group, but are encouraged to give one another personal space in order to observe and reflect

Activity #1 (40 mins): Nature Walk: The nature walk will take place in the conservation land adjacent to the high school. Once we have reached a designated area in the woods, students will find a place to sit and quietly observe nature. During this time they should make notes about some of their observations. Pictures—as long as they are accompanied by some narrative—are allowed.

Homework: Students should write a one-page entry reflecting on the experience of observation in nature. The entry should include an overview of what they observed and their general reactions to the experience. Students also must read the excerpts contained in the literature anthology from “The Pond in Winter” and “Spring.” (See Attachment F and G)

Lesson 5

Duration: 85 mins

Materials needed: Previous night’s homework, notes on tone and voice, access to the internet

Opening activity (15 mins): Students are paired with another. They must share an observation from the day before and also a reflection from last night’s journal. There will be three rotations of partners.

Activity #1 (30 mins): Once students have shared their ideas, we will have a class discussion about the experience. Also, we will draw connections with and discuss Thoreau’s experiment of living in the woods and journaling about it for two years. This will be an opportunity to answer questions students may have about Thoreau and his time at Walden Pond.

As a class, we will discuss the sections students read the previous night. At this point, I will call attention to Thoreau’s descriptive language, specific details, and observation of ordinary occurrences. The objective is for students to become aware of what it means to fully see nature.

Activity #2 (40 mins): Review terms tone and voice, discussing their impact on style. A good resource can be found at <http://library.wheaton.edu/uploads/RL/G1/RLG1Y4myVGj37T2uDI7hw/Style-diction-tone.pdf>. Students will be assigned partners and given a specific one of Thoreau’s journal entries to read. They will focus on its content and its style—including tone and voice. Once students have had time to read the entry, and look at others on the site, as a class we will go around and listen to the range of topics Thoreau wrote about in his journal. Students will also share their thoughts on Thoreau’s writing style in the entry.

Site for accessing Thoreau’s journals: *The Walden Woods Project*:
<http://www.walden.org/Institute/index.htm>

Homework: After school set aside 20-30 minutes to sit in nature. Choose a place in your neighborhood, at a local park, or even in the conservation land near the high school. During this time, you should observe nature, keeping in mind all the points we have discussed about observation. In your journal, write two brief entries. The first entry should be the experience written in a “Thoreauvian” way! Try to capture his tone and voice. Next, write the entry in your own voice.

Lesson 6

Duration: 90 mins

Materials: Poem “Thoreau’s Nightmare (*A Year of Poems and Lessons* by Nancy Atwell), access to the Internet, excerpts from “the Conclusion” (Attachment H), quotes for analysis (attachment I).

Opening Activity: (20 mins) Students will each receive a copy of the poem “Thoreau’s Nightmare” (available in Nancy Atwell’s book *A Year of Poems and Lessons*). One student will read it aloud and then students will be given time to annotate. As a class we will discuss any questions about terms or vocabulary. I will read the poem through one more time, and we will discuss it as a class. Students will discuss the poem’s meaning, themes, metaphors, similes, meter, and other literary devices.

Also collect journals to read last night’s homework.

Activity #1: (45 mins) Read the excerpt in the anthology from “the Conclusion.” Because there are so many important and meaningful passages here to consider, we will read it through once and then return to complete a close readings. We will discuss the passage holistically and then groups will begin to examine passages in isolation. Each group will be given a passage to look at closely (Attachment I). They will annotate, commenting on specific words and phrases. They should discuss Thoreau’s ideas and be able to explain them to the class. I will rotate around and work with each group to ensure an accurate understanding. Once completed, students will present their passage and discuss their ideas. I will follow up with additional comments.

Homework: Students should choose one passage they particularly liked from the section we read of “the Conclusion.” They will use this passage and create a collage with pictures that represent the ideas in the passage—the emphasis should be on symbolic images. The collage must be accompanied by a 1-2 page description of the collage and analysis of the passage.

OR

Students have the option of creating a CD for Thoreau. They must create a playlist of at least five songs that contain lyrics and ideas similar to those “in Conclusion.” The student must print out the lyrics and annotate them to fully explain the connection. The songs should be burned to a CD and it should contain a creative cover that Thoreau would appreciate. The student must be able to explain—and justify—why Thoreau would appreciate this cover.

Students have three days to complete the assignment.

Attachment A

Literary Terms

Figurative Language is language that is not meant to be taken literally. Similes and metaphors are both examples of figurative language.

