

*Reading Henry David Thoreau:  
One Path Toward Interbeing*  
Honors American Literature (Grade 11)

*If you are a poet, you will see clearly that there is a cloud floating in this sheet of paper. Without a cloud, there will be no rain; without rain, the trees cannot grow; and without trees, we cannot make paper....Looking even more deeply, we can see we are in it too. It is not difficult to see, because when we look at a sheet of paper, the sheet of paper is part of our perception. Your mind is in here and mine is also. So we can say that everything is in here with this sheet of paper. You cannot point out one thing that is not here – time, space, the earth, the rain, the minerals in the soil, the sunshine, the cloud, the river, the heat. Everything co-exists with this sheet of paper....“To be” is to inter-be. You cannot just be by yourself alone. You have to inter-be with every other thing. This sheet of paper is, because everything else is.*

Excerpt from *The Heart of Understanding:  
Commentaries on the Prajnaparamita Heart  
Sutra*, by Thich Nhat Hanh (p. 3-4)

David Rockermann  
Wayland High School  
264 Old Conn. Path  
Wayland, MA 01778

August 2007

## **Guiding Principles/Learning Standards**

### *English Language Arts Curriculum*

#### **Guiding Principles:**

*Guiding Principle 1:* An effective English language arts curriculum develops thinking and language together through interactive learning.

*Guiding Principle 4:* An effective language arts curriculum emphasizes writing as an essential way to develop, clarify, and communicate ideas in persuasive, expository, narrative and expressive discourse.

#### **Massachusetts Learning Standards:**

##### *Standard 1: Discussion*

Students will use agreed-upon rules for informal and formal discussion in small and large groups.

##### *Standard 2: Questioning, Listening, and Contributing*

Students will pose questions, listen to the ideas of others, and contribute their own information or ideas in group discussions in order to acquire new knowledge.

##### *Standard 8: Understanding a Text*

Students will identify the basic facts and main ideas in a text and use them as the basis for interpretation.

##### *Standard 15: Style and Language*

Students will identify and analyze how an author's words appeal to the senses, create imagery, suggest mood, and set tone, and provide evidence from the text to support their understanding.

##### *Standard 19: Writing*

Students will write with a clear focus, coherent organization, and sufficient detail.

##### *Standard 20: Consideration of Audience and Purpose*

Students will write for different audiences and purposes.

## ***Objectives***

### ***Overarching Objective:***

Students will be able to realize their potential to foster change in their natural, social, and political environments by exploring Thoreau's contributions as a social critic, a free-thinking individual, and a conservationist.

### ***Behavior Objectives:***

1. Students will identify with Thoreau's thinking and publish quotations to plant seeds of thought in their school community.

2a. Students will recognize and become more familiar with the diversity of their natural environment through the art of journaling.

2b. Students will practice the methods of observing that made Thoreau an influential naturalist and conservationist.

3. Students will examine passages outside of *Walden* to recognize the scope of universal themes in Thoreau's writings.

4. Students will experiment with their abilities to express their own experiences with the natural world through various artistic mediums.

5. Students will become familiar with and appreciate the ecological systems present on their school campus.

6. Students will explore the effects of complacency vs. direct action on their social and political environments.

7. Students will use their understanding of Thoreau's contributions as a social critic, a free-thinking individual, and a conservationist to attempt to bring about change on their school campus.

### ***Unit Duration: Three Weeks***

### ***Required Readings Materials:***

*Walden*, Signet Classics.

*Civil Disobedience*, Dover Thrift.

***Reading Thoreau: One Path Toward Interbeing***  
**Lesson 1: “Going to Walden”**

***Objectives:***

Students will begin to contemplate the significance of place and living in the present moment.

Students will identify with Thoreau’s thinking and publish quotations to plant seeds of thought in their school community.

***Procedure:***

Reading and discussion of “Going to Walden” **(25 minutes)**

Distribute Handout #1: Mary Oliver’s “Going to Walden”

Read poem aloud to class before giving students the opportunity to re-read to themselves. Students respond to questions for discussion (Responses should include supporting evidence from the poem)

Provide background information on the Transcendentalist movement. **(15 minutes)**

Explanation of the process and purpose of keeping the Quotations Journal. **(10 minutes)**  
Distribute Handout # 2: Building Quotations Journals (& Selected Quotations from “Economy”)

Explanation of tonight’s homework and time to scan quotations **(5 minutes)**

**Homework:**

1. Choose a minimum of three quotations from Handout #2 to begin your Quotations Journal. Feel free to write down thoughts and reflections beneath the quotations if you feel inspired.

