

Mark Reynolds
Belmont High School
221 Concord Ave.
Belmont, MA 02478
Grade 11
College Prep American Literature
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Wide Awake in America: A Place of Reform

“I do not propose to write an ode to dejection, but to brag as lustily as chanticleer in the morning, standing on his roost, if only to wake my neighbors up.”

-Henry David Thoreau “Where I Lived, and What I Lived For” *Walden*

Abstract

The audience for this curriculum is made up of eleventh graders taking College Prep American Literature. This four week unit follows a unit entitled “The British are Leaving!: America as a Place of Revolution” and leads into a unit on American Romanticism. I plan on gradually folding in this curriculum with a number of journal entries that make use of Janet Burne's string journaling. These entries will – fingers crossed – introduce students to the values of observation and self-reflection; two key values that they will further develop an appreciation for during the “Wide Awake” unit. The readings will consist largely of excerpts from Emerson's essays (“Nature,” “Self-Reliance,” “The American Scholar,” “The Divinity School Address”) and Thoreau's work (selected passages from *Walden* and “Civil Disobedience,” “Walking,” and “Life Without Principle”). Students will also read Margaret Fuller's “Farewell,” make connections to various poems/songs (e.g., “Once in a Lifetime” by the Talking Heads), and view Richard Linklater's *Waking Life*.

While I will stress the honing of specific reading and writing skills (e.g., annotations, literary devices, revisions), the main objective of the unit will involve providing students with the tools to meaningfully explore who they are and what their place is in their school, their neighborhood, and their community at large. These tools will include reconsidering what observation really is; using metacognition to make the process of self-reflection more approachable; and making text to text connections and text to self connections.

Objectives

Students will be able to recognize – in the contrast between the “Age of Reason” and Transcendentalism – that ideas or movements often arise from a dissatisfaction with the status quo.

Students will be able to make connections between ideas of the transcendentalists and more contemporary thinkers/artists from multiple disciplines.

Students will be able to apply key tenets from Thoreau's writings (i.e., living deliberately, living intuitively, living simply, etc.) to their own endeavors in reflective journaling.

Content Outline

Week	Content	Skills/Frameworks/ Literary Devices
1	<p>-What is Transcendentalism? Reactions to the Age of Reason and the failure to achieve the promises of the American Revolution. Notes and discussion</p> <p>-Excerpts from Emerson's essays ("Nature," "Self-Reliance," "The American Scholar," "The Divinity School Address") Annotations and discussion</p> <p>-Nature and You handout 1</p>	<p>-Journaling and Discussion (Standard 1)</p> <p>-Making Personal Connections (Standard 9)</p> <p>-Annotating non-fiction (Standard 13)</p> <p>-Figurative Language</p>
2	<p>-Who is Henry David Thoreau? Where did he live, and what did he live for? Notes and discussion</p> <p>-Excerpts from Thoreau ("Economy," "The Village" <i>Walden</i>)</p> <p>-Where I'm From Inventory handout 2</p> <p>-Seeing Where You're From Anew: John Stilgoe segment ("The Eyes Have It") from <i>60 Minutes</i></p> <p>-String journal #3</p>	<p>-Discussion (Standard 1)</p> <p>-Annotating non-fiction (Standard 13)</p> <p>-Tone, Audience (Standard 20)</p> <p>-Paradox</p> <p>-Analysis of Media (Standard 26)</p>
3	<p>-Excerpts from Thoreau ("Where I Lived, and What I Lived For" and "Conclusion" <i>Walden</i>) Annotation and discussion</p> <p>-Morning Routine/Morning as Metaphor handout 3</p> <p>-Annotations and Allusions handout 4</p> <p>-"Once in a Lifetime" The Talking Heads handout 5</p>	<p>-Discussion (Standard 1)</p> <p>-Annotating non-fiction (Standard 13)</p> <p>-Making Connections to other texts (Standard 9)</p> <p>-Allusion</p>
4	<p>-Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience" Annotations and discussion</p> <p>-Reform movements of the era, Walden as a "reform of one"</p> <p>-Margaret Fuller's "Farewell"</p> <p>-Richard Linklater's <i>Waking Life</i> (2002), viewing guide handout 6</p> <p>-Reforming yourself/your writing: choose a journal entry to revise</p>	<p>-Reflect and Revise (Standard 25)</p> <p>-Analysis of Media (Standard 26)</p> <p>-Discussion (Standard 1)</p> <p>-Making Personal Connections</p>

State Standards (Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks)