Simile: a figure of speech that makes a direct comparison between two subjects using either like or as
Example: The trees looked like pitch forks against the sullen sky.

Metaphor: a figure of speech in which one thing is spoken of as though it were something else
Example: death is an eternal nap

Attachment B

from "Where I Lived, and What I Lived for"

When first I took up my abode in the woods, that is, began to spend my nights as well as days there, which, by accident, was on Independence Day, or the Fourth of July, 1845, my house was not finished for winter, but was merely a defense against the rain, without plastering or chimney, the walls being of rough, weather-stained boards, with wide chinks, which made it cool at night. The upright white hewn studs and freshly planed door and window casings gave it a clean and airy look, especially in the morning, when its timbers were saturated with dew, so that I fancied that by noon some sweet gum would exude from them. To my imagination it retained throughout the day more or less of this auroral character, reminding me of a certain house on a mountain which I had visited a year before. This was an airy and unplastered cabin, fit to entertain a travelling god, and where a goddess might trail her garments. The winds which passed over my dwelling were such as sweep over the ridges of mountains, bearing the broken strains, or celestial parts only, of terrestrial music. The morning wind forever blows, the poem of creation is uninterrupted; but few are the ears that hear it. Olympus (7) is but the outside of the earth everywhere....

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practise resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion. For most men, it appears to me, are in a strange uncertainty about it, whether it is of the devil or of God, and have *somewhat hastily* concluded that it is the chief end of man here to "glorify God and enjoy him forever...."(17)

Still we live meanly, like ants; though the fable tells us that we were long ago changed into men; like pygmies we fight with cranes; it is error upon error, and clout upon clout, and our best virtue has for its occasion a superfluous and evitable wretchedness. Our life is frittered away by detail. An honest man has hardly need to count more than his ten fingers, or in extreme cases he may add his ten toes, and lump the rest. Simplicity, simplicity, simplicity! I say, let your affairs be as two or three, and not a hundred or a thousand; instead of a million count half a dozen, and keep your accounts on your thumb-nail. In the midst of this chopping sea of civilized life, such are the clouds and storms and quicksands and thousand-and-one items to be allowed for, that a man has to live, if he would not founder and go to the bottom and not make his port at all, by dead reckoning, and he must be a great calculator indeed who succeeds. Simplify, simplify. Instead of three meals a day, if it be necessary eat but one; instead of a hundred dishes, five; and reduce other things in proportion. Our life is like a German Confederacy,(18) made up of petty states, with its boundary forever fluctuating, so that even a German cannot tell you how it is bounded at any moment. The nation itself, with all its so-called internal improvements, which, by the way are all external and superficial, is just such an unwieldy and overgrown establishment, cluttered with furniture and tripped up by its own traps, ruined by luxury and heedless expense, by want of calculation and a worthy aim, as the million households in the land; and the only cure for it, as for them, is in a rigid economy, a stern and more

than Spartan (19) simplicity of life and elevation of purpose. It lives too fast. Men think that it is essential that the *Nation* have commerce, and export ice, and talk through a telegraph, and ride thirty miles an hour, without a doubt, whether *they* do or not; but whether we should live like baboons or like men, is a little uncertain. If we do not get out sleepers, (20) and forge rails, and devote days and nights to the work, but go to tinkering upon our *lives* to improve *them*, who will build railroads? And if railroads are not built, how shall we get to heaven in season? But if we stay at home and mind our business, who will want railroads? We do not ride on the railroad; it rides upon us.

Attachment C

Guiding Questions for lesson #2

1. What does it mean to live deliberately?
2. What do you think Thoreau meant by the essential facts of life? Why?
3. What does Thoreau mean when he says, “and not when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.”
4. What is resignation?
5. What does Thoreau mean by the following:
 - a) I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life.
 - b) To live sturdily and Spartan-like.
 - c) To cut a broad swath and shave close.
 - d) To drive life into a corner and reduce it to its lowest terms.
 - e) We live meanly like ants.

Are they metaphors? Similes? How do they help to illustrate the writer’s point?

Attachment D

Open to your schedule from yesterday. Look at what you did with your time.

Consider the following:

- 1) Is this a typical day and use of your time?
- 2) What did you spend the most time doing?
- 3) What activity did you enjoy the most? The least?
- 4) What is one event you can eliminate from your regular schedule—even if it was not on your schedule yesterday—in order to create more free time. What would be gained with this time? What would be lost?