2. “Read Where I Lived, and What I Lived For”

***Reading Thoreau: One Path Toward Interbeing***  
**Lesson 2: “To be awake is to be alive” (72)**

***Objectives:***

Students will recognize and become more familiar with the diversity of their natural environment through the art of journaling.

Students will practice the methods of observing that made Thoreau an influential naturalist and conservationist.

***Procedure:***

Opening quotations for contemplation and discussion: **(10 minutes)**

“When we are unhurried and wise, we perceive that only great and worthy things have any permanent and absolute existence, that petty fears and petty pleasures are but the shadow of the reality. This is always exhilarating and sublime. By closing the eyes and slumbering, and consenting to be deceive by shows, men establish and confirm their daily life of routine and habit everywhere, which still is built on purely illusory foundations” (76).

“We are wont to forget that the sun looks on our cultivated fields and on the prairies and forests without distinction. They all reflect and absorb his rays alike, and the former make but a small part of the glorious picture which he beholds in his daily course. In his view the earth is all equally cultivated like a garden” (133).

“It is a surprising and memorable, as well as valuable experience, to be lost in the woods any time” (136)

Students share quotations they recorded in their journal from previous night’s homework.

Questions for discussion:

What do you notice about Thoreau’s delivery?

Describe the *tone* of your quotations? **(15 minutes)**

Explanation of the process and purpose of keeping a Nature Journal **(10 minutes)**

Distribute Handout #3 and a copy of Jeannie Abbott’s “Sample Journal Page”

Students read and consider the approaches to journaling in Thoreau’s *Journal* Excerpts: July 19<sup>th</sup>, 1851-1860 (Handout). **(5 minutes)**

Students journey to the fields to begin their Nature Journal **(15 minutes)**

**Homework:** Read “Sounds” and “Solitude”

***Reading Thoreau: One Path Toward Interbeing***  
**Lesson 3: “Interbeing” in a Consumer Culture**

**Objective:** Students will examine writings outside of *Walden* and recognize the scope of universal themes in Thoreau’s writings.

***Procedure:***

This lesson will take two class periods.

***Day 1***

Quotation for contemplation (written on the board):

“To read well, that is, to read true books in a true spirit, is a noble exercise, and one that will task the reader more than any exercise which the customs of the day esteem. It requires a training such as the athletes underwent, the steady intention almost of the whole life to this object. Books must be read as deliberately and reservedly as they were written” (81)

Distribute Handout #4: Excerpt from *The Heart of Understanding...*

Review directions

Students complete response in groups of four. **(35 minutes)**

Each group reads their response aloud. Discussion. **(20 minutes)**

***Day 2***

Distribute Handout #5: “(Nothing But) Flowers” Lyrics and Questions

Play “(Nothing But) Flowers” to the class while they read the lyrics. **(10 minutes)**

Students re-read lyrics and complete questions in their groups. **(25 minutes)**

Class Discussion **(20 minutes)**

**Homework:**

Read “Higher Laws” and “Conclusion”

## ***Reading Thoreau: One Path Toward Interbeing***

### **Lesson 4: Finding a Medium for Reflection**

**Objective:** Students will experiment with their abilities to express their own experiences with the natural world through various artistic mediums.

**Procedure:**

Discussion Questions for “Higher Laws” and “Conclusion”:  
(To be completed in groups of two to three – **20 minutes**)

1. Thoreau does not seem to be a particularly violent individual. Why does he state: “We cannot but pity the boy who has never fired a gun; he is no more humane, while his education has been sadly neglected”? (169).
2. Thoreau’s commentary on “abstain[ing] from animal food” and the faults in “liv[ing] by rich cookery” may lead some readers to believe he rarely ate meat or rich meals, but other sources prove otherwise. What is the function of creating this persona/speaking in first person? Does it draw you closer to or further from the ideas in the text?
3. Thoreau states: “We are conscious of an animal in us, which awakens in proportion as our higher nature slumbers. It is reptile and sensual, and perhaps cannot be wholly expelled; like the worms which, even in life and health, occupy our bodies. Possibly we may withdraw from it, but never change its nature” (174). Try to explain what Thoreau might be getting at when he mentions our “higher nature.” How does the “animal” get in the way?
4. Try to describe your own animal nature. Are there dominant elements that send your “higher nature” into deep hibernation? What are they? Do you attempt to control these elements? How?
5. Explain Thoreau’s reasoning for leaving the woods as described in “Conclusion.” What are your opinions about his decision to go back to living in the society that he so harshly criticizes? Does it work?
6. Re-read pages 255-257. Find and record a quotation that you feel best represents Thoreau as a free-thinking individual. Why is this particular passage poignant?
7. How does Thoreau’s reference to the story of the “beautiful bug which came out of the dry leaf of an old table of apple-tree wood” work as a metaphor for the Transcendentalist perspective of nature?
8. Read aloud a favorite quotation from “Conclusion” with your group, and explain why the quotation resonates with you.