Language Strand – Standard 1: Discussion, Standard 4: Vocabulary and Concept Development

Reading and Literature Strand – Standard 9: Making Connections, Standard 13: Non-fiction

Composition Strand – Standard 20: Consideration of Audience and Purpose, Standard 25: Evaluating Writing

Media Strand – Standard 26: Analysis of Media

Lesson Details

September to mid-October (journals interspersed among units on America as a place of many voices and as a place of revolution during the Age of Reason)

Prior to beginning the “Wide Awake” unit, students will have submitted four journal entries that will introduce concepts of place-based learning. The prompts include: two string journals (the second prefaced with an excerpt from the Epilogue of Annie Dillard's *An American Childhood*), a journal about solitude, a journal about observing one thing very closely. The journals will work congruently towards helping students consider their powers of observation, their relationship with – or estrangement from – solitude, their sense of place.

Mid-October to mid-November

I will begin the unit with the line Thoreau chose for the title page of *Walden*, because the idea that he is not setting out to write about dejection or despair but rather to lift his readers from such states will resonate with students who often complain that literature (particularly the brand that they are force-fed in school) is depressing. Thoreau and the transcendentalists are anything but depressing, and I will play up their optimism and inspiration. Having framed the unit with this line, I will pose the first essential question: How can exploring where you're from help you explore who you are? Students will perhaps have an inchoate sense of this connection through the journaling they've done, but we will return to the question throughout the unit.

We will spend the first week of the unit stepping back from the Thoreau frame to meet Emerson, to engage with what transcendentalism is, and to read and annotate excerpts from some of Emerson's essays. Students will consider nature as a mirror into their minds in an activity detailed on Handout 1. They will then read and annotate passages from Emerson's “Nature.” We will discuss how Emerson wished for his audience to see the world anew.

Emerson's inspirational call will provide a transition into week two's introduction to Thoreau. Students will learn of Thoreau's many talents, the major tenets of his writings, and the landscapes he immortalized. As a way of connecting to *Walden*, students will complete a “Where I'm From” inventory that asks them to consider how much they really know (or don't know) about their hometown. This week, students will view a *60 Minutes* segment entitled “The Eyes Have It.” The segment aired in 2004 and features John Stilgoe, a Harvard professor of landscape history. Stilgoe takes the viewer on a tour of an urban landscape (Cambridge, MA) and points out how much we miss during the hustle and bustle of our lives. Students will do their third string journal after viewing the segment and hopefully see something new.

During the third week of the unit, students will read and discuss excerpts from *Walden*. At this point – through journaling and prior discussions – they will hopefully be able to pull out some of the

key tenets of the work (e.g., living deliberately, living simply, living intuitively, etc.). I will assess for this through discussion and annotation checks. Also, we will try to make connections to our own lives and to other works (including the Talking Heads' song "Once in a Lifetime," which poses the question, "How did I get here?").

The unit's fourth and final week will consist of reflection and an extension activity with the film *Waking Life*. During class, students will view parts of the film and discuss how it does and doesn't relate to what they've learned about transcendentalism, Emerson, and Thoreau. Outside of class, students will be selecting one of their journal entries to carefully revisit and revise. They will have to write a reflection paragraph on what they chose to revise and why they made deliberate choices. They will also address some way that they "woke up" during the unit.

List of Materials

- Student journals
- Copies of excerpts from Emerson's essays ("Nature," "Self-Reliance," "The American Scholar," "The Divinity School Address")
- Copies of excerpts from Thoreau's works (selected passages from *Walden* and "Civil Disobedience," "Walking," and "Life Without Principle")
- Copies of Margaret Fuller's "Farewell"
- LCD projector (for slide shows of Walden Pond and other Concord sites; for "Once in a Lifetime" video; for screening *Waking Life*)
- Copy of "The Eyes Have It" segment from *60 Minutes*
- Copy of *Waking Life* dvd
- handouts and journal prompts

Rubric/Grading System

Homework Checks (check + = 10 pts., check = 8 pts., check - = 5 points): Handout 1 (Nature and You), Handout 2 (Where I'm From Inventory), Handout 3 (Morning Routine/Morning as Metaphor, Handout 4 (Annotations and Allusions)

Journal Checks (check + = 20 pts., check = 16 pts., check - = 10 pts.): Journal #4, Journal #5

Revised journal entry and reflection paragraph (essay grade out of 100 pts.)