Attachment E

Name _____

| Metaphor or Simile from “Where I Lived, and What I Lived For” | Explanation of how this use of figurative language helps the writer communicate his idea: |
|---|---|
| | |

Attachment F

from The Pond in Winter

AFTER A STILL winter night I awoke with the impression that some question had been put to me, which I had been endeavoring in vain to answer in my sleep, as what — how — when — where? But there was dawning Nature, in whom all creatures live, looking in at my broad windows with serene and satisfied face, and no question on *her* lips. I awoke to an answered question, to Nature and daylight. The snow lying deep on the earth dotted with young pines, and the very slope of the hill on which my house is placed, seemed to say, Forward! Nature puts no question and answers none which we mortals ask. She has long ago taken her resolution. "O Prince, our eyes contemplate with admiration and transmit to the soul the wonderful and varied spectacle of this universe. The night veils without doubt a part of this glorious creation; but day comes to reveal to us this great work, which extends from earth even into the plains of the ether.⁽¹⁾"

[2] Then to my morning work. First I take an axe and pail and go in search of water, if that be not a dream. After a cold and snowy night it needed a divining-rod to find it. Every winter the liquid and trembling surface of the pond, which was so sensitive to every breath, and reflected every light and shadow, becomes solid to the depth of a foot or a foot and a half, so that it will support the heaviest teams, and perchance the snow covers it to an equal depth, and it is not to be distinguished from any level field. Like the marmots in the surrounding hills, it closes its eyelids and becomes dormant for three months or more. Standing on the snow-covered plain, as if in a pasture amid the hills, I cut my way first through a foot of snow, and then a foot of ice, and open a window under my feet, where, kneeling to drink, I look down into the quiet parlor of the fishes, pervaded by a softened light as through a window of ground glass, with its bright sanded floor the same as in summer; there a perennial waveless serenity reigns as in the amber twilight sky, corresponding to the cool and even temperament of the inhabitants. Heaven is under our feet is well as over our heads.

[3] Early in the morning, while all things are crisp with frost, men come with fishing-reels and slender lunch, and let down their fine lines through the snowy field to take pickerel and perch; wild men, who instinctively follow other fashions and trust other authorities than their townsmen, and by their goings and comings stitch towns together in parts where else they would be ripped. They sit and eat their luncheon in stout fear-naughts ⁽²⁾ on the dry oak leaves on the shore, as wise in natural lore as the citizen is in artificial. They never consulted with books, and know and can tell much less than they have done. The things which they practice are said not yet to be known. Here is one fishing for pickerel with grown perch for bait. You look into his pail with wonder as into a summer pond, as if he kept summer locked up at home, or knew where she had retreated. How, pray, did he get these in midwinter? Oh, he got worms out of rotten logs since the ground froze, and so he caught them. His life itself passes deeper in nature than the studies of the naturalist penetrate; himself a subject for the naturalist. The latter raises the moss and bark gently with his knife in search of insects; the former lays open logs to their core with his axe, and moss and bark fly far and wide. He gets his living by barking trees. Such a man has some right to fish, and I love to see nature carried out in him. The perch swallows the grub-worm, the pickerel swallows the perch, and the fisher-man swallows the pickerel; and so all the chinks in the scale of being are filled.

Attachment G

from "Spring"

Walden is melting apace. There is a canal two rods wide along the northerly and westerly sides, and wider still at the east end. A great field of ice has cracked off from the main body. I hear a song sparrow singing from the bushes on the shore — *olit, olit, olit-chip, chip, chip, che char-che wiss, wiss, wiss*. He too is helping to crack it. How handsome the great sweeping curves in the edge of the ice, answering somewhat to those of the shore, but more regular! It is unusually hard, owing to the recent severe but transient cold, and all watered or waved like a palace floor. But the wind slides eastward over its opaque surface in vain, till it reaches the living surface beyond. It is glorious to behold this ribbon of water sparkling in the sun, the bare face of the pond full of glee and youth, as if it spoke the joy of the fishes within it, and of the sands on its shore — a silvery sheen as from the scales of a *leuciscus*,⁽⁵⁾ as if were all one active fish. Such is the contrast between winter and spring. Walden was dead and is alive again. But this spring it broke up more steadily, as I have said.