Class discussion of “Higher Laws” and “Conclusion” questions. **(25 minutes)**

Distribute Handout #6: Finding Your Medium

Review project objective and directions with students. **(10 minutes)**

**Homework:**

1. Read first half of *Civil Disobedience*.
2. Write down three questions about the ecology of our campus for Mr. Alden.

***Reading Thoreau: One Path Toward Interbeing***  
**Lesson 5: Walking**

**Objective:** Students will become familiar with and appreciate the ecological systems present on their school campus.

**Procedure:**

Nature walk on campus grounds with Peter Alden **(55 minutes)**

**Homework:**

Finish *Civil Disobedience*

Challenge yourself to find an invasive species surrounding your home, and be ready to report any findings.



***Reading Thoreau: One Path Toward Interbeing***  
**Lesson 6: Civil Disobedience and the Socratic Seminar**

***Learning Standards:***

***Objective:*** Students will explore the effects of complacency vs. direct action on their social and political environments.

***Procedure:***

Introduction to philosophy and procedure of the Socratic Seminar (**5 minutes**)  
Distribute Handout #7

Individual preparation and time to review notes (**10 minutes**)

Students move desks and chairs to form inner and outer circles.

Discussion A (**15 minutes**)  
Outside circle shares findings (**5 minutes**)  
Discussion B (**15 minutes**)  
Outside circle shares findings (**5 minutes**)

**Homework:** Write a reflective journal entry on today's discussions (one page minimum). Consider ideas that you feel were not fully explored in the discussions.

***Reading Thoreau: One Path Toward Interbeing***  
**Lesson 7: Community Service Project**

**Objective:** Students will use their understanding of Thoreau's contributions as a social critic, a free-thinking individual, and a conservationist to attempt to bring about change on their school campus.

***Procedure:***

Read and discuss the following quotations from "Economy": **(10 minutes)**

"But man's capacities have never been measured; nor are we to judge of what he can do by any precedents, so little has been tried" (7).

p. 8 "Confucious said, "To know that we know what we know, and that we do not know what we do not know, that is true knowledge."

Distribute Handout #8

Present project objective and goals **(25 minutes)**

Class begins brainstorming **(20 minutes or remainder of period)**

**Homework:** Visit <http://www.nrdc.org/greensquad/> and take the take the Green Squad tour through the virtual school. This should provide solid ground for additional ideas and research.

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One Path Toward Interbeing  
Handout #1

***Going to Walden***

*By Mary Oliver*

It isn't very far as highways lie.  
I might be back by nightfall, having seen  
The rough pines, and the stones, and the clear water.  
Friends argue that I might be wiser for it.  
They do not hear that far-off Yankee whisper:  
How dull we grow from hurrying here and there!  
Many have gone, and think me half a fool  
To miss a day away in the cool country.  
Maybe. But in a book I read and cherish,  
Going to Walden is not so easy a thing  
As a green visit. It is the slow and difficult  
Trick of living, and finding it where you are.

Read "Going to Walden" at least one more time before writing responses to the following questions. When you feel ready to record your thoughts, be sure to include evidence from the poem for support.

1. Who is the speaker?
2. Describe the speaker's *tone* in this poem.
3. What is a "green visit"?
4. What is "the trick of living"?
5. Is there a central idea or message in this poem? What is it?

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One Path Toward Interbeing  
Handout #2

***Building Quotation Journals (& Selected Quotations from “Economy”)***

**Objective for this assignment:** To identify with Thoreau’s thinking and publish quotations to plant seeds of thought in your school community.

**Task:** Starting with tonight’s homework assignment, you will begin building a Quotations Journal that you will carry out through the end of the school year. The goal is to reflect on larger ideas, unique insights, or any passages that strike you in the course of your readings. Your quotations may be serious, humorous, puzzling, upsetting, enlightening...anything that catches grabs your attention that you believe might be worth revisiting in the future.

You are required to add at least two quotes per week, and you are welcome (but not required) to add any additional thoughts or notes beneath your quotations. Each entry must include: the date, the complete quotation, the page number, the book title, and author’s name. It is important that you keep a separate journal/notebook for this assignment alone.