Rubric For Revised Journal and Reflection

Category	For Full Credit	Comments
Purpose (20)	-Addresses the prompt in a clear voice and appropriate tone -Engages with the prompt and arrives at a personal understanding of questions asked	
Content (30)	-Includes specific details where applicable -Explains the significance of the details	
Revisions (30)	-Demonstrates multiple extensions from the original draft -Showcases proper grammar and spelling	
Reflection (20)	-Explains deliberate choices in revising from one draft to the next -Discusses an “awakening” or new awareness gained by revisiting and revising the original	

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- Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *Nature and Selected Essays*. New York: Penguin Group, 1985.
- Fuller, Margaret. "Farewell." *New York Tribune* 1 August 1846.
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- Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden and Other Writings*. New York: Bantam Books, 1981.
- Tzu, Lao. *Tao Te Ching*. New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2005.
- Waking Life*. Dir. Richard Linklater. 2002. DVD. Fox Searchlight Pictures, 2002.

Journal Prompts and Handouts

(n.b., students will complete journals 1-4 before the unit begins and will have the opportunity to revise one of the entries at the unit's close)

Journal 1

String Journal (following the guidelines suggested by Janet Burne)

Journal 2

Society is commonly too cheap. We meet at very short intervals, not having had time to acquire any new value for each other. We meet at meals three times a day, and give each other a new taste of that old musty cheese that we are. We have had to agree on a certain set of rules, called etiquette and politeness, to make this frequent meeting tolerable and that we need not come to open war. We meet at the post-office, and at the sociable, and about the fireside every night; we live thick and are in each other's way, and stumble over one another, and I think that we thus lose some respect for one another. Certainly less frequency would suffice for all important and hearty communications. Consider the girls in a factory- never alone, hardly in their dreams. It would be better if there were but one inhabitant to a square mile, as where I live. The value of a man is not in his skin, that we should touch him.

Walden, "Solitude"

- 1. Preparation to write** - Identify someone with whom you often communicate (in person, on the phone, emailing, texting, etc.). Note the frequency of your conversations, and briefly describe the substance (i.e., topics) of these communications. Are there any repetitive topics? Would you be able to keep in touch with this person and maintain as good a relationship with less contact? What do you gain by frequent communication with this person? What would you lose if you limited your communication with this person? What would you gain?
 - 2. Journal** - Write a journal entry which includes a brief description of the the frequency and substance of your communication with the person identified. How thoughtful are we when we constantly talk to someone (other than ourselves)? Can we have strong relationships with limited communication? To what extent do we sacrifice part of ourselves - or "lose some respect" for ourselves and others - when incessantly communicating with another?
-

Journal 3

String Journal (again following Janet's guidelines, but supplemented with the following passage. Students will read the Dillard excerpt and pay attention to descriptive language and the idea of becoming aware of one's place in the world and be encouraged to attempt making such a connection in their journal entry.)

You travel, settle, move on, stay put, go. You point your car down the riverside road to the blurred foot of the mountain. The mountain rolls back from the floodplain and hides its own height in its trees. You get out, stand on gravel, and cool your eyes watching the river move south. You lean on the car's hot hood and look up at the old mountain, up the slope of its green western flank. It is September; the goldenrod is out, and the asters. The tattered hardwood leaves darken before they die. The mountain occupies most of the sky. You can see where the route ahead through the woods will cross a fire scar, will vanish behind a slide of shale, and perhaps reemerge there on that piny ridge now visible across the hanging valley – that ridge apparently inaccessible, but with a faint track that fingers its greenish spine. You don't notice starting to walk; the sight of the trail has impelled you along it, as the sight of the earth moves the sun.

Before you the mountain's body curves away backward like a gymnast; the mountain's peak is somewhere south, rolled backward, too, and out of sight. Below you lies the pale and widening river; its far bank is forest now, and hills, and more blue hills behind them, hiding the yellow plain. Overhead and on the mountain's side, clouds collect and part. The clouds soak the ridges; the wayside plants tap water on your legs.

Now: if here while you are walking, or there when you've attained the far ridge and can see the yellow plain and the river shining through it – if you notice unbidden that you are afoot on this particular mountain on this particular day in the company of these particular changing fragments of clouds, - if you pause in your daze to connect your own skull-locked and interior mumble with the skin of your senses and sense, and notice you are living, - then will you not conjure up in imagination a map or a globe and locate this low mountain ridge on it, and find on one western slope the dot which represents you walking here astonished?