[15] The change from storm and winter to serene and mild weather, from dark and sluggish hours to bright and elastic ones, is a memorable crisis which all things proclaim. It is seemingly instantaneous at last. Suddenly an influx of light filled my house, though the evening was at hand, and the clouds of winter still overhung it, and the eaves were dripping with sleety rain. I looked out the window, and lo! where yesterday was cold gray ice there lay the transparent pond already calm and full of hope as in a summer evening, reflecting a summer evening sky in its bosom, though none was visible overhead, as if it had intelligence with some remote horizon. I heard a robin in the distance, the first I had heard for many a thousand years, methought, whose note I shall not forget for many a thousand more — the same sweet and powerful song as of yore. O the evening robin, at the end of a New England summer day! If I could ever find the twig he sits upon! I mean *he*; I mean *the twig*. This at least is not the *Turdus migratorius*. The pitch pines and shrub oaks about my house, which had so long drooped, suddenly resumed their several characters, looked brighter, greener, and more erect and alive, as if effectually cleansed and restored by the rain. I knew that it would not rain any more. You may tell by looking at any twig of the forest, ay, at your very wood-pile, whether its winter is past or not. As it grew darker, I was startled by the honking of geese flying low over the woods, like weary travellers getting in late from Southern lakes, and indulging at last in unrestrained complaint and mutual consolation. Standing at my door, I could bear the rush of their wings; when, driving toward my house, they suddenly spied my light, and with hushed clamor wheeled and settled in the pond. So I came in, and shut the door, and passed my first spring night in the woods.

[16] In the morning I watched the geese from the door through the mist, sailing in the middle of the pond, fifty rods off, so large and tumultuous that Walden appeared like an artificial pond for their amusement. But when I stood on the shore they at once rose up with a great flapping of wings at the signal of their commander, and when they had got into rank circled about over my head, twenty-nine of them, and then steered straight to Canada, with a regular honk from the leader at intervals, trusting to break their fast in muddier pools. A "plump" of ducks rose at the same time and took the route to the north in the wake of their noisier cousins.

[17] For a week I heard the circling, groping clangor of some solitary goose in the foggy mornings, seeking its companion, and still peopling the woods with the sound of a larger life than they could

sustain. In April the pigeons were seen again flying express in small flocks, and in due time I heard the martins twittering over my clearing, though it had not seemed that the township contained so many that it could afford me any, and I fancied that they were peculiarly of the ancient race that dwelt in hollow trees ere white men came. In almost all climes the tortoise and the frog are among the precursors and heralds of this season, and birds fly with song and glancing plumage, and plants spring and bloom, and winds blow, to correct this slight oscillation of the poles and preserve the equilibrium of nature.

[18] As every season seems best to us in its turn, so the coming in of spring is like the creation of Cosmos out of Chaos and the realization of the Golden Age.⁽⁶⁾ —

Attachment H

from "the Conclusion"

I left the woods for as good a reason as I went there. Perhaps it seemed to me that I had several more lives to live, and could not spare any more time for that one. It is remarkable how easily and insensibly we fall into a particular route, and make a beaten track for ourselves. I had not lived there a week before my feet wore a path from my door to the pond-side; and though it is five or six years since I trod it, it is still quite distinct. It is true, I fear, that others may have fallen into it, and so helped to keep it open. The surface of the earth is soft and impressible by the feet of men; and so with the paths which the mind travels. How worn and dusty, then, must be the highways of the world, how deep the ruts of tradition and conformity! I did not wish to take a cabin passage, but rather to go before the mast and on the deck of the world, for there I could best see the moonlight amid the mountains. I do not wish to go below now.

[5] I learned this, at least, by my experiment: that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours. He will put some things behind, will pass an invisible boundary; new, universal, and more liberal laws will begin to establish themselves around and within him; or the old laws be expanded, and interpreted in his favor in a more liberal sense, and he will live with the license of a higher order of beings. In proportion as he simplifies his life, the laws of the universe will appear less complex, and solitude will not be solitude, nor poverty poverty, nor weakness weakness. If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them.

Why should we be in such desperate haste to succeed and in such desperate enterprises? If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away. It is not important that he should mature as soon as an apple tree or an oak. Shall he turn his spring into summer? If the condition of things which we were made for is not yet, what were any reality which we can substitute? We will not be shipwrecked on a vain reality. Shall we with pains erect a heaven of blue glass over ourselves, though when it is done we shall be sure to gaze still at the true ethereal heaven far above, as if the former were not?