In addition to recording two quotes per week, you are required to choose one quote per quarter to post in a public place on campus (on paper or poster board) where other members of the school community will take notice. In addition to posting the quotation, you are to write a one-page reflection addressing the following questions:

What is it about this quotation that caught your attention?  
Where did you post the quotation?  
Who do you think suppose noticed this quotation? Did you target a particular audience?  
Did the act of posting this quotation in a public place have an impact on your social, political or natural environments? (Think carefully about this one)  
How has reflecting on this quotation affected the way you read and interpret the rest of this author’s work?

This one-page reflection may be turned in at any point during the term, but it’s probably a good idea to take care of it before the closing days of the marking period.

\*\*\*You must check in with me regarding your choice of quotations before posting it on campus\*\*\*

**Assessment:** Your completion of two quotations per week throughout the course of the term will result in a passing grade for the Quotation Journal. The posting and written reflection of a quotation will count as a separate paper grade (see Reflective Writing Rubric). Effective use of structure, idea development, textual support (if relevant), and grammar and mechanics will be expected.

### *Selected quotations from “Economy”*

p.2 “-even these forms of conscious penance are hardly more incredible and astonishing than the scenes which I daily witness. The twelve labors of Hercules were trifling in comparison with those which my neighbors have undertaken; for they were only twelve, and had an end;”

p. 2 “I see young men, my townsmen, whose misfortune it is to have inherited farms, houses, barns, cattle, and farming tools; for these are more easily acquired than got rid of.”

p. 4 “The finest qualities of our nature, like the bloom on fruits, can be preserved only by the most delicate handling. Yet we do not treat ourselves nor one another thus tenderly.”

p. 5 “See how he cowers and sneaks, how vaguely all the day he fears, not being immortal nor divine, but the slave and prisoner of his own opinion of himself, a fame won by his own deeds. Public opinion is a weak tyrant compared with our own private opinion.”

p. 5 “It is never too late to give up our prejudices. No way of thinking or doing, however ancient, can be trusted without proof.”

p. 7 “But man’s capacities have never been measured; nor are we to judge of what he can do by any precedents, so little has been tried.”

p. 8 “Who shall say what prospect life offers to another? Could a greater miracle take place than for us to look through each other’s eyes for an instant? We should live in all the ages of the world in an hour; ay, in all the worlds of the ages. History, Poetry, Mythology! – I know of no reading of another’s experience so startling and informing as this would be.”

p. 7 “We are made to exaggerate the importance of what work we do; and yet how much is not done by us! or, what if we had been taken sick?”

p. 10 “Most of the luxuries, and many of the so-called comforts of life, are not only no indispensable, but positive hindrances to the elevation of mankind. With respect to luxuries and comforts, the wisest have ever lived a more simple and meager life than the poor.”

p. 12 “In any weather, at any hour of the day or night, I have been anxious to improve the nick of time, and notch it on my stick too; to stand on the meeting of two eternities, the past and future, which is precisely the present moment; to toe that line.

p. 14 “The life which men praise and regard as successful is but one kind. Why should we exaggerate any one kind at the expense of the others?”

p. 16 "...yet I am sure that there is greater anxiety, commonly, to have fashionable, or at least clean and unpatched clothes, than to have a sound conscience."

p. 18 "It is desirable that a man be clad so simply that...if an enemy take the town, he can, like the old philosopher, walk out the gate empty-handed without anxiety."

p. 21 "Who does not remember the interest with which when young he looked at shelving rocks, or any approach to a cave? It was the natural yearning of that portion of our most primitive ancestor which still survived in us."

p. 24 "...the cost of a thing is the amount of what I will call life which is required to be exchanged for it, immediately or in the long run."

p. 27 "Most men appear never to have considered what a house is, and are actually though needlessly poor all their lives because they think that they must have such a one as their neighbors have."

p. 28 "I had three pieces of limestone on my desk, but I was terrified to find that they required to be dusted daily, when the furniture of my mind was all undusted still, and I threw them out the window in disgust. How, then, could I have a furnished house? I would rather sit in the open air, for no dust gathers on the grass, unless where man has broken ground."

p. 35 "In those days, when my hands were much employed, I read but little, but the least scraps of paper which lay on the ground, my holder, or tablecloth, afforded me as much entertainment, in fact answered the same purpose as the Iliad."

p. 36 "There is some of the same fitness in a man's building his own house that there is in a bird's building its own nest. Who knows but if men constructed their dwellings with their own hands, and provided food for themselves and families simply and honestly enough, the poetic faculty would be universally developed, as birds universally sing when they are so engaged? But alas! We do like cowbirds and cuckoos, which lay their eggs in nests which other birds have built, and cheer no traveler with their chattering and unmusical notes. Shall we forever resign the pleasure of construction to the carpenter?"