You may then wonder where they have gone, those other dim dots that were you: you in the flesh swimming in a swift river, swinging a bat on the first pitch, opening a footlocker with a screwdriver, inking and painting clowns on celluloid, stepping out of a revolving door into the swift crowd on a sidewalk, being kissed and kissing until your brain grew smooth, stepping out of the cold woods into a warm field full of crows, or lying awake in bed aware of your legs and suddenly aware of all of it, that the ceiling above you was under the sky – in what country, what town?

You may wonder, that is, as I sometimes wonder privately, but it doesn't matter. For it is not you or I that is important, neither what sort we might be nor how we came to be each where we are. What is important is anyone's coming awake and discovering a place, finding in full orbit a spinning globe one can lean over, catch, and jump on. What is important is the moment of opening a life and feeling it touch – with an electric hiss and cry – this speckled mineral sphere, our present world.

-excerpted from the Epilogue of Annie Dillard's *An American Childhood*

Journal 4

“A man's interest in a single bluebird is worth more than a complete but dry list of the fauna and flora of a town.”

-Henry David Thoreau Journal

“You didn't see the thing because you don't know how to look. And you don't know how to look because you don't know the names.” -Father Paulus to Nick Shay in Don DeLillo's Underworld (540)

1. Preparation to Write Choose an object of interest to you (an apple, a sneaker, a leaf, a book, etc.) and name as many parts of it as you can (e.g., if I chose a book, then I would name the cover, the pages, the binding, the table of contents, etc.). Make your list as extensive as you can. When you've run out of parts, research the object. Find at least three sources and become an expert on the object you have chosen. Make a diagram of the object and label as many parts of it as you possibly can.

2. Journal Write a journal entry that discusses how much you really did know about the object you selected. What did you learn in the process of researching the object? What does this activity tell you about looking at and knowing something? Is there anything that you might take for granted that you know well, but might just truly have a surface knowledge of? What other interests (in anything, not just objects, but life pursuits as well) do you have that you could pursue with a keener eye?

Journal 5 (string journal #3, to be completed after viewing “The Eyes Have It” segment from *60 Minutes*)

Handout 1
Name
Emerson and Transcendentalism

Nature and You

“The stars awaken a certain reverence, because though always present, they are inaccessible; but all natural objects make a kindred impression, when the mind is open to their influence. Nature never wears a mean appearance. Neither does the wisest man extort her secret, and lose his curiosity by finding out all her perfection. Nature never became a toy to a wise spirit. The flowers, the animals, the mountains, reflected the wisdom of his best hour, as much as they had delighted the simplicity of his childhood...Not the sun or the summer alone, but every hour and season yields its tribute of delight; for every hour and change corresponds to and authorizes a different state of the mind, from breathless noon to grimmest midnight. Nature is a setting that fits equally well a comic or a mourning piece.”

-Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Nature”

Go outside. Look up, look down, look at the horizon, look at what is right in front of you. List what you see of nature (e.g., an ant, a rosebush, a cloud).

Place four items from your list in the table below:

A)	B)
C)	D)

Now consider how each part of nature you have selected reflects something in you (your current state of mind, your emotions, your thought process, etc.). For each item, write a sentence or two drawing a comparison between the natural phenomena and yourself.

For example if I selected clouds, then I might make the following comparison: **The puffy cumulus clouds above move at the slow pace of my own thoughts when I'm trying to come up with an idea for a writing assignment; they remind me to take my time.**

A)

B)

C)

D)

Handout 2
Name

Where I'm From Inventory

“I have travelled a good deal in Concord.” - Henry David Thoreau “Economy,” *Walden*

For this assignment, you will explore a place you may think you know very well: the place you live. Please respond to the following questions. You may need to do some research! Please cite any sources you use.

A) I am from _____, established in _____.
(your hometown) (year)

B) The population is about _____ inhabitants.

C) Some typical flora (i.e., plant life) are:

1 (please list at least five)

2

3

4

5

D) Some typical fauna (i.e., animal life) are:

1 (please list at least five)

2

3

4

5

E) The local government is made up of (who are the elected officials and what are their roles? Can you name any one who works for the town?):

F) My hometown is known for (something historical, someone famous, something/thing infamous, etc.):

G) A current issue of importance in my hometown is (consider how this issue impacts you and how you could have an impact on this issue):

H) I live on _____ Rd./St./Ave./Blvd./Way/etc. (Do you know the significance of your street name?)

I) How is the above Thoreau quotation a paradox (i.e., a contradictory statement)? Think about it in connection Lao-Tzu's assertion that, **“The farther one travels, the less one knows”** (which was borrowed by George Harrison for The Beatles' “Within You Without You”).