However mean your life is, meet it and live it; do not shun it and call it hard names. It is not so bad as you are. It looks poorest when you are richest. The fault-finder will find faults even in paradise. Love your life, poor as it is. You may perhaps have some pleasant, thrilling, glorious hours, even in a poorhouse. The setting sun is reflected from the windows of the almshouse as brightly as from the rich man's abode; the snow melts before its door as early in the spring. I do not see but a quiet mind may live as contentedly there, and have as cheering thoughts, as in a palace. The town's poor seem to me often to live the most independent lives of any. Maybe they are simply great enough to receive without misgiving. Most think that they are above being supported by the town; but it oftener happens that they are not above supporting themselves by dishonest means, which should be more disreputable. Cultivate poverty like a garden herb, like sage. Do not trouble yourself much to get

new things, whether clothes or friends. Turn the old; return to them. Things do not change; we change. Sell your clothes and keep your thoughts. God will see that you do not want society. If I were confined to a corner of a garret all my days, like a spider, the world would be just as large to me while I had my thoughts about me. The philosopher (19) said: "From an army of three divisions one can take away its general, and put it in disorder; from the man the most abject and vulgar one cannot take away his thought." Do not seek so anxiously to be developed, to subject yourself to many influences to be played on; it is all dissipation. Humility like darkness reveals the heavenly lights. The shadows of poverty and meanness gather around us, "and lo! creation widens to our view." (20) We are often reminded that if there were bestowed on us the wealth of Croesus, (21) our aims must still be the same, and our means essentially the same. Moreover, if you are restricted in your range by poverty, if you cannot buy books and newspapers, for instance, you are but confined to the most significant and vital experiences; you are compelled to deal with the material which yields the most sugar and the most starch. It is life near the bone where it is sweetest. You are defended from being a trifler. No man loses ever on a lower level by magnanimity on a higher. Superfluous wealth can buy superfluities only. Money is not required to buy one necessary of the soul.

The life in us is like the water in the river. It may rise this year higher than man has ever known it, and flood the parched uplands; even this may be the eventful year, which will drown out all our muskrats. It was not always dry land where we dwell. I see far inland the banks which the stream anciently washed, before science began to record its freshets. Every one has heard the story which has gone the rounds of New England, of a strong and beautiful bug which came out of the dry leaf of an old table of apple-tree wood, which had stood in a farmer's kitchen for sixty years, first in Connecticut, and afterward in Massachusetts — from an egg deposited in the living tree many years earlier still, as appeared by counting the annual layers beyond it; which was heard gnawing out for several weeks, hatched perchance by the heat of an urn. Who does not feel his faith in a resurrection and immortality strengthened by hearing of this? Who knows what beautiful and winged life, whose egg has been buried for ages under many concentric layers of woodenness in the dead dry life of society, deposited at first in the alburnum of the green and living tree, which has been gradually converted into the semblance of its well-seasoned tomb — heard perchance gnawing out now for years by the astonished family of man, as they sat round the festive board — may unexpectedly come forth from amidst society's most trivial and handselled furniture, to enjoy its perfect summer life at last!

[19] I do not say that John or Jonathan (26) will realize all this; but such is the character of that morrow which mere lapse of time can never make to dawn. The light which puts out our eyes is darkness to us. Only that day dawns to which we are awake. There is more day to dawn. The sun is but a morning star.

Attachment I

Selected passages for analysis from "the Conclusion"

1. I left the woods for as good a reason as I went there. Perhaps it seemed to me that I had several more lives to live, and could not spare any more time for that one. It is remarkable how easily and insensibly we fall into a particular route, and make a beaten track for ourselves.

2. The surface of the earth is soft and impressible by the feet of men; and so with the paths which the mind travels. How worn and dusty, then, must be the highways of the world, how deep the ruts of tradition and conformity!

3. I learned this, at least, by my experiment: that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours. He will put some things behind, will pass an invisible boundary; new, universal, and more liberal laws will begin to establish themselves around and within him; or the old laws be expanded, and interpreted in his favor in a more liberal sense, and he will live with the license of a higher order of beings. In proportion as he simplifies his life, the laws of the universe will appear less complex, and solitude will not be solitude, nor poverty poverty, nor weakness weakness.