p. 40-41 "Which would have advanced the most at the end of a month, - the boy who had made his own jackknife from the ore which he had dug and smelted, reading as much as would be necessary for this - or the boy who had attended the lectures on metallurgy at the Institute in meanwhile, and had received a Rodgers penknife from his father??"

p. 45 "Nations are possessed with an insane ambition to perpetuate the memory of themselves by the amount of hammered stone they leave. What if equal pains were taken to smooth and polish their manners? One piece of good sense would be more memorable than a monument as high as the moon."

p. 46 “As for the Pyramids, there is nothing to wonder at in them so much as the fact that so many men could be found degraded enough to spend their lives constructing a tomb for some ambitious booby, whom it would have been wiser and manlier to have drowned in the Nile, and then given his body to the dogs. I might possibly invent some excuse for them and him, but I have no time for it.”

p. 54 “A lady once offered me a mat, but as I had no room to spare within the house, nor time to spare within or without to shake it, I declined it, preferring to wipe my feet on the sod before my door. It is best to avoid the beginnings of evil.”

p. 58 “As for Doing-good, that is one of the professions which are full. Moreover, I have tried it fairly, and, strange as it may seem, am satisfied that it does not agree with my constitution. Probably I should not consciously and deliberately forsake my particular calling to do the good which society demands of me, to save the universe from annihilation; and I believe that a like but infinitely greater steadfastness elsewhere is all that now preserves it. But I would not stand between any man and his genius...”

p. 59 “There is no odor so bad as that which arises from goodness tainted. It is human, it is divine, carrion. If I knew for a certainty that a man was coming to my house with the conscious design of doing me good, I should run for my life, as from that dry and parching wind of the African deserts called the simoon, which fills the mouth and nose and ears and eyes with dust till you are suffocated, for fear that I should get some good done to me...”

p. 63 “I read in the Gulistan, or Flower Garden, or Sheik Sadi of Shiraz, that ‘they asked a wise man, saying: Of the many celebrated trees which the Most High God has created lofty and umbrageous, they all none azad, or free, excepting the cypress, which bears no fruit; what mystery is there in this? He replied: Each has its appropriate produce, and appointed season, during the continuance of which it is fresh and blooming, and during their absence dry and withered; to neither of which states is the cypress exposed, being always flourishing; and of this nature are the azads, or religious independents. – Fix not thy heart on that which is transitory; for the Dijlah, or Tigris, will continue to flow through Bagdad after the race of caliphs is extinct: if thy hand has plenty, be liberal as the date tree; but if it affords nothing to give away, be an azad, or free man, like the cypress.’”

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One Path Toward Interbeing  
Handout #3

### ***Keeping a Nature Journal***

***Objective for this assignment:*** To recognize and become more familiar with the diversity of your natural environment through the art of journaling.

***Task:*** Over the course of the next three weeks, you are to keep a Nature Journal modeled after the attached “Sample Journal Page,” created by artist Jeannie Abbott. You do not have to include all of the aspects of the “Sample Journal” in each entry, but are to complete a minimum of four of the suggested tasks. You are required to keep at least three one-page entries per week, and you are required to revisit one specific destination at least three times in the course of keep your Nature Journal. You may choose to focus on an isolated spot in your yard at home, a corner of a field at school, a particular tree, a particular depression or patch of soil, etc. The most important element of this assignment is that you pay attention to your senses and keep an open mind; nature journaling can provide a great escape from the rush of the school week.

***Assessment:*** Your Nature Journal and your Quotations Journal will be assessed together on a pass/fail basis. Demonstrating effort and fulfilling stated requirements will earn you a passing grade. Failure to complete the stated requirements or demonstrating minimal effort



### **“Interbeing”**

Read the following passage taken from Thich Nhat Hanh’s *The Heart of Understanding: Commentaries on the Prajnaparamita Heart Sutra* with your group. Consider how this commentary on philosophical ideas composed over two thousand years ago on the other side of the globe might have resonated with Thoreau, paying particularly close attention to the passage in “Spring” that describes the thawing of sand and clay (241-244). In your groups, read this passage from “Spring” and write one to two paragraphs comparing ideas that thread between these two texts that were written nearly two thousand apart from one another. What are the central ideas in each passage? Why do you suppose these ideas found their way into such different texts? Your response will be collected and counted as part of your group-work grade.