J) On a scale where 1 equals “I know next to nothing about where I live” and 10 equals “I could write the book on where I live,” rank how well you know your hometown. Explain your ranking (If you're in the 1-5 range, then what could you do to better know and appreciate where you're from? If you're in the 6-10 range, then what could you do to sustain your active involvement with where you're from?)

Handout 3
Name

Morning Routine / Morning as Metaphor

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

-Henry David Thoreau “Where I Lived, and What I Lived For” *Walden*

A) Describe your typical weekday morning (you may write a paragraph or a list):

B) Describe your typical weekend morning (you may write a paragraph or a list):

C) How are they similar and/or different? What accounts for these similarities and/or differences?

D) What are three words you would use to describe what morning is like for you?

1)

2)

3)

If a day were a metaphor for a lifespan, what part of the lifespan would morning take? Why?

E) What else is morning compared to? Why?

F) Compare/contrast your typical mornings with metaphorical morning.

G) What could YOU change (about yourself) to improve your mornings? (If your mornings are models of productivity, then discuss what YOU have done to make them so.)

Handout 4
Name

Annotations and Allusions

Please annotate this excerpt. Look up at least three (3) of the allusions (i.e., references) Thoreau makes. When you have carefully read and annotated, please respond to the questions that follow the excerpt.

Every morning was a cheerful invitation to make my life of equal simplicity, and I may say innocence, with Nature herself. I have been as sincere a worshipper of Aurora as the Greeks. I got up early and bathed in the pond; that was a religious exercise, and one of the best things which I did. They say that characters were engraven on the bathing tub of King Tching Thang to this effect: "Renew thyself completely each day; do it again, and again, and forever again." I can understand that. Morning brings back the heroic ages. I was as much affected by the faint hum of a mosquito making its invisible and unimaginable tour through my apartment at earliest dawn, when I was sitting with door and windows open, as I could be by any trumpet that ever sang of fame. It was Homer's requiem; itself an Iliad and Odyssey in the air, singing its own wrath and wanderings. There was something cosmical about it; a standing advertisement, till forbidden, of the everlasting vigor and fertility of the world. The morning, which is the most memorable season of the day, is the awakening hour. Then there is least somnolence in us; and for an hour, at least, some part of us awakes which slumbers all the rest of the day and night. Little is to be expected of that day, if it can be called a day, to which we are not awakened by our Genius, but by the mechanical nudgings of some servitor, are not awakened by our own newly acquired force and aspirations from within, accompanied by the undulations of celestial music, instead of factory bells, and a fragrance filling the air — to a higher life than we fell asleep from; and thus the darkness bear its fruit, and prove itself to be good, no less than the light. That man who does not believe that each day contains an earlier, more sacred, and auroral hour than he has yet profaned, has despaired of life, and is pursuing a descending and darkening way. After a partial cessation of his sensuous life, the soul of man, or its organs rather, are reinvigorated each day, and his Genius tries again what noble life it can make. All memorable events, I should say, transpire in morning time and in a morning atmosphere. The Vedas say, "All intelligences awake with the morning." Poetry and art, and the fairest and most memorable of the actions of men, date from such an hour. All poets and heroes, like Memnon, are the children of Aurora, and emit their music at sunrise. To him whose elastic and vigorous thought keeps pace with the sun, the day is a perpetual morning. It matters not what the clocks say or the attitudes and labors of men. Morning is when I am awake and there is a dawn in me. Moral reform is the effort to throw off sleep. Why is it that men give so poor an account of their day if they have not been slumbering? They are not such poor calculators. If they had not been overcome with drowsiness, they would have performed something. The millions are awake enough for physical labor; but only one in a million is awake enough for effective intellectual exertion, only one in a hundred millions to a poetic or divine life. To be awake is to be alive. I have never yet met a man who was quite awake. How could I have looked him in the face?

We must learn to reawaken and keep ourselves awake, not by mechanical aids, but by an infinite expectation of the dawn, which does not forsake us in our soundest sleep. I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life by a conscious endeavor. It is something to be able to paint a particular picture, or to carve a statue, and so to make a few objects beautiful; but it is far more glorious to carve and paint the very atmosphere and medium through which we look, which morally we can do. To affect the quality of the day, that is the highest of arts. Every man is tasked to make his life, even in its details, worthy of the contemplation of his most elevated and critical hour. If we refused, or rather used up, such paltry information as we get, the oracles would distinctly inform us how this might be done.