4. If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them.

5. Why should we be in such desperate haste to succeed and in such desperate enterprises? If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away. However mean your life is, meet it and live it; do not shun it and call it hard names. It is not so bad as you are. It looks poorest when you are richest. The fault-finder will find faults even in paradise. Love your life, poor as it is. You may perhaps have some pleasant, thrilling, glorious hours, even in a poorhouse. The setting sun is reflected from the windows of the almshouse as brightly as from the rich man's abode; the snow melts before its door as early in the spring. I do not see but a quiet mind may live as contentedly there, and have as cheering thoughts, as in a palace. The town's poor seem to me often to live the most independent lives of any.

6. Moreover, if you are restricted in your range by poverty, if you cannot buy books and newspapers, for instance, you are but confined to the most significant and vital experiences; you are compelled to deal with the material which yields the most sugar and the most starch. It is life near the bone where it is sweetest. You are defended from being a trifle. No man loses ever on a lower level by magnanimity on a higher. Superfluous wealth can buy superfluities only. Money is not required to buy one necessary of the soul.

7. Only that day dawns to which we are awake. There is more day to dawn. The sun is but a morning star.

RUBRICS

Collage

| | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|-------------------------------|---|---|--|--|
| Images | The images are carefully created or were thoughtfully chosen. The poster meets size specifications and is a full collage. The design and layout show exceptional attention to detail. | The images were thoughtfully chosen. The poster meets the specifications. The layout shows time and effort. | The images have a connection to the quote and demonstrate some reflection. The poster meets specifications but may be missing one detail. The layout took some effort. | The images have a very loose symbolic connection to the passage. Not enough time and effort were taken to create or collect the images. There are a couple of missing required details to the collage. Not enough time and effort were put into the project. |
| Symbolism | The images are highly symbolic and there is a meaningful connection with the passage. | Most images communicate a connection to the quote symbolically. | The images have a weak connection to the quote or some are too literal. | The images are disconnected from the meaning of the quote or all are literal. |
| Written Reflection | The written portion is insightful, reflective and analytical. It clearly communicates the student's understanding of the passage and his or her connection through the symbolic images. It is a sophisticated piece of writing free of errors in grammar and mechanics. | The written portion is insightful and reflective. It communicates the student's connection with the passage and explains some of the passages meaning. It is well written and only contains minor errors in grammar and/or mechanics. | The written portion provides a connection the student has with Thoreau's passage. The interpretation of the passage may need development or the connection does not provide enough detail. There may be several errors in grammar and/or mechanics. | The written portion does not meet the most of the objectives of the assignment because the connection is not clearly communicated. There is little to no insight into the passage's meaning. |
| Class Presentation of Project | The student presents for 2-3 minutes and fully explains the collage and its meaning. He or she speaks slowly and clearly. There is eye contact and the presenter demonstrates confidence. | The student presents for 2-3 minutes and explains the meaning of the collage. He or she speaks slowly and is clear for most of the presentation. He or she makes eye contact for most of the presentation. | The student presents his or her collage to the class but does not demonstrate enough pre-planning for the presentation. He or she is may be unclear and the presentation lack flow. The pace needed to be slower and he or she needed more consistent eye contact. | The student's presentation lacks insight and reflection on his or her work. He or she has not prepared. The pace is off and this is little or no eye contact with the class. |

Name _____

CD Project

Transcendentalists

Consider what songs you would put on a CD called *Transcend*, which is based on motifs and themes present in “the Conclusion” of *Walden*. Your CD must contain songs that Thoreau would appreciate because in some way they echo the ideas he raises in “the Conclusion” of *Walden*. You must annotate the lyrics thoroughly to communicate the connection. There should be detailed notes for each print out of song lyrics. You must create an original cover that Thoreau would appreciate. You will present your project to the class and explain the connections of the songs and the cover of the CD you create.

_____/20

Decide on five songs and write out or print out the lyrics to those songs (omitting any inappropriate lyrics).

_____/50

Annotate the lyrics to make a connection between the ideas in the music and the ideas presented by Thoreau. Be thorough; there should be at least five annotations per song.

_____/20

Design a cover for your CD. It may contain images taken from magazines, the internet, etc. or you may draw the images that will make up your cover. It must be creative, detailed, and connect with the themes of the CD. You will turn in this sheet, your cover, the CD, and the annotated lyrics.

_____/ 10 A brief presentation to the class about the CD. You must specifically discuss at least two of the five songs, stressing the connections you made in your annotation. You also are required to explain your CD cover and tell the class why Thoreau would appreciate it. You need to speak slowly, clearly and maintain eye contact with your audience.

Massachusetts' ELA Standards: 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 19, 22, 25

Sources:

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