*If you are a poet, you will see clearly that there is a cloud floating in this sheet of paper. Without a cloud, there will be no rain; without rain, the trees cannot grow; and without trees, we cannot make paper. The cloud is essential for the paper to exist. If the cloud is not here, the sheet of paper cannot be here either. So we can say that the cloud and the paper inter-are. “Interbeing” is a word that is not in the dictionary yet, but if we combine the prefix “inter-” with the verb “to be,” we have a new verb, inter-be. Without a cloud, we cannot have paper, so we can say that the cloud and the of paper inter-are.*

*If we look into this sheet of paper even more deeply, we can see the sunshine in it. If the sunshine is not there, the forest cannot grow. In fact, nothing can grow. Even we cannot grow without sunshine. And so, we know that the sunshine is also in this sheet of paper. The paper and the sunshine inter-are. And if we continue to look, we can see the logger who cut the tree and brought it to the mill to be transformed into paper. And we see the wheat. We know that the logger cannot exist without his daily bread, and therefore the wheat that became his bread is also in this sheet of paper. And the logger’s father and mother are in it too. When we look this way, we see that without all of these things, this sheet of paper cannot exist.*

*Looking even more deeply, we can see we are in it too. It is not difficult to see, because when we look at a sheet of paper, the sheet of paper is part of our perception. Your mind is in here and mine is also. So we can say that everything is in here with this sheet of paper. You cannot point out one thing that is not here – time, space, the earth, the rain, the minerals in the soil, the sunshine, the cloud, the river, the heat. Everything co-exists with this sheet of paper. That is why I think the word inter-be should be in the dictionary. “To be” is to inter-be. You cannot just be by yourself alone. You have to inter-be with every other thing. This sheet of paper is, because everything else is.*

Excerpt from *The Heart of Understanding: Commentaries on the Prajnaparamita Heart Sutra*, by Thich Nhat Hanh (p. 3-4)

**If you're having trouble getting started, examine the following lines from "Spring":**  
"I feel as if I were nearer to the vitals of the globe, for this sandy overflow is something such a foliaceous mass as the vitals of the animal body. You find thus in the very sands an anticipation of the vegetable leaf" (242).

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One Path Toward Interbeing  
Handout #5

***(Nothing But) Flowers***

lyrics by David Byrne

Here we stand  
Like an Adam and an Eve  
Waterfalls  
The Garden of Eden  
Two fools in love  
So beautiful and strong  
The birds in the trees  
Are smiling upon them  
From the age of the dinosaurs  
Cars have run on gasoline  
Where, where have they gone?  
Now, it's nothing but flowers

There was a factory  
Now there are mountains and rivers  
you got it, you got it

We caught a rattlesnake  
Now we got something for dinner  
we got it, we got it

There was a shopping mall  
Now it's all covered with flowers  
you've got it, you've got it

If this is paradise  
I wish I had a lawnmower  
you've got it, you've got it

Years ago  
I was an angry young man  
I'd pretend  
That I was a billboard  
Standing tall  
By the side of the road  
I fell in love  
With a beautiful highway

This used to be real estate  
Now it's only fields and trees  
Where, where is the town  
Now, it's nothing but flowers  
The highways and cars  
Were sacrificed for agriculture  
I thought that we'd start over  
But I guess I was wrong

Once there were parking lots  
Now it's a peaceful oasis  
you got it, you got it

This was a Pizza Hut  
Now it's all covered with daisies  
you got it, you got it

I miss the honky tonks,  
Dairy Queens, and 7-Elevens  
you got it, you got it

And as things fell apart  
Nobody paid much attention  
you got it, you got it

I dream of cherry pies,  
Candy bars, and chocolate chip cookies  
you got it, you got it

We used to microwave  
Now we just eat nuts and berries  
you got it, you got it

This was a discount store,  
Now it's turned into a cornfield  
you got it, you got it

Don't leave me stranded here  
I can't get used to this lifestyle

## *Analyzing the Lyrics*

1. Describe the protagonist's surroundings, using details from the song in your description.
2. How does the protagonist in the song feel about his/her surroundings? How do you know?
3. What *does* the protagonist want? (This question may be trickier than it appears...depending upon your findings for the next question.)
4. Listen to David Byrne's voice. Consider the content and feelings described in the song. How would you describe the *tone*?
5. What do you think the lyricist, David Byrne, is trying to get at? Be as specific and detailed in your answer as possible. Remember that we should assume that the lyricist and the protagonist in the song are not necessarily the same person.
6. Is the content of this song at all similar to concepts that you have encountered in *Walden*? Please provide examples.
7. What would Thoreau think of "(Nothing But) Flowers"? Is a song an effective mode to voice an opinion on a rather serious topic?