Excerpted from "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For" *Walden*

Please respond to these questions after you have READ (and maybe REREAD), ANNOTED, and looked up ALLUSIONS.

A) Describe one of Thoreau's allusions. Why do you think he made this particular reference? How does it relate to what he is saying here?

**B) Read the following quotation: “What's the point of waking up in the morning if you don't try to match the enormosity of the known forces in the world with something powerful in your own life?” -Don DeLillo *Underworld*
How does this quotation connect to Thoreau's ideas?**

C) What does Thoreau mean when he says, “we must learn to reawaken and keep ourselves awake”? Explain. How awake are you?

Handout 5
Name

**“Once in a Lifetime” (David Byrne & Brian Eno)
Performed by the Talking Heads**

And you may find yourself living in a shotgun shack
And you may find yourself in another part of the world
And you may find yourself behind the wheel of a large automobile
And you may find yourself in a beautiful house, with a beautiful wife
And you may ask yourself - well...how did I get here?

Letting the days go by/let the water hold me down
Letting the days go by/water flowing underground
Into the blue again/after the money's gone
Once in a lifetime/water flowing underground.

And you may ask yourself
How do I work this?
And you may ask yourself
Where is that large automobile?
And you may tell yourself
This is not my beautiful house!
And you may tell yourself
This is not my beautiful wife!

Letting the days go by/let the water hold me down
Letting the days go by/water flowing underground
Into the blue again/after the money's gone
Once in a lifetime/water flowing underground.

Same as it ever was...same as it ever was...same as it ever was...
Same as it ever was...same as it ever was...same as it ever was...
Same as it ever was...same as it ever was...

Water dissolving...and water removing
There is water at the bottom of the ocean
Carry the water at the bottom of the ocean
Remove the water at the bottom of the ocean!

Letting the days go by/let the water hold me down
Letting the days go by/water flowing underground
Into the blue again/in the silent water
Under the rocks and stones/there is water underground.

Letting the days go by/let the water hold me down
Letting the days go by/water flowing underground
Into the blue again/after the money's gone
Once in a lifetime/water flowing underground.

And you may ask yourself
What is that beautiful house?
And you may ask yourself
Where does that highway go to?
And you may ask yourself
Am I right? ...am I wrong?
And you may say to yourself
My god!...what have I done?

Letting the days go by/let the water hold me down
Letting the days go by/water flowing underground
Into the blue again/into the silent water
Under the rocks and stones/there is water underground.

Letting the days go by/let the water hold me down
Letting the days go by/water flowing underground
Into the blue again/after the money's gone
Once in a lifetime/water flowing underground.

Same as it ever was...same as it ever was...same as it ever was...
Same as it ever was...same as it ever was...same as it ever was...
Same as it ever was...same as it ever was...

After listening to “Once in a Lifetime” and watching the video, consider how the song connects to Thoreau's writings. Do any lyrics stand out? What about the video emphasizes the song's message?

Handout 6
Name

Waking Life Viewing Guide

During the next few classes, we will view a number of scenes from Richard Linklater's 2001 animated feature film *Waking Life*. This is a challenging film that poses many big questions and doesn't offer any easy answers. Linklater shot the film using digital cameras and then worked with multiple animators who used a technique known as interpolated rotoscoping to animate the live-action sequences. Why use this technique? Why turn a film with so much philosophical conversation into a cartoon? These are just a few of the questions we will discuss during our viewings. Please bear in mind these additional questions and considerations while you watch:

-*Waking Life* is structured as a series of dreams and does not follow a typical narrative arc (i.e., introduction, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution). This seemingly disjointed structure can frustrate viewers at times. Think about why Linklater would choose to organize his film in such a way. There is a method to the madness!

-Much of the conversation in *Waking Life* addresses big ideas like choice, responsibility, free will, evolution. The discussions can sound like lectures in graduate school courses (some of them are based on such lectures). Do not worry if you don't follow everything that is said. If you find yourself thinking, "What are they talking about?," then try to focus on the images and what they can tell you. I do not expect us to make sense of every bit of dialogue.

-The characters in *Waking Life* are not named. The central character, through whose dreams we travel, is played by Wiley Wiggins (the kid in *Dazed and Confused*, another Linklater picture). Why might none of the characters have names?

-As alluded to earlier, some sequences of *Waking Life* will go over your head; however, some of them will hopefully connect with you in some meaningful way. Perhaps there will be a line or idea you find inspirational or jarring or upsetting. When something like this comes up, make a note of it and consider why the line (or image or scene or conversation or concept) made such an impact on you.