**Bonus (Time Permitting):** Explain how the parentheses in the title might reflect the protagonist's attitude about his/her surroundings.

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One Path Toward Interbeing  
Handout #6

### ***Finding Your Medium***

***Objective for this assignment:*** To experiment with your abilities to express your own experiences with the natural world through various artistic mediums.

***Task:*** Although we have finished reading excerpts from *Walden*, we are going to continue with our Nature Journals for the next week of classes. You should have a total of at least nine entries, and you are welcome to add more if you are feeling inspired. Once you have completed your seven entries, you are to generate a poem, sketch, painting, collage, photograph, or polished piece of creative descriptive writing based on an observation in one of your entries to present to the class. Be sure to consider the advantages and limitations of Thoreau's medium for expressing his experience in the natural world before you set out to find your own.

***Your presentation should address the following questions:***

Why was I drawn to this medium?

What were the difficulties in trying to capture your observations through this medium?

What are we not seeing?

How did this exercise affect your sense of connection to your environment?

This assignment is relatively open and straight forward, and it should provide an interesting opportunity to experiment in personal reflection.

H. American Lit.  
One Path Toward Interbeing  
Handout #7

### *Socratic Seminar on Civil Disobedience*

#### **Procedure:**

You will be given 10 minutes to organize your thoughts on the interpretive question below and to locate relevant passages in the text.

There will be two groups (A&B). Each group will explore a different question for 10-15 minutes within the inner circle. The role of each student in the outer circle will be determined by the task described on the note card each student will receive. These tasks will include (but not be limited to) making observations about the structure of the inner circle discussion. Students in the outer circle will share their observations after the 10-15 minutes of inner circle discussion is finished.

**Discussion A:** In the opening paragraphs of *Civil Disobedience*, Thoreau states, “The only obligation which I have a right to assume, is to do at any time what I think right” (2). Explore how this mentality could potentially threaten one’s political, social, and natural environments. Explore how this mentality could foster significant progress in one’s political, social, and natural environments. What are the implications of this mentality during the time of its writing (1849)?

**Discussion B:** On the subject of voting, Thoreau declares, “Even voting for the right is doing nothing for it. It is only expressing to men feebly your desire that it should prevail. A wise man will not leave the right to the mercy of chance, nor wish it to prevail through the power of majority” (5). Is Thoreau’s take on voting excruciatingly pessimistic, or is it realistic? Explore this question within the context of the time of its writing (1849) **and** present day.

**Grades for the seminar will be based on the following categories:**

**Conduct** - Demonstrate respect and patience with others’ opinions.

**Speaking** - Articulate clearly and precisely, and when necessary, make attempts to move the conversation onto a new idea.

**Reasoning** - Cite relevant textual passages for support, and make connections between ideas.

**Listening** - Pay attention to detail, avoid repetition, build on discussion.

**Reading** - Show familiarity with the text, be able to locate passages, use notes.

**Each category is worth five points**

(5 = Excellent/exceeds expectations, 1 = Little to no demonstration of skill)

***Possible ways to start the discussion:***

I noticed...what do you think about that?

I was surprised that...were you surprised?

After reading the passage, I predict...based on the following...

Why did...? What does that mean?

The author seems to repeat the word...why?

Could...be a connection to...?

One Possible theme might be...What do you think?

I feel the author's tone is...why do you suppose he/she feels this way?

***Tasks on note cards for students in the outer circle :***

Who is the leader of the discussion? Why?

Who makes the excellent use of the text. How?

Count the number of interruptions.

Count the number of "likes."

Make a list of everyone's name in the inner circle. Count the number of times each person speaks.

Who seems most prepared for the discussion? Why?

Add one point to the discussion that has not yet been made.

Who makes the best point?

Who demonstrates excellent listening skills?

Observe and record the different ways people show agreement (verbal/physical)

Observe and record the different ways people show disagreement (verbal/physical)

### ***Community Service Project***

***Objective for this project:*** To use your understanding of Thoreau's contributions as a social critic, a free-thinking individual, and a conservationist to attempt to bring about relevant change to our natural environment at Wayland High School.

Your community service project will be an ongoing assignment. You will determine the direction and the timeline for this project (as a class), but you will have to plan for a goal that is attainable by the end of the school year. We will be moving on to the next unit as you get your feet on the ground with this assignment, so it will be essential to set a realistic timeline.

***Assessment:*** Assessment will be based on effort and collaborative skills (See attached *Group Work Rubric*) and personal reflection. Each one of you will submit a 2-3 page reflective paper detailing your specific contributions to the project and focusing on the ways in which this the project has affected your relationship with your social, political, and natural environments at school. Your evaluation will be based on the attached *Reflective Writing Rubric*.

#### ***Some steps you'll want to consider as a class:***

- ▶ Identify problems and vote on a project – Find a place or an issue on campus that you care about as a class. Explore a number of possibilities before taking a vote.
- ▶ Assess your potential resources. It is essential that you choose a project that can be done with the resource you have (or will be able to attain).
- ▶ Draft a budget. This can be done in teams or as a class; the choice is yours. Think of creative ways to fund your project.
- ▶ Determine a specific strategy, and form committees. List the tasks that each group is to carry out.
- ▶ Develop a more specific plan of action. Create a work plan and timeline.
- ▶ Implement your plan of action and keep track of progress made. Address difficulties with the class; communication is essential for success.
- ▶ Document any and all progress made on your project. A P.R. committee focusing on writing, taking photos, and recording videos of progress can provide a real boost for your project. Inform the community of your action.



► Look at this as a real opportunity to promote significant and lasting change in your environment. Take pride in your progress.

*Possible Project Ideas:*

- ◇ Reduce amount of plastic bottle waste on campus (Selling reusable metal water bottles)
- ◇ Propose green design ideas to the school committee for our new school (planning for the school is already underway, but there is always a possibilities for changes and additions)
- ◇ Start a composting site on campus
- ◇ Improve recycling on campus
- ◇ Raise awareness about carbon footprints
- ◇ Plant Trees
- ◇ Research and reduce use of pesticides on school grounds
  
- ◇ The possibilities are endless...

## ***Group Work Rubric***

### ***A – Exceeds the Standard***

- Consistently and actively works toward group goals.
- Eagerly accepts and fulfills individual role within the group.
- Consistently and actively contributes knowledge, opinions, and skills.
- Values the knowledge, opinion and skills of all group members and encourages their contribution.
- Helps group identify necessary changes and encourages group action for change.

### ***B – Meets the Standard***

- Works toward group goals without prompting.
- Accepts and fulfills individual role within the group.
- Contributes knowledge, opinions, and skills without prompting.
- Willingly participates in needed changes.

### ***C – Partially Meets the Standard***

- Works toward group goals with occasional prompting.
- Contributes to the group with occasional prompting.
- Participates in needed changes, with occasional prompting.

### ***D/F – Does not Meet the Standard***

- Works toward group goals only when prompted.
- Contributes to the group only when prompted.
- Participates in needed changes when prompted and encouraged.

\*Modified from: <http://www.sdcoe.k12.ca.us/score/actbank/collaborub.html>

## Reflective Writing Rubric

	<b>EXCEEDS THE STANDARD</b>	<b>MEETS THE STANDARD</b>	<b>PARTIALLY MEETS THE STANDARD</b>	<b>FAILS TO MEET THE STANDARD</b>
<b>Focus</b>	Your sophisticated thesis statement provides a focus that you maintain throughout your essay	Your thesis statement provides a focus that is steadily maintained.	Your thesis statement provides a focus that is maintained for most of your essay.	The focus of your essay is unclear and inconsistently maintained.
<b>Structure</b>	Your essay is exceptionally well organized and cohesive.	Your essay is appropriately organized into an introduction, a conclusion, and distinct body paragraphs.	There are minor problems with the way you have organized your essay.	There are major organizational problems in your essay.
<b>Use of Supporting Detail</b>	You use exceptionally specific and relevant details from your experience to illustrate your main points.	You use appropriate details from your experience to support your main points.	You use some details from your experience, but your essay would be strengthened if you added more.	You do not use any details from your story to illustrate your main points.
<b>Voice</b>	Your voice is highly engaging, consistent, and appropriate to the task.	Your voice is appropriate to the task and conveys engagement with the material.	Your voice is somewhat appropriate to the task, but conveys minimal engagement with the material.	Your voice conveys indifference about the material, or is inappropriate to the task.
<b>Grammar and Mechanics</b>	Your sentence structure is varied and sophisticated, and your editing is flawless.	Your sentence structure is sound and your editing is generally good.	Minor problems with sentence structure and/or editing get somewhat in the way of your effort to communicate clearly	Major Problems with sentence structure and/or editing make it difficult for your reader to follow your essay

**GRADE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Bibliography:**

Thoreau, Henry David. Walden. New York: Signet Classics, 1999.

Thoreau, Henry David. Civil Disobedience and Other Essays. Mineola, N.Y., 1993. 1-18.